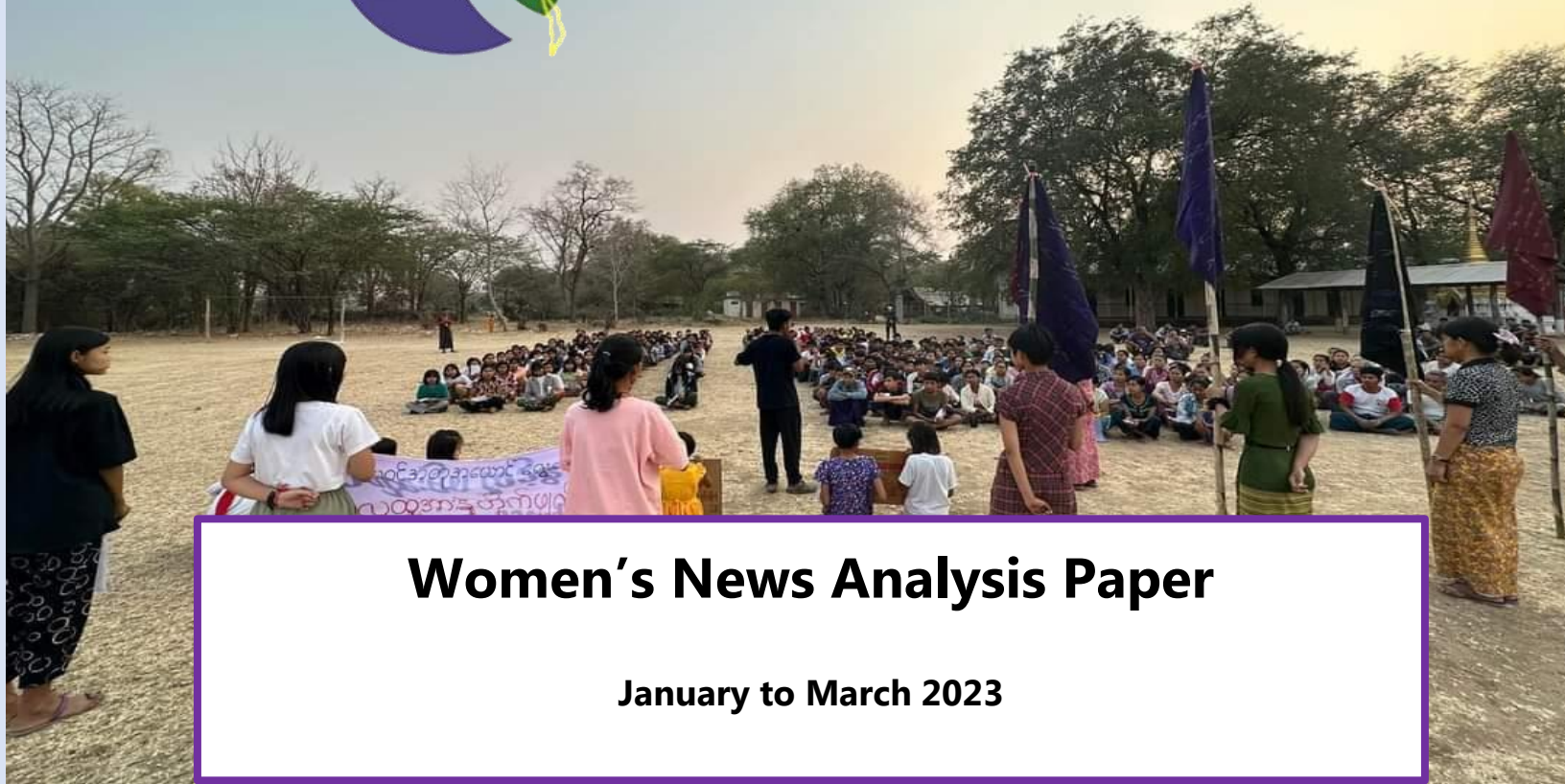




BURMESE WOMEN'S UNION



Women's News Analysis Paper

January to March 2023

1: Summary

During the past three-month period, from January to March 2023, three main significant events have occurred as follow. **Burma's Manels Watch** organized by Women's League of Burma (WLB) and Salween Institute for Public Policy (SIPP), **three women who were murdered by military junta** in Tartai village, Sagaing township, Sagaing region **were found with their clothes torn which indicates that they were being raped**, and **female political prisoners were brutally beaten and oppressed by the wardens in O-bo prison** and banned from meeting family members, forbidden accepting parcels and rights to medication as well as drinking water which led to drinking bathroom water.

