



The situation of Women, Peace, and Security in Myanmar

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Key findings

- **Widespread and systematic sexual violence** by the junta has intensified against women, girls, and LGBTQ+ in interrogation centers, prisons, and detention facilities, as well as areas of armed conflict.
- Sexual and gender-based violence by perpetrators, including armed groups, remains **severely underreported due to fear of retaliation, lack of legal recourse and access to justice, and social stigma.**
- Women and children suffer disproportionately from the **junta's targeted and/or indiscriminate aerial and ground attacks.**
- **The junta's forced conscription has triggered mass migration**, exposing women to risks of unsafe travel, smuggling, trafficking, and early and forced marriages.
- **Economic distress** has increased poverty among women-headed households and the collapse of formal education places adolescent girls at risk of exploitation.
- **The junta's obstruction of humanitarian aid** prevents full and unfettered humanitarian access to displaced women and girls.
- **Mass displacement has worsened** the humanitarian situation, leaving women and girls without essential protections and at high risks of trafficking and other abuses.
- Despite emerging as key figures in Myanmar's pro-democracy movement, **women remain underrepresented in decision-making processes and participation within resistance organizations and marginalized** due to gender discrimination and patriarchal dynamics while being frequently targeted for arrests and reprisals by the junta.

I. Introduction

On February 1, 2021, the Burmese military attempted a coup against an elected government, triggering a people-led pro-democracy movement marked by organized protests, civil disobedience, and armed resistance. The military's attempted coup triggered a cascade of crises—economic, education, humanitarian, refugee, and political—that has devastated the livelihood and protection conditions of civilians. Specifically, these conditions have produced acutely gendered effects, including heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, impeded humanitarian access, security threats and discrimination, and lack of gender-sensitive assistance, against women and LGBTQ+ communities despite their multifaceted resistance at the forefront of Myanmar's pro-democracy movement. The country's human rights and humanitarian catastrophe is now preventing the full, equal, safe, and effective participation of sexual and gender minorities in peace, state, and society-building.

In line with the calls of Burma's women human rights defenders (WHRDs), and women's groups and other civil society and community-based organizations, the international community must now act to implement the fundamental tenets of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, as a step toward comprehensively resolving the ongoing crisis.

II. Key issues

A. Women's participation in pro-democracy movement

Following the attempted coup in 2021, women have taken the lead in Myanmar's pro-democracy movement, playing a vital role in organizing documentation, direct action, civil society, and humanitarian relief efforts. The active participation of women, especially WHRDs, in the movement is crucial for advancing democracy, human rights, and gender equality, yet their decision-making capacities in political leadership and resistance remain limited, and they face significant risks of gendered intimidation, physical and digital violence, reprisals, and discrimination in the absence of adequate recourse mechanisms for protection or justice.

Women-led, community-based and civil society organizations

Women have emerged as leading figures in Myanmar's pro-democracy movement and its calls for justice and accountability.¹ In areas where men are targeted by the regime for perceived association to resistance activities, women have taken the role of delivering

¹ United Nations, "Pathways to people: women human rights defenders in conflict, post-conflict, and crisis-affected settings," UN Doc. A/78/131, 7 July 2023, para. 85, documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/198/48/pdf/n2319848.pdf.

supplies to the front lines and facilitating advocacy efforts on a local and mass scale.² Women-led civil society and community-based organizations lead the charge in delivering humanitarian relief in conflict-affected areas beyond the reach of international organizations limited by access restrictions imposed by the junta.³ Ethnic women’s organizations also collaborate with humanitarian organizations, leveraging their deep understanding of the displaced population to guide aid efforts.⁴ Additionally, women-led civil society organizations assist documentation efforts to collect information on human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence.⁵

Acts of intimidation and reprisals against women human rights defenders

In the front lines of the pro-democracy movement, women expose themselves to heightened risks of abuse and exploitation, both in-country and in exile, where they lack adequate protection. As a result of their prominent involvement in the movement, women are increasingly vulnerable to arrest and victimization due to the dangers associated with their advocacy. Sectors targeted by the junta, such as education and healthcare, are predominantly represented by women.⁶ Women and LGBTQ+ activists in Myanmar have faced online and offline reprisals from the junta, including violent threats, sexualized harassment, and doxing—where personal information is published to incite violence or arrest.⁷ Online abuse targeting women on Telegram increased fivefold by the end of 2022 compared to weeks following the attempted coup.⁸ This harassment forces many WHRDs to retreat from public life and self-censor due to fear of violence or arrest.⁹ Women politicians also reported concerns about physical safety and the risk of sexual violence, with many reporting to have experienced sexual harassment and gender discrimination, further complicating their involvement in political life.¹⁰

