

The Enlistment of Women:

*Gendered Impacts of
Forced Conscription
By the Military Junta*



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Introduction

It has now been over four years since the military junta attempted a coup. During this time, there has been widespread resistance and stark opposition to the regime's brutality. Despite the fact that the coup was unlawful, even according to the military-drafted constitution, the junta has continued to violate international norms and principles by launching violent attacks against the opposition. Ethnic communities, in particular, have been terrorized by the junta's relentless gunfire in their villages and temporary shelters, even in the absence of armed actors.

More than 3.5 million people have been displaced since the failed coup.¹ Children are being denied safe pathways to education, as schools are routinely bombed in aerial raids and bombardments. Families are struggling to find work to sustain their livelihoods due to the presence of military soldiers and landmines surrounding their homes and farms.

With dwindling access to food due to inflation and a lack of work opportunities, many who have been displaced have resorted to foraging and relying on local vegetation for sustenance.

¹ [Four years after the coup, Myanmar remains on the brink](#), United Nations, 29 January 2025

The attacks by the Burmese Army are increasing as local people are being accused of harbouring soldiers from the armed resistance. Military checkpoints are also being frequently expanded and established in various parts of the country, especially along popular routes, where individuals are questioned, extorted, and often disappear. Many of the men and women who are stopped and interrogated find themselves being forcibly enlisted as part of the junta's unlawful conscription efforts.

The People's Military Service Law mandates conscription but had not been enforced for over a decade. However, last year, the junta began implementing it for the first time since it was passed, requiring men aged 18 to 35 and women aged 18 to 27 to enlist.

The timing of its enactment is indicative of the junta's desperation amid its increasing losses on the battlefield. Reports from the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), suggest that conscripted individuals, often youths, are deployed to front-line battles and forced to fight under the threat of violence.² Though the law has now been in effect for over a year, regulations of the People's Military Service Law were only recently passed in January 2025, with several updates made.³

² [Forced to Enlist](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, December 2024

³ [Myanmar junta enforces military conscription law, restricts travel for summoned individuals](#), Mizzima, 26 January 2025

The attacks by the Burmese Army are increasing as local people are being accused of harbouring soldiers from the armed resistance.

As the junta has moved quickly to implement a campaign of forced conscription, they have employed deceitful tactics, including conscripting young people at schools, bus stations, ship docks, or while they are visiting friends and family in their communities. Reports of missing youth are often prevalent in areas under junta control. As a result, young people in local villages have said they are even *'too afraid to sleep.'*⁴

While the junta initially claimed it would not force women to join,⁵ at the end of January 2025, it was announced that registration for them, regardless of their circumstances, would begin.⁶ They have since been removed from their homes, subjected to rigorous military training, and deployed to conflict zones where they encounter unimaginable horrors.

HURFOM reported that the military junta started collecting lists of women to serve in the military from Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Northern Ye, Kyaikmayaw, Bilin, Paung township, Mon State and Launglon, Yebyu in Dawei as well as Hpa-an, Karen State.

Women forced to serve under the junta have begun training in Kyaikto township, Mawlamyine. In the Mon State Revolutionary Force (MSRF), hundreds of women fled to liberation areas after the announcement of the fifth batch of recruitment.

⁴ [Junta troops forcibly recruit more than 70 young men in Myanmar town](#), Radio Free Asia, 17 March 2025

⁵ [Myanmar military exempts women from draft for now](#), Nikkei Asian Review, 22 February 2024

⁶ [Myanmar Junta Registering Women Ahead of Possible Conscription, the Irrawaddy](#), 29 January 2025

Women face physical and mental threats in any form of military custody, including being forced to train and fight on the front-lines for a brutal regime.

Further, this briefing paper by the Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma) will provide an overview of the junta's illegal and unjust campaign of forced conscription and how it specifically impacts women. Using a combination of desk research, data, cases and testimony from our members, we will assess the gendered impacts of forcing women to fight alongside the junta and what steps must be urgently taken by the international community to protect women and girls in Burma.

ND-Burma is grateful to our members for their contributions. In particular, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and the Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO) who all provided ample evidence to support the findings and analysis in this briefing paper.

ND-Burma also consulted with the women's organizations in our network, including the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), the Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU) and the Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO), to ensure their expertise in the gendered context was included.