Since March 8th, 2023 marked as the international women's day, women's activities in terms of gender equality, political activities and eradication of patriarchy were remarkably visible during January to March. At the same time, oppression and violence against women were widely seen during the last three-month. However, there is lack of hope to obtain justice for women's rights violation and violence against women under the complete collapse governance system due to the military junta attempting coup.

The data and facts presented in this analysis paper were compiled by the Burmese Women's Union (BWU) from information that reliable news media disclose. Due to numerous limitations and challenges of information flows on the ground, there could be much higher number that we have limited access to.

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2: Women's Situation

2.1 : Women's Political Activities

On March 8, 2023, international women's day, panels, demonstrations and ceremonies of the international women's day that advocate oppression and discrimination of women and women's rights violations were widely seen in Myanmar. Women's League of Burma (WLB) and Salween Institute for Public Policy (SIPP) have organized three days long Manel Watch in Chiangmai, Thailand. In this manel watch, photos and posters from male only participated panels were displaced with the explanation of patriarchy.

Organizers who organized the Manel Watch disclose that "Many (people) perceive that this is about roasting men by groups of women when they heard about Manel Watch. Actually, we organized this exhibition in order to eradicate patriarchy and together to find solutions in terms of gender equality, not to threaten men"¹.

2.2 : Women's Security Situation

According to the data compiled by Burmese Women's Union during January to March 2023, there have been found that women were arbitrary arrested and sentenced as well as brutally murdered and raped by military junta. Battalion (99) of the military junta had raided the Tartai village, Sagaing township, Sagaing region and killed (17) civilians including (3) women by chopping their bodies.² It have been reported that three women's bodies were found with their clothes torn apart and their genital areas were swollen.³

“Parcels were forbidden for a month, locked up in the solitary confinement, transferred to the fined building, parcels were not allowed, forbidden contacting outsiders, news have been blacked out, they did not receive medical assistance, banned from using water, only water from bathroom.”

On 3rd February evening around three o'clock, there has been disputes inside O-bo prison due to rudeness words and beating from wardens to a female political prisoner from female's building no (1). However, it has been reported that instead of peacefully handling this matter, around (150) male wardens raided to the female prisoners building and brutally beaten.⁴ Due to that raid and beating, more than (100) female political prisoners were injured and (21) prisoners were in critical condition. In addition, it is known that (72) prisoners were transferred to the fined building where they were ordered punishment and some prisoners were locked up into the solitary confinement.

As the consequences of that raid, those female political prisoners were forbidden from contacting family members outside prison and banned from receiving parcels as well as medical check-up. Furthermore, they were forced to drink water from bathroom as drinking water was inaccessible.

A family member from the female political prisoner discloses that "Parcels were forbidden for a month, locked up in the solitary confinement, transferred to the fined building, parcels were not

¹ Delta News Agency, 5th March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/deltanewsagency/posts/pfbid02jV1aYhrPzzutGRoR81NVLcJxESaw4FaCHfEkr3qzFa7peisMhKbHqhbPpkXvnK7nl>

² RFA Burmese, 7th March 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/1174839723175634/>

³ RFA Burmese, 7th March 2023.

⁴ Anti-junta Forces Coordination Committee – Mandalay, 7th March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/AFCCMandalay/posts/pfbid02qu5jNCMqggKq6oNah7MXJpJXudSxpZEMW2e3UgR5MFhk2eGyF3qxnJo7KPb9rHGMI>

allowed, forbidden contacting outsiders, news have been blacked out, they (female political prisoners) did not receive medical assistance, banned from using water, only water from bathroom⁵.

It has been reported that there are (336) female political prisoners inside O-bo prison and almost all of the female political prisoners were faced violation by any forms of violence. Moreover, there are some who were arrested and their additional news were not provided at all.⁶

2.3 : Women and Economic situation

Under the economic crisis, women are handling their family livelihood by finding any jobs. Especially women from rural areas migrated to the economy cities such as Yangon and Mandalay in hoping to find any possible jobs as armed conflicts affected areas are widely spreading across the country. Besides their struggles to find jobs in those cities, they were targeted by scammers.

A mother of a son, a 33-year-old, Ma Maw Hlaing who is from Pauk Township, Magway region where armed conflicts between military junta and people defense forces are intensified, migrated to Yangon to find a job through the assistance of a broker. However, she was left behind on the road and lost all of her money.⁷

Female garment workers are also faced unjust exploitation and labor rights violation. It has been reported that some pregnant workers from garment factories in Hlaingtharyar industry zone, Yangon were fired from their jobs without any benefits.⁸ Furthermore, garment workers from Dishang Fashion Garment also faced a huge demand of the products and they were given notices and prohibit from taking leave if they did not meet the demanded numbers of products.⁹

The closure of two garment factories, Guo Tai Garment Industrial Park and GY Sen on February 28 has left more than 2000 workers unemployed and other garment factories are also planning to leave due to less orders. Nestle, a well-known food brand based in Switzerland, has also announced that it will leave Myanmar. Therefore, the number of unemployed may reach tens of thousands in early 2023. As there were large numbers of female workers in those garment factories and industrial zones, female workers are facing unemployment.¹⁰

Due to domestic political and economic unrest in Myanmar, the mass exodus of Burmese citizens including many women seek employment in neighboring countries. In such departures, they leave through illegal methods that cost a lot of money. Hence, they are facing the arrests and imprisonments by the authorities of neighboring countries and sent back to Myanmar.