The absence of safety measures exacerbates the vulnerability of WHRDs, underscoring the urgent need for protective mechanisms that safeguard the rights and voices of women participating in the pro-democracy movement. The pro-democracy leadership must

² United States Institute of Peace, “The Role of Women in Myanmar’s Evolving Security Institutions,” 15 December 2022,

usip.org/publications/2022/12/role-women-myanmars-evolving-security-institutions.

³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Courage amid crisis: gendered impacts of the coup and the pursuit of gender equality in Myanmar,” UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.8, 1 July 2024, para. 198,

ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session56/a-hrc-56-crp-8.pdf.

⁴ Ibid, para. 199.

⁵ Ibid, para. 200.

⁶ Australian Institute of International Affairs, “The Revolution is Female: Myanmar’s Women Fighting Against Min Aung Hlaing’s Junta,” 1 June 2023,

internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-revolution-is-female-myanmars-women-fighting-against-min-aung-hlaings-junta/.

⁷ Myanmar Witness, “Digital Backgrounds: Politically Motivated Abuse of Myanmar Women Online,” January 2023, pg. 2-5, myanmarwitness.org/reports/digital-battlegrounds.

⁸ Ibid, pg. 2.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 3.

¹⁰ OHCHR, “Courage amid Crisis,” para. 220.

continue to prioritize gender equality, especially for the progress of future transitional justice efforts.

Gender inequality in emerging governance structures

Myanmar's pro-democracy movement has created new opportunities for women to engage in politics and policymaking, leading to unprecedented diversity in leadership and state-building. Representation remains limited, with women disproportionately underrepresented in leadership roles across the National Unity Government (NUG), the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), and ethnic consultative councils. The NUG has made progress by forming ministries focused on women and human rights, yet male dominance persists, particularly in high-level decision-making roles.¹¹ Women represent 24% of the NUG's 37 top positions.¹²

However, gendered barriers, patriarchal dynamics, and tokenization persist in decision-making processes, with women often being relegated to "soft" issues or tasks and excluded from critical spaces that control arms and finances.¹³ Issues related to gender-based violence have recently seen greater progress at the NUCC under the leadership of the Joint Coordination Committee on Gender (a subcommittee that has spearheaded policies and measures on gender equality and the WPS agenda), as well as sub-national, ethnic consultative councils, such as the Karenni Interim Executive Council.¹⁴

Gender inequality in armed resistance

Women remain crucial to armed resistance and security institutions, representing 20% to 30% of fighters in the People's Defense Forces¹⁵ and a growing proportion of members joining ethnic resistance organizations and police and security forces. However, women in armed resistance groups who receive the same military training as their male counterparts continue to experience exclusion from frontline combat roles and are often relegated to supportive or administrative positions that reinforce traditional gender norms.¹⁶ This shows that despite the increased representation of women in armed roles, patriarchal dynamics still sideline them in revolutionary environments.

¹¹ Ibid, para. 214.

¹² Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, "Inclusion and Gender Equality in Post-Coup Myanmar: Strategies for Constitutional and Democratic Reform," May 2022, pg. 6, idea.int/publications/catalogue/inclusion-and-gender-equality-post-coup-myanmar-strategies-constitutional-and.

¹³ OHCHR, "Courage amid Crisis," para. 214.

¹⁴ Ibid, para. 210 and 216.

National Unity Consultative Council, "NUCC Myanmar/Burma," nucc-federal.org/.

WPN is a member of the NUCC.

¹⁵ National Unity Consultative Council, "NUCC Myanmar/Burma," nucc-federal.org/.

¹⁶ OHCHR, "Courage amid Crisis," para. 196.

