**The Women’s Leading Role in the Spring Revolution:**

**A New Innovative Perspective for the Future**

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**“This revolution shall not succeed without women”** are the wordson the white background manifests the Spring Revolution.

THE PAST BUILDING THE FUTURE

In 2021 Burma /Myanmar had 54.806 million population of which female population was 28.4, that is 2 million more than the male population. Different 130 ethnic groups, 100 languages, cultures, and extraordinary abundant natural resources, climates, and habits are at the basis of its complexity.

A country with a huge geopolitical importance, being enshrined between China, India, Bangladesh, and Thailand.

In a male-dominated society, and under the British empire, and thanks to the British policy to promote a western women culture, many young women could use the increasing enrolment into education, [[1]](#footnote-2) to start playing a social and political role, particularly in the anti-colonial struggle. The first women organization funded in 1919, as the **Burmese Women’s Association**, was guided by wives of public officials and rich women entrepreneurs, while the grassroot women joined the women peasant, workers, journalists and students in the independence movement, thus making many female leaders to emergein the political arena[[2]](#footnote-3). On February the 3rd **1927,** more than 100 women activists staged the first strike against sex discrimination, protesting British regulations, that prevented women from holding legislative positions. they went to the office of the Rangoon City Corporation (of which we were allowed to be members) and marched with banners and signs to the Legislative Council, followed through the streets by a large crowd of spectators. They were marching to ask for the deletion of the "Sex - disqualification clause" or elimination of the ban on participating in elections. Norm considered anti-feminist, rather than anti-nationalist. Finally, in 1929 women obtained the right to vote. Since then, several outstanding women lead a fight for gender equality and political participation.

In **1931** Together with the NCWB, the women formed the Burmese National Council, which had a more nationalistic approach. Between the 1920 and 1930 an increasing important women movement organized labour strikes, rallies, university boycotts, despite the fact that such feminist movement has been largely ignored by a men-run politics. The demonstrations were sponsored by the National Council of Women in Burma for the improvement of the conditions of working women and children. Many of them supported the design of the independent Myanmar, many women intellectuals had active role as writers, journalists, poets, like Ma Ma Lay, that became in 1948 the President of the Writers Association. She was a feminist and independentist activist, or Daw San, a feminist journalist writing on: Yuwadi Journal Young Women’s Journal, published by Dagon Khin Khin Lay, written and managed entirely by women.

During the first years after the independence, many women played a public role, such as **Ba Maung Chein**, the first woman in 1953, to assume the role of minister in the Burmese government, although at that time, the most influential woman was **Khin Kyi**, the wife of General Aung San, and mother of Aung San Suu Kyi, who in the course of her career was conferred various international awards, included the Nobel Peace Prise, for her role, social and political commitment for Peace and Democracy.

But, in a country plagued by internal ethnic conflicts, that started on the eve of independence in 1947, women have been always struggling to have a say, to avoid being the first victims of such complex internal conflicts, and above all, to be the victims of the Tatmadaw, as the Burmese Army is called.  A very important contribution to the women political role was, and is represented by the **Karen Women’s Organization**, formed in 1949, seeking to organize for democracy, human rights and gender equality.

All efforts for women's advancement were cancelled by the proclamation in **1962**, of the Burmese Way to Socialism, a new ideology guided by the Revolutionary Council. that dissolved the parliament and oppressed the country until 1988, when a general uprising for democracy was repressed in blood, and another military dictatorship took the power. It is in that terrible historical moment, that a new woman leader emerged: **Daw** **Aung San Suu Kyi**.

She, the daughter of General Aung San, the father of the nation, killed in a conspiracy in 2947, started leading the popular opposition to the military with a new party: the NLD.

She paid such a decision, with 15 years of house arrests, between 1989 and 2010, renouncing her freedom, her family, and her husband. From the house arrests, nevertheless, she guided the NLD in to the 1990 political elections. Its extraordinary results could not be accepted by the military and were annulled, arresting the newly elected parliamentarians, and continuing the widespread repression toward any type of dissent.