Impacts of Forced Conscription in Burma

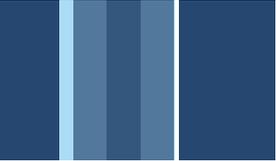
Since the military's attempted coup on February 1, 2021, Burma has experienced increasing human rights violations, with forced conscription emerging as a brutal tool of control. The unlawful recruitment of young men and women, particularly in rural areas, is rising. Testimonies from ND-Burma members indicate that these individuals are often taken without consent to the front-lines of battle. Families report that youths are being used as human shields, with many losing their lives in conflict zones.

These actions highlight the junta's desperation to replenish troop numbers amid escalating resistance. Communities nationwide remain under constant threat of arbitrary arrests, extortion, and forced conscription, exacerbating fear and insecurity in already oppressed regions. Further, this coercive recruitment strategy is a blatant violation of fundamental rights and international humanitarian law, necessitating urgent action from the global stakeholders to hold the junta accountable and protect vulnerable populations.

The junta's forced conscription has multiple aims. One is to instill fear. The second is to replenish depleted forces due to escalating territorial losses. The third is to exploit vulnerable groups, including attempting to manipulate elections. By forcedly drafting youth, the junta aims to gain leverage over families who are tacitly threatened with conscripts' safety and threatened to vote for them, assuming the junta's sham election goes ahead. While recruitment efforts were not directly observed, officials collected copies of household lists in February 2025 in the Pa-O area, Taunggyi, and operated in nearby villages. According to the Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO), these lists included male and female censuses.

PYO has received reports that recruitment efforts may not currently occur within the community but are conducted at universities. However, the exact strategy being employed remains unclear. Ground reports from Shan State indicate that a woman from Taunggyi University underwent female military recruitment training. Although it is confirmed that she completed the training and has returned, the number of batches recruited so far is still under investigation.

According to the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), which is active in targeted areas of Mon State, Karen State and the Tanintharyi



“Ever since my son was taken, I’ve been worrying every day. It’s not just about money—we are all mentally exhausted. The stress is affecting my health,”

region, throughout March 2025, there were at least three cases reported of families being forced to pay ransom money to secure the release of their sons, who had been seized by junta forces for military service. The ransom demands ranged from 3 million to 6 million kyats (approximately \$1,000 to USD 2,000). Those who could not pay were forced to take out high-interest loans from friends or local lenders.

One mother, whose 25-year-old son had been working as a driver, said his forced recruitment had left her not only without income, but also in constant anxiety over his safety and well-being.

“Ever since my son was taken, I’ve been worrying every day. It’s not just about money—we are all mentally exhausted. The stress is affecting my health,” she told HURFOM on March 5th, 2025.

HURFOM also reported that the military junta has been relentlessly arresting young people in Bilin Township, Mon State, with at least 15 youths detained between the first and second weeks of March 2025. On the evening of March 9th, junta forces raided homes in Zot Thoke village, Bilin Township, and apprehended more than 10 youths, including women.⁷

“We still don’t know the reason behind their arrests, and we haven’t been able to contact them yet. Our biggest concern is that they might be sent for forced conscription,” said a resident.⁸

The junta’s forced conscription policy has devastated families by pushing women—especially mothers and the elderly—deeper into poverty and uncertainty. With no way to support themselves and overwhelming financial burdens, they are left with no choice but to live in fear, debt, and hopelessness.

The loss of young women, many of whom are primary earners or caregivers, has left families struggling financially, deepening poverty in affected communities.

⁷ [March 2025 Monthly Overview](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2025

⁸ Ibid

Fourteen million people (6.3 million men and 7.7 million women), or 26 percent of the population, are eligible for military service.⁹ This has prompted thousands to try to leave the country by fleeing to various borders, including Thailand, China, and India. Those who try to evade conscription can face up to three years in jail. However, extortion and bribery have also enabled families with higher incomes to pay hefty fees to avoid being enlisted.¹⁰ In the panic and rush to escape, two women were killed on February 19, 2024 in a stampede at a local passport office as thousands queued to try and gather their documents to leave.¹¹

Several cases have also been documented of young men and women being recruited checkpoints and forcibly enlisted into the military by soldiers during interrogation. As evident in a case reported by HURFOM on March 2, 2025, two young men traveling by motorcycle from Thaton to Bilin were stopped at the checkpoint around noon. After soldiers had checked their phones, they were immediately taken into custody.¹²

HURFOM documented that junta forces in Bilin Township have intensified their arrests of young people, sending some to military training and extorting money from others through intimidation. Since the enforcement of the conscription law in Mon State, the junta has reportedly conscripted over 2,000 people up to batch 10.

