



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

International Women's Day

8th March 2021

As today, March 8th, marks International Women's Day, KHRG would like to honor all the women who have defended human rights and continue to do so in this critical time. We extend our appreciation for their contributions, dedication and achievements now and in the past. In Southeast Myanmar, where armed conflict has been happening for more than 70 years, women of all ages have experienced a spectrum of violence and violations, committed especially by armed actors. Being a woman is challenging in a country like Myanmar where gender-based discrimination is widespread due to sociocultural norms, religious stigmas and ongoing conflict, and yet women consistently demonstrate their strength in the face of these challenges.

This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Choose to Challenge" meaning that the responsibility to change is ours. If we all choose to challenge gender bias and inequality, and celebrate women – in all their capacities – we can improve the situation of women and create a more just and inclusive world.

This year in Myanmar, women are not only choosing to challenge gender bias and inequality but a military takeover that threatens peace and democracy for everyone. Since the Burma Army staged a coup on February 1st 2021, women can be seen joining protests and a Civil Disobedience Movement, not only actively participating, but leading in the fight against military rule, risking their lives and the possibility of detention. Many brave women, especially young women, have already lost their lives in the fight against military rule. The death toll is rising every day, and yet more women continue to go out in the street every day. We greatly appreciate and respect their braveness and their dedication. It is important to recognize the strength and contributions that women make, both at times of political unrest like now, and in their daily lives.

Both men and women have taken to the streets to protest a coup and unjust rule. We urge everyone to embrace this same energy in the fight against gender bias and inequality. The burden should not be that of women alone. Today is a day to celebrate the achievements and honour the sacrifices made by women for their family, village, township, district and/or country. But it is also a day to begin anew, to stop the violence, inequality, and bias that women confront in their lives every day.

#ChooseToChallenge