

The Killing of Activists in Myanmar

What is the issue?

Recently, Myanmar's junta executed four pro-democracy activists and has called the executions "lawful" and said it was "justice for the people."

What has happened in Myanmar since the coup in 2021?



- The military (Tatmadaw) seized power from the democratically elected party in 2021 and formed the State Administrative Council (SAC).
- Following the coup, Aung San Suu Kyi and several other leaders were detained immediately and are still in detention.
- As mass protests, called the 'spring revolution', against the regime began, a parallel government was formed.
- It has an armed division known as the People's Defence Force (PDF), which is trained by several armed ethnic groups but they have not been able to make a change against the junta's repressive measures.

The "88 Movement" remains one of the defining moments of Myanmar's modern history where protestors voiced their resentment over the economy and the government's wide restrictions on personal freedom.

What led to the latest executions?

Myanmar's economy contracted 18% last year and GDP this year is expected to be 13% lower than in 2019, according to the World Bank.

- **Junta's failure to establish legitimacy-** There is growing restlessness within the junta for failing to establish control and legitimacy despite being in power since 2021.
- **Boosting the morale of the military leadership-** A section within the Tatmadaw has questioned Senior General's leadership capabilities, compared to his predecessors.
- Some military and police officials have even joined the pro-democracy movement.
- **People's resistance-** The government is grappling with a resistance movement, ethnic conflicts, terror attacks and a failing economy.
- **Global focus-** Perhaps the regime sees the global focus on Ukraine and Sri Lanka as an opportunity to carry out something in its own backyard.

What about the international responses?

- The execution has been condemned by individual countries and international organisations.
- Regionally, the strongest voice has been from Cambodia, the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Myanmar is a member.
- Neither the condemnations nor the earlier sanctions levied by the U.S., Canada, Australia, the U.K., the European Union and others, have made an impact on the regime.
- Successive military regimes have resisted external pressure, both from within the region and the rest of the world.
- The Senior General did not budge to honour ASEAN's five-point consensus for the peace and stability of Myanmar, although he agreed to implement them in a regional meeting in 2021.
- Russia has strongly supported the junta since the coup.
- China, the junta's oldest ally, was one of the first to give it de facto recognition after the coup.

References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/expained-the-killing-of-activists-in-myanmar-and-its-aftermath/article65685690.ece?homepage=true>
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