In this scenario Aung San Suu Kyi, despite her prominent historical opposition role, and her sufferings, was mainly representing the Bamar majority ethnic group, while the ethnic minority women, victims of the longest civil war in the world, were hindered to play any political role, even in their ethnic States. Nevertheless, in some of them, as in Kachin State, since **1961** women started to be part of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of the largest ethnic armed forces, and the civil administration of the Kachin Independence Organization.  Kachin women could join the army, but only in a supporting role to the combatting soldiers. Nevertheless, after 1961 they could join the military boot camps, and could actively take part in the conflict, and finally, in 2011 they succeeded to join the KIA Defence Academy.

The military dictatorship. funded on a feudal power system, on a violent nationalist and Buddhist culture elaborated and imposed their 2008 Constitution, that not only granted and continue to grant, the impunity for crimes committed by the military, but foresees the appointment of men into positions “deemed suitable for men only”, grants 25% of the parliament seats to the military, as well as key ministerial positions to military top military chiefs. A constitution that foresees that both the President and the two vice presidents “must be well acquainted in military matters”.

The dictators embodied the traditional patriarchal and authoritarian culture in the constitution. and women’s relative absence from positions of influence helped enable the military to maintain its grip on power. Positively, during those violent years, and particularly after the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security, and later with the other UNSC resolutions[[3]](#footnote-4) the Women, Peace and Security Agenda could be established, giving rise to a wide women conscience and organizations networks grew in ethnic States, where women, have been widely victims of the military and local authority’s violence, trough harassment, rapes, killings, arbitrary arrests, detention and torture and other types of physical and mental violence.

During the long dictatorship, and still at the dawn of the process of political opening in 2011, the **Burma Women League** denounced how ethnic minority women and girls were “particularly subject to widespread and systematic sexual violence by Burmese soldiers, including rape, torture and sexual slavery, as a means of terrorizing and subjugating the ethnic minorities. In those years, millions of people had to run and survive in the jungle, or in IDP Camps inside Myanmar, and nearby countries, such as Thailand, Bangladesh, Malesia, etc.  The ILO, thanks to the Burmese and international trade unions, to the women networks, and ethnic groups, collected since 1996, evidence and complaints on hundreds of thousands of cases concerning women and girls used as forced laborers, porters for military troops, as human **minesweepers**, and as a weapon of war, in Kachin, Karen, Shan, Rakhine, Chin, Karenni States. [[4]](#footnote-5) thousands of them were not only harassed, but also raped, in front of their children and families.

Ethnic women did not keep silent, and a series of organizations started blooming: the Karenni National Women’s organization in 1993, the Burmese Women’s Union, in 1995, and other ethnic women organizations, such as the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN). The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), in 2002 published ‘License to Rape’, a very important report that draws upon international humanitarian law, to make the case that abuses in Myanmar constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that rape has been used as a weapon of war in a wider counter-insurgency strategy by the Myanmar military [[5]](#footnote-6). Similar political importance has the KWO’s report ‘State of Terror’[[6]](#footnote-7), which collected details of 4.000 documented cases of human rights violations, of which 959 cases of women’s human rights violations were committed during the period 2004–2006.

From 1989 on, the military engaged in a series of closed-door peace negotiations with Ethnic Armed Organizations, and 24 ceasefire agreements were signed, but with no formal women participation.

As, in most conflict-affected countries, women’s role in peacebuilding is still a huge issue, since it goes hands in hands with a patriarchal dominant culture that considers war as “men issue “, and that consider and use women as a war weapon[[7]](#footnote-8).

It has been therefore extremely difficult to push, not only for the participation of women in the negotiations, but most importantly, for a different negotiating paradigm. Most of the initial peace negotiations with the ethnics, **after 2011** were purely based on a nation-State, and institutions building dominated by men approach.[[8]](#footnote-9)

In **1999** a group of 12 women organizations formed the **Women’s League of Burma**, which started to collect and denounce internationally the crimes perpetrated by the military junta all over the country and started to play women participation in the political area. Women were aware of the fact that gender-based violence was still common even after the start of the transition to democracy, due to the patriarchal, medieval dominant culture, that brought with it the absence of an effective legal recourse for survivors. From 2017 to 2020 the Women League of Burma reported 469 cases of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, rape and attempted rape.