In January 2025 alone, reports indicate a sharp rise in forced conscription and arbitrary arrests across Mon State, with at least 60 individuals detained for various reasons and over 15 forcibly taken for military service.¹³ Many young men and women have been arrested, and underage youths have vanished without a trace.



On December 28, 2024, in Thuwanna Wadi Town, Thaton Township, Mon State, ten residents, including the local administrator, were arrested for voicing their opposition to the junta's forced conscription on social media.

⁹ [Myanmar Junta Registering Women Ahead of Possible Conscription](#), The Irrawaddy, 29 January 2025

¹⁰ [Myanmar's Silent Disease: How Everyday Bribery Fuels Autocratic Control](#), The Fulcrum, 17 January 2025

¹¹ [Timeline—One Year On: Key Developments in Junta's Fast-Track Conscription](#), the Irrawaddy, 8 February 2025

¹² X: @HURFOM 3 March 2025

¹³ Ibid

As the junta searches neighbourhoods, village tracts and wards, those who have resisted the military's orders for forced conscription have been penalized. On December 28, 2024, in Thuwanna Wadi Town, Thaton Township, Mon State, ten residents, including the local administrator, were arrested for voicing their opposition to the junta's forced conscription on social media.¹⁴ The insecurity and uncertainty of the current situation have posed numerous challenges for people in Burma who want to avoid involvement in the politics and brutality of the war.

The lack of control civilians feel over their lives has also resulted in significant mental health challenges, with many enduring anxiety, depression, and trauma from violent combat. Families live in constant anguish over their loved ones' fates, while communities are left devastated as opportunities and futures are stolen."¹⁵

In the place of men or women who are not home during the inspections by the junta, other members of the family, including the elderly, are forced to take their place and join the military. Compounding the stress of the situation is the fear of retaliation if families challenge or refuse the junta's demands. The forced conscription effort has also led to worsening inequality in the service sector, where children are being made to work to earn an income in place of their family members who have been forced to fight.

According to HURFOM, a 21-year-old woman from the Tanintharyi Region fled her village after receiving a military draft notice. She had been supporting her family by working as a teacher. She now lives in hiding in a border town, unable to continue her work or reunite with her family. Forced conscription is not just a military policy—it is a direct attack on families and communities, particularly for women.

The forced enlistment of young men, and occasionally women, has resulted in numerous families being deprived of their primary earners. In many of these communities, young adults typically play a crucial role by generating income, helping with farming tasks, looking after younger siblings, and caring for elderly members. Their abrupt absence disrupts the family dynamic and pressures those who remain.¹⁶

¹⁴ [January 2025 Monthly Overview](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2025

¹⁵ [APHR Denounces Myanmar's Forced Conscription of Youth, Calls for Urgent International Action](#), ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, 19 December 2024

¹⁶ [Forced to Enlist](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, December 2024

Photo: *The military junta's forced conscription campaign in Mon State is escalating as local authorities, including village and ward administrators, ramp up recruitment efforts for the 11th batch of military training.*

Credit: HURFOM



According to HURFOM:

“More underage children are now working at restaurants, tea shops, bars, bike repair shops, and grocery stores. Due to the political crisis, prices have rapidly increased, creating gaps in the labour market. In Mawlamyine, Mon State, more and more violations of child labour between the ages of 12 and 16 have been found, and their wages are being exploited by the service industry.”¹⁷

There have also been reports of young people being killed while training to be in the military following forced enlistment. Ko Latt, a young man aged 27 and recruited by the junta in March 2024, lost his life in their custody.¹⁸ Upon friends and family viewing the body, they described seeing blood around his face, suggesting he had been beaten. The military has denied any involvement.

According to the youth-led group, the National Youth Congress, findings from their report, *“Exposing Abuses and Ending Exploitation: Combating Forced Recruitment of Young People in Myanmar,”* indicated that the majority of the men and women enlisting in the Myanmar Armed Forces are by forced recruitment (560 incidents out of 886), in addition to coercive recruiting (260 incidents) and lastly followed by abductions (66 incidents).¹⁹

¹⁷ [Forced to Fight](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 7 May 2024

¹⁸ [Myanmar Junta Blamed for Muslim Conscript's Death](#), the Irrawaddy, 5 April 2024

¹⁹ [Exposing Abuses and Ending Exploitation: Combating Forced Recruitment of Young People in Myanmar](#),” The National Youth Congress

