



ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

in Myanmar in the Aftermath of the 2021 Coup D'état



ENDURING SILENCE

The testimonies of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) have historically been marginalized by fear, social stigma, and pervasive impunity.

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Analysis of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Myanmar in the
Aftermath of the 2021 Coup D'état

Equality Myanmar

This report is published in commemoration of the
International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict,
observed annually on 19 June.



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About Equality Myanmar

Equality Myanmar (EQMM) is a prominent nongovernmental human rights organization dedicated to fostering a culture of respect for human rights, justice, and accountability across Myanmar.

Founded in 2000 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, as the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), the organization rebranded to Equality Myanmar in 2013. This shift coincided with relocating its headquarters and primary operations inside Myanmar to better serve communities directly.

EQMM conducts a wide array of impactful activities, including:

- Human rights awareness raising and education programs (such as multi-day trainings, thematic workshops on topics like community organizing, advocacy, land rights, and freedoms of expression/assembly/association)

- Documentation of human rights violations

- National and international advocacy, lobbying, and campaign coordination

- Emergency support for vulnerable communities

The organization collaborates with diverse local civil society groups, educators, activists, and representatives from various linguistic, cultural, and ethnic communities. Its programs extend to all states and regions of Myanmar, often incorporating materials in Burmese and ethnic languages to address information gaps.

Since the February 2021 military coup, EQMM has adapted significantly to the challenging environment. It has shifted much of its work to online platforms for continuity and safety, while continuing select in-person activities in border areas along the India-Myanmar and Thailand-Myanmar frontiers.

Vision

To realize a peaceful, tolerant, and federal democratic society where the inherent dignity and human rights of all individuals are upheld.

Mission

To empower the people of Myanmar to claim their fundamental rights, seek justice, and catalyze systemic change.

For the most up-to-date details on their ongoing work, reports (including recent organizational updates), and resources, visit their official website at equalitymyanmar.org. The organization remains committed to its mission amid Myanmar's prolonged crisis.

Acknowledgements

The production of this report was made possible through the invaluable collaboration and unwavering commitment of data collectors, contributors, and interviewees. We extend our deepest gratitude to the survivors, witnesses, and family members who shared their experiences while operating under significant personal risk within junta-controlled territories, liberated zones, and border regions.

We formally recognize the profound challenges and systemic barriers these individuals overcome daily. Their courage is fundamental to this research, and their dedication to documenting these realities is both extraordinary and essential.

Our sincere thanks also go to the partner organizations and individual advocates who remain steadfast in their pursuit of human rights in Myanmar. Their consistent support has been vital to the advancement of our collective mission.

Furthermore, we are immensely grateful to the European Union for its sustained investment in research concerning conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) since the 2021 military coup. Their support has been instrumental in the development and publication of these findings.

Finally, we pay tribute to the resilience of human rights defenders and civil society organizations across Myanmar, with particular emphasis on women's rights organizations. Their tireless, high-risk advocacy serves as a cornerstone of inspiration and provides Equality Myanmar and the broader human rights community with the fortitude to persevere in this critical work.

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Foreword

Against the backdrop of protracted conflict and political repression in Myanmar, the testimonies of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) have historically been marginalized by fear, social stigma, and pervasive impunity.

This situational report, titled Enduring the Silence - အားတင်းကာ တောင့်ခံနေရသည့် နှုတ်ဆိုတံတို့များ is the culmination of extensive efforts by Equality Myanmar to systematically document these grave human rights violations following the 2021 military coup.

The findings detailed herein reveal distinct patterns of abuse utilized as instruments of warfare, social control, and state-sponsored terror.

In presenting this evidence, we address both the unprecedented scale of human suffering and the remarkable resilience of those who have endured these atrocities.

This publication serves as a formal mandate to dismantle the culture of silence; it advocates for comprehensive accountability, survivor-centric justice, and a transition toward a legal framework where dignity and human rights supersede authoritarian brutality.

We urge national and international stakeholders to utilize this data to drive decisive action, ensuring that all violations are meticulously recorded, perpetrators are held to account, and survivors receive the necessary redress and support for their recovery.

Equality Myanmar remains steadfast in its commitment to elevating these testimonies until substantive justice is achieved and a peaceful, inclusive Myanmar is established on a foundation of universal human rights.

