

# Mass detentions at the Kan Thar Yar Strike

Report 4: Mass detentions following the February 2021 coup (report series)

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 10 March 2023

## Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** North Okkalapa Township (မြောက်ဥက္ကလာပမြို့နယ်), Yangon (ရန်ကုန်မြို့) [16.912472, 96.165611].
- **Date/Time of Incident:**
  - 10 March 2021
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
  - Myanmar security forces (specific units could not be identified)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
  - At least 100 young activists were detained at the youth movement strike at Kan Thar Yar park in North Okkalapa on 10 March 2021.
  - Myanmar Witness has identified, analysed, and cross-referenced 21 distinct videos and photos related to the protest, of which it was possible to verify or fully verify 18 pieces of content.
  - Myanmar Witness has pieced together this user-generated content to provide a chronological reconstruction of the events. All content referenced below is fully-verified unless otherwise stated.
  - This report reveals the mass arrests of young people and the use of force against protestors, with one protestor allegedly dying as a result.

## Executive Summary

Following the 1 February 2021 Coup, Myanmar's State Administration Council (SAC) has [stripped](#) away due process and fair trial rights to detain thousands of protestors, activists and human rights defenders. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [reported](#) that the vast majority of these deprivations of liberty were carried out without respect for the rule of law or in accordance with international human rights standards, therefore constituting arbitrary and unlawful detention.

This series of case studies documents four separate incidents in Yankin, Tamwe, North Okkalapa and Lanmadaw in late February and early March 2021. Three of the reports cover mass detentions of protestors, while the other examines a case of mass detention of community members, following an incident involving alleged undercover military officers in the same area.

Over 100 individuals were arrested at each of the three protests investigated by Myanmar Witness. In all three cases, there is no evidence to indicate that the protests were anything but peaceful. Myanmar Witness has analysed, verified and triangulated multiple pieces of footage to develop a detailed timeline and map of events leading up to and including the detention of the protestors. Sound grenades, teargas and live ammunition was used on the protestors.

This report looks at the mass detention of activists at the youth movement strike at Kan Thar Yar park in North Okkalapa on 10 March 2021. At least 100 young activists, including many women, were detained by police and one fatality was reported.

These examples of mass detentions are being released to mark two years passing since their occurrence; however, they are by no means exhaustive. Myanmar Witness continues to monitor the deprivation of civil liberties in Myanmar.

## Protests in North Okkalapa

North Okkalapa was the site of sustained unrest between Myanmar security forces and the local population in late February and March 2021. On 3 March, a day of clashes between police and protestors resulted in multiple deaths after government forces opened fire on protestors (see Myanmar Witness' report: [Violence against protestors in North Okkalapa](#)).

A week later, on 10 March, police arrested a large number of protestors from the youth movement strike at Kan Thar Yar park in North Okkalapa, triggering another day of confrontation between police and the local community. [Myanmar Now](#) put the number of detainees between 100-200, while [The Guardian](#) cited eyewitnesses who claimed the number was "at least 200". Social media users put the number as high as 400, with many posts suggesting the detained included many young women.



*Figure 1: Location of incident, Kan Thar Yar Park, North Okkalapa. The red square indicates the area where the crackdown occurred.*

## The investigation - a chronological walkthrough

Myanmar Witness has identified, analysed, and cross-referenced 21 distinct pieces of content related to the protest on the 10 March 2021, of which it was possible to verify or fully verify 18 pieces of content. By doing so, Myanmar Witness has been able to create a chronological reconstruction of events which took place.



Figure 2: Overview of events in North Okkalapa on 10 March 2021 [16.912333, 96.165583].