While the rate of women enlisted remains comparatively low to men, this has not lessened the impacts and concerns. In January 2025 alone, junta forces arrested over 100 civilians, including children and pregnant women.²⁰ The names of married women have also been included in the list of those eligible for recruitment, even though the service law states they are exempt.²¹ HURFOM received testimony from a woman in Mawlamyine, Mon State, who shared:

“The [junta] is aggressively trying to take as many young people as possible, forcing families to provide three youths per ward. In some cases, where no males are left in households, women are taken. Militia groups are going door to door, threatening people.”²²

In another case, on the night of December 28th, 2024, the military junta raided homes under the pretense of guest list inspections and arrested five young women in Thaton Township, Mon State. The women were then forcibly taken to a military training camp, representing a concerning escalation in the regime’s forced conscription practices.²³ The women, aged 20 to 25, were taken into custody late at night. Residents claim that junta soldiers examined their phones, using any politically sensitive material they found as grounds for the arrests.²⁴

There has been strict enforcement of movement restrictions, which have been detrimental to those trying to leave the country legally. Those between the ages of enlistment are being denied any form of exit by air²⁵ and are closely monitored through various junta-run checkpoints. This has exacerbated fears and anxieties over the junta’s presence, which has already infiltrated communities with raids and looting, as well as arbitrary arrests.

There have also been long-lasting impacts on families that are faced with economic hardship and depend on the joint labour of their husbands and sons to support their livelihoods. Many women must now take on new responsibilities, in addition to those they have already transcended since the attempted coup, including managing their households and maintaining an income with very few jobs available. As noted by HURFOM in their Voice Up series, *“This forced recruitment policy is hitting women and children the hardest. Fewer working family members force many mothers and wives to take on exhausting, low-paying labour to survive. Some families borrow money, while others reduce meals or pull their children out of school to help with work.”²⁶*

The implications of the junta’s forced conscription law have had impacts on the labour market, women, and children and have only fueled the displacement and crisis by further exploiting vulnerable groups.

²⁰ [February 2025 Monthly Overview](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2025

²¹ [Forced Conscription in Myanmar: Stop Sending My Sisters to the Bombs](#), The Diplomat, 26 February 2025

²² [Forced to Enlist](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, December 2024

²³ [January 2025 Monthly Overview](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2025

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ [Myanmar junta authorities prevent young adults from leaving the country by air](#), Radio Free Asia, September 8, 2024

²⁶ [Voice Up Volume 2, Issue 1: 5 December 2024 - March 2025](#), Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 19 March 2025

Gendered Impacts of the Forced Conscription Law

The junta's forced conscription law directly undermines the freedom and protection of women and girls in Burma. Historically, the junta has used gendered violence, including rape and sexual assault, to isolate and terrorize women. Patterns of systematic violence and conflict-related sexual violence have been well-documented by ethnic women's organizations that have repeatedly called for an end to military impunity.

The lack of consequences that the junta has faced for their crimes against women has only emboldened them to commit more. If forcibly conscripted, the risks women and girls face are significant. The military has consistently moved to limit protections for victims of sexual violence by their troops through the 2008 military-drafted Constitution, which essentially bars the regime from being held accountable.

Background on Gender Inequality in Burma

The junta has repeatedly blocked and delayed attempts to strengthen legal mechanisms to protect women. Members of the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party posed significant disruptions in advancing the proposed Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women law in 2019.

The law was an attempt at a meaningful step forward in trying to advance protection for survivors of violence and pathways to accountability. However, there were inadequacies in the draft, including problematic language such as a lack of clear and concise definition of terms such as sexual violence, rape and consent.²⁷ Ultimately, the law was never passed or enforced, signifying yet another setback for advancing gender equality in the country.

Further, under the democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD), strides towards ending patriarchy and advancing gender equality also stalled.²⁸

Since the failed coup in February 2021, violence against women has increased²⁹ with all domestic pathways towards justice wholly eroded by the junta, which has stacked the courts and legal system with supporters

²⁷ [Procedural and Substantive Suggestions for the Proposed Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women Law](#), the Women's League of Burma, February 2019

²⁸ [Women's Participation in Politics Undermined by the NLD](#), The Irrawaddy, 9 May 2019

