



**Burma News International,  
Myanmar Peace Monitor**

# **The Defensive War and the Role of Women Warriors**



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## Introduction

The Spring Revolution to remove dictatorship in Myanmar could hardly have been called a "people's revolution" without the participation of a large number of women, who make up as much as 52 percent of the country. The slogan "Without women, this struggle will not succeed" written in red paint on the white canvas, exemplifies the mass of women proudly standing at the forefront against the coup of February 1st, 2021.

From the very beginning, women who have been fighting for equal rights for men and women, to end discrimination against women, to end oppression of women, to end domestic violence against women, including religious discrimination against women, have continued to hold peaceful protests and armed resistance movements against the coup regime despite its brutalities, such as violent crackdowns, torture, killings and rapes of women.

This research paper is about the removal of military dictatorship, the role of women in the Spring Revolution to establish a federal democratic union and the stories of female soldiers fighting the junta forces with all the weapons they can get.

## Research methodology

This paper, titled "The Defensive War and the Role of Women Warriors", contains information and news from local and foreign media, including members of Burma News International (BNI). Through exclusive interviews, the BNI reporters have also collected and presented opinions, assessments and visions from women participating in the People's Defence Forces, women leading strikes, and women active in civilian and military organisations in regions across Myanmar such as Kachin, Kayin, Kayah (Karenni), Rakhine, Yangon and Mandalay.



## Background

People have become accustomed to misconceptions over the years. The oppression and discrimination against women, not only in Burmese society but in society at large, is taken for granted. However, women have continued to struggle against the oppression, violence and discrimination from generation to generation. Society is still reluctant to allow women a role in decision-making, whether socio-economic or political.

From revolutionary movements for liberation from colonial rule and the rule of fascist Japan through generations of military coups and anti-authoritarian movements, the 1988 uprising, the 2007 Saffron Revolution, post-2010 governments, judicial and legislative inconsistencies, and protests against injustice. Women's rights activists have been vocal against unjust orders and laws not only under military rule but also under elected governments.

The participation of a large number of women in Burmese society became even more evident during the Spring Revolution against the military coup on February 1st, 2021. The role of women has been enormous, from the pot and pan banging movement and demonstrations in the streets to armed resistance against the coup regime with all the weapons they could get on the front lines,

as well as logistics soldiers and paramedics. No fewer than 156 women have died in violent crackdowns and killings by the coup regime and its henchmen, including Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing, who was shot in the head during a demonstration in Nay Pyi Taw, Kyal Sin, also known by her Chinese name, Jiaxi, who was shot dead during a demonstration in Mandalay, and Ma Pan Thee, who jumped from a building on the 44th Street in Yangon.

The fact that tens of thousands of women, young and old, have been in prisons and internally displaced persons camps for over a year since the military coup shows the sheer courage of women who are physically less strong than men during the Spring Revolution.

In the Spring Revolution in Myanmar, women are playing a role in two different groups - one involved in peaceful protest against the military dictatorship, the other in armed resistance movements. Women are also involved in efforts to overthrow the military regime and build a federal democratic union in the future. The role of women in the Spring Revolution has become so important that sarongs are raised as flags as a tribute to their participation.

In addition to resisting the military dictatorship, women in Burmese society have simultaneously fought against oppression, discrimination, and certain misconceptions such as male supremacy.

## The role of women in the Spring Revolution

The role of women in the Spring Revolution to overthrow the coup and uproot the military dictatorship continues to gain momentum. Women in Myanmar have not only fought against the military dictatorship but also for the reform of fundamental ideas such as gender equality, the elimination of discrimination and gender-based oppression.

Mi Hsu Pwint likened women's participation in the Spring Revolution to "Smouldering like a rice husk fire, not a rice straw fire". Mi Hsu Pwint was one of the leaders in the 1988 uprising and a female leading member of the Central Leading Committee of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF).





Amara, a spokesperson for the M2M - Myaung Women Warriors in Sagaing Region, which was formed during the Spring Revolution, said they are not only fighting for the success of the Spring Revolution, but also for gender equality as they fight on the front lines and take on tasks of logistics soldiers, paramedics and mine production in the rear.

"We are walking the path of this Spring Revolution with confidence. Like the men, we have always had the attitude that we must be able to participate vigorously in this armed struggle," she said.

