



# Urgent call for principled, comprehensive, and effective international action on Myanmar's devastating earthquake

Statement

March 31, 2025

**Women's Peace Network shares its deep despair with our fellow people of Myanmar, who were struck by a devastating earthquake last Friday.** On March 28, 2025 at 12:50 PM, a 7.7-magnitude earthquake of a depth of 10 kilometers [hit](#) at least 68 townships in Sagaing Region, Mandalay Region, Magway Region, Bago Region, Shan State, and Nay Pyi Taw. It was [followed](#) by a series of aftershocks – including one of around 6.4 magnitude and [another](#) of 5.1 – with strong tremors felt in Yangon and across the country, as well as in Mae Sot, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok in Thailand. The earthquake was recorded as Myanmar's strongest in decades, and the world's strongest [since](#) the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye and Syria.

**Early reports of the earthquake's impact are catastrophic.** As of this statement's writing, the death toll from the earthquake is expected to [exceed](#) 10,000. Thousands of civilians – including women and children – have already been [discovered](#) dead, injured, or missing following the earthquake. Roads, highways, bridges, such as the central [Ava Bridge](#) in Sagaing Region, and other key transportation pathways have collapsed. Homes and buildings have fallen, trapping countless people and [resulting](#) in power outages and electricity shortages. UNESCO World Heritage [sites](#) and other centuries-old, cultural monuments have been significantly damaged or destroyed. The earthquake [hit](#) monasteries, pagodas, churches, and other areas of worship – [including](#) mosques right before Ramadan prayers and Eid al-Fitr.

Despite such levels of devastation, the Burmese military's brutal [suppression](#) of press freedom, as well as [restrictions](#) on the internet and other communication channels, continue to significantly [limit](#) access to information on the earthquake's impact on its epicenter.

**Meanwhile, the earthquake's devastation will intensify** – with its effects [magnified](#) by the Burmese military's relentless atrocities on civilians. There are already [reports](#) of the military [launching](#) airstrikes on townships in Bago Region, Sagaing Region, and Shan State, as well as on villages and IDP camps along the country's border with Thailand. In prisons and interrogation centers – including many in Mandalay regions – over 22,000 civilians [remain](#) arbitrarily arrested and detained in torturous conditions without due process, and now without lifesaving support. Over four years since its attempted coup, and approaching its sham elections, the military will likely continue to use this moment of crisis for its illegitimate control as was demonstrated by its aid blockages and other brutal, authoritarian responses to Cyclone Nargis in 2008, Cyclone Mocha in 2023, and Typhoon Yagi in 2024.

**Under the military's [stranglehold](#), Myanmar's economy will further disintegrate following the earthquake.** The earthquake is expected to yield economic losses [exceeding](#) the country's GDP, which has already [contracted](#) significantly due to the military's continued

mismanagement and brutalities. The military's unjust attempts at forced recruitment has already sparked an exodus of the country's youth. Now with lesser guarantees to their livelihoods and security, many more civilians will have no choice but to flee – over land and sea – to other South and Southeast Asian countries. As a result, Myanmar's post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction will likely be bleak. Famine will likely ensue.

**Therefore, in response to the earthquake, the international community must take all measures to address Myanmar's multidimensional, human rights and humanitarian crisis without lending legitimacy to the junta.** The junta does not have effective control in central Myanmar, where the majority of the earthquake-affected areas are located. WPN thus urgently calls for the following.

- **Provide direct and full humanitarian aid:** Humanitarian actors and donors must deliver all forms of assistance directly to the people of Myanmar via civil society, community-based organizations, ethnic revolutionary organizations and consultative councils, and other local actors in Myanmar – never the military, or its proxy groups, via Nay Pyi Taw. [Engaging](#) with the junta on this matter will only enable its corruption and manipulation of aid. Relief providers must work with the National Unity Government, which has [declared](#) a two-week pause in military offensives, cooperation with the UN and non-governmental organizations, and deployment of the Civil Disobedience Movement in its rescue and relief efforts.
- **Support local documentation efforts:** The international community must rely on and provide financial and material assistance to local, independent media outlets and civil society that are [gathering](#) data on the earthquake's impact. Their efforts will be crucial in preparing for effective emergency responses in Myanmar. With its ulterior goal of global recognition, the junta must never be relied on as a credible source of information.
- **Ensure access to asylum and refuge:** Thailand, Bangladesh and other regional countries must ensure livelihoods and protection, including safehouses, to all fleeing the country for safety – especially following the earthquake. In line with the non-refoulement principle, detention and deportation of refugees and asylum seekers must be avoided.
- **Impose targeted sanctions and arms and aviation fuel embargo:** To prevent the Burmese military's attacks on earthquake-affected areas and population, governments must impose targeted economic sanctions and financial penalties on the military and its related businesses, as well as its arms and aviation fuel supplies.



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