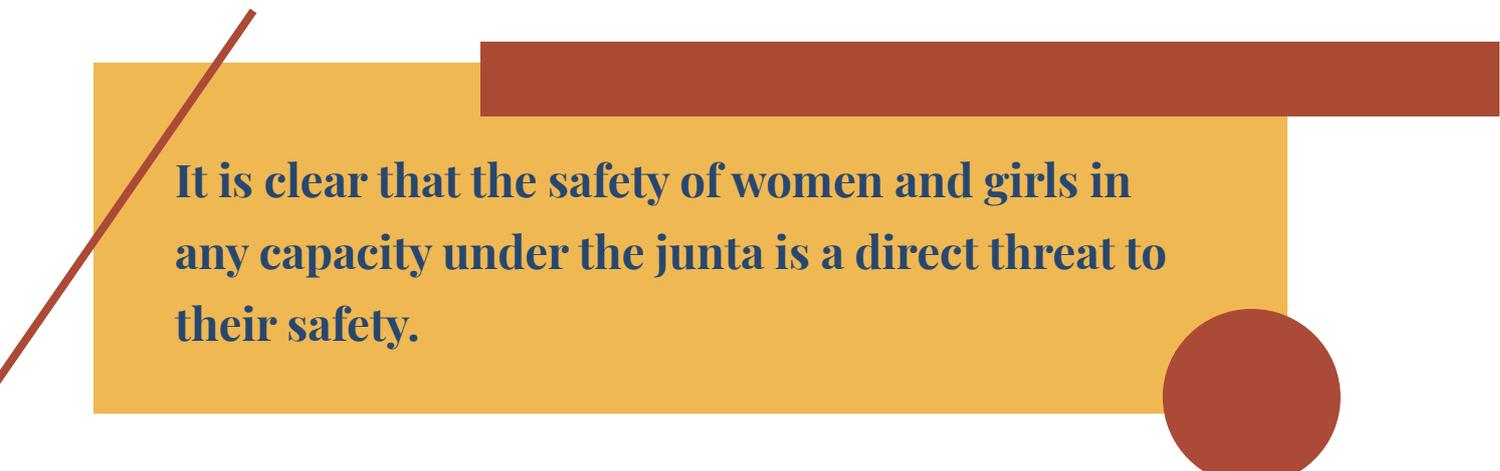
²⁹ [Over 660 Women Killed by Myanmar Junta Forces Since Coup](#), The Irrawaddy, 6 December 2023

of their authoritarian agenda. There is overwhelming evidence which makes clear that women and girls are not safe in the presence of armed soldiers, and thus, being forced to enlist in the regime poses serious concerns over their safety.

For example, in junta-backed prisons, female political prisoners were beaten during crackdowns in February 2024, including being hit with slingshots.³⁰ In a separate incident documented by HURFOM, women were once again met with violence when they protested the neglect of an injured inmate in June 2024 in Kyaikmayaw Central Prison in Mon State. The guards subsequently beat the women and separated them in the following days.

ND-Burma member, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) has also provided evidence that women are facing high rates of sexual violence, noting: *“Since the junta’s attempted coup on February 1, 2021, women, children, people of diverse sexual orientation, as well as men, have been facing sexual violence from soldiers, policemen, prison authorities, and affiliates of the junta all over the country.”*³¹

Therefore, as indicated in both of these cases and the many more instances that go unreported, it is clear that the safety of women and girls in any capacity under the junta is a direct threat to their safety.



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³⁰ [Female political prisoners brutally beaten in Mandalay’s Obo Prison](#), Myanmar Now, 14 February 2024

³¹ [Women Subjected to Sexual Violence during the Spring Revolution under the Military Coup](#), The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners 1 March 2024

Risks Facing Women and Girls if Forcibly Conscripted

Women are being abducted from their homes, workplaces, and even while travelling. Many are being arrested without explanation and are later forcibly conscripted. Women forced into military service face significant risks of sexual violence, harassment, and abuse. Families fear for their daughters' safety, aware of the military's history of gender-based violence. In addition, when security forces conducted door-to-door raids for conscription, if they fail to find young men at home, women and girls are taken instead. Several young women have been abducted directly from their homes, leaving families devastated and fearful.

According to ND-Burma member, the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), if women and young girls are forcibly recruited into the military, they may face several risks and challenges; women and girls can be victims of sexual, gender based violence and abuse. They also face a high risk of forced labor, including being forced to cook and clean for soldiers, carry heavy loads, and transport military supplies and information. Another direct impact is the threat of front-line combat, forcibly sending them into combat zones and using them as human shields.