In many villages, rapes were and continue to be hidden and the perpetrators are not prosecuted, but obliged to compensation by private agreement between the two involved families under the supervision of the village head.[[9]](#footnote-10)

While women organizations, over the years have been denouncing the violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw, (the Myanmar army), their absence from the Peace negotiating tables, between the army and the Ethnic Armed Organizations, increasingly taking place since 2011, could not be accepted anymore. Pressure to change the negotiating approach, thus to include a gender perspective on the political themes started to be heard.

The problem was that most of the women in the peace process, were not included in the negotiation teams, but could only take part as observers or facilitators. The first Union-level Peace Team made up of 11 members, saw the inclusion of only 2 women, that were member of the National Parliament, one from Kachin State (Daw Dwe Bu), and one from Chin State (Daw Mi Yin Chan)[[10]](#footnote-11).

Women’s civil society groups started to be very vocal on peace, security issues and their impact on women, and despite their mounting campaigns for their inclusion in political discussions and peace process, they continued to be largely left outside the official decision-making meetings. This, despite Myanmar’s obligation as a signatory to the Convention to End Discrimination against Women.

Two important organizations, concentrated their activities on the priority of peace: the **WIN Peace**, established in 2013 by a group of ethnic women networks focusing on raising women voices on sexual violence in conflict-affected areas, peacebuilding activities, and in the promotion of women’s strategic participation, and leadership in peace, and security governance. Among those organizations **WON**, **GEN** (Gender Equality Network with 130 organizations) (Women Organization Network), **WL**B (Women’s League of Burma), Gender and Development Institute, **Shalom** and others, understood that they had to unite forces and strategies to build a policy-advocacy network dedicated to securing the participation of women in the peace process, and that gender issues had to be included in their outcomes.

Women were fully aware of the need to have a voice and a say in the peace process. Since decades of civil war and of dictatorship have highlighted the different impact of war and Gender based violence on women’s lives, and the fact that no adequate mechanisms are in place, to bring perpetrators of Gender based violence to account. The National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), signed in 2015 between the national government and 8 Ethnic Armed Organizations (in 2018 including other 2 EAOs) affirmed only the principle of the inclusion of a “[reasonable number of women representatives in the political dialogue process](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MM_151510_NCAAgreement.pdf)”, with the effect that only 2 women were included in the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee in January 2016.

But, as stated by AGIPP, the NCA did not include reference to Myanmar’s obligations under international humanitarian and human rights laws, nor the UN Security Resolutions that comprise the [Women, Peace, and Security](mailto:http://www2.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%2520women%2520briefthematicpsuswebrev3%2520pdf.ashx%3Fv=2%26d=20141013T121455) (WPS) policy framework. The NCA specifically did not comply with Myanmar’s CEDAW obligations and its implementation mechanisms already excluded women, lacked an adequate definition of gender-based violence and insecurity, nor had accountability mechanisms. As stated by the AGIPP website, “*by failing to take into account men’s and women’s different experiences of violent conflict and insecurity, as well as their needs and contributions towards the building of peaceful societies, the sustainability of the peace process, is placed at considerable risk*”. [[11]](#footnote-12)

Thanks also to these pressures, the Union Peace Conference, known also as the Twenty-first Century Panglong Conference (August 31- Sept. 3, 2016). included the participation of representatives of all the EAO and CSOs and signed an agreement that fixed a 30% gender quota in every level of political dialogue.

In Myanmar, under the NLD government, women’s formal representation in the peace negotiation process remained below its own 30% target. But it was improving:

* in 2015, the participation of women in the formal peace process was limited to 5 percent;
* in 2016 it was 13 percent;
* in May 2017 it was 17 percent;
* in July 2018 it was 22 percent;
* in August 2020 it was 17 percent[[12]](#footnote-13).