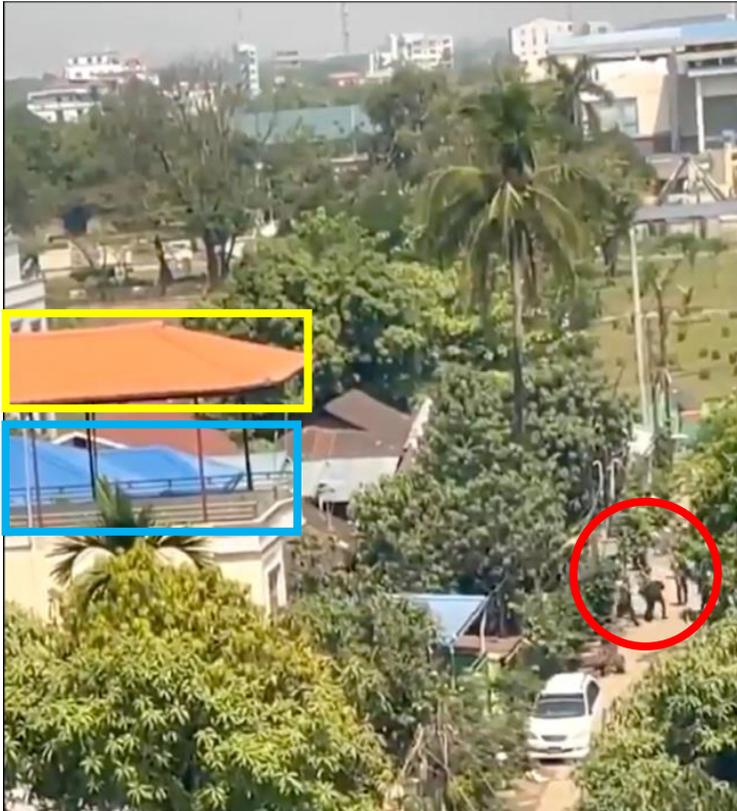
**1021:** A 11-minute Facebook livestream, timestamped at 1021 local time, shows a large crowd of protestors, gathered near the junction of Kan Thar Yar Park (source redacted due to privacy concerns). The filmer shows barricades set up by the protestors at three sides of the junction and protestors standing with makeshift shields. The crowd is chanting and banging shields but otherwise appears peaceful.



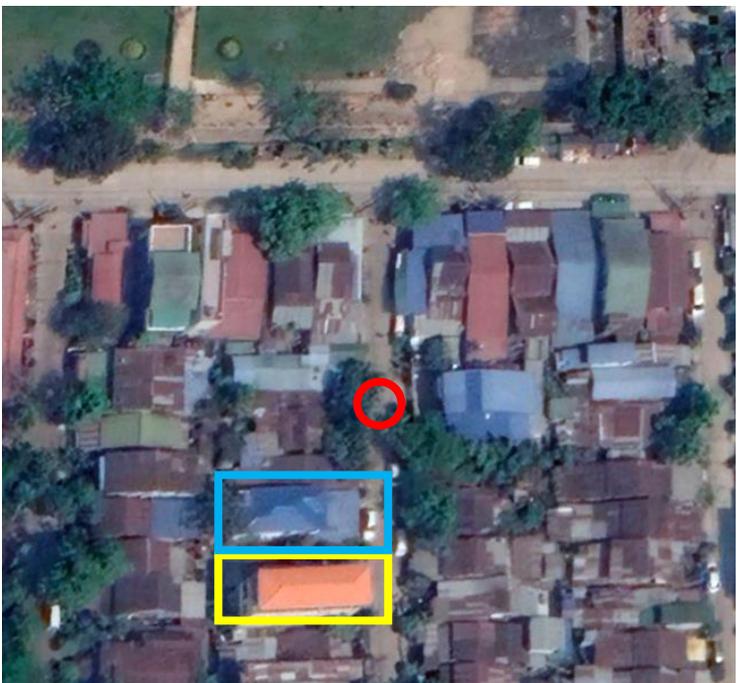
*Figure 3: Capture (07:08) showing the front of a column of protestors on Thu Dammar Road [16.912333, 96.165583] (source: the link has since been removed, however this content was archived by Myanmar Witness).*

**1030:** At the 08:00 minute mark the crowd begins to retreat southwards, slowly at first before breaking into a panicked run at 09:20 minutes (1030 local time). The filmer passes several barricades and lines of protestors with shields who are not retreating, before moving into the residential area to the south of Kan Thar Yar Park. Shots can be heard from 09:50 minutes.

**1130:** Footage posted on Twitter shows police moving from house to house in a number of streets (source redacted due to privacy concerns). Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate the events to the south of the park. Through shadow analysis, Myanmar Witness calculates that the video was taken at approximately 1130. Shots can be heard in the footage. Police can be seen dragging people out of the houses at the 01:22 minute mark and at least five people are detained.