For this paper, BNI - Myanmar Peace Monitor interviewed women members of the People's Defence Forces, women leaders of urban and rural strikes, ethnic armed groups, and civil society organisations. They believe that the continued





strength of the Spring Revolution to this day is due to the strong participation of women as a whole.

Women's participation in all the groups and movements of the Spring Revolution, such as the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) represented by the slogan "Do not go to the government office, free yourself", the still active

women's strikes in the cities, the People's Defence Forces in the cities, and the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), remains very strong.



**They rebelled against the dictator by raising women's sarongs as flags, which are the symbol of most prominent Burmese women.**

**I think their campaign and persuasion did a lot for the revolution. Even in this difficult situation, we can see the participation of women in the protests. So, I really believe that women's participation in the Spring Revolution has led to change**



As of April 11th, 2022, 156 of the 1,673 people killed during the Spring Revolution were women, according to the Ministry of Youth and Children Affairs of the National Unity Government (NUG). Most of the victims were between 14 and 70 years old, and most of the women were between 18 and 50 years old. Mya Thwe Thwe Kahing, the 19-year-old girl, is the first person to give her life during the Spring Revolution.

"They rebelled against the dictator by raising women's sarongs as flags, which are the symbol of most prominent Burmese women. I think their campaign and persuasion did a lot for the revolution. Even in this difficult situation, we can see the participation of women in the protests. So, I really believe that women's participation in the Spring Revolution has led to change," said Ma Hsuzi Nway, who is participating in the urban protests in Yangon.

"I think women are fighting the ideological revolution and the overthrow of the military dictatorship from all sides at the same time," said Ma Chaw Su San, a member of the Monywa University Students Union, who is leading the urban strikes.

In Burmese society, it can be said that the greater participation of the mass of women in the Spring Revolution is practical proof of the decades of oppression, violence, discrimination and marginalisation they are still fighting against.





## Challenges for women in action

In a society dominated by male supremacy, the challenges for women are greater than for men because of their anatomically different femininity. Despite the obvious acts of courage, bravery and risk-taking during the Spring Revolution, women still face inequalities because their capabilities are underestimated simply because they are women. They are also still disrespected and marginalised in the political decision-making arenas.

Ma Aye Myint Aung Aung of the Women's Alliance, which is leading the strikes in Mandalay, described her confrontation with the henchmen of the coup regime as follows:

"I still remember that. The women were told not to go to the front because we were being shot at with live ammunition by the soldiers of the coup regime and we could only fight them off with slingshots. The men only wanted us to stand at the back while they went to the front. But we women would not listen. We wanted to hold the shields. We also dared to risk our lives, so we wanted to go to the front. The men thought we women were physically weak. They thought we could not run. Since then, such things have become a problem."





Bauk Hsai, an ethnic Kachin girl actively involved in the anti-coup movements in Kachin State, said women's participation in the Spring Revolution was severely challenged by conservative ideologies.

"The leaders were only men. Women were not allowed to lead," she said.

Mi Hsu Pwint, a member of the Central Leading Committee of the ABSDF, a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and a participant in the peace process, said women had been left behind in political leadership positions. "Women's participation in decision-making areas is still very weak," she said.

Saw San Nyein Thu, president of the Rakhine Women's Initiative Organisation (RWIO), argued that women's capabilities are limited by superficial notions and misunderstandings in the traditional sense of Burmese society and this poses a great challenge to women.

Hillary, a member of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF B-09), who has been fighting on the front line against the regime forces during the Spring Revolution, said from her current experience, that women are actively participating in various aspects of the struggle to overthrow the military dictatorship.

For example, some of them have taken on the task of educating internally displaced persons (IDPs), providing them with medical and logistical support. "Even in the most difficult form of armed struggle, girls risked their lives on the front lines on an equal footing with boys. We women have been active in all walks of life and our generation has been fighting against the dictatorship as much as they could. We are the generation that will lay the foundation," Hillary believes.

Nang Htet, a female soldier of the People Defence Force in the Karen National Union (KNU)-controlled area, said they faced great challenges, including the danger to their lives, but also the heinous atrocities committed against their families by the coup regime and its henchmen.

