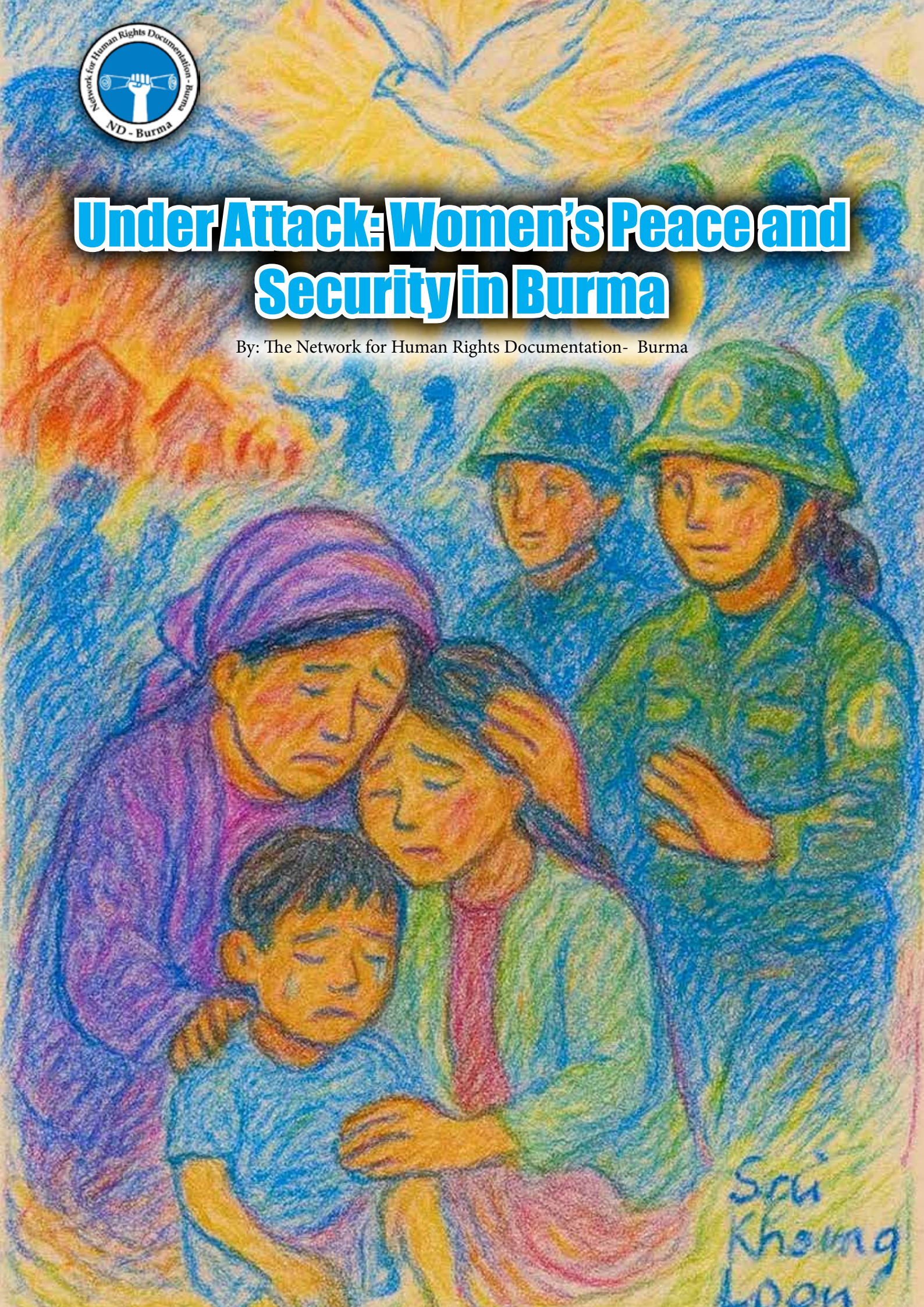




# **Under Attack: Women's Peace and Security in Burma**

By: The Network for Human Rights Documentation- Burma



Sou  
Kheing  
Loon

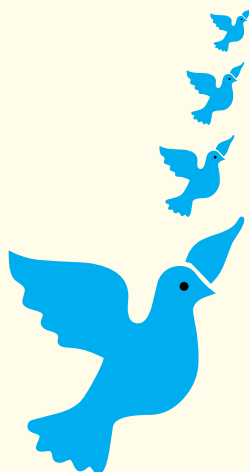


# Under Attack: Women's Peace and Security in Burma

By: The Network for Human Rights Documentation- Burma

2025

Cover Photo : Sai Khsing Loon  
Ta'ang Women's Organization(TWO)

