



On International Women's Day, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland Calls for the Protection and Security of Women and Condemns Ongoing Gendered Violence

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Women in Burma today face many threats to their safety and well-being. On this International Women's Day, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) calls for an end to military impunity, which has emboldened the junta to commit crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. Rape continues to be used as a weapon of war to traumatize and intimidate young women and girls. In Southeastern Burma, HURFOM has documented 5 women killed, 9 injured, 32 arrested, and 6 detained since the beginning of 2023. In addition, seventeen female teachers from the Civil Disobedience Movement arrested in February 2023 are still missing.

Since the failed coup on 1 February 2021, HURFOM has documented that over 65 women have been killed, 190 were injured, and 700 were arrested. In addition, out of 125 total enforced disappearances since the coup in Southeastern Burma, 30 have been women in HURFOM target areas of Mon State, Karen State and Tanintharyi region.

Gendered violence persists across the country. Women face ongoing risks as the military junta increases its presence, particularly in areas like Karen State, where opposition to the Burma Army has been fierce and unrelenting. Gendered violence is both targeted and indiscriminate. At the beginning of the year, on 1 January 2023, the junta forces patrolling a local area in Mon State fatally shot two young women riding a motorcycle in the back. The two victims were both severely injured.

In a separate case involving attacks against women, the Burma Army arrested several young women at the end of January 2023, including four from Ye township and six from Abaw village and Kyar-tan village, Mon State. They were tortured and examined at a military training camp. HURFOM reporters from the area confirmed that the junta forces jailed four women detainees out of the ten who were abducted. The victim's family members have appealed for the truth and justice to emerge. The junta's treatment of women is entrenched in decades of patriarchal rule and institutions which discriminate heavily based on gender.

HURFOM has reported that various forms of gender-based violence still occur in areas where internally displaced people have fled. Harassment and domestic violence are rising as there are worsening tensions within households due to the lack of food security and livelihoods. Women human rights defenders are working to provide social services that reduce stress in the home, such as clothing and monetary support. Mental health and psychosocial support are critical for war-affected families.

And yet - despite the many challenges facing them, women have persevered. They continue to advocate for their rights and freedoms and for equality to be a pillar for a free and fair Burma. While women continue to take significant risks to protect themselves, their families and their loved ones, the international community must take their plight seriously. More protection for women and girls is needed from the international community. Funding for women-led organizations and supporting cross-border aid is one-way global actors can lend solidarity to those on the ground and offer support during this time of immense uncertainty. They can pursue international accountability mechanisms that hold the regime to account, including for their crimes against women and girls.

Further, HURFOM condemns the ongoing gendered violence. On Women's Day, and every day, HURFOM calls for gender equality and for all stakeholders to do their part in ending gender-based violence once and for all. As enshrined in the Geneva Convention for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War states: "Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault."

Media Contact

Nai Aue Mon, HURFOM Program Director

Email: auemon@gmail.com

Signal: +66 86 167 9741

HURFOM was founded by exiled pro-democracy students from the 1988 uprisings, recent activists and Mon community leaders and youth. Its primary objective is restoring democracy, human rights and genuine peace in Burma. HURFOM is a non-profit organization, and all its members are volunteers with a shared vision for peace in the country.