B. Escalating atrocities against women

The Burmese military employs gendered atrocities against women and LGBTQ+ as a deliberate tactic to instill fear among civilians. Reports indicate a troubling increase in sexual violence against women, girls, and sexual minorities perpetrated by the junta, with instances also occurring, albeit not systematically, among members of resistance forces. Women are also disproportionately affected by aerial and ground attacks, endure dire conditions as political prisoners, and face gendered consequences from the forced conscription law, which all contribute to a climate where insecurity and abuse is pervasive. Without a standing rule of law and accessible support services, survivors lack legal recourse and protection, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity.¹⁷

Escalating sexual violence by the junta

Widespread sexual violence remains a critical concern for women, girls, and sexual minorities in Myanmar. Systematic and longstanding patterns of sexual violence by the junta have intensified against women and sexual minorities following the attempted coup, especially in conflict zones, displacement settings, and detention facilities.¹⁸ Reports of sexual violence against pregnant women and adolescent girls are frequent.¹⁹ The junta has systematically targeted women and LGBTQ+ political prisoners with sexual violence, executions following rape, sexualized torture, sexualized verbal threats, sexual humiliation, and invasive searches.²⁰ Junta soldiers commit sexual violence during raids on civilian villages, kidnapping women into military-run camps to sexually violate.²¹ Women in the junta were also reported to have faced physical and sexual abuse from higher-ranking officials.²² With millions of women eligible for forced military conscription, women who are conscripted are increasingly at risk of such abuses.

Sexual violence by members of other armed groups

Alarming reports have surfaced regarding sexual violence committed by armed groups, including members of ethnic resistance organizations, local defense forces, and the People's Defense Forces. These reports include sexual assault against women and girls, executions following rape, and sexual coercion in exchange for the release of male relatives.²³ Women and LGBTQ+ individuals training in armed groups face heightened risks

¹⁷ Ibid, para. 57.

¹⁸ Ibid, para. 58.

¹⁹ Ibid, para. 64.

²⁰ OHCHR, "Situation of human rights in Myanmar," UN Doc. A/HRC/57/56, 4 September 2024, para. 42-47, [ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/A_HRC_57_56_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/A_HRC_57_56_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx).

²¹ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), "Conflict-related sexual violence," UN Doc. S/2024/292, 4 April 2024, para. 52-53, [un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/report/report-of-the-secretary-general-on-conflict-related-sexual-violence/202404-SG-annual-report-on-CRSV-EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/report/report-of-the-secretary-general-on-conflict-related-sexual-violence/202404-SG-annual-report-on-CRSV-EN.pdf).

²² OHCHR, "Courage amid crisis," para. 70.

²³ UNSC, "Conflict-related sexual violence," para. 53.

of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment, perpetuated by commanding officers.²⁴

In Rakhine State, reports have also emerged of members of the Arakan Army (AA) targeting Rohingya women with rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence amid its widespread attacks on northern Rakhine State, where the majority of the ethnic and religious minority reside. Specifically, a pattern has emerged of groups of AA soldiers forcibly entering Rohingya villages in northern Rakhine State, then torturing and gang raping women attempting to flee.²⁵ To prevent the further commission of sexual and gender-based violence in particular, it is imperative that human rights obligations and international law are upheld, without discrimination, by all actors in Myanmar.

Aerial and ground attacks

Women and children are disproportionately harmed by aerial and ground attacks from the junta. In July 2024, the junta was reported to have attacked 23 monasteries, 14 schools, two clinics, two hospitals, and over 1,024 homes in the Karen State with airstrikes, drones, and artillery fire.²⁶ The majority of those wounded or killed were women and children in conflict-affected communities.²⁷ Since the attempted coup, 1,502 casualties were caused by landmines and explosive devices.²⁸

In northern Rakhine State, Rohingya women and children remain at heightened risk of being targeted with artillery and drone attacks by the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army amidst their escalating armed conflict.²⁹ The persistent threat of armed violence and forced displacement leaves women and children trapped in a cycle of fear, where their daily lives are defined by insecurity and uncertainty.

²⁴ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 75.

²⁵ Fortify Rights, “International Criminal Court: Investigate Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Civilians, Hold Perpetrators Accountable,” 27 August 2024, <https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2024-08-27/>. CNN, “Massacre survivors say history is repeating - with new perpetrators,” 29 August 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/29/asia/myanmar-massacre-survivor-testimonies-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>.

