

Medical workers harassed by riot police in Yangon

Report 2: Police and Military Harassment and Mistreatment of Individuals following the Coup

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 27 February 2023

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:** Sanchaung township (စမ်းချောင်းမြို့နယ်), Yangon (ရန်ကုန်) [16.803814, 96.135186].
- **Date/Time of Incident:**
 - 27 February 2021
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and/or Involvement:**
 - Battalion 26 of the Lon Htein (Riot Police)
- **Summary of Investigation:**
 - Myanmar Witness has verified footage of armed police in riot gear harassing medical workers in Yangon.
 - One civilian was grabbed by the throat, while a medical worker had a pump-action shotgun pointed directly at their face. Individuals were also detained.
 - Myanmar Witness has verified the involvement of Battalion 6 of the Lon Htein, including its officers, in this incident.

Executive Summary

In the months following the February 2021 military coup, Myanmar Witness documented and verified footage of police and military violence against individuals. This mini-series of spot reports documents five separate incidents in Yangon, Mandalay and Sagaing in February and March 2021.

The case studies show police and military personnel beating unarmed individuals, including those already in detention; harassment, intimidation and arrest of medical workers; and the infliction of degrading treatment. They also show evidence of coordination between police and

violence by men in civilian clothes. Analysis of rank and insignia clearly visible in the footage enables attribution of responsibility for the violence to the Lon Htein (Riot Security Forces), soldiers from Myanmar military's Yangon Command, and the 101 Light Infantry Battalion. Additionally, ranked police officers were identified in two incidents.

In the second report of the series, Myanmar Witness has verified footage of armed police in riot gear harassing medical workers in Yangon. Individuals were detained, one civilian was grabbed by the throat and a medical worker had a pump-action shotgun pointed directly at their face. Myanmar Witness has verified the involvement of Battalion 26 of the Lon Htein, including its officers, in this incident.

These examples of police and military brutality are being released to mark two years passing since their occurrence; however, they are by no means exhaustive. Myanmar Witness has documented other instances of police and military harassment since the coup, which has been documented in several reports, including: violence against protestors in [North Okkalapa](#), [Bago](#), and [Hlaing Tharyar](#); and, the deaths of multiple female protestors, including [Ma Kyal Sin \(Angel\)](#) and [Daw Tinnwe](#).

The investigation walkthrough

Myanmar Witness has collected multiple pieces of user-generated content and news reporting showing events that happened on Padonmar Street in Yangon's Sanchaung district on 27 February 2021.

The majority of images were taken on Padonmar Street, on the western side of Padonmar Stadium at around 16.803472, 96.134389. At multiple times during the day, police were seen harassing and detaining civilians in this area.



Figure 1: Map detailing the protest location.

Analysing the images

In a collection of images posted on The Irrawaddy's [twitter](#) and [website](#), Myanmar Police can be seen harassing medical workers. In the bottom right of Figure 2, a policeman is pointing a gun straight at a medical worker.

