



Karen Women's Organization (KWO)

Formal Message for "16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women" 2022

No One is Above the Law

25th November 2022

November 25th marks the "International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women". The theme chosen this year by women in our community is: "No one is above the law". This is a message of warning to the perpetrators of violence and it is a message of comfort to the victims of violence. Violence against women is a crime in the communities, and countries we live in. There are local, national, and international laws which clearly forbid violence against women and girls, and clearly state what penalties there are for those who break the law. Everyone is governed by these laws, no matter who they are.

Right now in our homeland, Kawthoolei, we all can see and feel the terrible military violence which the Burma Army is forcing upon women. So many of our sisters and mothers and children have been hurt, threatened or killed. So many thousands have been forced to flee from their homes and hide, and live in constant fear of violence. So much of what we have built up in our community has been broken. We are in great danger. These are war crimes, committed by the SAC junta and its soldiers. They have broken national and international laws and we want to remind everyone today that these men are not above the law. We will not be quiet about it. These men will be held accountable one day. They will be punished, detained, and shamed.

To the perpetrators of violence, we say to you, that you are not above the law. No matter who you are, powerful or powerless, soldier or civilian, if you abuse women and girls, if you are violent against us, if you break the law, you will be held to account. You will be charged and judged by the legal system. You will be punished by the community, the national justice system, and by the International Courts. When you are violent to women, you are breaking the law, and you will suffer the consequences.

To the victims of violence, we say to you, that the violence you have suffered is not your fault. You have a right, here and now and always, to be protected from violence, to live each day free of violence or the threat of violence. And you have the right to see the perpetrator of violence held accountable in the justice systems and by the community. No perpetrator is above the law. Laws apply to everyone equally. Both the powerless and the powerful are regulated by the law. No person, no soldier, no leader, none of them has a right to abuse you. If someone has abused you, report it, speak out. And the justice system has duties to ensure you are protected and that the perpetrator is held accountable.

Today marks the beginning of the Annual 16 Days of Activism Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women. **KWO invites everyone** to take some action to stop violence against women. We all have duties and powers and everyone can do something to help stop the violence against women in Burma and in the world. Join a boycott, write to your government and encourage them to refer the SAC junta to the International Criminal Courts, report incidents of violence, give practical support to victims of violence, make a donation to a women's organization providing services to victims, educate yourself and your family. Show solidarity with us, make us stronger, and help to stop violence against women.

In solidarity,

Executive Committee
KWO