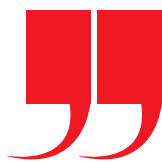
Every woman who participated in the Spring Revolution, whether in the armed resistance movement or in the urban-rural strikes to overthrow the military dictatorship, has her own challenge. There are many cases of women who were

arrested by the coup regime and subjected to undue torture and ill-treatment, sexual violence and rape, and even death.

A 27-year-old woman who had just come out of the childbirth, was raped by three soldiers of the military regime in Aklui village in Tedim Township, Chin State, on the evening of November 11th, 2021. According to Thin Yu Mon, Director of Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), the coup regime soldiers forced the husband to lie down in the bathroom at gunpoint and raped his wife right in front of him.



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On April 4th, 2022, junta soldiers arrested a father and his daughter in Hte Hlaw village in Gangaw Township, Magwe Region, raped and killed the 14-year-old daughter, and also murdered the father. In another case, two women from Kyaw village in Minkin Township, Sagaing Region, killed themselves by hanging after being repeatedly raped by the regime soldiers on March 27th, 2022, according to a member of the People's Defence Force - Minkin Township. At least five civilians died in Kyaw village, including the two women who committed suicide.

The All Burma Federation of Students Union (ABFSU) announced on February 19th, 2022, that a member of the Burma Communist Party (BCP) and a woman who had been detained for political reasons, were raped and imprisoned in an interrogation camp run by the coup regime in Obo Prison in Mandalay. These are just some of the heinous atrocities committed by the coup regime. Across the country, it

is difficult to gauge the extent to which women were affected by such incidents, where the coup regime soldiers set fire villages on fire, committed mass arson, and, of course, forced civilians to flee the war. Therefore, the challenges for women actively and vigorously participating in the anti-dictatorship movement during the military coup or the Spring Revolution are as great as for women in Burmese society.



## **Benefits of women's participation**

Women's participation in the Spring Revolution also focuses on the elimination of male supremacy as a priority in Burmese society, along with the abolition of dictatorship in all forms. So, it can be said that it is more difficult than the groups fighting against the military dictatorship alone. Worse, it will be many times more difficult for them than for groups fighting only to regain political power. However, the active participation of women in the Spring Revolution has only added to its momentum.

"The sacrifices of the first deaths of Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing and Jiaksi, and Ma Pan Thee, who jumped dead from the building without kneeling before the dictators, have hurt the hearts of the public and given them a clear perspective on the revolution," said Ma Hsuzi Nway, who is currently participating in the urban flash mob protests in Yangon. These examples are testament to the risk-



taking, courage and sacrifice of women, and this is one of the benefits of women's participation in the Spring Revolution.

Baukk Hsai, a leader of the anti-military movement in Kachin State, said that during the Spring Revolution, those who used to view women as weak and discriminated against them have realized women's true capabilities, but that women in detention are still subjected to sexual harassment and violence, in addition to torture, just like men.

During the Spring Revolution, women took on the same responsibilities as men. While the men fight at the front against the regime forces, the women take on their tasks in logistics and carrying out strikes in the rear. Women also play a crucial role in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and the Boycott Military Products' campaign, said Ma Chaw Su San, a member of the Monywa University Students Union, who is participating in the urban strikes. Ma Chaw Su San cited an example of the benefits of women's participation during the Spring Revolution:

"During the 'Our Htabi, Our Flag, Our Victory' strike, the coup regime seemed afraid of women's participation. Some groups of women participated in the anti-coup strikes by hoisting sarongs while others fought shoulder to shoulder with the men. The idea of mutual respect emerged among the people."

Amara of the Myaung Women Warriors said the women's participation in the Spring Revolution helps the men to plan all activities better. In monitoring the activities of the coup regime's troops in Myaung Township, women's participation is very strong. Women's participation is also crucial in making weapons, especially mines, she said. Explaining the mines they make, she said: "As far as the effect of the mines is concerned, the mines can cut off the way of the terrorist regime troops. They help us to defeat the terrorists of the State Administration Council (SAC) quickly and save the resistance soldiers from unnecessary harm. So, I think mine operations are a very effective way to repel enemy attacks."

Women are generally soft-hearted, but women's participation in the armed resistance movement could create a more conducive environment for dialogue, said Saw San Nyein Thu, head of the RWIO. "Women tend to be detail-oriented.