²⁶ Human Rights Foundation of Monland, “Voice Up: A Gendered Overview of the Human Rights Situation in Southeastern Burma,” 10 September 2024, issue 3, pg. 6, rehmonnya.org/reports/VoiceUp_Issue_3.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Associated Press, “UN rights chief raises alarm about Myanmar’s Rohingya civilians trapped by fighting,” 23 August 2024, apnews.com/article/myanmar-arakan-army-rakhine-rohingya-0dbdb7270b715a0779d40a60a6792825.

Conditions of women political prisoners

From February to August 2024, the junta arrested nearly 5,649 women for political reasons and killed 1,132 women under political pretexts.³⁰ Women and sexual minorities in the custody of junta security forces are exposed to torture, sexual violence, verbal attacks, physical assault, and psychological abuse throughout their arrest, interrogation, and imprisonment. These gendered abuses have been accompanied by executions and deaths without due process or access to adequate appeal mechanisms, underscoring the grave dangers of women. The junta's criminalization of resistance activities has led to thousands of women facing arbitrary searches and arrests, particularly given their significant representation in pro-democracy activism, civil society organizations, and humanitarian work.³¹ The junta also deliberately targets women and LGBTQ+ activists to abolish organizations and networks supporting gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights.³²

Impact of forced conscription on women

The junta's enactment of the 2010 People's Military Service Law has imposed significant gendered risks for women, making those aged 18 to 27, as well as "professional women" up to the age of 35, eligible for forced conscription into the military.³³ With an estimated 7.7 million women aged 18 to 27 eligible for conscription,³⁴ the law has caused a mass exodus,³⁵ forcing thousands of women to undertake dangerous channels during their escape that expose them to risks of smuggling and trafficking. Exemptions for married women have also led to negative coping mechanisms, raising risks of early and forced marriages.³⁶

C. Worsening livelihood conditions for women

As Myanmar struggles with an economic collapse, rising displacement, and humanitarian emergencies, women and girls bear the brunt of the consequences resulting from the attempted coup. Women are experiencing worsening livelihood conditions, characterized by gendered poverty and economic dependence, a significant decline in educational attainment, and obstruction of aid amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis exacerbated by displacement, violence, and the devastating aftermath of Typhoon Yagi. These conditions perpetuate an environment that undermines women's rights and opportunities, severely impacting their welfare and further deepening gender inequalities.

³⁰ Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, "Women Behind Bars in the Spring Revolution." 1 September 2024, aappb.org/?p=29135.

³¹ OHCHR, "Courage Amid Crisis," para. 98.

³² Ibid, para. 7.

³³ Ibid, para. 153.

³⁴ Associated Press, "Many in Myanmar consider fleeing to Thailand to escape conscription into an army they despise," 24 February 2024, apnews.com/article/myanmar-flee-conscription-law-army-thailand-cbf9fa999b8ac828ea3710ac58b2c157.

³⁵ OHCHR, "Courage Amid Crisis," para. 153.

³⁶ Ibid.

Gendered poverty and loss of economic independence

The attempted coup has induced a severe economic crisis in Myanmar, leading to a troubling “feminization” of poverty. Women-headed households are now 1.2 times more likely to experience poverty than their male counterparts.³⁷ From 2017 to 2022, women’s employment dropped by 11%, which is twice the decrease experienced by men.³⁸ Industries that typically employ women, such as garment, tourism, and hospitality, have faced significant economic disruptions since the alleged coup.³⁹ Rural women have been disproportionately burdened into taking on unpaid forms of work at home.⁴⁰ Additionally, economic distress is one of many compounding factors that has escalated tensions within households, increasing cases of domestic and interpersonal violence against women.⁴¹

Decline of educational and skill-building opportunities

Concurrently, the collapse of formal education due to armed conflict and displacement has resulted in adolescent girls to become at heightened risk of “early marriage and negative coping mechanisms that increase vulnerability to trafficking, unsafe migration, exploitation, and abuse.”⁴² Educational barriers are particularly severe for ethnic minorities, with Rohingya women and girls prone to illiteracy and relegated to housework without opportunities to access formal education.⁴³ In the long term, despite significant strides by the pro-democracy movement in addressing this issue, the education crisis will risk further deepening gender equality and productivity in the workforce.⁴⁴

