



Women's Forum For Peace
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**"Establishing the Sustainable Peace of the Union
through Women's Power"**

Statement

September 21, 2014

Women Organizations Network (WON) and the Women's League of Burma (WLB) held the second Women's Forum for Peace in Rangoon on September 19th and 20th under the theme of "Establishing the Sustainable Peace of the Union through Women's Power", attracting more than 350 women representatives from both inside and outside the country.

The first day of the Forum focused on group sharing of the joint activities and works implemented by WON and WLB in the 2013-14 period, and also gave the audience the opportunity to hear about the experiences of eight women from ethnic communities across the country. A documentary video on women's opinions relating to peace was also shown, following the presentation of solidarity speeches by Naw Ohn Hla and Wai Wai Nu, who were also awarded the 2014 N-Peace award. In commemoration of democratic martyr Win Maw Oo who was killed on September 19, 1988 and all other female martyrs who have given their lives the fight for peace across the country, a memorial ceremony was also observed.

The second day drew on the experiences of other countries to broaden discussion as to how to move forwards – including the dynamics of the peace process of the Philippines – and looked separately at the issues around the role of women, peace, security, development, investment and the rule of law. Building on this, the role of ethnic women in the peace process was discussed, as were methods to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in the process of building sustainable peace.

The Forum took the opportunity to award peace prizes to Padoh Zipporah Sein and Saw Mra Yarzar Lin who have played a crucial role in peace process up to now, and honored Naw Ohn Hla, Daw Myint Myint Aye, Daw Khin Mi Mi Khine and Daw Bawk Jah who were imprisoned for standing up against the suffering of the peoples of Burma.

At the conclusion of the first Women's Forum held in September 2013, a declaration was released with drew attention to the fact that stakeholders – including the government, armed groups, international organizations and donors – have the duty to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in relation to Burma's peace process. Furthermore, stakeholders were exhorted to ensure the meaningful participation of women as a prerequisite to sustainable peace.

Unfortunately, the substantive participation of women in the process has continued to be neglected as an issue, and no clear progress has been made in peace talks – resulting in the continuation of fighting, and the disturbing recurrence of armed conflicts in ethnic areas. Alongside this, threats to genuine peace in Burma remain serious, not least because of the creation of political, racial and communal conflicts which have catalysed increased violence against women.

The lives of women remain insecure due to the lack of transparency in Burma's process of transition and the ongoing centralization of power, the occurrence of widespread land seizure across the country, the increase in the number of arrests made using repressive laws, and increasing sexual violence and attacks on women.

Based on the above, the second Women's Peace Forum submits the following demands to the broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in the safeguarding of the human rights of women:

1. The meaningful participation of women at every level of decision making – both in the peace process, and other development initiatives undertaken by the government and other stakeholders.
2. Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 across the country, aided by the participation of women impacted by conflict, and other independent women's organizations.
3. Amendment of the 2008 Constitution, which inhibits the implementation of the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the provision of laws which safeguard the human rights of women.
4. Immediate cessation of the forced confiscation of land, which directly impact the lives of women and local people.

Furthermore, the representatives of the Forum signed a petition demanding the release of human rights defender Phyu Hnin Htwe – the Burmese second year University student who was detained in Monywa prison – and sent it to the President and respective agencies.

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