Only women can discuss causes more thoroughly," she said.

Mi Hsu Pwint, one of the leaders of the ABSDF, said that women's participation in the Spring Revolution has strengthened and activated the revolutionary movement and that it is also receiving more support and empathy from the public and the international community. Mi Hsu Pwint believes in the motto "The highest level of organisation will be the strongest".

It is hoped that women's participation in the Spring Revolution will provide insight into the details of their respective roles as well as collective thinking in the field of political ideology. It also provides a balance between the pillars of the revolution.



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## **Difference between urban-rural strikes and armed struggle**

The violent acts of the coup regime and its henchmen against the people, including the women who were peacefully protesting against the military coup, as well as the torture and killings in public, have only led to the formation of the armed resistance throughout the country. The military regime's violent crackdown on protesters with speeding cars on the streets of cities like Yangon and Mandalay has shocked not only the Burmese community but also the world community.

In exclusive interviews with BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor correspondents, women members of the People's Defence Forces, women leaders who have participated in anti-coup strikes and military organisations, said they chose armed resistance because it was simply inevitable.





"We understood that this revolution, which started with the people's strikes, could not be fought in this way. The enemy would not surrender. We had to choose the path of armed revolution. But there is a phrase about why we chose it," said Ma Aye Myint Aung Aung, an activist with the Women's Alliance Bureau (WAB) in Mandalay. The question of whether we take up arms is not important, but the purpose of doing so is important, she said.

It is important to follow the military's code of conduct and the Geneva Conventions because armed resistance is not as internationally recognised as peaceful protests. As in Sagaing Region, the combination of mass protests and armed resistance has strengthened the Spring Revolution, said Ma Aye Myint Aung Aung.

This is similar to the ideology of Bauk Hsai, a girl who is participating in the movement against military dictatorship in Kachin State. Bauk Hsai sees the need for a combination of armed resistance and mass strike in Kachin State. Instead of shouting "Our Cause," people should participate in the Spring Revolution by boycotting the main loyal supporters and groups of the junta until victory is achieved, she said. Referring to the geographical situation, Bauk Hsai also said the following:

"I think we can rely more on armed resistance in places where there are ethnic armed groups. In places far from ethnic armed groups, like Yangon, we should do more urban resistance so as not to let the people's revolution go down." Currently, the People Defence Forces are providing security for strikes against the military regime in townships such as Monywa, Myaung, Yin Mar Bin in Sagaing Region. On the morning of April 17th, 2022, five members of the local People's Defence Forces, who were providing security for a protest in Monywa, were arrested and killed by a Pyu Saw Htee group under the State Administration Council (SAC).

Both the urban-rural strikes and armed resistance are features of the Spring Revolution that involve great risk and the sacrifice of many lives. The sacrifices are enormous. Both approaches have the same goal - removal of the military dictatorship and establishment of a federal democratic union. Ruling a region cannot be achieved through strikes or armed struggle alone, said Ma Chaw Su San, who is participating in strikes in Monywa, Sagaing Region.



**To show that the SAC is unable to rule us and that we can resist their orders, we must continue the strikes. Strikes can mean going to the streets to protest, staying at home and resisting their orders, not going to school, not paying taxes, etc. It's a movement that has to be made anyway.**



"We had to take up arms for democracy, but we also support armed resistance with strikes on the ground. The paths are different, but they are interwoven. This is how we get the message of the need for armed revolution and participation. Only by combining the two can we create a free zone," she said.

Hillary, a member of the Karenni National Defence Force (KNDF), believes that armed revolution could lead to the rapid removal of military dictatorship. "Either way, our common enemy is this dictator. The common path is the emergence of a federal democracy. Therefore, we all have to work together with different responsibilities for the common goal. So, we must continue the urban-rural strikes along with the armed resistance to shake the dictator's throne," Hillary said.

Ma Zu Zu, Joint Secretary (1) of the Burmese Women's Union (BWU), believes that neither the urban-rural strikes nor the armed resistance will decide the victory of the Spring Revolution, but they are only a step on the way of the

Spring Revolution. Therefore, it is necessary for the urban-rural protests to continue while armed resistance remains necessary to protect the villages and towns, Ma Zu Zu said.

