



In Memory of Our Fallen Sisters, Five Years into Myanmar's Spring Revolution
Breaking Patriarchy One Htamein At A Time.

#OneHtamein5Years

1 February 2026

The 2021 coup attempt was born out of a deeply entrenched patriarchal system that sought to erase women's leadership and directly attack the existence, autonomy, and visibility of women in Myanmar. Women make up more than half of Myanmar's nearly 55 million population, yet power has long been monopolized by a hyper-militarized, male-dominated institution with no experience of genuine democratic transition. The Myanmar military, operating under the 2008 Constitution, attempted to reclaim control over women's bodies, lands, resources, and territories through violence and fear.

Since the coup, more than 6,400 civilians have been killed, including over 1,400 women, while sexual and gender-based violence has risen sharply. According to the Women's League of Burma, at least 900 conflict-related sexual violence cases committed by junta forces have been documented since February 2021, a figure that represents only a fraction of the real scale due to stigma, insecurity, and systematic under-reporting. This violence is not incidental but deliberate, rooted in patriarchal norms that punish women for defying social hierarchy.

Yet Myanmar is a nation defined by diversity, resilience, and women's collective strength. When soldiers attempted to control our bodies and silence our voices, women from the garment sector, farming and rural communities, ethnic areas, urban neighbourhoods, refugee camps, and the informal economy across the country rose in resistance together with the country — and we call this uprising the Spring Revolution.

The Spring Revolution is backed and raised by the *htamein* (sarongs). In the early days following the coup, women transformed the htamein into a powerful tool of resistance. On International Women's Day 2021, female sarongs were raised as flags of our resistance by feminist and activist sisters of the revolution. Female sarongs were also hung by local residents across streets as barricades to deter junta-backed police and soldiers, who feared passing beneath them and losing hpone—the culturally constructed belief in male spiritual superiority in Myanmar.

Long used to shame women's bodies and label them as "unclean" or "inferior", the *htamein* was reclaimed and weaponized against patriarchy. This act of defiance — and the use of *htamein* as flags and protection for communities — came to be known as the Sarong Revolution, exposing the junta's fragility and the enduring power of feminist resistance.

As the human rights crisis in Myanmar has worsened, the *htamein* has evolved from a once silenced meaning of power that was overshadowed by patriarchy, to one of resistance. In times of worsening displacement, when fleeing for their lives, men and women have only a short time to gather their belongings. For nearly everyone, one *htamein* is among them, a symbol of home and where they come from. For young men fighting against the junta, the *htamein* remains significant, as they often take pieces of their mothers' *htamiens* for luck and safety on the battlefield. Young generations and feminists are reclaiming the power of *htamein*, using it as a flag of a revolutionary frontline that shapes society and as a shield against oppressive patriarchal ideas.

On this fifth anniversary, we remind the world that the future we are actively shaping is inclusive, safe, and dignified for all gender-diverse individuals, grounded in a federal democratic political framework.

Further, Sisters2Sisters affirms that the struggle for democracy is inseparable from the struggle against patriarchy. In our fight against dictatorship under a patriarchal system, women who wear the *htamein* understand that justice and accountability are non-negotiable—without them, any future system will reproduce the same violence we are resisting. From ongoing efforts at the International Court of Justice to accountability initiatives pursued through Timor-Leste and other countries invoking universal jurisdiction, these actions reflect a collective refusal to allow crimes against women and civilians to go unpunished.

We pledge to confront the systems that normalize violence, silence women, and police bodies. We will continue to resist militarism, misogyny, and authoritarian power, and to insist on justice without exception — breaking patriarchy, one *htamein* at a time.

#Sisters2Sisters

*With this note, we'd like to extend an open invitation to our friends near and far especially male allies to participate in our campaign from 1 to 6 February to share their insights around stories of the *htamein* and its significance in the context of the current crisis, and to share a photo of themselves with their *htamein*, or just their *htamein* if they have safety concerns. These will then be shared on social media with the hashtags #OneHtamein5Years and #HtameinStories.*