

Sisters of the Good Shepherd are united with the people for the future of Myanmar

by Sr Rebecca Kay

The coup d'état is disrupting the country's development, but also the missionary and social activities of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who care for girls, seniors and the sick. The military dictatorship will increase poverty. The Sisters decided to stand with the people in the name of the social doctrine of the Church and Pope Francis 'Laudato si'.



Yangon (AsiaNews) – Sister Rebecca Kay, superior of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, decided to express, together with her community, explicit support for non-violent demonstrations against the military dictatorship and the [coup d'état of 1 February](#).

The Sisters are one of the many religious institutes that support the protesters who have filled the streets of Myanmar cities: Mandalay, Myitkyina (Kachin), Yangon, Taunggy, etc. They are united with the people, in total harmony; they share their concerns, worries and fears. They want to grow in the future and in the light.

Here is what Sister Rebecca told us.

We want to show our unity with the people. We are in total harmony, we share the same concerns, worries and fears. We don't want to be under the junta, we want a safe life.

In the last 10 years, for better or for worse, we began to enjoy freedom, and were able to meet the world. Our country saw the future and the light grow.

Before the coup, the situation was rather calm. I could communicate with the world; I was able to carry out my missionary work as provincial superior of four countries; I could arrange meetings even without travelling; I could support the work of my Sisters in different countries; I could have relations with our mother house in Rome.

Now all this is gone and nothing is certain. All this makes me sad because it limits my abilities to serve the people.

We do not want to go back to the time of darkness, living in fear and oppression. Life under the dictatorship was terrible, fearing pointed guns, fights. Now we don't know what will happen to us, when and how.

Praying is not enough. I believe in prayer and work and both are the most effective way to support our country.

[In the convent] we have continuous adoration, day and night; the rosary every day and the breviary. We say the rosary together with the people who work with us or with the guests of the clinic for the poor we manage.

In Myanmar last year, due to COVID, the country got poorer. The communities we serve already have many difficulties. If now there is a coup d'état and tensions arise, I cannot imagine how much worse the situation of poor people will be.



The Sisters of the Good Shepherd have a mission in society. Under the new democratic government, its social works are registered as a foundation. Maybe, under the junta we won't be able to keep this registration anymore and our service to the people will be reduced. We work with many women, with non-profit organisations, with foundations, etc.

Unfortunately, our future is now confused; the future of our nation is dark. We cannot go out, we have restrictions, and we cannot work for the people. All this is terrible for those who need it most, especially women (street girls, abused women, etc.).

As citizens, we stand with our people and for our mission to the poor and need; to women, girls, children; to the most vulnerable. It is unbearable to see our people suffer, lose hope, overwhelmed by fear.

What is happening violates the laws of the country, it violates our human rights and our dignity. It is a great blow to democracy and development, which began to take hold in the country over the past five years.



The military are advising religious leaders to tell their faithful to stay calm, that nothing is going on, that everything will be fine. But we don't believe it. We already see the insecurity and darkness; power supplies, the Internet and telephone lines cut; banking instability, job insecurity, unemployed day labourers. This is the main concern that grieves me: all of this will have an impact on the people of Myanmar.

Perhaps we risk being imprisoned, but we want to be together with the people in the streets, sharing their traumas and suffering. What is happening violates our freedom of expression, our free vote that we cast three months ago, the right to choose our new democratic government, our leaders.

What has happened in recent days is real injustice, a manipulation of power. We want a civilian government; we don't want to be under a military government. We want to be governed by love, attention, not oppression and fear.

At present, according to the constitution, we men and women religious do not have the right to vote, but we want to vote because we too are citizens and have human rights. We want to have the right to life, security and joy.



We want all the people of Myanmar, of all religions, races and ethnicities, to enjoy the same rights and democracy. We all want development for the whole country, like what we have seen over the past 10 years.

In past few days, life has plunged into darkness, uncertainty, full of fear and anger. We no longer want this; we want to stand by our people.

Religious leaders, Brothers, Sisters, priests, even the Bishop of Mandalay have expressed their

solidarity with the people. We will do this today and always, in the name of the Church's social doctrine, as well as our mission and for what Pope Francis says in *Laudato si'*.