

In Yangon, Myanmar, an older woman squares up to a convoy of military trucks. She's ready to fight, dressed in civilian clothing: blue jeans, sneakers, standard-issue medical mask pulled up over her nose. 'We are unarmed and unafraid,' she says, jabbing her finger in the direction of the soldiers. 'You're the same age as my children! Think about your futures!' She tells them her own age: 67 years old. The woman may stand alone, but she speaks on behalf of her community. 'We are unafraid.'

The scene, captured via camera phone, is a key moment in *Myanmar Diaries*, a protest film by the Myanmar Film Collective that comprises phone footage from citizen journalists woven together with short fictionalised vignettes. Stories about a pregnant teenage girl whose lover is headed for the jungle and a widower who takes his own life sit next to vérité footage of unrest on the streets. The resulting hybrid film is a document of pain and act of resistance that records the aftermath of the military coup d'état led by General Min Aung Hlaing that took place in Myanmar on February 1 2021, one year into the COVID-19 pandemic. In solidarity with the Burmese filmmakers who created the footage, its European co-producers refuse to be credited.

The Burmese have endured cycles of violence under various military dictatorships, from the post-independence coup in 1962 to the coup that followed the 8888 Uprising of August 1988. *Myanmar Diaries* depicts the fresh reign of terror inflicted by the Burmese military – the Tatmadaw – after they deposed the democratically elected state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and seized control of the region in early 2021.

Footage filmed from the passenger seat of a car glides past the convoy; a tannoy announces that all 'gathering' is 'forbidden'. In gathering together this material, the Myanmar Film Collective offers a challenge to the junta. Each anonymous, individual moment of bravery they depict forms part of a larger movement of civil disobedience; the Collective uses the recurring image of a colony of ants to emphasise the idea of a swarm.

The word 'communality', as the Merriam-Webster dictionary Defines it, refers to 'a feeling of group solidarity'. That feeling is built through the banging of pots and pans that call attention to violence; a close-up of bloodied hands that show how that violence stains; a black plastic bag wrapped around the head of a protester, temporarily blinded, silenced and suffocating.

But behind the protestor, the demands of the Collective are made clear. **RELEASE OUR STUDENTS. WE WANT JUSTICE. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT.** The protestor tears a hole in the bag and peers out of it.