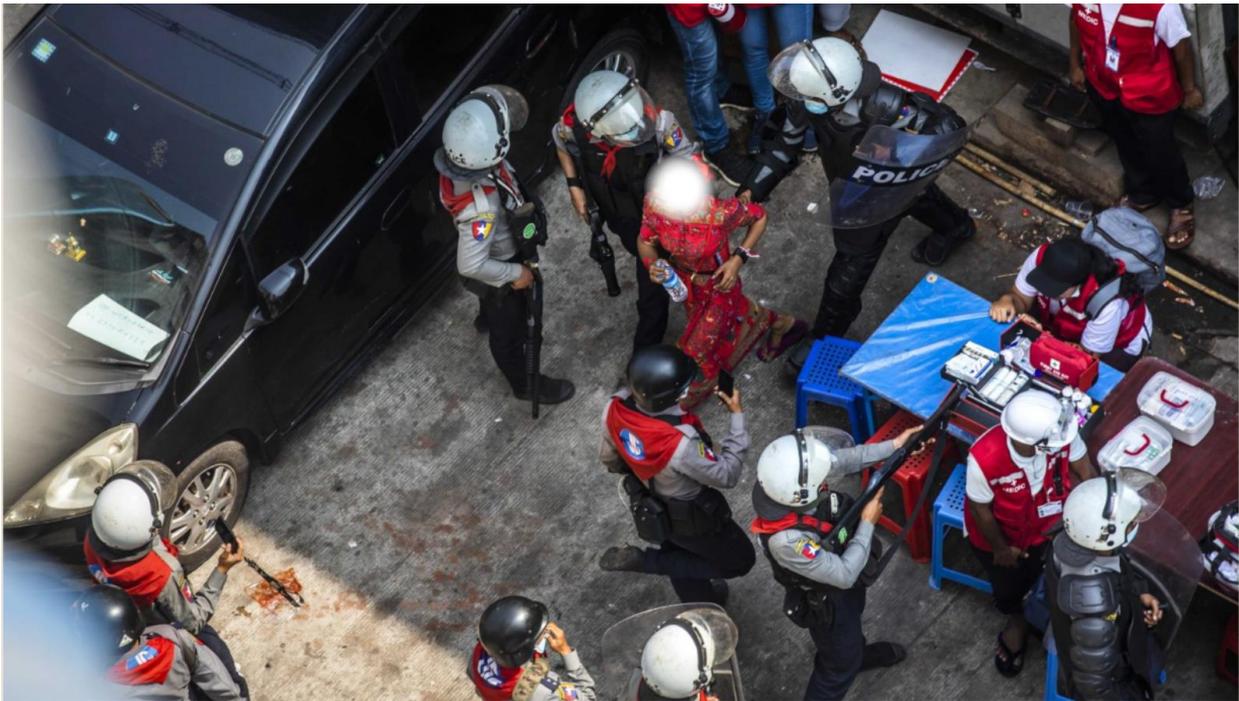


Figure 2: Harassment of medical workers by police at around 16.803472, 96.134389 (Source: Irrawaddy). Face blurred by Myanmar Witness.

The police officer is pointing a pump-action shotgun at the medical worker. The gun has a distinctive rubber pad at the end of the stock and, based on its size, it appears to mount a 12 gauge barrel (18.5mm). Even if exclusively loaded with non-lethal rounds, at such close range and at eye level the impact would most probably be lethal.



Figure 3: (Top) Close up of shot-gun in Figure 2. (Bottom): photograph of a pump-action shotgun from Human Rights Watch ([HRW photo](#)).

Other images posted by the Irrawaddy show a police officer grabbing a woman in civilian clothing by the throat (Figure 4) and civilians being detained (Figure 5).

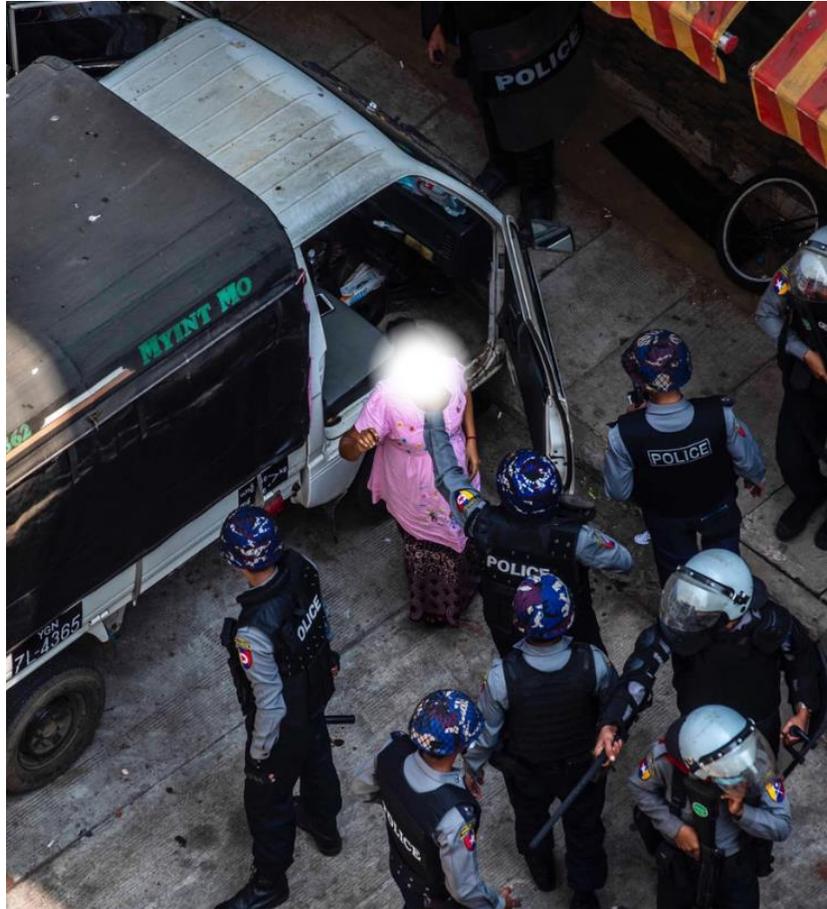


Figure 4: Police grabbing a female civilian by the throat (Source: [Irrawaddy](https://www.irrawaddy.com)).