The following are additional concerns and risks for women and young girls if forcibly conscripted into the military junta:

Sexual Violence

The military's use of sexual violence as a weapon of war puts conscripted women at even greater risk. Last year, women's organizations condemned the junta's announcement to enlist women and alerted the public of several dangers to their well-being, including:

“Women who will be forcibly recruited will be exposed to rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and other brutal forms of sexual violence, as well as conflict-related sexual violence, that the military has long perpetrated.”³²

This warning must be taken seriously, as there are no guarantees for women's safety within the military junta. Several cases further highlight the risk.

³² [Women Organizations' Joint-Statement on Conscription Law by the Junta in Myanmar](#), Sisters to Sisters, 9 March 2024.

In Kawkaareik, Karen State, at least five young women were forcibly taken from a university dormitory and sent to a military training site, where they were forced to cook and provide logistical support for the troops. Reports suggest some experienced sexual violence, according to HURFOM.

ND-Burma member the Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU) observed that women and girls facing challenges in leaving the country and often join resistance forces in the jungles, where they are subject to sexual and emotional abuse. The Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO) also shared the concern over groups of girls and women who are recruited into the military may face discrimination throughout the recruitment process and on the training grounds.

They may also encounter **sexual violence and harassment**, be **perceived as sex workers**, experience various **forms of sexual exploitation**, be **forced to participate in entertainment**, and **face health risks** associated with women. Additionally, they might **endure forced labour, carry weapons such as mines, under go unequal training methods, face mental insecurity, and lack adequate protection**.

Women also face a lack of privacy in militarized conditions. During military training, sleeping and bathing areas must be separate for men and women. If these are combined, women will be objectified and forced to entertain the male combatants, which would be distressing for women.

Furthermore, this situation may cause both physical and mental harm to them. When women are made to serve in the military, they can experience mental distress, fear, and uncertainty about the future. If they are sent to the front-lines, they may face more significant risks of injury and even death due to disparities in physical anatomies.

Human Trafficking

As women increasingly try to flee, human trafficking also poses a significant risk for women and girls. With many trying to leave the country, women are susceptible to schemes which promise jobs outside of Burma, only to find themselves trafficked without any access to pathways to protect them. Members of the LGBTQI community are also at risk of sexual exploitation and further discrimination by the junta.³³

The Tavoyan Women's Union shared that there are reports of women and girls being trafficked abroad by so-called 'labour agencies' promising to find work for them in Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Dubai, and China. They are misled and in reality, once they accept the 'offers' find themselves living in hiding and facing various hardships and difficulties.

³³ [Myanmar's Women Face Significant Risks From Junta Conscription Drive](#), The Diplomat, 7 July 2024

Similarly, countless people have been arrested in their residences and workplaces, including the people who have been trafficked. Moreover, it is known from young people who were arrested and released that both young women and young men who were arrested in their respective countries were returned to the junta and sent to military training by the junta.

The Ta'ang Women's Organization added that in the aftermath of the failed coup, women have faced increased gender-based insecurity, mental distress, life-threatening situations, and unhealthy living conditions. The forced conscription puts them at additional risk of being exploited as sex workers, facing threats, being coerced without consent, and being used as prostitutes at any time. Additionally, there may be attempts to silence or erase data regarding the various forms of violence and abuse. There is a lack of complaint mechanisms and institutions to address and resolve these issues.

Trauma and Distress

Families live in constant fear of their daughters being taken. Parents face the impossible choice of hiding their daughters, fleeing their homes, or sending them into military service. Entire villages have emptied as families flee to protect their daughters from forced conscription.

Young women report experiencing anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, especially those who have been forcibly conscripted or are in hiding. As noted by HURFOM in their report, *Forced to Enlist*, the psychological toll of forced conscription cannot be overlooked, with many *“experiencing severe anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Women who are conscripted face additional challenges, including sexual harassment and assault within the military ranks.”*³⁴

According to HURFOM, a group of women and children from a village in the Tanintharyi region were held hostage by the military in a cruel and strategic attempt by the junta to force their male relatives to enlist. The women faced threats of violence, and the children were deprived of food and water until the men agreed to join the military. This tactic has become increasingly prevalent in the region as the junta struggles to maintain control. These incidents underscore the extreme measures taken by the junta to enforce conscription in Tanintharyi, employing violence and threats to subjugate the local population.

Young people, especially those from ethnic communities, have faced disproportionate impacts from the junta's policies. Many have been forced to abandon their education and livelihoods to escape conscription, leading to a lost generation of youth who are deprived of opportunities for a better future.