D. Humanitarian crisis and displacement

The ongoing humanitarian crisis has been exacerbated by the attempted coup, leading to dire food shortages and limited access to aid for over 3.4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)⁴⁵ and approximately 13.3 million food insecure persons.⁴⁶ In 2023, there were 2.6 million IDPs in Myanmar: 34% women and 37% children.⁴⁷ Gendered protection risks from displacement leave women and girls, especially of ethnic and religious minorities,

³⁷ United Nations Development Programme, “Poverty and the Household Economy of Myanmar: a Disappearing Middle Class,” 11 April 2024, pg. 32, undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-04/undp_poverty_and_the_household_economy_of_myanmar_-_a_disappearing_middle_class_april_2024.pdf.

³⁸ International Labor Organization, “Myanmar: Labour market update 2023,” 27 July 2023, pg. 1, ilo.org/media/7356/download.

³⁹ Ibid, pg. 5.

⁴⁰ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 124.

⁴¹ Ibid, para. 79.

⁴² Ibid, para. 146.

⁴³ Ibid, para. 147.

⁴⁴ Ibid, para. 146.

⁴⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “Country - Myanmar,” 23 September 2024, data.unhcr.org/en/country/mmr.

⁴⁶ World Food Programme, “Myanmar,” wfp.org/emergencies/myanmar-emergency.

⁴⁷ UNHCR, “Myanmar situation,” reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/myanmar-situation.

vulnerable to sexual violence, harassment, and early marriage.⁴⁸ Displaced women and girls endure deteriorating living conditions in highly confined and militarized areas that lack privacy and proper sanitation.⁴⁹ Pregnant women are especially at risk of complications due to inadequate access to maternal care and treatment.⁵⁰

In northern Rakhine State, access to life-saving medical care has become “almost nonexistent”⁵¹ since November 2023, resulting in the forced displacement of reportedly more than 500,000 people over the past few months - the vast majority being Rohingya. International non-governmental organization, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), reported that nearly half of the 83 Rohingya whom its staff treated in Cox’s Bazar for violence-related injuries in Myanmar, between August 5 and 17 of 2024 were women and children.⁵²

Obstruction of humanitarian aid

The limited supply of resources in camps and shelters is worsened by the exacerbating armed conflict and the junta’s weaponization of aid access. The UN estimates that 18.6 million people in Myanmar will need humanitarian assistance in 2024, with women and girls making up the majority of those in need.⁵³ However, there remains a concerning gap between humanitarian needs and the availability of assistance reaching at-risk populations.⁵⁴ WHRDs and women-led organizations, who have played an instrumental role in leading the facilitation of humanitarian aid, have been subject to detention along with the blockage and confiscation of aid.⁵⁵

In Rakhine State, food, water, medical care, and emergency humanitarian aid continue to be denied to a growing number of IDPs, including from Rohingya and Rakhine communities, further exposing them to starvation, preventable illnesses, and death.

Aftermath of Typhoon Yagi

The junta’s restriction on humanitarian aid raises concerns in light of Typhoon Yagi, which has claimed over 360 lives in Myanmar as of October 2024.⁵⁶ Floods were reported to have affected an estimated one million civilians,⁵⁷ increasing food insecurity and displacing more

⁴⁸ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 127.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Médecins Sans Frontières, “Trapped and forgotten: The continuing struggles of the Rohingya people,” 21 August 2024, doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/trapped-and-forgotten-continuing-struggles-rohingya-people

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 131.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ United Nations News, “Myanmar: Military’s obstruction of humanitarian aid could be international crime,” 30 June 2023, news.un.org/en/story/2023/06/1138262.

⁵⁶ Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG), “Gender-Impact Flash Update: Myanmar Flooding No. 1 - 1 October 2024,” 1 October 2024, pg. 1, reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/gender-impact-flash-update-myanmar-flooding-no-1-1-october-2024

⁵⁷ Ibid.

than 240,000 civilians⁵⁸ from their homes. Estimates indicate that women and girls constitute 60% of the affected, with 600,000 impacted by flooding, including 12,974 pregnant women among other IDPs, children, and seniors.⁵⁹ Humanitarian aid agencies have limited or no access to affected regions and relief efforts have been impeded by blocked roads, infrastructure damage, and severed communication lines.⁶⁰ As humanitarian aid remains restricted, women and children remain vulnerable to the lack of essential resources, healthcare, and shelter.