3: Women's situation under armed conflicts

According to the Institute for Strategy and Policy – Myanmar (ISP Myanmar) released on November 23, 2022, there has been more than 7,800 armed conflicts across the country, Myanmar since the coup February 1, 2021.¹¹ In March 2023, battalion (66) of the military junta had raided Namnain village, Pinlaung region, Southern Shan state where armed conflicts between military junta and local defense forces were intensified, a massacre of (33) local people, including (3) monks was committed.¹² According to the information released on February 1, 2023 by Progressive Karenni People Force – PKPF, there have been more than (500) armed clashes and almost (200) air strike by military junta has occurred in Karenni (Kayah) state by the military junta during the last two years attempting coup.¹³ The Karen National Union (KNU)

⁵ Anti-junta Forces Coordination Committee – Mandalay, 7th March 2023.

⁶ Ayeyarwaddy Times, 7th March 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/ayeyarwaddytimes/photos/a.509189952572344/2429775783847075>

⁷ Action Committee for Democracy Development, 22nd March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/acdd.burma/posts/pfbid02tQ7uFsF49npiZ1BRqRJ1Sngkj3BdCjpmvwwx1QvVu5xiJLRgV52v5Rx4418vhqEI>

⁸ Myanmar Labour News, 10th March 2023. <https://www.myanmarlabournews.com/news/656>

⁹ Myanmar Labour News, 10th March 2023. <https://www.myanmarlabournews.com/news/656>

¹⁰ Irrawaddy, 2nd March 2023. <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2023/03/02/258355.html>

¹¹ ISP, 23rd Nov 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=498696055625001&set=a.469106025250671>

¹² RFA Burmese, 16th March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064542350311/search/?q=%E1%80%94%E1%80%94%E1%80%BA%E1%80%B8%E1%80%94%E1%80%AD%E1%80%99%E1%80%B7%E1%80%BA%E1%80%80%E1%80%BB%E1%80%B1%E1%80%B8%E1%80%9B%E1%80%BD%E1%80%AC>

¹³ Kantarawaddy Times, 5th Feb 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/KantarawaddyTimes/posts/pfbid03B2KDn2FbRUCeqKBWAfL62Y5SDjUm9aVE9r8kd1j8PbFTHwo4VS3ukHFU1Z8KT5XI>

has released the report that within armed clashes between the KNU and military junta, there has been (436) times of armed clashes and military junta has bombed (57) times by air force and bombed (208) bombs in January 2023.¹⁴

In addition, up until February 28, 2023 since the military coup, there has been (60,459) houses were destroyed due to military junta torched whole village where ever they had raided.¹⁵ It has been found that during such armed conflicts hit by heavy weapons, air strike and military raids, women have died and women who have been captured and killed by military junta show signs of sexual violence.¹⁶ The data compiled by Burmese Women's Union, it has been confirmed that majority of the women fatality were caused by armed conflicts during the past three months.

4: IDPs Situation

Military junta is deliberately and intentionally bombing civilians' villages and refugees' camps. Due to the continuous firing of heavy weapons by the military junta that entered the six-mile tract on the eastern side of Demoso, Karenni state, three IDPs camps with more than a thousand people had to be moved again.¹⁷ In Kyaukgyi Township, Nyaunglaypin district, Bago region, (2696) local residents from four villages have been forced to flee their homes due to the firing of heavy weapons by battalion (60) of the military junta.¹⁸

As a result of such inhumane attacks on civilians, the refugee camps, which have been expanding, are facing food shortages and water scarcity in this spring. The areas where IDPs from the eastern side of Demoso, Karenni state are moving to live are areas with little drainage. As the IDPs already in that areas have to share water, the more IDPs are facing the problem of water scarcity. Furthermore, children including students and over 60 years old elders are suffering from skin disease due to the lack of health care in some villages and refugees' camps in Hpruso Township, Karenni state.¹⁹

Over 10,000 refugees who are Sarlingyi Township, Sagaing region, where the military junta army frequently raids are also in needs of basic commodities supplies such as rice, oil, salt and fish paste.²⁰ It is also found that military junta army mainly burned rice and grain storage while raiding and burning the village.