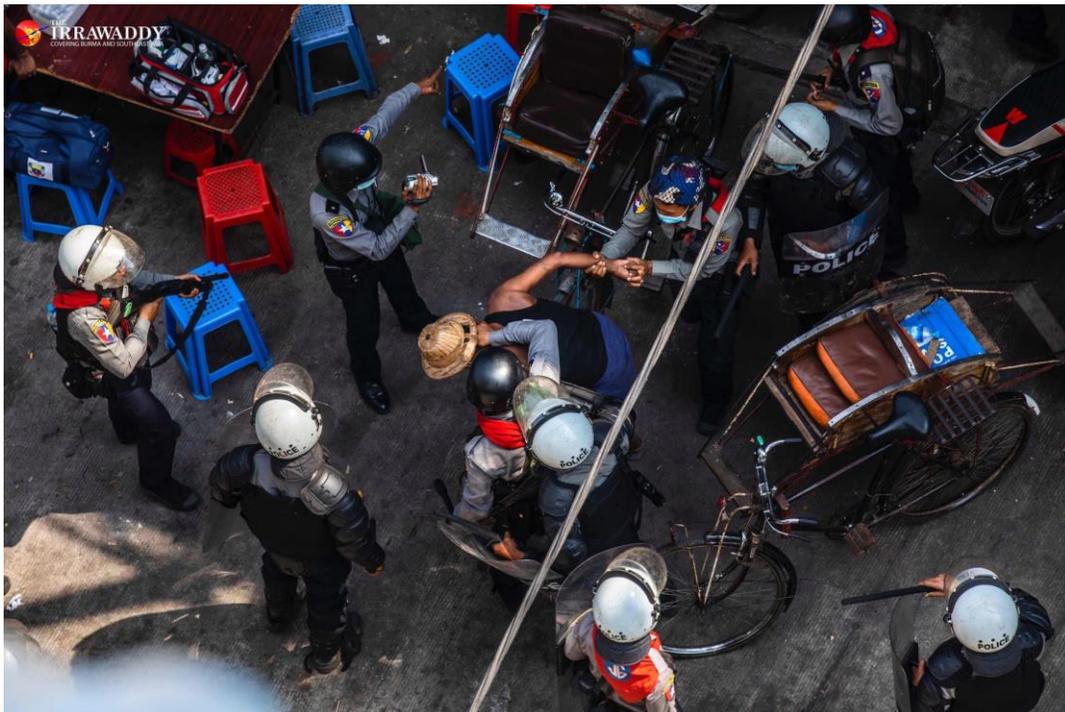


Figure 5: Police arrest civilians.

Myanmar Witness has confirmed the location of this set of photos to Padonmar Street, on the western side of Padonmar Stadium [16.803472, 96.134389] by cross-referencing the images with other material gathered from nearby locations. For example, in [one video](#) verified by Myanmar Witness, the same power conductor and roofing can be seen (Figure 6).