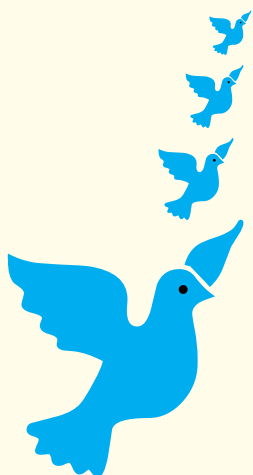


## Introduction

On 1 February 2021, the military deliberately sabotaged the prospects for democracy when they attempted a coup. Senior politicians and newly elected Members of Parliament were quickly detained and arbitrarily arrested. Those who escaped the junta's grasp fled, and many remain in exile as their names circulate on military-sponsored wanted lists. Widespread opposition to the hijacking of the November 2020 national elections emerged, and it wasn't long before protests flooded the country's streets.

The gendered impacts of the junta's violence over the last four and a half years have had alarming effects on the safety of young women and girls. Their rights and freedoms are being regularly undermined as aerial and ground strikes from the military junta escalate, especially in areas where the opposition holds significant bases and territory. More than four years after the attempted coup in Burma, women and girls are still facing immense risks to their safety. The military junta has openly ignored concerns for women's rights, their protection, and their calls for reforms to laws that have discriminated against their potential and well-being.

Patriarchal norms have long challenged women's rights. In addition, the severe humanitarian crisis following the 2021 military coup, and ongoing gender-based violence, which includes arbitrary arrests, movement restrictions, and limited access to resources, as well as other rights violations. Among the current barriers threatening women's safety are the ongoing conflict, forced conscription and the sham election. Militarization across Burma's various States and Regions has made it so difficult to survive that no place has been granted safe and secure from the threat of an indiscriminate attack.





According to the Women's League of Burma (WLB), between 1 February 2021 and 2025, there have been more than 550 instances of conflict-related sexual violence documented, with over 80% of reported incidents occurring in conflict-affected regions, including Sagaing, Shan, Kachin, Karenni, and Karen states.<sup>1</sup> There has been no justice or accountability in any of the reported cases.

Although women face immense challenges, they continue to resist patriarchal systems that have tried to silence their calls for equality and justice for crimes committed against them. Each year, the global campaign, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, reminds societies of the long journey still ahead to achieve a gender-equal future for everyone. Across Burma, the calls for gender-informed policies and approaches are rooted in decades of an oppressive system that urgently needs change and reform.

Further, the Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma) will address the worsening situation of women's peace and security amid the 16 Days Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence. Using desk research and member data, our findings call for urgent support for victims and survivors of various forms of violence committed against them.

---

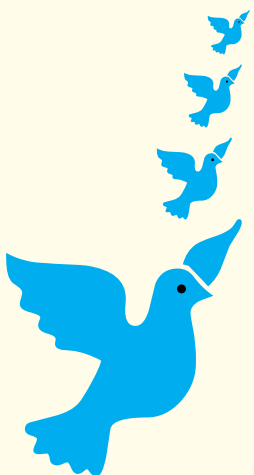
1. Seeking Justice and Accountability for Women Victims and Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Burma/Myanmar, the Women's League of Burma, 4 November 2025

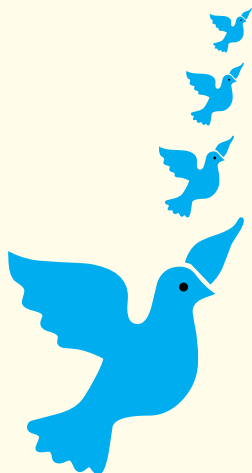
## Situation Overview for Women and Children

Across the country, women and children face serious threats to their safety as the military junta intensifies its operations with frequent airstrikes and ground assaults. The deterioration of women's rights and the protection of fundamental freedoms has been ongoing for many years, and the aftermath of the coup has worsened these gaps in safeguarding. According to last year's situation assessment on Burma by the United Nations, it was noted that acts of extreme brutality were carried out against civilians with absolute impunity.<sup>2</sup> The UN also warned earlier this year that if Burma is on a path to self-destruction, if violence does not end.<sup>3</sup> The grim realities that innocent people are forced to confront include forced displacement, in which 3.5 million have had to flee, leaving over seven million women and girls in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>4</sup>