The military opposed to maintaining the 30% quota, arguing that it was quite impossible to overcome the obstacles to women's participation, and when in 2015 the Ethnic Armed Organizations included two women in the Senior delegation (Naw Zipporah Sein of the Karen National Union, and founding member of the Women’s League of Burma and Daw Mra Raza Linn of the Arakan Liberation Army), the visibility of women in the peace process changed significantly.[[13]](#footnote-14)

An interesting survey on broadening women participation in the peace process identified a series of recommendations, such as: the development among women in ethnic armed organizations of a network and regular coordination to fill the gap; The need to develop a strategy regarding all the peace process; the need to draft a gender policy, that includes special mechanisms or affirmative actions and advocate accordingly for adoption by political parties, peace institutions, and electoral bodies; Alternatives for access and disseminate peace-related information, and most importantly making peace information available in local languages and disseminating through local media; To develop mechanisms, including interparty coordination to maximize the coverage of party supporters and increase citizens’ participation; develop an inclusive channel or medium to bring concerns and recommendations of those who are excluded from the formal peace process to negotiation tables and ensure their inclusion[[14]](#footnote-15).

**THE 2021 NEW MILITARY COUP AND WOMEN LEADERSHIP**

 The 1st of February 2021 military coup signed the end of all these efforts, but all the organizational links and the relations built in the last ten years, created the basis for widespread general women leadership in the opposition movement. While until the coup the women organizations had flourished mainly among the ethnic minorities, and had struggled against the military, and for a women role, and a gender centred approach in the peace process, now also the women organizations from the Bamar main ethnic component, started from the outset to join the other women organizations. A great women alliance is blooming

The military did not understand that the 2021 society is different from that of 1962, 1988, 1990, and of the saffron revolution of 2007. They did not expect such a widespread opposition throughout the country and throughout different social strata, even though during the ten years of democratic transition, there has been a proliferation of social organizations.

Trade unions, banned until 2012, before the coup had over 110,000 members, mainly in industrial areas, which are predominantly female, in the service, education, health and transport sectors, and in agriculture. They built along the years of clandestine activity, a strong trade union leadership, empowering young capable women, who together with civil society organizations, Generation Z, now are the backbone of strikes and of CDM initiative and political strategy, paralyzing the economy and giving check to the dictatorship;

This together with the alliance between ethnic groups and all the other opposition organizations, and the overcoming of stereotyped views, that relegated women to the margins of political action are new elements that are making things profoundly different from previous failed revolutions. The strength of the Internet created an interconnected just-in-time opposition. In February 2021, **97.4%** of the population used Facebook, and although now, due to military restrictions, users are 87.89%, nevertheless they create a driving force for actions and organized just-in-time opposition.

Already in the first days following the coup, the Ethnic Armed Organizations condemned the coup and announced their non-cooperation with the military. Also, 13 women organizations announced their resignation from the Women Participation Technical Working Group, and refused to provide technical support to the Military, until the civilian government will resume office.

The same position was adopted by the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar, that on the 29th of January the Confederation declared its opposition to “*any kind of action or attempt to alter the outcome of the elections or impede Myanmar’s democratic transition*”[[15]](#footnote-16) and immediately after the coup it withdraw from all tripartite bodies.

During these long months the military has been carrying out door to door searches in workplaces, hostels, and houses. Almost all activists were forced to go into hiding.

As of today, 1.500 innocent persons have been killed and 15.000 citizens have been arrested.

Myanmar women make the 60% of the protesters and between 70 and 80 percent of the movement’s leaders. The first protester to die in the anti-junta demonstrations was a 20-year-old female grocery store worker, **Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing**, who was shot in the head on February the 9th, in the capital Naypyidaw. She died 10 days later.

From the first days, the strikes arose among industrial zones workers, that are mainly young immigrant women, the hospital workers, from doctors to nurses, midwifes and cleaners, the civil servants, the teachers and university professors, and even the women farmers in the ethnic villages.

The demonstrations of the first months challenged many of the misogynist social norms, by breaking down gender stereotypes. In the first months, the young women of main towns such as Yangon, also organized out-of-the-ordinary events: "the protest of the princesses" in which they paraded through the streets in ball gowns, the peasant women with baskets of fruit, the winners of beauty contests, with victory bands, transgender people with their provocative outfits. Since in the Buddhist tradition sarongs and women's underwear - are perceived as 'impure', because it is believed that coming into contact with or walking under these, leads to bad luck, reducing male superiority "As a political provocation the girls used the so-called Htaimein, ie. Sarongs, to create flags, hats or banners across the streets. An effective deterrent to prevent the military from attacking protesters. They used a degrading superstition towards women, as a successful defence strategy."

