

Burma – The important role of women in democracy



In the interview, Nang Moët Moët talks about the important role of women in and for democracy and explains how democracy can be built by the people.



My name is Nang Moët Moët and I have been working as Secretary General at Women’s League of Burma since 2019. This is an umbrella organisation that has been bringing together women’s political organisations from different parts of the country since 1999. Our vision is equality, democracy and the establishment of a federal democratic union.

Current situation in Burma

In Burma, we are currently facing so many crises and challenges. The Covid crisis in 2019 had a severe economic and psychological impact on our country. Shortly afterwards, there was a military coup and the military took power (on 1 February 2021). It is a nightmare. People are being arrested, killed or trying to flee to other countries. And then we experienced a terrible earthquake.



Nang Moët Moët

The role of women in society

Women make up 51 percent of the population and play a very significant role in the democracy movement. But women are politically underrepresented in Burma. Traditionally, men dominate and women’s participation is limited. The role of women must be given greater recognition in political discussions and policy-making. **Because if half the population is not represented, it is not a democracy.**

Women’s League of Burma

We work on various issues and have a large program. We offer training courses for young feminists, young political activists and leaders, for example in the areas of constitutionalism, gender democracy and federalism, thereby empowering them. We are also committed to ensuring that at least 30 percent of political offices are held by women.



Women’s League of Burma in action.

We support our member organisations in ensuring the survival of women and their children. In our current situation in Burma, many women suffer sexual violence and harassment by the military. We have a crisis centre, provide psychological and legal support, and document human rights violations.

Dangers

The biggest problem is air strikes. When air strikes occur, all services, schools and deliveries have to be postponed.

Democratic approach: The Burmese federalism approach

We want to give women and young people the opportunity to become more involved in political processes at the state, regional, district and federal levels. **We have, so to speak, different levels of democracy “from below”.** The central federal level is too distant and too dangerous. But the grassroots, regional and district levels are very close to us. They offer women the opportunity to get involved in such movements. Such grassroots democracy movements are processes of nation building; they are an opportunity.

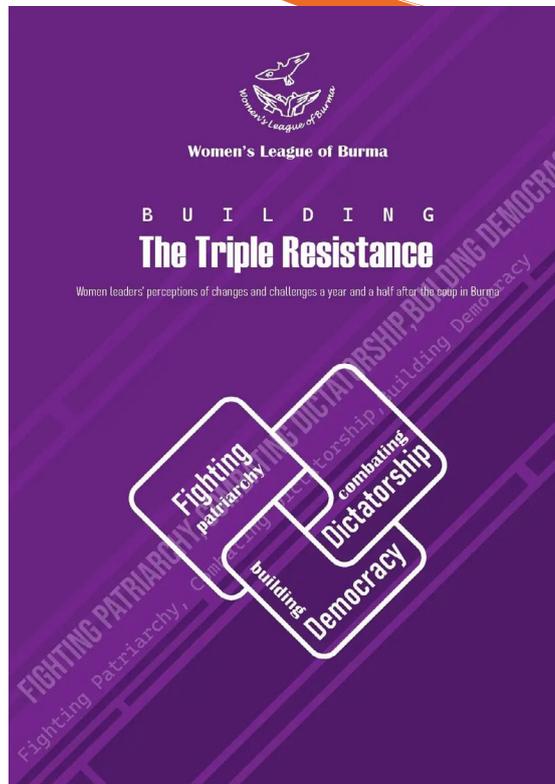
Democracy in Burma?

The problem of democracy in Burma will not be solved tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, because it is a long struggle. It is a difficult process to build a democracy from a movement. Democracy exists in other countries. So why not in Burma?

My vision for the future

My goal for the future of Burma is for women to be recognised from a very intersectional perspective: women like me, who are discriminated against and oppressed by their families, as citizens of Burma, as women who grew up in Burma, who belong to an ethnic minority, who come from a rural area and not from the city.

I want Burma to be peaceful and equal, not just democratic. Democracy does not automatically mean equality. My goal is democracy for all of us, for the people of Burma.



Demands of the Women's League of Burma.

I have not let challenges and attacks influence me because I have already been through a lot. I simply recognise what has happened to me, what challenges I face. I simply acknowledge it and try not to avoid the challenges or difficulties I face. That is where I draw my experience from.

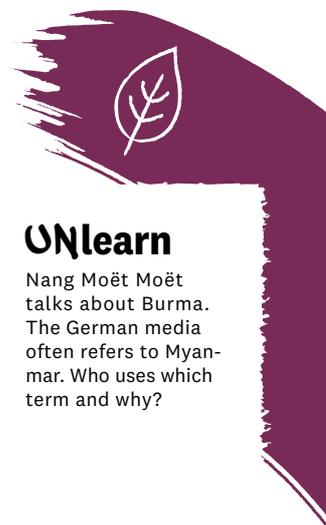
If my rights are threatened, yours are too

We all have an idea of what we want to do. So just go for it. I do what I do as long as I don't harm other people. That's how I proceed.

Our movement stands for democracy. Democracy for Burma does not only affect the people of Burma. **If my rights are violated, it also means that your rights are threatened.** So stay in touch and remember that the democracy movement around the world is also your movement.

Tasks

- 1) Assess how democracy can still take place in places where people are frequently exposed to air strikes.
- 2) Discuss the three quotes highlighted in bold and purple in small groups.



ONlearn

Nang Moët Moët talks about Burma. The German media often refers to Myanmar. Who uses which term and why?