



အမျိုးသမီးများအဖွဲ့ချုပ် (ပြန်ဟန်ငံ) WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA

Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women “Access to Justice, End Impunity”

25 Nov 2019 (Monday)

Activists around the world have been organizing 16 Days of Activism activities annually to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women which falls today, on 25 November. This year in 2019, the Women's League of Burma, together with its two members the Lahu Women's Organization and Shan Women's Action Network, collaborated with its partner organization Keng Tung Youth Centre to host an event, under the theme “Access to Justice, End Impunity,” at Tai Li hall, Keng Tung township.

Since the time WLB was founded, we have celebrated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in different areas of our member organizations. WLB is practicing a zero tolerance policy by constantly advocating to international governments and officials; publishing justice-related analyses; and organizing campaigns in order to ensure the total Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The number of women and girls who have experienced rape and other forms of sexual violence all over Myanmar has been increasing.

In one such incident that happened to a mentally-ill girl from Hoya village in Loikaw, though the case was brought to court with charges under Article 377/376, the perpetrator was only sentenced to seven years in prison. This is an example of an unjust verdict.

According to WLB's 2018-2019 record of cases of violence against women, there were a total of 238 cases of sexual violence where no justice was received, but impunity was given. Including other forms of violations of human rights, many women and children have been affected and many lives lost.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a statement that there were 1,405 cases of sexual violence in 2016, 1,583 cases in 2017, 619 cases in 2018, and cases continue to occur in 2019. Additionally, there were 619 (60.94%) child rape cases in 2016, 897 (63.84%) cases in 2017, 1028 (64.93%) cases in 2018, and 419 (67.68%) cases by mid-2019.

In current conflict areas, including Shan State, Kachin State, and Rakhine State, sexual violence cases committed by authorities and those in power have not been brought to justice and the perpetrators have been enjoying impunity. Hence, the possibility to bring justice for women victims still seems far away and in fact, it appears as if violence against women is encouraged. Despite the efforts of WLB and its member organizations to publish cases of violence with evidence, the cases are still considered controversial. For instance, with regard to an incident



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which happened on 10 May 2019 at Nam San township in Northern Shan State, where two Myanmar Tamataw soldiers raped a woman, no justice was done.

The Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women Bill (PoVAW Bill) has been taking too long to be enacted as a law and the current bill appears to be unable to actually protect diverse women from all forms of violence. In particular, the bill does not take into account women's voices or their concerns. In addition, those who were initially involved in drafting the bill and experts working in the justice system and in sexual violence were not able to provide advice during the bill editing process, nor were they informed about the key changes.

Moreover, women who are trying to bring truth and justice forward and human rights protectors have been threatened, arrested, and assaulted and women who are seeking justice have often been bribed to close their cases.

For the reasons stated above, WLB urge authorities and officials as follows:

- To take action systematically and effectively to ensure independent, unbiased, and just decisions on incidences of violence against women;
- To bring justice in cases of violence during armed conflicts and to end impunity;
- To amend the existing laws that oppress and violate women and to pass laws that protect all women who are residing in Myanmar;
- For the international community to take effective action against perpetrators who have committed sexual violence, to call for effective economic sanctions, and to support rehabilitation of survivors;
- And for effective action to be taken against all military officials, government officials, and security personnel who have committed violence, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence that are considered crimes according to international laws.

WLB will continue collaborating on gender equality, building a federal democratic union, ending the civil war, bringing justice and eliminating violence against women for long-awaited peace, with our theme this year for 16 Days of Activism as "Access to Justice, End Impunity."

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