The rise in airstrikes, including attacks on temporary shelters and IDP camps, remains a serious concern. The military has increased its aerial attacks, leaving many women victims of death or injury.<sup>5</sup> Between January and May 2025, the military carried out at least 1,134 distinct airstrikes, compared to 197 and 640 during the same periods in 2023 and 2024.<sup>6</sup> These assaults often happen without warning or time to flee. As ND-Burma documented last year, the deployment of the airstrikes has resulted in many long-term challenges for those targeted, including a lack of adequate shelter, food and medical supplies.<sup>7</sup> The worsening offensives have also created obstacles to the

2. Update on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar Overview of developments in 2024, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 2025
3. Myanmar on the 'path to self-destruction' if violence does not end, United Nations, 10 June 2025
4. In Myanmar, a Regional Response is Urgent to Support Women's Civil Society Amid Crisis, Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, 20 June 2025
5. Myanmar – Air strikes continue to target civilians, European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 1 September 2025
6. Ibid
7. Airstrikes Perpetrated by the Military Junta in Northern Shan State, Kachin State and Karenni State in November 2024, the Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma, 10 December 2024





safe delivery and provision of humanitarian aid, which the military routinely tries to intercept and sabotage.

Of particular concern is the impact on vulnerable groups, such as women and children, who are disproportionately affected by the conflict. Children, in particular, face numerous challenges, including the denial of their fundamental rights, limited access to education, and profound psychological trauma resulting from the constant threat of violence and displacement. Their childhoods have been robbed of them as they live in a state of perpetual fear, unable to engage in everyday activities or enjoy the company of their friends without the looming spectre of conflict.

As most young men are fighting on the frontlines or being forcibly recruited to the Burma Army, young women and children are constantly seeking shelter and protection because of the relentless attacks by the junta. In addition, the uncertainty within the camps and the lack of employment opportunities or educational advancement have also heightened tensions at home, leading to increased rates of domestic violence and presenting yet another form of assault that women are forced to endure.

It has led to harmful coping mechanisms, particularly among young men who have resorted to alcohol and drug abuse. This, in turn, leads to higher rates of domestic abuse. The primary victims of violence in the home are young women and children, including adolescents who are struggling to survive. Children who are made to witness this kind of behaviour may also become traumatized or replicate similar acts of violence later. The epidemic of violence against women and the need for a coordinated response become all the more urgent.

Perhaps most concerning is that despite the various forms of abuse women have endured, there is a lack of justice and referral pathways. Accountability remains impossible under the military junta, as soldiers are protected from the crimes they commit by the 2008 Constitution. Following the coup, the junta also ensured that courts and various judicial systems were staffed with individuals who supported the regime's agenda. This has rendered any prospects for reparations virtually impossible. Since the coup, women have accounted for one in five deaths, with over 1000 killed, according to ND-Burma, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.<sup>8</sup>

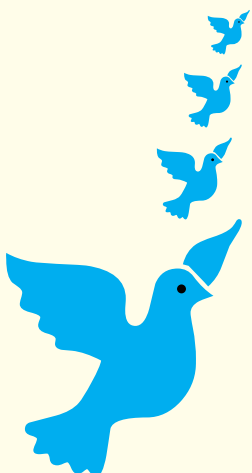
The 16-Day campaign in Burma has seen locally-led women's organizations at the helm of sharing advocacy messages on how to prevent violence in the community. Their unwavering commitment to justice and equality initiatives has been a beacon of hope and support for victims and survivors for decades.

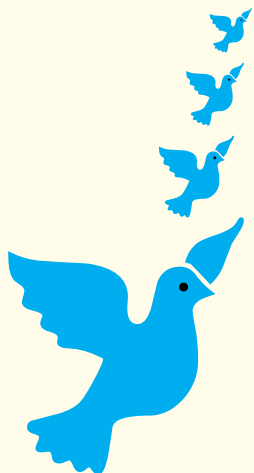
The following are additional challenges that women and girls face in Burma.

