



April-June 2023

Women's News

Analysis

Paper

5th July 2023



1 : Summary

During the three-month period from April to June, the following significant events occurred: military terrorists arrested people holding or wearing flowers as part of a flower strike that marked the birthday of Daw Aung San Su Kyi, seven workers were fired for leading a protest to demand a raise in wages, and analysis reports on sexual violence against women were released.

On June 19, a flower strike to mark Daw Aung San Su Kyi's birthday drew widespread civilian participation. Interrogations and arrests by the terrorist army were documented across the country and included the targeting of women who were holding flowers on the street.

In June, the Burmese Women's Union (BWU) published an analysis paper on conflict related sexual violence against women. In this paper, BWU referenced reports of (59) sexual violence cases documented by BWU and an additional (54) cases which were disclosed by media outlets.

The economic impacts of Myanmar's political instability are far-reaching, leaving many workers vulnerable to exploitative practices by employers. A recent case of the firing and arresting of garment factory workers who organized a strike to demand increased wages is one such example. Throughout Myanmar, lack of stable employment, low wages, and exploitative labour conditions are contributing push factors that are driving many people, especially women and young people, to seek work abroad, often undocumented.

The data and facts presented in this analysis paper were compiled by BWU from reliable news media outlets and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). Numerous limitations and challenges remain with regards to accessing and validating information directly from the ground and, as such, it is possible that actual numbers are higher than reported here.

2 : Women's Situation

2.1 : Women's Political Activities



Photo 1: Flower strike that marked Daw Aung San Su Kyi's birthday in Khin-U township, Sagaing. Photo-Public Voice Television

On June 19, 2023, people participated in the nationwide flower strike on the birthday of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, rallying on the streets as well as by participating in online photo sharing campaigns. Over 500 locals from a village in Khin-U Township, Sagaing region, participated in the strike.¹ On the same day, it was reported that over 130 civilians from Yangon, Mandalay and Ayeyarwady regions were arrested for holding or wearing flowers.² On the roads of Yangon, the terrorist army forces interrogated and arrested commuters, while 13 female workers from Thamardi gold shop in Papaethan Township, Yangon, were arrested for allegedly participating in the flower strike.³

¹ Public Voice Television, 20 Jun 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/pvtmyanmar/posts/pfbid02erwzoCYGQU6thsyuzcpku3E2jsasUXyRVqrkhRXhCBxwWAY4BtuihMMyt8KQj83aI>

² RFA, 20 Jun 2023. <https://web.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=147221555035693>

³ Ayeyarwaddy Times, 19 Jun 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/ayeyarwaddytimes/posts/pfbid06QVjJGiHNFx9xn5442LM3ofKv4KcmxQPDbq7yWoZspLLR5GnQquMowi6723jcwI>

2.2 : Women's Security Situation

According to data compiled from media sources and analyzed by BWU, numerous women were arbitrarily arrested, sentenced, and brutally raped and murdered by the terrorist army during the last quarter.

On April 7, four teenage girls – Linn Lat Aung, Aye Hnin Thu, Thawdar Min and Muu Thwelt San – from Pathein Township, Ayeyarwady region, were each handed five-year jail sentences under Article 50-J and 52-A.⁴ A leader of the women's demonstration committee, Ma Ei San was also sentenced to two years in jail on April 16.⁵

On May 28, 2023, at around 6 o'clock in the morning, the terrorist army raided and torched Chin Yar village and Moe Phyu village, Yesakyo Township, Magway Region.⁶ The army also raided a nearby IDP camp, killing two IDP women, and taking women as hostages.

According to a local civilian, two young girls who were held in a ward of Mybye City, southern Shan State, were murdered by terrorist army forces and showed signs of being the victims of rape.⁷ According to the source:

“Two women were raped and killed. They seem to have been first detained and tortured then raped and interrogated. Their father was also killed.”

To coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, BWU released an analysis paper entitled “Sexual Violence Against Women Under Political Instability”. In this paper, BWU collected (36) sexual violence cases and (23) cases of domestic violence from five target areas (Karenni [Kayah] State, and Sagaing, Magway, Bago and Ayeyarwady regions). Furthermore, BWU also compiled 54 cases of sexual violence against women that were published by reputable media outlets.

“Two women were raped and killed. They seem to be first detained and tortured then raped and interrogated. Their father was also killed.”