E. Refugee crisis

The ongoing crisis in Myanmar has led to mass forced displacement, significantly contributing to a rapid influx of civilians across South and Southeast Asia. As thousands of civilians flee to Thailand and other neighboring countries seeking refuge, the lack of protection, legal rights, and access to resources places them at heightened risk of violence and exploitation. Rohingya women and girls in particular face severe vulnerabilities upon seeking refuge in Bangladesh, including increased risks of gender-based violence, restricted access to essential services, and inadequate safety mechanisms. These conditions threaten the safety of refugee women and girls, endangering their safety and well-being as they live in uncertainty under hostile environments in host countries.

Mass forced displacement of women and children

Mass forced displacement continues to worsen the refugee crisis, with thousands of civilians fleeing from Myanmar into neighboring countries across South and Southeast Asia, including Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. UNHCR estimates indicate that there are 1,335,585 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers as of August 2024—989,585 in Bangladesh, 93,200 in India, 81,200 in Thailand, and 168,700 in Malaysia.⁶¹ Many refugee women lack access to essential protection and livelihoods in their host countries.

Refugees further experience limited legal protections and are often subject to arrest, family separation and detention, deportation, and pushbacks at borders, which especially jeopardizes the safety and well-being of women.

⁵⁸ Associated Press, “Casualties in Myanmar push Southeast Asia’s death toll from Typhoon Yagi past 500,” 17 September 2024, apnews.com/article/flood-landslide-disaster-naypyitaw-251c12ebee148daefe3bcc2f6235f34.

⁵⁹ GiHA WG, “Gender-Impact Flash Update” pg. 2.

⁶⁰ British Broadcasting Corporation, “Floods and mudslides kill more than 200 in Myanmar,” 16 September 2024, bbc.com/news/articles/c4ggggjiv4vo.

⁶¹ UNHCR, “Myanmar Situation,” data.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar.

Rohingya refugee women and girls

An estimated 51.8% of 1 million Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char in Bangladesh⁶² are women and girls who are heavily reliant on humanitarian aid and severely restricted from education and employment.⁶³ In the camps, Rohingya girls and women face increased vulnerabilities to gendered violence from members of armed militant groups, criminal gangs, and security forces due to overcrowded living conditions that erode privacy.⁶⁴ Recent arrivals experience significant challenges, including lack of registration, limited access to basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, medical treatment), constant risk of refoulement, sexual and financial exploitation, trafficking, and kidnapping.

Rohingya women escaping from Myanmar, and as refugees from Bangladesh, are exposed to risks of trafficking, early and forced marriages, commercial sex work, sexual slavery, domestic servitude, debt bondage, forced labor, unsafe work conditions, and wage theft,⁶⁵ and deadly sea and land crossings across the region; Rohingya *hijras*, as well as other LGBTQ+persons, also remain at particular risk of sexual violence and abductions.⁶⁶ 2023 was the “deadliest year” for Rohingya, according to the UNHCR, which reported that women and children composed the majority of the individuals forced into such crossings.⁶⁷

III. Conclusion and recommendations

The deteriorating human rights and humanitarian catastrophe in Myanmar continue to threaten women’s safety, welfare, and rights. Living under risks of violence, economic hardship, displacement, hinders the participation of women in peace and state-building processes. Immediate action is needed to provide protection, justice, and support systems that will allow women to emerge from these challenging conditions and meaningfully engage in all levels of peacekeeping and state-building.

⁶² Rohingya Refugee Response, “2024 Joint Response Plan: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis,” 2024, pg. 11, rohingyaresponse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/JRP-2024.pdf.

⁶³ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 171.

⁶⁴ OHCHR, “Courage amid crisis,” para. 171.

⁶⁵ Ibid, para. 177.

⁶⁶ CNN, “Rohingya hijras speak up about rampant sexual abuse in refugee camps,” 31 July 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/asequals/rohingya-hijra-abuse-refugee-camps-bangladesh-as-equals-intl-cmd/>.