### **1. Natural Disasters**

Women and girls experience the impact of crises differently from men do. Amid the already challenging environment and ongoing conflict, the devastating earthquake on March 28, 2025, proved no exception. While many were left without their homes and belongings, women faced additional hurdles, especially as the junta was mismanaging the response.

8. Women account for 1 in 5 deaths in Myanmar since coup, Radio Free Asia, 5 July 2024





The severe damage caused by the earthquake created extra obstacles for women survivors. Reproductive health access and services have also been compromised following the quake, which caused significant damage to potentially life-saving care facilities, including clinics and hospitals.<sup>9</sup> According to The Guardian, three hospitals were destroyed, and 22 sustained partial damage, straining the healthcare system and further limiting the services available to women.<sup>10</sup>

As stated by an ND-Burma member, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), in their quarterly Voice Up series, *“women and children, in particular, face different challenges during natural disasters. Therefore, a gendered response to the crisis is crucial, as their vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the impacts often linked to climate change. These effects include rising temperatures and air pollution, which impact women’s health and can result in preterm births, low birth weight, and diminished maternal health.”*<sup>11</sup>

Women’s organizations have called for the emergency response to be sensitive to the gender-specific needs of the most vulnerable. This includes urging aid that prioritizes gender-sensitive support, ensures access to menstrual care, provides safe shelters, and delivers medical assistance to women, particularly those who are pregnant, new mothers, and infants.<sup>12</sup> There were 8.8 million women and girls affected by the earthquake, including nearly 5 million in the areas hardest hit.<sup>13</sup>

9. Uncertainty, dangers loom for Myanmar women, girls, and other initially stated that women would not be drafted under the new People’s Military Service Law, registration for women aged 18 to 27 began at the start of vulnerable populations after earthquake, Myanmar Now, 3 April 2025

10. Myanmar healthcare facilities overwhelmed, WHO says, and scale of earthquake deaths and injuries ‘not fully understood’ – as it happened, The Guardian, 31 March 2025

11. Voice Up: April-June 2025, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, July 2025

12. Beneath the Cracks, Destruction and Devastation by the Junta in the Earthquake Aftermath, The Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma, 28 April 2025

13. Myanmar Earthquake: Gender Snapshot, UN Women

Typhoon Yagi, a massive monsoon, also had devastating impacts on women, with the deaths of 844 people in September 2024, disproportionately affecting women and girls, destroying their livelihoods, such as farming and informal work, increasing their caregiving burden, disrupting access to essential healthcare, and heightening risks of exploitation and gender-based violence.

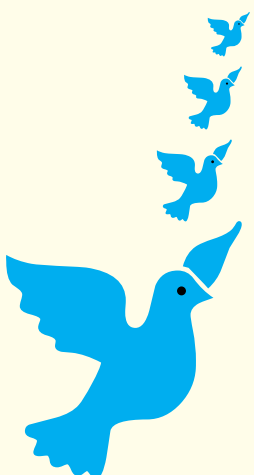
## **2. Forced Conscription**

Although the Burmese military initially stated that women would not be drafted under the new People's Military Service Law, registration for women aged 18 to 27 began at the start of 2025, causing concern and uncertainty. The junta's compulsory conscription is viewed as a recent strategy to divert attention from their battlefield losses and the numerous soldiers who have deserted.

Many men have refused to fight, joined armed revolutionary groups, or fled to neighbouring countries. Women are now being targeted and enlisted to fill the gaps in numbers as the junta has struggled to recruit and retain men.

There has been speculation that women will not be compelled to serve on the frontlines. However, there is no evidence to support this. The junta would not hesitate to use women as human shields and to force them into roles that jeopardize their safety.

Women and girls face a high risk of sexual assault and rape while in military custody. Reliable avenues for justice are lacking, preventing them from seeking accountability. Furthermore, the Constitution mandates that military accusations against civilians





are tried in military courts, where soldiers are largely shielded and impunity flourishes.

ND-Burma members are concerned about the safety and security of young women and girls. The consequences of forced conscription have been catastrophic across various communities in Burma, where mothers, daughters, sisters and even pregnant women have been separated from their families to be enlisted. The gendered impacts on young women and girls are consequential and pose severe risks to their safety.

### **3. Sham Election**

The sham election is the latest effort by the military junta to assert itself in the international dialogue and framework. Their bid for legitimacy is rooted in claims that the 2020 election was marred by widespread election fraud, despite a lack of evidence to support them.

