

From: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/06/committing-womens-rights-during-burmas-peace-process>

Committing to Women's Rights During Burma's Peace Process

By Sarah Taylor

Last week in Burma's commercial capital, Rangoon, the [Ta-ang Women's Organization](#) had to cancel the launch of a report because the authorities deemed its subject matter too sensitive. The report, "Trained to Torture," documents Burmese military abuses perpetrated since 2011, including sexual violence. Venues refused to host the group, and copies of the report were seized by authorities.



EXPAND

A woman is silhouetted as she stands outside her hut near the bank of Yangon River
March 18, 2012.

When the Burmese government meets this week with an international women's rights treaty committee, it should make clear how it is going to stop this type of discrimination. This should include how it will protect women's rights and ensure that women's voices are central to peace efforts with ethnic armed groups and to Burma's political life.

Burma, which ratified the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (CEDAW) in [1997](#), is obligated to uphold women's rights, and provide accountability when these rights are violated. This includes when sexual violence is committed during conflict and when women are prevented from participating in politics. Under the treaty, national governments – including Burma's new government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy – should take specific measures to ensure "[women's meaningful participation](#) in processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts."

Burmese women are not peripheral to the decades of conflict from which this country is slowly emerging. They have [fought in ethnic armed groups](#), have [mobilized for peace](#), have been imprisoned for their politics, and have been [targeted for sexual violence](#) for decades. Abuses against women continue in conflict zones, especially Kachin and Shan States.

Although Burma's political transition should allow more space for women's participation in public life, to date the new government has not made much progress. Indeed, a new committee appointed by the government in June to oversee the peace process, the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, [has no women](#) – despite the government pledging 30 percent representation in peace talks. This follows an unfortunate trend: Since 2012, women have been under-represented in Burma's peace efforts, and on most peace process committees and bodies of both government and ethnic armed groups, [women have been completely excluded](#). In only one case has women's participation approached being significant rather than token, when two women participated on the 14-member [Senior Delegation](#), the ceasefire negotiation team for the ethnic armed groups.

Burmese women are fighting for their voices to be heard. Will the Burmese government, and the leaders of the Burmese military and ethnic armed groups, listen to what they have to say?