Similarly, women hung sanitary pads soaked in red paint, to emulate blood on photos of the military general, Min Aung Hlaing - an incredibly humiliating and degrading gesture. “*For a society where men, including Min Aung Hlaing, detest the idea of menstruation, smearing his face with what he finds the dirtiest is unimaginably humiliating”* said a women activist[[16]](#footnote-17). For these reasons during these months, the army in the cities sent spies to target women living alone, whose homes were easy targets for looting and harassment.

The economic uncertainty caused by the coup and Covid19 had a negative effect on the whole economy and particularly on employment. The ILO employment rapid assessment, outlined an increase of 1.6 million unemployed workers, and many workers shifted into poor-quality, lower-paid jobs in less productive sectors such as agriculture. In addition, there are numerous reports of workers rights violations.[[17]](#footnote-18)

Female garment industry union leaders emerged from years of silent work of organizing and collective bargaining, and are at the forefront of the deadly anti-military protests, to protect their rights and asking global brands to take their side. Apparel and footwear industry, with 700.000 workers, mainly young migrant women before the pandemic[[18]](#footnote-19) and an export value of $ 6.7 billion was hit by the coup and its employment decreased of at least 250.000 jobs. Repression arrived immediately in the most important industrial sector. On February 18, about 1,000 textile workers producing for Primark brand were locked up in the GY Sen Apparel Company, to prevent them, from attending the demonstrations. The Industrial Workers Federation, chaired by Khaing Zar Aung, a strong woman former garment factory worker, has been reached, together with 28 other trade unionists by arrest warrants. Since the first days of the coup the union leader has been negotiating with global brands, to oblige them to respect workers rights in their supply chain, and to compensate, according to the law, workers who were dismissed temporarily or permanently.

Negotiations went on particularly on workers compensation, but not on fundamental workers rights. And even in this case there have been only partial results, since local suppliers, many of whom are Chinese, pay military and police to guard in front of the factories, blackmailing female workers and threatening to fire them, if they participate in demonstrations, or report violations of labor rights.

Most workers know they will be left without work and without food, but they would rather starve, than live under a new violent dictatorship. Many brands including Benetton Group, H&M, Primark and Bestseller have suspended all new orders from Burmese factories, until further notice. While the EU Parliament recently adopted a resolution calling for an audit of the EU GSP system and the EBA (All Except Arms standards), which facilitate imports from less developed countries into Europe. A big step forward to isolate the military not only politically but also economically. Unfortunately despite the fact that there are plenty of acts demonstrating the violation of the EU regulation and particularly the human and labour rights UN and ILO conventions, still today brands prefer to close their eyes on the proves of violation of human rights at work, and insist in remaining to work in Myanmar.

A central role is played by the women trade union leaders of the CTUM and of the Labour Alliance. The CTUM Constitution foresee a representation of women in the decision bodies of at least 30%. Women empowerment and leadership trainings have been carried out along the years. Each sector union, as well as the Confederation have their own Women Committees. Particularly important this has been for the garment union and the agriculture, where women trade unionists have been negotiating the land reform and the restitution of land confiscated by the military during the previous dictatorship. A women trade unionist of the CTUM is now in the ILO Governing Body and others before the coup were negotiating with the government the minimum salary, the social security procedures and many other key economic issues.

That is why immediately after the coup, women labour activists and trade union leaders were at the forefront of the opposition movement. Women garment workers from the Industrial Zones are at the centre of a political conflict.

Hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs and hundreds of thousands are victims of violence at work and violation of fundamental human rights. Many others fell back into sex trafficking. But no one wants to go back to the previous military regime and women prefer to starve or to be arrested, than to go back to an endless dictatorship.

