

# 8888 Uprising

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## About 8888 Uprising

- It was a series of nationwide protests, marches and civil unrest in Burma (Myanmar) that peaked in August 1988.
- Columns of demonstrators from all walks of life stood united under the emblem of the fighting peacock which would go on to become a powerful symbol of democracy in the country.
- **Goal Of Uprising-** ousting a dictatorial regime under which the country had been systematically oppressed since 1962.
- **Two-fold objective Uprising**
  - To push for the transfer of power from the military to a civilian leadership
  - Change in the political system from an authoritarian regime to a multi-party democracy.
- Events occurred on 8 August 1988 and therefore it is known as the 8888 Uprising.
- '8888' was a people's movement that challenged the then ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party's grip on political, economic and social affairs which led the country into extreme poverty.
- Troops known as the Tatmadaw began opening fire on protestors. In the weeks that followed, at least 3,000 demonstrators died as a result and thousands more were jailed. The military then took firm control of the government and initiated further crackdowns in September.

## Outcomes of the uprising

- The protests and the bloody crackdown gave rise to the National League for Democracy (NLD), a political party

which paved the way for the current Myanmar State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi's entry into politics and for the pro-democracy movement to continue.

- On 26 August 1988, she stood outside the iconic Shwedagon Pagoda and addressed an estimated crowd of 500,000 people on the urgent need for the nation to transition to a democracy after an unsuccessful experiment with socialism.
- Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest in 1989 and a year later, her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a resounding victory in the national polls – sweeping 80 percent of the seats in parliament and 60 percent of the popular vote. However, the military led government there ignored the election results and remained in power for another two decades.

### **Present set up In Myanmar**

- The democratic transition in Myanmar meticulously designed by the military, primary objective, laid out in the country's 2008 Constitution, is to give the military a dominant role in politics.
- In a parallel to the 'Burmese way to socialism' introduced by former military leader Ne Win in the 1960s.
- Myanmar now practices 'Burmese way to democracy' as introduced by former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt in 2003 when he announced the military's seven-step road map to a flourishing democracy.

# TIMELINE: MYANMAR'S 8888 UPRISING

## September 1987 - June 1988

Demonstrations between students and security personnel take place. Tens of thousands are arrested in the widespread crackdown that ensues.

## 23 July 1988

Ne Win, who had taken over state power in a 1962 coup, resigns the premiership and is forced to publicly denounce it, but also issues threats to demonstrators if the army shoots at him. It does not aim into the air.

## 28 July 1988

U Nu, who was responsible for much of the violence against demonstrators early in the year and for other acts of brutality, is blamed for the state's corruption. Widespread outrage at this appointment provides more momentum toward a massive general strike.

## 8 August 1988

Thousands of thousands of people join massive nationwide general strikes in what has come to be known as the '8888 Uprising'. Demonstrations continue through the ensuing weeks.

## 12 August 1988

San Linn resigns after 16 days as the country's leader. Maung Hlaing, a military leader who closely aligned with the military government, is made president a week later.

## 26 August 1988

Saw Htay gives his first major speech to thousands of an estimated 500,000 people at Rangoon's iconic Shwedagon Pagoda.

## September 1988

Demonstrations continue to grow across Burma and violence from both sides escalates. Aung Mye Thaw, Saw Hlaing, and a new government, the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC), is announced, marking a return to the martial rule of the previous 28 years. Crackdowns begin across the country.

## 20 July 1989

Saw Htay is placed under house arrest, where he would remain off and on for most of the next 10 years.

## 27 May 1990

Nationwide elections are held and are considered relatively free and fair. Saw Htay's National League for Democracy (NLD) wins a resounding victory. SLORC ignores the election results and remains in power, under different names, for the next two decades.

## March 2011

The military handover to a nominally civilian government following the end of the previous year.

## March 2016

U Nu Kywe comes to as president, reflecting in a new era of hope for Myanmar's democracy movement takes power after 50 years of military domination.



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**Link:** <https://journalsofindia.com/myanmars-struggle-for-democracy/>