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The bloody sandals lie on the Rangoon pavement, their owner ominously absent.

Burma's five-week protest against the ruling junta, has escalated from marches and military warnings to a bloody confrontation that has left at least a dozen people dead, including a Japanese journalist.

Yesterday, security forces signalled their determination to crush the pro-democracy movement by firing into crowds with automatic weapons and giving demonstrators 10 minutes to clear the streets or be shot.

State television said at least nine people were killed in the second day of a crackdown, the largest uprising in almost 20 years.

Monasteries were raided overnight, and monks were kicked and beaten as soldiers rounded them up and shoved them onto trucks.

() "In the evening they shot at the crowd, and there were sandals everywhere," an eyewitness from Rangoon told the Mizzima News, run by Burmese exiles.

"I could not imagine what happened to the young boys and girls at the front."

The crackdown began Wednesday when soldiers and police fired tear gas, clubbed protesters and arrested up to 200 monks in an attempt to quash the uprising, the largest since the rebellion by students and monks in 1988, in which more than 3,000 people were killed.

Troops dispersing crowds yesterday chased fleeing people, beating anybody they could catch, witnesses said.

(...) A group of exiled Buddhist monks yesterday sent a letter to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, calling for the Security Council to use its authority to enforce the **responsibility to protect** vulnerable civilians.

"We believe that the people of Burma deserve ... immediate protection from this brutal military junta," it said.

The killing of 50-year-old journalist Kenji Nagai, of the Japanese video news agency APF News, ratchets up tensions with the international community, which has already condemned the Burmese regime's actions and called for an end to the violence.

Japan, a substantial aid and trade partner of Burma, reportedly summoned Burmese Ambassador Hla Myint and urged him to take "appropriate measures" to resolve the unrest

peacefully, according to the Irawaddy News Magazine.

() "Every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand up for people suffering under a brutal military regime like the one that has ruled Burma for so long," he said in a statement.

() The junta told diplomats summoned to its new jungle capital, Naypyidaw, "the government was committed to showing restraint in its response to the provocations," one of those present said.

In a sign the junta may be hearing the international outcry over its clampdown, Burma's rulers later in the day agreed to receive a UN envoy to discuss the crisis.

Full text available at:

<http://www.thestar.com/News/World/article/261474>