

Scores killed in Rangoon as troops fire on crowds

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Students, monks die in army crackdown

Rangoon (AP) — Troops of the new military government fired on Buddhist monks, students and thousands of other peaceful demonstrators in the capital yesterday, killing about 100 people. Opposition leaders vowed to fight on until democracy was achieved.

Residents also reported clashes between troops and demonstrators in Mandalay, the country's second largest city, and other major towns including Pyiamana, Prome and Pegu. Details were not available.

Witnesses and other reports said about 150 people, including 17 soldiers, had died in fighting in Rangoon since military commander Saw Maung overthrew civilian President Maung Maung in a coup Sunday afternoon. Maung Maung's fate remained unknown.

An Asian diplomat quoted doctors as saying 67 victims were hospitalized yesterday at Rangoon General Hospital. The military said soldiers fired on "violent and unruly mobs" in Rangoon

and three other towns over the two days, killing 23 people and wounding 23, but added its figures were incomplete.

Three key opposition leaders, reacting to the killings, vowed in a joint statement to "continue our struggle for democracy by various means until the goal is achieved."

Former Brig Gen Aung Gyi, former defence minister Tin Oo and Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's late independence leader, issued the statement. A fourth leading opposition figure, former prime minister Nu, separately deplored the killings.

Soldiers shot largely

unarmed protesters near the main government administrative building, the US embassy, Sule Pagoda, Rangoon General Hospital and other areas of the capital.

Troops guarding bridges and road junctions fired to stop people from suburbs, some armed with swords, spears, crossbows and other primitive weapons, who were trying to enter Rangoon on Sunday night to join the protesters.

The shooting subsided by early afternoon, but skirmishes followed as troops used cranes and forklifts to clear roadblocks demonstrators had erected. Witnesses said one boy was killed and six wounded when soldiers fired on youths trying to remove a fallen tree that had been used as a barrier.

A Western diplomat in Bangkok said the violence signalled the end to the cycle of recent weeks in which demonstrators had succeeded in forcing a series of concessions from the government.

"We're into possibly one of the final acts now ... a naked confrontation with the army," he said, speaking anonymously. "Either the students win or the army wins."

The soldiers were enforcing a ban on public gatherings imposed immediately after the coup by the military commander and defence minister, Gen Saw Maung, and 18 other senior officers.

The Western diplomat suggested hard-liner Saw Maung had seized power to save the Burma Social-



It looks like a line-up for the 200 metres men's freestyle at the Seoul Olympics. In fact our picture shows morning commuters trying to keep their feet dry at a bus shelter yesterday outside the Philippine Embassy on Sukhumvit Road. ● Another picture: Page 2.

Economic ruin

Other analysts believe the military may have acted to reassert its traditional authority.

Military spokesman Kyaw Sann told newsmen soldiers fought demonstrators in four places on Sunday night and in several areas of the capital yesterday.

"The violent mob attacked security forces with catapults and jing-les (metal darts) and the troops had to disperse the mob by shooting in many parts of the town last night," he said.

He described the situation yesterday in similar terms, adding that crowds

of more than 1,000 people raided two police stations and seized two dozen firearms and some ammunition.

Kyaw Sann said authorities in most parts of the country had abolished the informal administrations set up by protesters. He said three people were killed and 15 wounded when authorities cleared centres in Magwe, Taunggyi and Loikaw.

In Rangoon, another Western diplomat said soldiers hidden from sight and possibly on rooftops

fired at demonstrators outside the US embassy building, which may have been struck by bullets. He said he saw two demonstrators apparently killed and two others wounded.

The diplomat said 1,000-2,000 demonstrators were marching in an orderly procession around a corner near the embassy when troops fired with automatic weapons.

"They were as far as we could tell unarmed and behaving in a peaceful manner," he said, also speaking anonymously.

"The troops opened fire on that group of demonstrators, and then opened fire on the small group of 100 or so people that were standing in front of the embassy at the same time."

The US mission earlier evacuated about 100 dependents and non-essential staffers. Other embassies have done the same.

Witnesses said they saw two monks fall after being hit near Sule Pagoda. The military spokesman said 10 demonstra-

tors were killed there as soldiers fired to disperse some 2,000 people.

"Many students are being mowed down. Can't anything be done?" asked a reporter telephoning from the scene of one confrontation before breaking down in tears.

Witnesses said military trucks took away corpses while residents dragged some dead and wounded into their houses during lulls in the firing or placed them into three-wheeled taxis that were peddled to hospitals.

Saw Maung is known as a right-hand man of toppled President Sein Lwin.



Burmese army troops man barricades barring the way to anti-government protesters near the national parliament building last week. — Reuter

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