³⁴ [Forced to Enlist](#), the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, December 2024

As documented by HURFOM, in one harrowing case, a 19-year-old Karen woman was forcibly conscripted while working in her family's fields. She was taken to a military camp where she was subjected to physical and psychological abuse before being forced to serve as a combatant.³⁵

Furthermore, the number of young people who develop mental disorders, use drugs, have depression, and commit suicide has also increased significantly. Women and girls are also more likely to experience violent situations, said the Tavoyan Women's Union.

Arbitrary Arrest

Junta forces frequently arrested villagers while they were returning from their farms or travelling between villages. Initially detained as porters, women and girls were later forced to carry ammunition and weapons alongside men. In several cases, they were even coerced into walking ahead of military columns as human shields on the front-lines—especially in conflict areas of Karen State and the Tanintharyi Region.

These brutal tactics illustrate the junta's indiscriminate and exploitative conscription policies, further exacerbating fear, displacement, and hardship among women and their families in conflict-affected regions. In a case by HURFOM in Thaton, Mon State, two sisters, aged 19 and 22, were forcibly taken by junta forces at night. Their parents were given no information about their whereabouts. The family later learned they had been sent to a military training camp.

Some young girls have gone missing without a trace. There have also been cases of young women being arrested by the military junta in shopping malls without any reason, as confirmed by the Tavoyan Women's Union.

Displacement & Migration

Many families have chosen to flee their villages rather than allow their daughters to be taken by the junta to serve in the military. Young women are being smuggled to Thailand or other safe locations, leaving behind broken families and communities. This has created further uncertainty over the conditions the young women face while being transported and what their futures will look like in the future.

There are risks of being detected while fleeing, including being deported into junta custody or sexual exploitation. Under these circumstances, there is no guarantee of safety, as families have very little control yet feel they have no choice but to protect their daughters from being forced to the front-lines.

Education and Work Opportunities Disrupted and Denied

Young women who once had bright futures in education or careers are now in hiding, fleeing, or being conscripted against their will. To enforce conscription, the junta has formed local militia groups, forcing civilians—including young women—to work for them under threats of violence.

Education pathways have already been severely undermined since the coup as schools are frequent targets in the junta's airstrikes. Despite the desires of young people to study and expand their educational opportunities, they are being denied the chance to move forward, due to conflict and risk their lives in a war against democracy that has threatened their safety and survival.

Women who have occupied jobs as teachers and educators are also now being threatened to leave their jobs to fight for the junta. Other livelihood possibilities have become virtually impossible and inaccessible as conflict intensifies across the borderlands and Burma's various States and regions.

All kinds of military organizations are male-centered structures, and women face discrimination, abuse, and oppression. The Ta'ang Women's Organization reported that they may be forced to work harder, which can lead to mental insecurity and physical harm, and there is often a lack of safety for women. Additionally, women may sacrifice their life security by missing out on educational and other advancement opportunities.

Education pathways have already been severely undermined since the coup as schools are frequent targets in the junta's airstrikes. Despite the desires of young people to study and expand their educational opportunities, they are being denied the chance to move forward, due to conflict and risk their lives in a war against democracy that has threatened their safety and survival.

Conclusion

The forced conscription of women and girls is not just a military tactic—it is an act of systematic oppression and gender-based violence. This policy has left families devastated, communities in crisis, and young women robbed of their futures. The international community must act now to stop this ongoing atrocity. Women and girls in Burma deserve protection, justice, and a future free from fear and forced conscription. Further, their enlistment is a grave human rights violation that requires immediate international attention.

The situation in Burma remains uncertain, with the potential for further deterioration as the junta continues its efforts to consolidate power through force and repression. Therefore, continued documentation and advocacy are essential to keep the international community informed and engaged in addressing the ongoing crisis.

As evidenced by ND-Burma members, the impacts of the forced conscription, particularly on women, have been detrimental. The junta is desperate amid ongoing losses on the battlefield and decreasing morale within its various battalions. The military remains deeply unpopular inside the country as it continually seeks to advance its self-interests and a lavish military budget that overlooks the need for humanitarian assistance and civilian protection.

Their actions are no surprise to the people of Burma, who have been vocal in their resistance against military rule. Even so, in all their cowardice, the junta has resorted to pushing those they routinely punish to the front-lines of a losing battle they are responsible for waging.