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Regardless of which way is better, there is no doubt that the two features of the Spring Revolution, both mass strike and armed resistance, are the lifeline of the Spring Revolution in Myanmar.







## **The defensive war and the role of women**

"Women who are working for gender equality in the course of the Spring Revolution, like me, are also empowering themselves by participating in the defensive war against the coup regime," said Amara from the Myaung Women Warriors.

"We must work for gender equality while striving for the success of the Spring Revolution," she said.

Mi Hsu Pwint, a central leading committee member of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) suggested that women who aspire to armed resistance should strive to become good commanders. She sees the potential of young women participating in the Spring Revolution as brilliant and full of energy. I think we could see many good female leaders if they clearly understand the purpose and goal of the struggle," said Mi Hsu Pwint.

According to the Defence Minister of the National Unity Government (NUG), there are now more than 400 People's Defence Forces waging defensive war against the coup regime throughout Myanmar. In addition, the NUG Ministry of Defence has established as many as 259 battalions and People's Defence Forces in more than 250 townships. Although it is not possible to estimate the number of female soldiers in these forces, it can be assumed that a greater or lesser number of women are participating in the defensive war.

The Myaung Women Warriors in Sagaing Region has more than 500 soldiers. The Sagaing Region-based Myanmar Defence Force (MDF-Special Force) has a female commando group. There are also about 700 women in the People's Defence Force (Demoso) in Karenni (Kayah) State.

Ma Thandar Lin, a 25-year-old paramedic from the 7th Battalion of the People's Defence Force (Kale) in Sagaing Region, worked as a teacher in Kale Township. She is one of the young people who gave up their personal goals for the future and joined the struggle because she could no longer bear the oppression of the military dictators after the coup.

"Many people have sacrificed their lives, sweat and blood in this revolution. I do not know when I will have to sacrifice my life. I cannot expect to return home alive. Maybe I will be able to return home with broken limbs. I might also fall in battle. But we will not turn back until we win. We will not go home until we have won," said Thandar Lin.





Daw Thiri Yadanar, a representative of Amyotha Hluttaw (National Assembly) from Mon State Constituency (11), was surrounded by coup regime soldiers and police on February 1st, 2021, along with over 400 other MPs at the City Development Council Guesthouse in Zabu Thiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw. Upon her return to his constituency in Bilin Township, she was charged under Section 505 of the Penal Code for leading protests against the military dictatorship and being hounded by the coup regime. Daw Thiri Yadanar, who is now in the area of the ethnic armed groups, said she will continue to participate in the revolution because she wants to continue the unfinished responsibility for the people, even though her life is in danger.

Ma Darli, who completed 45 days of military training in a liberated area, is a graduate of the University of Economics and worked in digital marketing. Ma Darli, who was even mocked as a child soldier during military training because of her small body, said she is now ready to fight against the coup regime.

"I live with the thought that I will die. Instead of dying without having done anything, it would be worth dying if I could carry out a suicide bombing to kill at least five of them (soldiers of the military regime). Even if I have to die, I think of how many of them I could kill then. I do not want to die for nothing. I do not feel sorry for myself. So, I will take their lives with mine," Ma Darli said. Now, as the Spring Revolution drags on and the defensive war gains momentum, massive offensives by the coup regime are being seen across the country. Under the impact of the People's Defence Forces' defensive war, the coup regime has started to carry out ruthless airstrikes and also commit vicious acts, such as setting villages on fire and torturing civilians. Ten members of the People Defence Forces, including seven female paramedics, were arrested in a raid by the junta forces on a local defence unit in Myinmu Township, Sagaing Region, on the morning of February 20th, 2022. On November 16th, 2021, nine paramedics were arrested when the military regime forces raided the Camp (3) of the People's Defence Force's battalion in Kale Township, Sagaing Region. Further information about those arrested is not yet available.

Like ordinary women, well-known female soldiers also participated in the defensive war of the Spring Revolution, such as Daw Yati Ohn, who worked as a university lecturer at Kale University, Daw Wara Nyarni, who joined the resistance movement as a Buddhist nun, and Ma Nang Wint War, a Shan-Karen





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ethnic woman. Also appearing were Htar Htet Htet, the former beauty queen of Myanmar, and actress Mya Hnin Yee Lwin in the uniform of the People's Defence Forces during the Spring Revolution.