Capture (01:32) of video showing police moving house to house south of the park (one of the five detentions magnified above).



Geolocation of the clip, based on the distinctive orange and blue roofs, highlighted in capture above. Location: 16.910472, 96.167194

Figure 4: [Top] Still image taken from the video uploaded to Twitter. [Bottom] Geolocation of the video. (Source: redacted).

**1200:** Three videos from alternative angles and additional footage posted and widely shared on Twitter, show a large number of protestors being marched into Kan Thar Yar Park and being forced to sit in rows before being taken to waiting trucks next to the park's entrance. Social media posts and eyewitnesses [claim](#) the total number of arrests ranged between 100-200 people.

One video posted on Twitter shows the detainees being loaded into the trucks (source redacted due to privacy concerns). Myanmar Witness obtained satellite imagery taken on 10 March showing six vehicles at that exact location, three of which match with those visible in the video (Figure 5).



*Figure 5: [Top Left] Magnified capture (00:14) from the video uploaded to twitter showing detainees sitting in the park. [Top Right] Magnified capture (00:22) shows detainees being taken to the trucks, also visible in satellite. footage taken on the day. [Bottom] Geolocation of the mass detention, based on the fountain, path, building at the park entrance and trucks [16.912194, 96.166111].*

**1400:** Videos posted to twitter show protestors returning to the streets en masse to call for the release of the detained protestors. They walk to the crossroads at Kan Thar Yar Park where the blockades were originally set up [16.912917, 96.165417]. Footage shows protestors raising their hands towards forces to the east before police fire teargas to disperse the crowds (source: the link has since been removed, however this content was archived by Myanmar Witness). Shadows indicate the footage was taken around 1400, which aligns with posts from individuals on social media.



*Figure 6: [Left] Capture (00:09) from a video shows protestors raising their hands to forces to the east. [Right] Capture from the same video (00:43) shows tear gas landing among the crowd, shot by forces to the east. (Source: the link has since been removed, however this content was archived by Myanmar Witness).*

At least one protestor was seriously wounded in the clashes. A video posted to social media (source redacted due to privacy concerns) shows the injured protestors being carried into the streets to the north of Kan Thar Yar Park. Shadow analysis by Myanmar Witness corroborates the social media users' claims that these events occurred around 1200.



Figure 7: Footage still at 00.08s from the video showing the injured man being carried to the north of Khan Thar Yar Park 16.914028, 96.169167. (Source: redacted).

Posts on the same day featured a man lying in a hospital bed and an image of the shrapnel allegedly removed from his abdomen (though it is impossible to verify the location or time from the photos, or if it was the same man from the protests). Multiple social media posts from individuals, including activists [verified](#) by Twitter, said the man, named as Zaw Zaw Moe, died of his wounds on the morning of 12 March, leaving behind four young children (source: redacted due to privacy concerns).



Figure 8: Photos posted on Twitter allegedly showing the man, Zaw Zaw Moe, in hospital and the shrapnel removed from his abdomen. (Source: redacted).

## Attribution

Myanmar Witness has seen evidence of the Myanmar police detaining people and trying to disperse crowds, but has been unable to conclusively link or identify the specific units of the Myanmar security forces involved in the crackdown of this protest and the detention of protestors. It should be noted that [Myanmar Now](#) and [The Guardian](#) both released images of Myanmar police and military personnel while reporting on the violent crackdown of protests in Yangon on this day.

## Conclusion and future monitoring

At least 100 young activists were detained at the youth movement strike at Kan Thar Yar park in North Okkalapa on 10 March 2021. This investigation has pieced together multiple sources of user-generated content to provide a chronological reconstruction of the events. It reveals not only the mass detentions, but also the use of force against protestors, with one protester allegedly dying as a result.

This series of case studies documents a number of early incidents involving violence against protestors and the deprivation of liberty of those who opposed the coup. As these case studies show, in the months following the coup, sound grenades, teargas, and live ammunition have been used on protestors and hundreds were detained.

Two years have passed since these events occurred in Yankin, Tamwe, North Okkalapa and Lanmadaw, however the military continue to crackdown on dissent. Myanmar Witness continues to monitor the deprivation of civil liberties.