Together with other trade unions, labour NGOs, 200 organizations of students, teachers, engineers, health workers, economic experts, youth and women the trade unions are calling the EU, the US and other governments for the introduction of Comprehensive Economic Sanctions[[19]](#footnote-20) to cut the financial flow of profits to the junta. In particular, They are calling on multinational companies and global brands to cease their operations, to disinvest, and to stop placing new orders, and halt their business relations in Myanmar until democracy is back. Workers know, that they will remain without jobs and food, but they prefer to starve now, then to live under a new violent dictatorship. Many brands have accepted such request. While the Eu parliament adopted recently a resolution putting into question the EU GSP and the Everything But Arms regulations, that facilitate the import into Europe of least developed countries goods, the EU Commission consider that is better to maintain a job, even if an exploitative job than remaining jobless. Comprehensive Economic Sanctions would represent a great step forward to isolate the military not only politically but also economically.

A big step forward is the fact that the NUG, the National Unity Government, appointed 8 women ministers or deputy ministers, out of 17 ministries. This together with the inclusion of women NGOs, and women leaders from trade unions and Generation Z, made the difference in the policies definition and in the drafting of the new Federal Democratic Constitution. The Ministry of Women youth and Children Affairs is guided by an extremely experienced Minister Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, leader of the Karen People, and among the actors of the Peace negotiations trying to include a gender perspective in the Peace agreements. She has been at the fore front of many campaigns on violence against women, peace process, political prisoners.

A new actor on the scene of the opposition, is represented by the **People Defence Forces,** that now counts about 50.000 forces. The PDF see many women joining these armed resistance groups, under the control of the Government of National Unity. In particular also women defence forces are appearing. “*I had never worn pants in my life before!”* A 23-year-old young teacher from the Sagaing region, who joined the **Myaung Women Warriors** told to Aljazeera. “*We fight against the military regime and to defeat stereotypes as well. The hands that swing children's hammocks can be part of the armed revolution* ". and more over “*along with destroying the military dictatorship, we want to overturn traditional gender norms and ensure women play an equal role in building a new nation*”. In fact, violence against the population and particularly women continue, and as pointed out by the UN Special Representative Patten: The patterns of sexual violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw against women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, as well as against individuals, based on their orientation sexuality and gender identity, as documented by the United Nations Fact-Finding is extremely concerning. More and more such violence are committed not only in ethnic villages, but also in urban areas of central Burma. Female detainees are often sexually assaulted by prison guards during their interrogations. On October 9, a mother and her two children (aged 2 and 6) were taken as hostages in Saw Pyar village, in Dawei region. A 7-year-old child of a journalist was interrogated by junta forces in Yangon who questioned if the young girl had witnessed her mother buying guns.[[20]](#footnote-21) According to AAPP women detained by the military reached up to 2.000. Many have been arrested with their children or babies, tortured, and sexually harassed. Only between December 1st and December 31, 2021 the military arrested 308 persons, among which 18 children and 68 women. Women are facing not only harassment and rapes by soldiers attacking towns and villages, they are facing violence and harassment in prisons. A recent BBC report denounced how women are tortured, sexually harassed and threatened with rape while in custody[[21]](#footnote-22).

Already the 2020 Gender Inequality Index ranked Myanmar 147 of 189 countries, while the 2021 Social Institutions and Gender Index identified Myanmar, as the eighth-most discriminatory country out of nine Southeast Asian nations.[[22]](#footnote-23) Another significant data is related to the maternal mortality ratio, with 282 per 100.000 live births. That was the highest mortality rate in Southeast Asia before the coup.

If discrimination, stigma, stereotypes and cultural taboos in communities, posed significant barriers in accessing quality sexual and reproductive health care services, and information before the coup, after the coup women has been facing incredibly higher difficulties in protecting their health and wellbeing. What people usually tend to ignore is the situation of refugees or internally displaced women. And from the coup, the number of IDPs reached 690.000, without considering the 148.000 Rohingya living in 21 displacement camps in Rakhine State.

Women in refugee camps are highly exposed to human right violation, and to negative impact for their reproductive health. In these situations, gender-based violence usually increases due to lack of public spaces, and healthcare facilities. There are risks including unhygienic conditions and challenges for safe delivery without equipment and infections after the deliveries.