Equality Myanmar

List of Acronyms

ASEAN

Association of
Southeast Asian Nations

CAT

The Convention Against
Torture and Other Cruel,
Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment or Punishment

CDM

Civil Disobedience Movement

CEDAW

The Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination Against Women

CRSV

Conflict-related sexual violence

CSO

Civil society organization

ERO

Ethnic resistance organization

FFM

Independent International
Fact-Finding
Mission on Myanmar

GBV

Gender-based violence

ICC

International Criminal Court

ICL

International Criminal Law

ICTR

International Criminal
Tribunal for Rwanda

ICTY

International Criminal Tribunal
for the former Yugoslavia

IDP

Internally displaced people

IHL

International humanitarian law

IHRL

International human rights law

IIMM

Independent Investigative
Mechanism for Myanmar

IMT

The International Military
Tribunal at Nuremberg

IMTFE

The International Military
Tribunal for the Far East

LGBTQIA+

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender, Questioning,
Intersex, Asexual

MARA

Monitoring, Analysis
and Reporting Arrangements

NLD

National League for Democracy

NUG

National Unity Government

NUCC

National Unity Consultative Council

OHCHR

Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Human Rights

OSRSG-SVC

The Office of the UN
Special Representative of
the Secretary-General on
Sexual Violence in Conflict

PDF

People's Defence Forces

POM

People on the Move

PWD

Persons with Disabilities

SGBV

Sexual and gender-based violence

SGBV

United Nations Special
Representative of the
Secretary-General on
Sexual Violence in Conflict

UDHR

The Universal Declaration
of Human Rights

UN

The United Nations

UNHRC

United Nations
Human Rights Council

UNSCR

United Nations Security
Council Resolution

UNSC

United Nations Security Council

USDP

United Solidarity and Development Party

WHO

World Health Organization

WPS

Women, Peace, and Security

Methodology

This report uses a mixed-methods research design combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. Its findings are based on data covering the period from February 2021, when the Myanmar military seized power, to December 2025. The data cover incidents across Myanmar as well as in an area on the Thai side of the Myanmar–Thailand border.

To ensure conceptual clarity and consistency in the systematic identification of CRSV cases and the data collection process, EQMM developed a definition of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) based on definitions used by the United Nations agencies, academic institutions, and gender organizations. EQMM’s Documentation Team gathered primary data through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with survivors and witnesses. Secondary data were collected from media reports, research publications, and analyses produced by international, regional, and local rights-based organizations. EQMM documented 217 conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) cases involving 161 survivors and/or victims who experienced various forms of CRSV. Moreover, EQMM conducted Expert Interviews with three female human rights activists working on gender equality.

During the data analysis phase, quantitative data were analyzed to identify the frequency and distribution of CRSV incidents, examine the profiles of survivors and victims, assess the geographical distribution of incidents, and identify temporal trends. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore the context, severity, modalities, and patterns of CRSV. Information was cross-checked across different data sources and research methods to enhance the reliability and credibility of the findings.

Ethical considerations were integrated throughout the research process. Data collection was conducted with due regard for the safety and security of survivors, victims’ family members, witnesses, data collectors, and collaborators, particularly in conflict-affected and high-risk areas. Given the sensitive nature of CRSV, EQMM adopted a survivor-centered approach and adhered to the “Do No Harm” principle. Informed consent, confidentiality, risk identification and mitigation measures, including the anonymization of all personal information obtained from interviewees, were implemented to protect survivors and witnesses.

Limitations

One of the main purposes of this research is to highlight the situation of CRSV in Myanmar as an advocacy tool. At this point, several important limitations should be acknowledged. Accessibility challenges and underreporting due to connectivity constraints, including widespread internet shutdowns, security concerns, and fear of reprisals in conflict settings, may have resulted in incomplete documentation of cases. As such, the findings presented in this report should not be interpreted as representing the full scale of CRSV across Myanmar. Rather, they indicate documented figures, patterns, and trends based on available data collected during the reporting period and in the areas covered by this research.

Notably, no CRSV cases were documented in three of Myanmar’s 14 administrative areas, despite the increasing violence in the aftermath of the coup. However, this should not be interpreted as evidence that no CRSV incidents occurred in those areas. Rather, it may reflect limitations in access, documentation, and verification.

Moreover, only one CRSV survivor/victim from an area outside Myanmar, along the Myanmar–Thai border, was documented in this research. This should not be interpreted as indicating that only one CRSV incident linked to the post-coup conflict occurred outside Myanmar during the reporting period. Instead, it reflects the challenges associated with documenting cases in cross-border contexts.

Additionally, while secondary data analysis was part of this research, publicly available information on CRSV in post-coup Myanmar remains limited due to a range of factors, including security concerns, funding shortages, resource constraints, and connectivity challenges.