The follow-through of an election is an extreme disservice and will only seek to further discriminate against women and girls. The suffering women endure is likely to worsen if the junta consolidates power through a sham election. The military's history of blatant misogyny and discriminatory policies that harm women could become even more deeply rooted. Since the junta does not protect or prioritize women's rights, these rights will continue to be sidelined and fall further below international standards.

Deliberate attacks on women have spread fear and instability, causing communities to flee and disrupting livelihoods. The effects of these actions are not only physical but also deeply

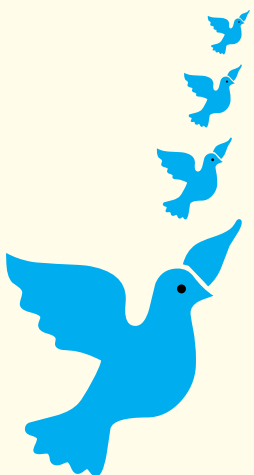
psychological, leading to increasing cases of PTSD and leaving women vulnerable without protection or access to justice. Survivors remain traumatized and lack sufficient support. Local women's groups have actively attempted to bridge these gaps by offering psychosocial support and trauma-informed care, but challenges persist in securing sustainable funding.<sup>14</sup>

Another period of military rule would continue to see the erosion of human rights in Burma and risk the escalation of further attacks against women and girls.

While most of the country strongly opposes the junta and its sham election proposal, ongoing concerns persist, including the risk that some international governments might fall for the junta's trap and use the election to legitimize their engagement. All support for the election must be rejected. The junta views any form of communication as an extension of its legitimacy, which should be immediately dismissed. Donors and diplomats must cut all ties with the regime.

Election monitors and international stakeholders must oppose the junta's latest move to tighten control. Instead, they should collaborate with local women's groups to restore truth and democracy. As election monitors have made clear, there is nothing to gain from the sham election.

14. Myanmar military's sham election is yet another setback for gender equality, Myanmar Now, 29 August 2025





## Conclusion

Civil society organizations have long been engaged in truth-telling and human rights documentation initiatives. Justice remains long overdue for victims and survivors of the military junta's brutal attacks on civilians. These assaults have persisted for decades, and in the wake of the failed coup, the calls for accountability must lead to concrete action to finally break the cycle of impunity.

For women in particular, the threats to their safety and well-being are being constantly undermined by the military junta. Active conflict and the ongoing struggles of their daily lives are filled with fear-based tactics designed to intimidate and mandate compliance under authoritarian rule.

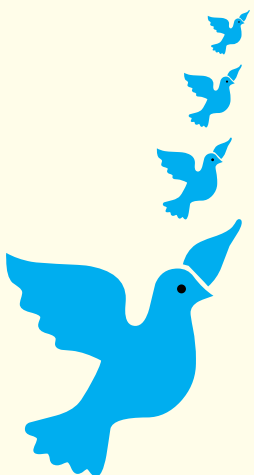
Women-led groups and activists have attempted to fill gaps in service provision by offering protection pathways and trying to process their cases for justice at the local level. However, the current conflict situation has made this much more difficult. More support is needed, and a coordinated response is required to improve prevention and access to mental health and psychological support. Young people, in particular, are often overlooked when it comes to initiating and coordinating a response to the trauma that they have experienced in conflict settings.

The situation in Burma, exacerbated by the ongoing attacks by the military junta, represents a grave humanitarian crisis that requires urgent intervention. Without immediate action to address the displacement, violence, and myriad challenges faced by civilians, particularly women and children, the already dire situation is likely

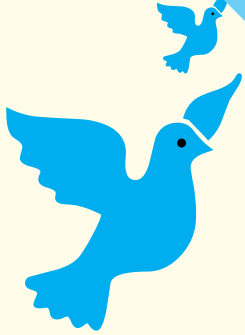
to deteriorate further, leading to even more human suffering and loss of life. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to psychological distress and require specific attention for the care they receive from communities during crises, and their needs often go unaddressed.

Youths face heightened risks in conflict zones, underscoring the need to create safe spaces that meet their specific needs. Women, as key caregivers and community members, are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, and prioritizing their needs is essential to addressing both the immediate and lasting impacts of such violence.

In conclusion, ND-Burma affirms our call for the protection of women and girls and the prevention of violence in all its forms worldwide. The 16-Day Campaign clarifies that violence will not be tolerated and that eradicating it requires a global effort.



