



Women's Peace Network

Statement on International Women's Day | March 8, 2023

We, Women's Peace Network, take this International Women's Day to reaffirm our solidarity with women across the world and our resilient resistance for equity and liberation. From Iran to Ukraine, women are the creators, innovators, and leaders of our intersectional movement for a world free of injustice. Our fellow women inspire us with hope that our future will be bright – no matter how bleak our reality may be.

Today, women across Myanmar face trauma and loss in our collective struggle for survival. Over two years since the attempted coup, the Burmese military is now escalating its brutal campaign against civilians in an attempt to legitimize its illegitimate authority. Emboldened by its ample supply of arms and aviation fuel, the military is intensifying its air and ground attacks in populated areas where Chin, Karen, Kachin, Karenni and many other communities reside. Within three years, over 390 women have been murdered by the military. These war crimes and crimes against humanity are forcing hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee with no guarantee for their safety, risking the surviving women with rape and other grave abuses. Meanwhile, Rohingya women are now facing a growing number of restrictions from the junta to their movement, education, marriage, childbirth, and other basic rights; the junta has used these restrictions, and their supposed violations, to arrest over 2,700 Rohingya, including at least 850 women. The junta has also arbitrarily arrested and detained more than 4,000 women activists, journalists, teachers, artists, doctors, lawyers, and those of many other professions since the attempted coup. In prisons and interrogation centers, women continue to be targeted by the junta with torture and sexual violence. Myanmar – a country where ethnic and religious minorities have been brutalized for decades – is no longer safe for all women and their fundamental freedoms.

Yet, in Myanmar and beyond, women continue to bravely resist the Burmese military and all forms of oppression in their communities. Our fellow women are innovating tactics and devising strategies that range from leading flash mob protests in their neighborhoods to documenting, and reporting on, the junta's crimes. Ethnic minority women in particular continue to be the first responders to atrocities in their communities, especially by providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to them. Time and time again, women in Myanmar are proving to the world that they themselves can create, innovate, and lead the Burmese pro-democracy movement to a truly peaceful, inclusive, and federally democratic union.



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Therefore, today, we urge the world to respect our voice and support our struggle with concrete and comprehensive actions. The international community must stop the Burmese military from committing more atrocities against us by pursuing measures that include economic sanctions against the military and its related businesses (including the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise), as well as a full ban on arms and aviation fuel sales to the military. Countries must actively support our cause by providing financial and material assistance to our communities, especially refugees and internally displaced persons, and enabling them access to cross-border aid. This support must also extend to mechanisms that will help bring justice to our communities, especially by prosecuting the Burmese military for its international crimes. Companies and corporations must not conduct any business with the military or its proxy militias, and ensure that their platforms, especially Facebook and Telegram, are safe for us and our resistance.

We also call upon the Burmese pro-democracy movement to actively include more women, especially from ethnic and religious minorities, in opportunities where they can fully utilize their skills and expertise. The future civilian leadership in particular must meaningfully engage with women, especially Rohingya women, to effectively address the root causes of discrimination and forms of sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar. This process should involve the issuance of a gender-justice policy, as well as the development of a transitional justice process that employs a gender-sensitive approach.

Above all, the international and Burmese community must invite women and other marginalized groups to all decision-making processes involving Myanmar. Governments, organizations, and leaders must actively consult with these groups throughout these processes as experts – not as helpless tokens of diversity and representation.

This International Women's Day, we honor our fellow women in Myanmar and beyond. It is past time the world realizes what we can and will achieve.