⁴ BNI-Myanmar Peace Monitor, 13 Apr 2023. <https://bit.ly/3JfaCrm>

⁵ Sisters 2 Sisters, 22 May 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/SpeakUp4MyanmarWomen/posts/pfbid02nVTg6BDF3eZJPcFs bQsKjXphwFshdqZxPhzSAAFx6if9hzFf4UxHC6QCx9r8Ghtol>

⁶ KhitThit News, 28 May 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/khitthitnews/posts/pfbid02xyejVbh3JBkyiZU5NiEzTtSrwnXVnMUm8KFJNKJSULV6Eqo7wbhSuiYmPh1534fJl>

⁷ Kantarawaddy Times, 4 June 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/KantarawaddyTimes/posts/pfbid02qZuywggzPtv9ndC831FgkdBJZp5AohXNR7TNFJUVD7WHSfcDF2WNMTj5bdhD7CQl>

According to data disclosed by AAPP, (111) women were killed and (67) women were detained by the terrorist army during the three-month period from April to June 2023.

2.3 : Women and Economic situation

Along with the doubling in the price of basic commodities, a shortage of employment has created serious challenges for many women in Myanmar. In order to make ends meet, women have had to make do only with the wages they get from the current workplaces. Garment factories, where most women work, frequently fire and arrest workers when they demand an increasing in their insufficient wages.

On June 8, seven workers – four women and three men – were dismissed from their jobs at the Hosheng Garment Factory in Thadhukan Industrial Zone, Shwe Pytha Township after demanding an increase in their daily wage from 4,800 kyats to 5,600 kyats.⁸ It is also known that a female leader who was dismissed was taken to Shwe Pytha for interrogation by the terrorist army. The next day, the remaining five union leaders and two laborers from labor affairs were arrested again, so at present, up to eight people have been arrested for agitating for better working conditions at the Hosang Myanmar Garment Factory.⁹

Given the widespread hardship facing women, many have been forced to take on random jobs to support their families. It was reported, for instance, that there are 21 women who earn money by unloading cargo at Angu Maw Ferry Port, Rati Taung Township, Rakhine State.¹⁰

In addition, there are women who try to find employment by entering foreign countries illegally. On May 3, Thai authorities arrested 30 Myanmar nationals holding temporary border crossing permits in Chiang Rai district. Those arrested included a total of 30 from northern Shan State, including nine men between the ages of 29 and 45, 10 women between the ages of 18 and 40, and 11 children between the ages of 5 and 15.¹¹

3 : Women's Situation Under Armed Conflicts

According to the Nyan Linn Thit Analytica, during the week of June 7-13, 2023, there were at least 50 clashes between the terrorist army and the revolutionary forces across Myanmar.¹² The report states that a total of seven airstrikes has occurred, two each in Karenni (Kayah) State, Sagaing Region, and Magway Region, and one in Karen State.

⁸ The Irrawaddy, 14 June 2023. <https://bit.ly/3PeAHdF>

⁹ Myanmarlabournews, 24 June 2023 <https://rb.gy/8xzt2>

¹⁰ HI, 14 Jun 2023. <https://web.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=809522660349685>