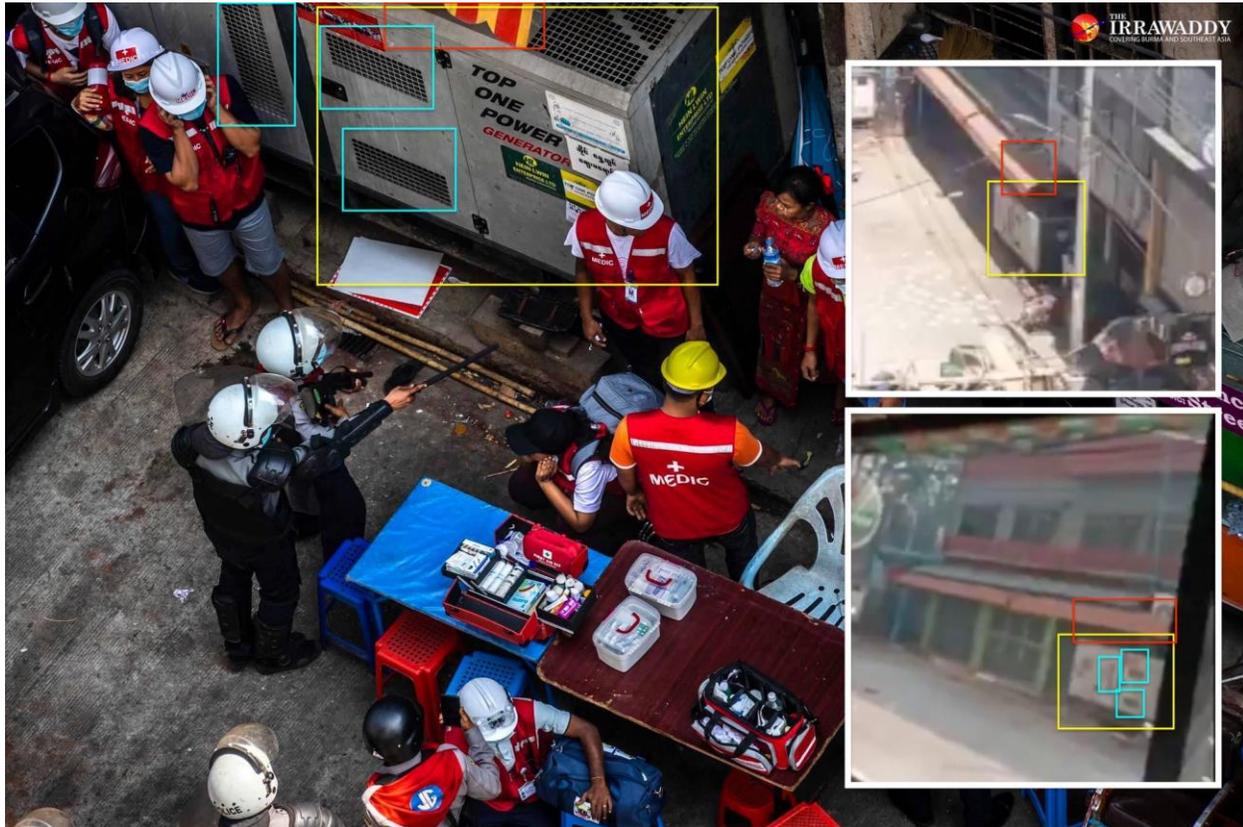


Figure 6: The geolocation of the photographs by Myanmar Witness.

In a series of images from the same location posted by a Twitter user, the police can be seen arresting more individuals (source redacted due to privacy concerns). The woman seen being arrested in Figure 7 (red box) was also visible in the images released by the [Irrawaddy](#): she was standing with the medical workers before she was detained.



Figure 7: (Left) Woman arrested. (Right) Arrested woman can be seen in the images posted by the Irrawaddy, standing near the medical workers. (Source: [Irrawaddy](#)).

The same woman was also seen in images uploaded by [Frontier Myanmar](#), along with a number of the other people that were seen standing with the medical workers in the images released by the Irrawaddy (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Additional images of arrest of woman (source: [Frontier Myanmar](#)).

Through open source information alone, Myanmar Witness has not been able to identify exactly what happened to the individuals pictured. It is claimed that they were detained due to the protests in the area; however, it is not known whether these people were actively involved in the protests.

Other images from the 27 February show the Myanmar Now journalist Kay Zon Nwe being [detained](#) after she live streamed the protests. She can be seen being detained by police in images released by both [Myanmar Now](#) and [Frontier](#) (Figure 9). According to [Myanmar Now](#), Kay Zon Nwe was subsequently released on 30 June 2021.



Figure 9: Detention of Myanmar Now journalist Kay Zon Nwe. (Source: [Myanmar Now](#) and [Frontier](#)).

Attribution: Lon Htein (Riot Security Forces) Battalion 26 and ranking police

By analysing the uniform of the officers involved in this event, Myanmar Witness was able to identify them as members of the Lon Htein (Riot Security Forces). For example, the patch visible on the personnels' right arms signals membership of Lon Htein, and the red scarves tied around their necks provide further insight (Figure 10). The blue circle on the red scarf states the battalion number: battalion 26 (၂၆).