The training scenes in which women participate shoulder-to-shoulder with men in the military training of the People's Defence Forces will forever remain a revered symbol of the Spring Revolution. Like the men, female soldiers have endured various forms of hardship and excessive use of force by the coup regime, in all weathers.

"Women's armed resistance is our history. It is a movement that needs to be documented and recognised," said Ma Zu Zu, Joint Secretary (1) of the Burmese Women's Union (BWU).



## Personal experiences of women warriors

"For generations they have never given us what we peacefully asked for. They have killed women in front of us. They killed our friends on our journey. The regime forces even killed Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing, on the grounds that protesters had thrown stones at them. So, we had no choice but to take up armed struggle against them. We could not give love to someone who could not be loved," said Nang Htet Htet, a member of the People's Defence Force in the KNU-controlled area, about the reasons for the armed resistance.

"We did not choose to take up arms because we are militants," said Nang Htet Htet.

After the military coup, the regime troops went from village to village, committing all kinds of crimes on a daily basis, such as killing innocent civilians, setting houses on fire, and stealing and looting civilian property. This led to the formation of the Myaung Women Warriors.

"We found ourselves in a situation where we had to decide to take up arms and defend ourselves against those who were committing all kinds of crimes.



The situation required us to take up the arms we could get and join the armed resistance to fight against them since October 26th," said Amara, who founded the Myaung Women Warriors on October 26th, 2021.

The Spring Revolution is not a road already paved. It is bumpy and requires great sacrifices. The rulers will no longer be able to stand up to the rebellious people. That is why the people of Myanmar should remain strong, Hillary urged .

"Either way, our common enemy is this military dictator. Our common path is the emergence of a federal democracy. We will show that we will never accept this dictatorship," Hillary said.

Amara said that every time she fought on the front line, it was a big challenge for her on how to defend herself and defeat the enemy (the junta forces). No soldier who has joined the armed struggle wants anything to go wrong halfway before victory is achieved, Amara said.

"To be able to fight for the victory of the revolution, you have to protect yourself. Trying to defeat the enemy can lead to sacrifice and loss."

The country 's economic downturn, rising commodity prices, and the decline of the currency during the military coup pose a major challenge to those fighting against the junta and those preparing to fight. As the revolution drags on, donor support is also dwindling. The resistance forces fighting on the front lines, including female soldiers, therefore need additional support from the people, Hillary said. Calling on the people to provide more support, she said the following:

"No one wants to be ruled by this dictator. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the people not to forget that people's power is necessary to overthrow this military regime. We will fight for this on the front line. I ask the people to support us as much as you can. Together, let us end this revolution as soon as possible. I would like to ask you to donate in good faith again."

## **Analysis**

Women's participation has been widespread, from the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and urban-rural protests to armed resistance. Women have participated at all levels of the anti-dictatorship movement, as educators, health workers, artists, workers, students and young people who call themselves Generation Z.

The women-led protests continue to this day. They chant slogans against the military dictatorship in Yangon, Mandalay, the villages of Amyint Lan in Monywa, the villages on the west bank of the Chindwin River, Kale, Depayin, Taze, Dawei, Gangaw, Thayetchaung, Wetlet, and Ayadaw townships in Myanmar.

During the Spring Revolution, women commando groups such as the Myaung Women Warriors were also formed. Women participated in armed resistance in urban and rural areas as frontline members of the People's Defence Forces, and as logistics soldiers and paramedics in the rear.

During the Spring Revolution, which emerged from a military coup in 2021, everyone is fighting for the removal of the dictatorship, including the military dictatorship, and for the establishment of a federal democratic union. At the same time, it is important to eliminate gender discrimination, sexual violence, and all other forms of oppression against women that have persisted for generations.

The role of women in building a future federal democratic union must be highlighted. Just as the military dictatorship must be overthrown, so must the ideology and behaviours associated with male domination in Burmese society. The exclusion of women in areas of political decision-making must be addressed.

As women's participation in the Spring Revolution was celebrated with the hoisting of women's sarongs, there is a need to address all forms of oppression against women and to fully ensure equality for women.