¹¹ Development Media Group, 5 May 2023. <https://bit.ly/43VUSC1>

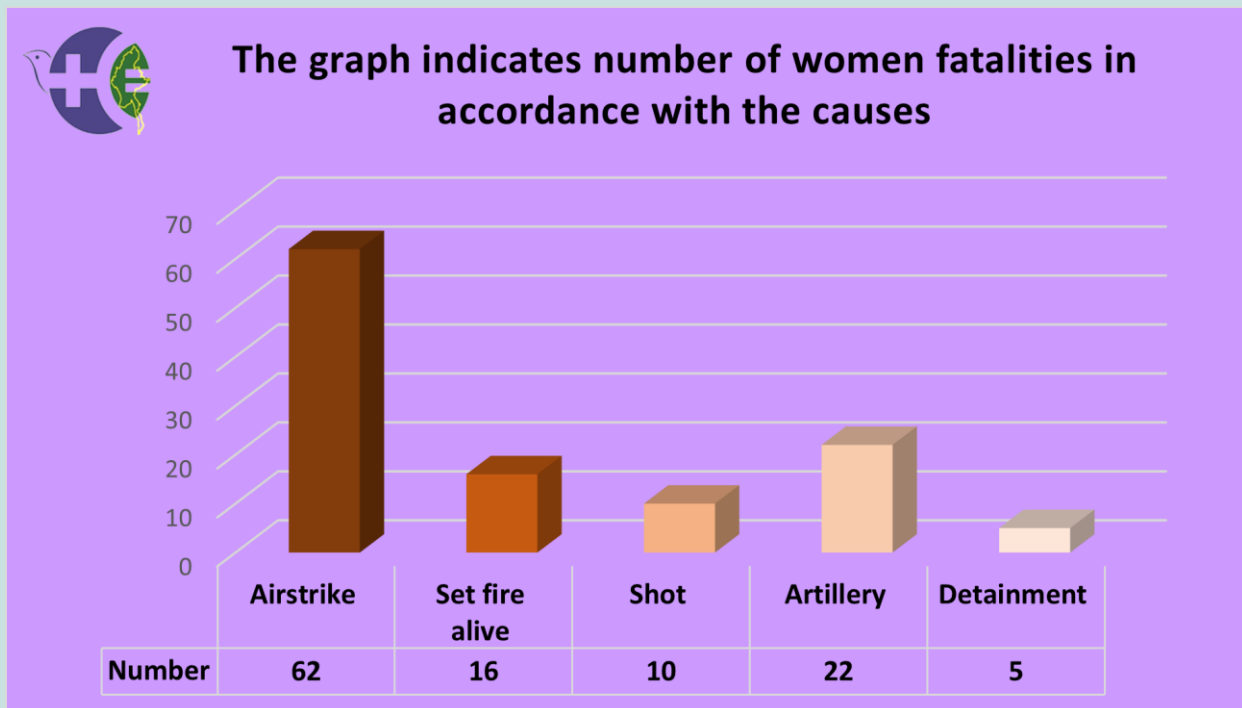
¹² Nyan Linn Thit Analytica, 14 Jun 2023.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qQg7Hn_DiRxcnmlZ5zfRMDVcZnW12Hld/view?fbclid=IwAR3emL5s3CSNIGLn6qhKjAbunx_1mkkYhuxfPndZPTT_DBqPJa4HH_K3r6x0

A total of 168 civilians including 46 women and children were killed due to aerial bombardment on April 11, 2023 in Pazi Gyi village, Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region.¹³ On May 10, the terrorist army invaded Nyaungpintha village, Moan Township, Bago Division with more than 100 soldiers, and took 19 civilians, including women and children, as hostages, whom they later burned to death.¹⁴

According to data released by Data for Myanmar, a total of 70,324 civilian homes were burned by the terrorist army during the two-year period from May 1, 2021 to May 31, 2023.¹⁵ Among these, it was reported that 53,816 houses were in Sagaing Region and 10,451 houses were in Magway Region.

During the past three months, from April 1 to June 25, the number of female fatalities compiled by the Burmese Women's Union included 62 women who were killed in airstrikes, 22 who were killed by artillery, five who died in detention, 16 who were burned alive by junta troops, and 10 who were shot to death.



¹³ The Irrawaddy, 16 Apr 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/theirrawaddyburmese/posts/pfbid029XyGHIvCbHxCg7pTWbDYAXKVZWEe9DbRv7vpuT88BH5b9nkJWi2b3TNS45nRrzi>

¹⁴ Karen Information Center-KIC, 14 May 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/KICNewsPage/posts/pfbid02DugX5T3V6z1jLDr5i1fTiSmVFa3fPeynYXigHfMtaNoWnM1BzgTc6W9bjYPrgAwol>

¹⁵ Data for Myanmar, 14 June 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/data4myanmar/posts/pfbid02qpYqYy6KNedhpCvAhtDgRlObLsdJCKCsQejaqFExRe1gzWXW11BcELBpL634Gm2l>

4 : Situation for IDPs

Civilians have been continuously forced to abandon their homes due to attacks, airstrikes, and the burning of entire villages by the terrorist army. The number of IDPs has consequently increased considerably. According to UNOCHA, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of April 10, 2023, there were more than 1.8 million internally displaced people across Myanmar.¹⁶ It was reported that nearly 1.5 million of that were IDPs who have fled their homes due to the conflict and insecurity caused by the military coup of February 2021.

In a recent statement, the Karen National Union (KNU) reported that more than 32,000 people were displaced when the terrorist army intensified artillery and infantry attacks against villages under the control of Brigade 3 in Muu Township, Nyaunglaypin District, Bago Division.¹⁷ There has also been an increase in the number of IDPs in Karenni State, where the terrorist army is mounting intense attacks.