The backsliding on fundamental rights and freedoms is of concern nationally but especially for ethnic women and girls whose rights have consistently been undermined in Burma. However, what remains unmistakable is the unwavering commitment that women have demonstrated throughout history. Their leadership has transcended since the attempted coup as they continue to resist not only the military but also patriarchal values and misogyny.

In line with calls for a federal democracy, women have asserted that the future of Burma must also include gender equality. These must be achieved simultaneously to ensure that all people, regardless of gender, are granted the same protections, freedoms, and fundamental rights.

Women human rights defenders continue to advocate for gender equality and reliable justice pathways for victims of violence in Burma. They must be listened to, and their calls must be enacted into policies and laws that aim to protect all women.

International organizations should collaborate with community-based organizations that provide community services to obtain accurate information and offer support. They must also pressure the military junta to stop the forced recruitment effort.

Further, we urge the UN to investigate and take effective action or objection by protecting young people who are fleeing the terrorist actions, including forced conscription, by the military junta. We also call on international organizations to provide funding and increase humanitarian assistance to grassroots organizations that are actively working on human rights and women's rights in order to truly understand what is happening in Burma.

ND-Burma members strongly urge the international community, including the United Nations and partners, to:

- **Condemn the forced recruitment of young men, women and girls and classify it as a war crime and crime against humanity.**
- **Implement targeted sanctions on junta officials responsible for enforcing forced conscription.**
- **Support emergency humanitarian aid for displaced women and families fleeing forced recruitment.**
- **Demand international accountability through UN investigations and legal mechanisms.**

Recommendations

To the International Community

1. Impose Targeted Sanctions

Countries and international bodies should expand existing sanctions to target individuals and entities responsible for enforcing forced conscription. These sanctions should include asset freezes, travel bans, and other measures to pressure the military to cease perpetrating human rights violations.

2. Support Legal Action through International Courts

The International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international legal bodies should be empowered to investigate and prosecute those responsible for forced conscription and related abuses. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should consider referring the situation in Burma to the ICC for investigation.

3. Enhance Diplomatic Pressure

Diplomatic efforts should be intensified, particularly within regional organizations such as ASEAN, to hold the Burmese military accountable for its actions. Countries with influence over the junta should be encouraged to leverage their relationships to push for an end to forced conscription and other violations.

4. Support Civil Society Organizations

International donors and organizations should increase funding and technical assistance to civil society organizations (CSOs) in Burma and neighboring countries. They are crucial in documenting abuses, supporting victims, and advocating for justice.

5. Ensure Humanitarian Aid and Protection for Displaced Populations

The international community should work to ensure that those who have been subjected to forced conscription efforts receive adequate humanitarian assistance and protection. This includes support for refugees and undocumented migrants in neighbouring countries, as well as those displaced within Burma.

To Donors

1. Expand Documentation Efforts

Local human rights organizations are encouraged to continue documenting human rights violations and to receive support in their capacity to do so. This includes field work and documentation on all atrocities and those related to forced conscription. They should focus on collecting detailed testimonies, case studies, and data on the impact of these policies. This documentation will be crucial for future legal actions and advocacy efforts.

2. Strengthen Collaboration Among Human Rights Organizations

Collaboration between local and international human rights organizations should be enhanced to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to documenting and addressing the Junta's abuses. This includes sharing resources, expertise, and information to amplify the impact of their work.

3. Increase Awareness and Advocacy Campaigns

Raising awareness of the situation in Burma through global advocacy campaigns is essential to maintaining international pressure on the junta. These campaigns should focus on the stories of those affected by forced conscription, highlighting the human impact of the military's policies.

4. Monitor and Report on the Long-Term Impact

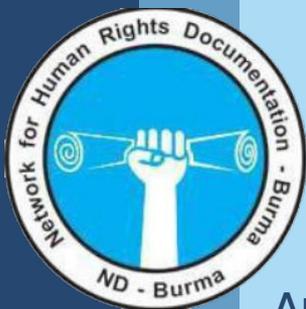
It is essential to monitor and report on the long-term effects of forced conscription on individuals, families, and communities. This includes tracking these policies' psychological, economic, and social consequences to inform future interventions and support efforts.

5. Advocate for Comprehensive International Intervention

The international community should be urged to take a more comprehensive approach to addressing the crisis in Burma, including through diplomatic, legal, and humanitarian channels. This may involve advocating for peace negotiations, supporting transitional justice mechanisms, and providing long-term assistance for recovery and reconciliation.

The Enlistment of Women:

*Gendered Impacts of Forced
Conscription by the Military Junta*



April 2025