⁶⁷ Al Jazeera, “UNHCR: 569 Rohingya died at sea in 2023, highest in nine years,” 24 January 2024, [aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/24/unhcr-569-rohingya-died-at-sea-in-2023-highest-in-nine-years](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/24/unhcr-569-rohingya-died-at-sea-in-2023-highest-in-nine-years). UNHCR, “UNHCR seeks comprehensive regional response to address rise in deadly South-East Asia sea journeys,” 17 January 2023, [unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-seeks-comprehensive-regional-response-address-rise-deadly-south-east-asia](https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-seeks-comprehensive-regional-response-address-rise-deadly-south-east-asia)

To the UN Security Council

- Uphold its mandate, as well as the Responsibility to Protect and WPS agendas, and use its powers under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to effectively address the situation in Myanmar, including by holding an **open briefing and issuing a new, actionable resolution**.
- Take effective measures for **justice and accountability**, including
 - a ban on arms and aviation fuel supplies,
 - targeted economic sanctions against the Burmese military and other perpetrators of atrocities,
 - a discussion on the possible non-compliance of the provisional measures that the International Court of Justice issued in January 2020 under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and
 - a referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court, or support the creation of an ad-hoc tribunal.
- **Enable cross-border aid** into Myanmar through Bangladesh and Thailand to address heightened humanitarian crises and ensure sustainable financial and material assistance to communities involving WHRDs, including for their access to basic needs and livelihoods, as well as asylum and protection.

To UN Member States and donor governments

- Hold the Burmese military and all other perpetrators of atrocities in Myanmar accountable for their violations of international law, including by
 - issuing economic sanctions and financial penalties,
 - imposing a full ban on arms sales and jet fuel supplies,
 - referring the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court,
 - exploring Universal Jurisdiction to prosecute the military for international crimes, and
 - support ongoing justice processes on Myanmar.
- Engage with the NUG and other key actors, including women's human rights organizations, of the Burmese pro-democracy movement over the Burmese military.
- Refrain from lending legitimacy to the Burmese military's upcoming nationwide elections, as well as its census and any other conduct related to its sham electoral processes.

- Ensure access to asylum and protection, as well as options for resettlement to third countries, over detention, deportation, and other acts in violation of the non-refoulement principle.
- Provide financial and material assistance to women's organizations, especially by implementing flexible funding mechanisms with maximum adaptability and optimal support.

To the UN Secretariat and the UN System

- The UN Secretary-General to
 - convene a special meeting on the situation in Myanmar;
 - invoke Article 99 of the UN Charter to raise to the Security Council attention to the situation in Myanmar, particularly its humanitarian crisis;
 - ensure that recommendations outlined by “A Brief and Independent Inquiry into the Involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018” (i.e., the Rosenthal report), among other reforms to prevent the recurrence of systematic failures in Myanmar, is implemented immediately by relevant UN actors in the country;
 - ensure that UN organizations and specialized agencies working on Myanmar provide direct assistance to diverse actors, especially women’s groups, in the country and in the diaspora; and
 - refrain from lending legitimacy to the Burmese military, including by not recognizing its sham elections and census process, and ensure that UN organizations, agencies and actors of the UN system follow suit.
- The UN Special Envoy to
 - ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of Myanmar’s diverse communities, especially women and other marginalized groups, in its engagements; and
 - act in line with the will of the country’s people, as well as international human rights principles.
- UN organizations and agencies to
 - ensure direct and frequent engagement with, and assistance to, diverse actors in Myanmar, including women’s groups and marginalized communities;
 - refrain from engaging with the junta, especially on providing full and unfettered humanitarian access.

To the Burmese pro-democracy leadership

- Meaningfully collaborate with and involve WHRDs – including ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQ+ community, the youth, and other marginalized groups – in all discussions and mechanisms related to the country’s democratic future.
- Ensure that violence against women, especially sexual and gender-based violence, is at the forefront of efforts for atrocity prevention, ensuring access to justice for victims of sexual violence and adopting inclusive and comprehensive transitional justice processes, in Myanmar.
- Respect the voices of the victims and survivors of the ongoing atrocities in Myanmar, many of whom are WHRDs.
- Ensure that the resistance forces comply with human rights principles and international law, and stand up against atrocities committed by all actors.
- Prioritize the WPS agenda, including the implementation of the WPS framework that was adopted by the NUCC.



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