Although the number of IDPs has increased, rations, basic commodities, and medical supplies are needed, as aid has been limited. Since the arrival of the rainy season, safer shelters for those IDPs are needed to withstand the heavy rain and wind. There is also a need for medicines to treat the diarrheal diseases that occur during the rainy season. In addition, a woman who suffered a miscarriage told the BWU that pregnant women in the IDPs camps suffered from depression and miscarriages due to the terrorist army's constant firing of heavy weapons at the camps.

Although the rainy season is the season to focus on agricultural work, many locals had abandoned their farms and were unable to continue farming because of "clearance operations" by the terrorist army. Under this rubric, the terrorist army raided 46 villages in Kyaukgyi Township, Bago Region. This forced more than 10,000 residents to flee and over 4,000 acres of farmland to be abandoned.¹⁸ This has created serious concerns about food security for the coming year.

¹⁶ BBC News Burmese, 19 Apr 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/BBCnewsBurmese/posts/pfbid02wi8VNWDHAe2zXdfHfjU13sdguswoeUk1GAecXu9KHncnoLE9do7xeqqPuByMex4I>

¹⁷ RFA, 3 Jun 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/pfbid02Ke1pUhJBj7DuQs59EdNmWAMPUavKQJUbUVPm52bfonmjacHRuWov79293jGEG7XXI>

¹⁸ RFA, 10 Jun 2023.

<https://web.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/pfbid02TMnFmDkGH8dYwK1xY4nfACUXRUXxw9F8NgXeLzMGeAM4u57KuHkIn5VufWXnjb5YI>

5 : Analysis

On June 19, women who are either holding or wearing flowers in their hair were interrogated and arrested on the accusation of participating in the “flower strike” that resistance groups called to commemorate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s birthday. Although it is a Burmese tradition to wear flowers and change them a daily basis, the arrests of those women are gross human rights abuses that have severely impacted the daily activities of many women.

The investigation and arrest of women for holding and wearing flowers reflects the threats that the terrorist army has posed in terms of women’s political activities and participation in political life. These actions have created a serious obstacle to women’s political participation.

Human rights violations against the women of Myanmar are getting worse day by day, and their security has become a serious concern. Women are frequently subjected to sexual violence, as well as arbitrary arrests and interrogations by the terrorist army. There are many cases in which women’s dead bodies were found naked or were clad in torn clothes, suggesting that these women were the victims of sexual violence and abuse before their deaths.

The terrorist army’s burning of civilian villages and the burning alive of trapped civilians are heinous crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the torching of entire villages violates the most fundamental human right, which is the right to live in accordance with human dignity.

The terrorist army is also committing war crimes by attacking civilians, with airstrikes or artillery. Such intentional targeting of civilians by the terrorist army is a logical outgrowth of the impunity that the Myanmar military has long enjoyed, despite its decades of inhumane acts.

The inability to take effective action against terrorist military groups that commit international crimes has led to more unrest throughout the country. Taking advantage of this instability, employers are exploiting workers and forcing them to work for paltry wages. Threats are being made by the terrorist army and workers are dismissed for calling attention to workers’ need for adequate wages. Female workers have highlighted this exploitation even knowing that they could face dismissal, arrest, prison terms, and even threats to their lives for protesting under the coup regime.

The lack of employment opportunities and political instability has led numerous civilians, especially women and young people, to go abroad in various ways in search of jobs. Burmese citizens who try to pass the border through illegal means hoping to find jobs abroad are also facing arrest by the relevant authorities.

At the same time, the population of IDPs in Myanmar is also increasing due to airstrikes and artillery attacks on villages and the burning of entire villages by the terrorist army in conflict areas. Despite the increase in the number of people fleeing war in Burma, the implementation of ASEAN’s Five-Points Consensus agreements for humanitarian assistance has been found to be limited.

Burma's political instability and economic instability have also affected the political and economic conditions of ASEAN countries, so it is necessary for ASEAN to handle and resolve the issue effectively.

Although it is the season to focus on agriculture, farmers were unable to cultivate agricultural activities due to the inhumanity of the terrorist army. The country therefore, may face food shortages and civilians may be more struggling with the livelihoods in the coming year. As a result, lower-class families and IDPs are likely to rely on donors. However, humanitarian aid is not available even for the current IDPs, which is especially worrying for the new IDPs.

Currently, it is challenging to get the necessary nutrition for pregnant women and girls arriving in IDPs / refugee camps. In some IDPs camps, rice is also limited and IDPs did not get to eat three meals per day. Furthermore, access to clean drinking water is also challenging. In addition to these conditions, due to the frequent clashes between the two sides and the sound of gunfire and bomb's explosion can causes health care both mentally and physically.