## Excerpts from interviews for the research paper



### Amara, M2M Information Officer - Myaung Women Warriors



There are areas where women's participation in the Spring Revolution is more effective. Even if this revolution is successful, the issue of gender equality will remain. I am proud of myself for having had the chance to strengthen the role of women, and grateful for all others who participated in the resistance. I would urge everyone to focus more on empowering themselves and to work hard to do so.





### Hillary - female soldier of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF B-09)



Help us in view of the difficult situation. After this, we want to go home. Let us build an independent and fair federal democratic union as soon as possible and live together peacefully. Only with strong public support and funding will we be able to accomplish our tasks faster. From there, we can procure more weapons to quickly overthrow the dictatorship. Our biggest challenge in this is donations, and we need heavy weapons. At the moment, we also need anti-aircraft guns. As you know, heavy weapons are much more expensive than normal guns. So, donate more as soon as possible. Donate half of your expenses. I would like to urge everyone to donate half of the money you spend on your pleasure.





## **Ma Chaw Su San - young woman participating in the urban boycott movement of the Monywa University Students Union**



It occurred to me, why should we be able to participate when even physically less strong women are bravely and actively fighting on the front lines. This struggle is not a women's struggle, nor a men's struggle, nor an LGBT's struggle. We must keep in mind that this is a fight for the federal democracy we all want. This will make history in the end. Throughout history, women have participated in revolutions, but the extent of their participation has not been great. No matter how many women have participated, the ideas about women have not changed over time. But now you can see that those ideas changed in the first year of the Spring Revolution. That is history.





**Ma Hsu Zan Nway - young woman participating in the urban strikes in Yangon**



When it comes to defensive war or other military matters, everyone thinks that only men are capable of it. No one can say if the defence minister could be a woman in the time of reconstruction of federal democracy. Not only in the military field, women could be experts in other fields as well. When the National Unity Government (NUG), which is considered by the public as the vanguard of this revolution, declared defensive war on the military regime, women became pillars of this development. We can see that they are trying in various ways to financially support the young people who are learning military skills to fight against the dictator. The fact that women lawyers are bravely providing legal aid to those arrested in urban flash mob strikes and making efforts to contact the families of those arrested under difficult circumstances shows that women are playing an important role in this revolution.





### Bauk Hsai - young woman campaigning against military dictatorship in Kachin State



In this revolution, 60 per cent of the leaders are women. I think women are just as capable as men, if not better. They are actively participating in this revolution. I would like to pay tribute to all the women who are participating in this revolution.





### Ma Aye Myint Aung Aung - young woman participating in the urban strikes in Mandalay



If we do not make sacrifices, this revolution will not succeed. This is something we have to accept. This revolution will have its price. That is why we want to say that we remain united in this situation. Not everyone in the jungle can take up arms. If everyone had to take up arms, there would not be enough arms. So, there are people who can afford to take up arms. We support the resistance by supplying what is needed. From here, I want to say that we are united for them.



### Ma Zu Zu - Joint Secretary (1) of the Burmese Women's Union (BWU)



Women are brave, and they do not let the dictator rule them, and they show their courage by taking part in the armed resistance. This is a clear example for everyone to see. Now women can fight on the front lines while others serve as logistic soldiers and paramedics in the rear. No matter what role they play, women's participation in this revolution cannot be ignored.





**Saw San Nyein Thu - President of the Rakhine Women's Initiative Organisation (RWIO)**



Women have been advocating for women's participation in political dialogues. This is because women want peace more. When a country thirsts for peace, women are thirstier for it.





**Mi Hsu Pwint - member of the Central Leading Committee of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)**



We need to support women until they become good commanders and give them suitable ranks in the military. We need to involve women in politics so that they are not left behind. We need to create opportunities for them. Women should work hard until they become influential political leaders. They should focus more on engaging in political arenas rather than expressing political views. Young women are smart and strong.







**Burma News International,  
Myanmar Peace Monitor**

**The sacrifices of the first  
deaths of Mya Thwe Thwe  
Khaing and Jiaxi, and Ma Pan  
Thee, who jumped dead from  
the building without kneeling  
before the dictators, have hurt  
the hearts of the public and  
given them a clear perspective  
on the revolution,**