5: Analysis

There have been some analyses highlighting the fact that there is more domination of the patriarchy over two years since the military coup d'état. Photos exhibition of "**Manel Watch**" highlights the situations in which women's voices are underrepresented in political reform panels and discussions. BWU have therefore concluded that the establishment of at least (30) percent of women policy alone is no longer sufficient in implementation of gender equality and women's participation. It needs to be put into practice. In implementing this policy, it is necessary to take into account the needs of women in order to have a meaningful participation of women in organizations as well as individuals. In addition, it is also necessary to leave out the male-centered ideologies such as inviting only male in some panels and talks in building a federal democratic state and pursuing gender equality.

¹⁴ RFA, 14th February 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/pfbid02SRmTPW6jXWWGgyPZNYqHqK3GKfC529GL3PfhIT9xas2CfsCVrJaay8474twbEoU3I>

¹⁵ Data for Myanmar, 20th March 2023. <https://www.datawrapper.de/?tuoS4/?fbclid=IwAR2ZBHMUL3ktIU9nbw3X0ntjCbx7oUsQhmM1wn-Xv51Bzi04Jsv0l63i8Es>

¹⁶ Data for Myanmar, 20th March 2023. <https://www.datawrapper.de/?tuoS4/?fbclid=IwAR2ZBHMUL3ktIU9nbw3X0ntjCbx7oUsQhmM1wn-Xv51Bzi04Jsv0l63i8Es>

¹⁷ Kantarawaddy Times, 28th January 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/KantarawaddyTimes/posts/pfbid0GUGLb1xfjt84pAuAhGo97kQR2n1GSY8PHgN1JQcdwUoqaE8HvV5azPpTMo9WiM5Bl>

¹⁸ RFA, 19th March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/pfbid032bqVaWfpw6PMA2aVCF8Gw5vfyoe1VV9pnbBnF154UwfH21qcCWW4NS3vEkHTquWQI>

¹⁹ Kantarawaddy Times, 8th March 2023.

<https://www.facebook.com/KantarawaddyTimes/posts/pfbid02x9mZfFqNoD1vR9ffFJ4Ci41Gcymt3UuTKxc21AvWB8skwZey1WLWMDPCHaaFyhogI>

²⁰ RFA, 31st January 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/pfbid08X5519iREYUhgwwXL2E5G53Dqi4BYtabvRYaUtyQAtrQn1HmH1pMkbKAqhDs5WxAl>

The situation of female political prisoners in prisons, where women's rights are severely violated, needs to be urgently addressed. With the news has been blacked out for female political prisoners, it is particularly worrying situation as they are facing the threat of losing their lives and right to live with dignity under the arbitrary torture of the prison authorities of the military junta. It is also a challenge as there are some women who have been arrested without any information is provided. In addition, necessary measures mentally and physically need to be prepared in advance by the National Unity Government (NUG) for the women who have been released from prison.

In the midst of the economic crisis, women either migrate to the city or abroad to solve their livelihood. Women seeking jobs inside and outside of Myanmar face the risk of human trafficking, exploitation and fraud by brokers. However, there is lack of mechanisms to complain in order to seek justice. Taking advantages of such impunity in the pursuit of justice, perpetrators are blatantly breaking the law. Therefore, these situations are needed to be tackle as soon as possible.

In addition, workers also suffer from violations of labor rights by employers and supervisors. There are situations which female workers may be sexually assaulted by employers and supervisors. The labor unions formed to help solve such violations are also unable to function regularly due to the arrest warrants issued after the military coup. If there are no organizations to help solve such labor rights violations and exploitation of workers, there is a possibility that there will be more cases of forced oppression.

In armed conflict areas, crimes against humanity are being committed by military junta army through brutal massacre of any civilians found in their raids. Women captured by the terrorist army were found showing signs of sexual violence in addition to killings, highlighting the fact that the military junta is using rape as a tactic of war. However, international governments are failing to take affirmative action against the military junta, who is openly committing international crimes.

In active armed conflicts areas, villages and refugee camps are being repeatedly bombarded with heavy weapons and aerial bombardment. Therefore, it is found that the military junta is blatantly violating the regulations of the Geneva Convention. There is a possibility that the military junta will carry out more heavy weapons firing and air operations in summer. Therefore, there is a need to effectively put actions in arms embargo to the military junta.

Women are also among the people who fled from their homes because of the terrorist army's unjust raids which resulted killing and burning. Due to sudden fleeing, women are unable to carry the necessary items. Therefore, women in refugee camps face more challenges. Hence, it is vital to focus on women's needs in providing humanitarian assistance.

As the number of people fleeing armed conflicts zones is increasing and they are unable to return to their homes, effective short-term and long-term humanitarian assistance and plans are needed in accordance with their physical and psychological needs.