## Recommendations



### To the International Community

#### 1. Impose Targeted Sanctions

- 🕒 Countries and international bodies should expand existing sanctions to target individuals and entities responsible for perpetrating acts of violence, notably the military junta. These sanctions should include asset freezes, travel bans, and other measures to pressure the military to cease its perpetration of human rights violations.

#### 2. Support Legal Action through International Courts

- 🕒 The International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international legal bodies should be empowered to investigate and prosecute those responsible for forced conscription and related abuses. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should consider referring the situation in Burma to the ICC for investigation.

#### 3. Enhance Diplomatic Pressure

- 🕒 Diplomatic efforts should be intensified, particularly within regional organizations such as ASEAN, to hold the Burmese military accountable for its actions. Countries with influence over the junta should be encouraged to leverage their relationships to push for an end to all forms of violence in the country, as well as other violations.

#### 4. Support Civil Society Organizations

- 🕒 International donors and organizations should increase funding and technical assistance to civil society organizations

(CSOs) in Burma and neighbouring countries. They are crucial in documenting abuses, supporting victims, and advocating for justice.

- ☛ Women-led organizations in particular must be supported with adequate funding to respond to the influx of cases through trauma-informed care and with resources readily available.

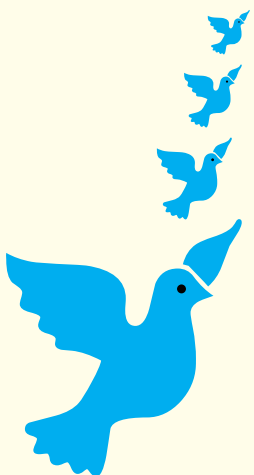
## **5. Ensure Humanitarian Aid and Protection for Displaced Populations**

- ☛ The international community should work to ensure that those who have been subjected to forms of violence receive adequate humanitarian assistance and protection. This includes support for refugees and undocumented migrants in neighbouring countries, as well as those displaced within Burma.
- ☛ A gender-informed response is needed when allocating humanitarian aid to ensure that the needs of women and young girls are met, as well as new mothers and pregnant women.
- ☛ There must also be global advocacy initiatives on protecting the rights of young women and girls who are increasingly at risk in conflict settings.

## **To Donors**

### **1. Expand Documentation Efforts**

- ☛ Local human rights organizations are encouraged to continue documenting human rights violations and to receive support in their capacity to do so. This includes field work and documentation on all atrocities and those related to gender-based violence. They should focus on collecting detailed testimonies, case studies, and data on the impact of the rise in violence. This documentation will be crucial for future legal actions and advocacy efforts.





## **2. Strengthen Collaboration Among Human Rights Organizations**

- 🕯 Collaboration between local and international human rights organizations should be enhanced to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to documenting and addressing the Junta's abuses. This includes sharing resources, expertise, and information to amplify the impact of their work.

## **3. Increase Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns**

- 🕯 Raising awareness of the situation in Burma through global advocacy campaigns is essential to maintaining international pressure on the junta. These campaigns should focus on the stories of how women and girls are directly impacted by conflict, highlighting the human impact of military impunity.

## **4. Monitor and Report on the Long-Term Impact**

- 🕯 It is crucial to monitor and report on the long-term impacts of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence on women, girls, children, families, and communities. This involves tracking the psychological, economic, and social effects of the violence to guide future interventions and support efforts.

## **5. Advocate for Comprehensive International Intervention**

- 🕯 The international community should be urged to take a more comprehensive approach to addressing the crisis in Burma, including through diplomatic, legal, and humanitarian channels. This may involve advocating for peace negotiations, supporting transitional justice mechanisms, and providing long-term assistance for recovery and reconciliation.

## ABOUT US

ND-Burma is a network of 13 member organizations representing a range of ethnic nationalities, women, youth, and former political prisoners. Since 2004, ND-Burma member organizations have been documenting human rights abuses and advocating for justice on behalf of victims. The network consists of ten full members and three affiliate members.



[office@ndburma.org](mailto:office@ndburma.org)



<https://www.facebook.com/theNDBurma>



<https://x.com/DocumentationNd>



<https://www.youtube.com/@NDBurma>



[www.ndburma.org](http://www.ndburma.org)