If, before the coup women and girls experienced problems to access to sexual and reproductive health services particularly in rural areas. After the coup, with the collapse of the health system, the attacks to hospitals by military and the dismissal of thousand doctors, nurses and midwifes, women faced huge problems to protect their health particularly during pregnancy. According to an UN Women publication, in August 2021, over 685.000 women were pregnant at the time, with an estimated 250 preventable maternal deaths, due to lack of access to hospitals and obstetric care. Over 5 million of girls between 10 and 19 years old “has been seriously disrupted by public-health, loss of school-year, and security-related restrictions and fears”[[23]](#footnote-24).

A big step forward is represented by the fact that the NUG, the National Unity Government nominated 8 women as ministers or deputy ministers out of 17 ministries.

As underlined by the UN Special Representative Patten: The patterns of sexual violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw against women from ethnic and religious minority groups, as well as against individuals, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, as documented by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, is extremely concerning.[[24]](#footnote-25)

In any case, this time the genocidal dictatorship has to face a well-structured opposition, and hundred’s thousands of people and women workers, empowered to fight for their rights and democracy.

This time will be different from the previously defeated revolts. The so-called “spring revolution” is made up of prepared young women, that from all working sectors and the countryside are the backbone of a popular revolt. They have now the political strength to oppose and to win, thanks to their courage and networks an isolated military junta. Their courage deserves the support of the women of the world. Their voices and their long fight for power and dignity cannot be ignored.

Now, after one year from the genocidal military coup, once again women and girls are at the centre of the repression, and are the backbone of the political response to counteract the military’s widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, including women, children and elderly.

Conclusions:

If under the previous Myanmar military rule, the extremely chauvinistic, authoritarian, patriarchal organization and culture, based on male superiority had relegated women to the sidelines of the society, punishing those who wanted to oppose, with rapes, violence, forced labor, women under the new military coup stand up. Not only women with a higher level of culture, but simple women workers, nurses, teachers, women farmers and women in villages. Women in general from all social strata. Their capabilities are bringing innovative tactics to the fight are gaining new leadership role, that is agreed by all other the opposition leaders. Women are sharing the leadership of the Myanmar Labor Alliance,

of the CDM and within the NUG and play an important role also within the ethnics.

This will pave the way, to a very revolutionary structural change within the Burmese politics, it will influence the Federal Democratic Constitution, and the political culture of those democratic forces that are leading the Spring Revolution and will contribute to build a new just and gender balanced society.

1. The number of female students in private and public schools increased by 61% from 1911 to 1921 and by 82% from 1921 to 1931 (Chie Ikeya Refiguring women Colonialism and Modernity in Burma, University of Hawai’i Press). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Feminism in Myanmar, August 2019, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, EMReF [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. UN Resolutions: n.1325 (2000); n.1820 (2009); n.1888 (2009); n.1889 (2010); n.1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and n.2493 (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Il Pavone e i Generali. Birmania, dalla Dittatura alla Rinascita. C. Brighi. Baldini Castoldi 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Women, Peace, and Security in Myanmar, Between Feminism and Ethnopolitics [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. the State of Terror. Karen Women Organization. 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. In 1997, Myanmar acceded and ratified the United

    Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), along with the guiding principles of the Fourth World Women Conference on Women (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995). Since then, Myanmar has aimed to achieve gender equality and help women fully enjoy their rights.  [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Women in Conflict and Peace© International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2015.  [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Barriers at every turn. Women’s League of Burma 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. https://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/government-peace-plan/ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process: the National Ceasefire [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Agreement. https://www.agipp.org/en/nationwide-ceasefire-agreement [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Women participation in the Peace Processes. Myanmar case study, Current Peace Efforts, Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/myanmar [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Broadening Participation of Women of Ethnic Political Parties in the Peace Process Needs and Recommendations March 2019. Women’s League of Burma, The Carter Center, UKAid.  [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. CTUM press release, 29.January 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Aljazeera, The Women of Myanmar: Our place is in the revolution. By [Umayma Khan](https://www.aljazeera.com/author/umayma-khan) Published On 25 Apr 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. ILO employment in Myanmar in 2021: a rapid assessment [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Myanmar Garment sector factsheet 2022 Eurocham Myanmar [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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