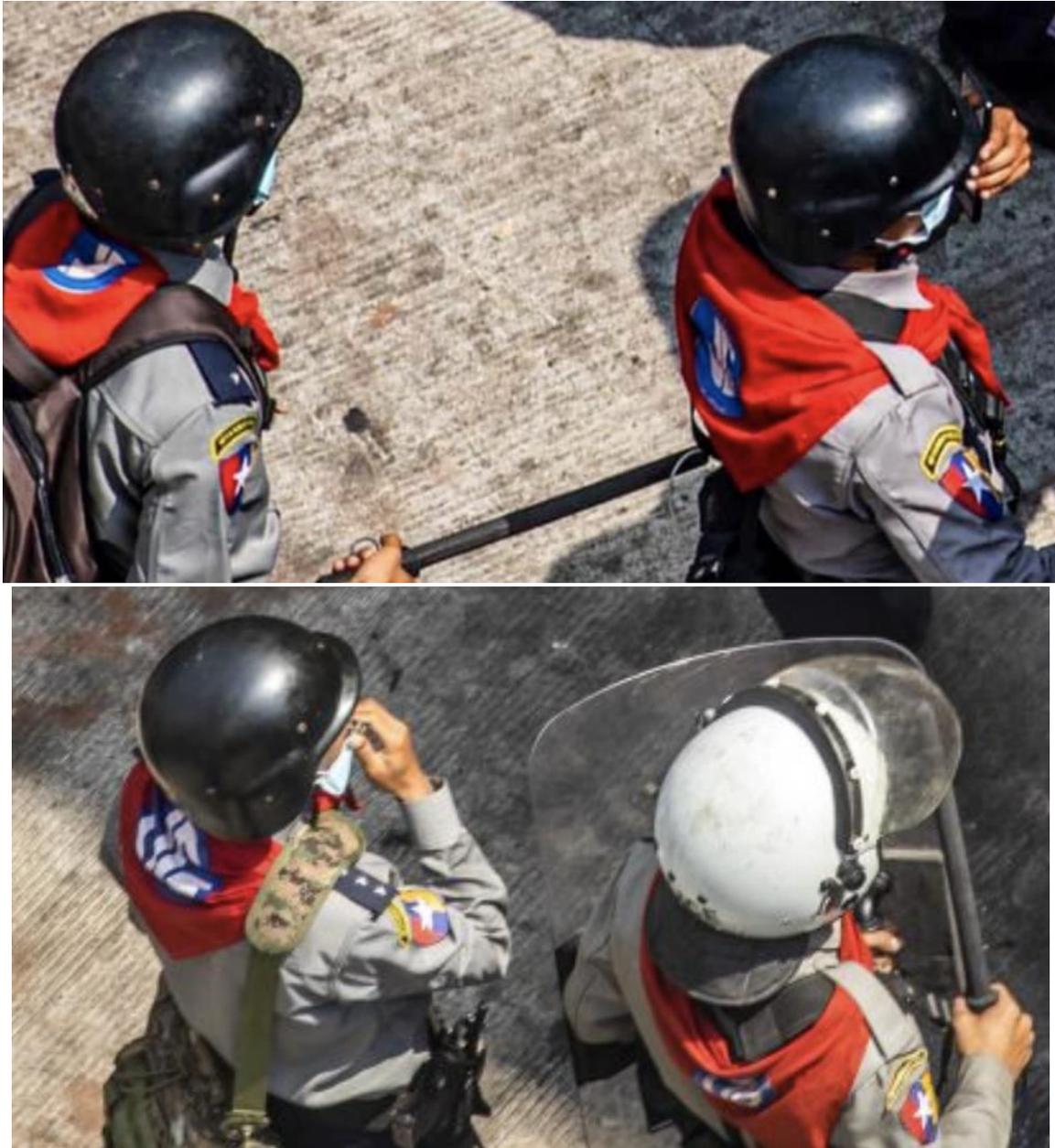


Figure 10: Close-ups of images released on social media, used to identify battalion 26.

Footage collected by Myanmar Witness indicates that the actions and behaviour of the Lon Htein personnel was condoned by the ranking officers at the scene. For example, in one of the images posted by [The Irrawaddy](#), a three-star police captain was present (as seen in the yellow box in Figure 11).



Figure 11: Enlargement of rank patch on the shoulder of the police officer. Images of police patches sourced from Wikipedia images.

Conclusion and future monitoring

This example has revealed armed police in riot gear harassing medical workers in Yangon. Individuals were detained, one civilian was grabbed by the throat and a medical worker had a pump-action shotgun pointed directly at their face. Myanmar Witness has verified the involvement of Battalion 26 of the Lon Htein, including a three-star police captain, in these incidents.

This mini-series of spot reports documents five separate incidents in February and March 2021 where the police and military have harassed or mistreated individuals. While these examples are by no means exhaustive, they capture a number of violent tactics employed by the Myanmar security forces to quell rebellion against the coup.