Reader Advisory

This report contains descriptions and analysis of serious human rights violations, including sexual violence, rape, gang rape, torture, and other forms of extreme physical and psychological abuse committed by armed groups, especially by the Myanmar military junta forces, in the context of armed conflict. Such content may be distressing or triggering for some readers, particularly survivors of CRSV or other forms of violence and torture.

These accounts are included not to sensationalize suffering, but to document violations, analyze patterns of abuse, and contribute to truth, accountability, and prevention. Every effort has been made to present the material with sensitivity and respect for survivors’ dignity and safety. Readers are advised to proceed with care and may choose to pause or skip sections as needed.

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from Equality Myanmar’s documentation and analysis of CRSV committed between February 2021 and December 2025. The findings are based on 217 verified CRSV incidents documented across different parts of Myanmar and one area on the Myanmar–Thailand border. These incidents involved 161 identified victims and/or survivors. Many victims and/or survivors experienced more than one form of sexual violence or multiple associated human rights violations.

The findings demonstrate the dire CRSV situation in post-coup Myanmar. Women and girls remain increasingly affected by CRSV in Myanmar. Of the 161 identified victims and survivors, 147 individuals, or 91 percent, were female. Among them, 39 were girls.

Approximately one in every four documented victims and/or survivors was a child. However, the findings show that CRSV is not confined to women and girls. Men, boys, and LGBTQIA+ persons were also subjected to different forms of sexual violence in conflict-related contexts. Male victims and/or survivors were identified, including three boys, who were identified, despite being a low number compared to the number of female victims and/or survivors. Eight victims and survivors were identified as having other gender identities.

The analysis of cases documented by different geographical areas reveals a strong concentration of CRSV in central Myanmar in the aftermath of the coup. Sagaing Region emerged as the most affected area, accounting for 38 percent of documented victims and survivors, followed by Mandalay Region and Magway Region. Significantly, a tremendous amount of violations were found in the Dry Zone, or Anya region, which had not historically experienced armed conflict before the 2021 coup. The emergence of widespread CRSV in these areas reflects the dramatic transformation of Myanmar’s conflict landscape and indiscriminate military attacks against the civilian population.

The findings further demonstrate a clear intensity of responsibility among the Myanmar military junta and its affiliated forces. 87.1 percent of documented violations were attributed to the Myanmar military and its affiliated forces. Local armed resistance groups, established after the 2021 coup, were implicated in 12 documented cases, while ethnic resistance organizations were identified in six cases.

Among the different forms of CRSV, rape was the most documented form in the post-coup context, accounting for 41 percent of all incidents. Gang rape constituted 27 percent of documented incidents, followed by sexual harassment at 28 percent and attempted rape at two percent. Collectively, rape and gang rape accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total documented incidents, which involved the most severe forms of sexual violence. Notably, all documented incidents of gang rape were attributed to members of the Myanmar

military junta and its affiliated forces.

Rape and gang rape mostly occurred during raids, military offensives, detention, interrogation, hostage-taking, and other situations in which perpetrators exercised overwhelming power over victims. Moreover, in numerous cases documented, sexual violence was used as a means of punishment or together with torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Women accused of supporting the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), providing assistance to People’s Defence Forces (PDFs), or participating in anti-coup activities were subjected to rape, gang rape, and sexualised torture while in military custody. In several documented cases, victims died as a result of torture and sexual violence.

LGBTQIA+ persons faced specific forms of vulnerability, too. Those forms include sexual violence, attempted rape, and sexual humiliation, especially in detention settings. In these cases, sexual violence was frequently linked to illegal punishment, coercion, torture, or discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQIA+ individuals were particularly vulnerable to sexualised forms of torture and degrading treatment while in custody.

Importantly, the report highlights that CRSV rarely occurs in isolation. Sexual violence was frequently accompanied by other serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest, abduction, detention, torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing. Among victims and survivors for whom associated violations could be identified, 40 individuals, or 27 percent, were reportedly killed following or in connection with acts of sexual violence. Many documented cases reveal a pattern in which victims were raped or gang raped before being killed, while perpetrators concealed, destroyed, or abandoned dead bodies to obstruct accountability and conceal evidence.

CRSV was often linked to enforced disappearance. Women detained by the Myanmar military were subjected to torture and sexual violence before their whereabouts were concealed from family members and communities. Additionally, sexual harassment was reported in detention centers, interrogation facilities, and police custody, while sexual exploitation was documented in situations of displacement, captivity, and humanitarian vulnerability. Women are subjected to being held hostage during battles and reported being pressured to exchange sexual access for food and other necessities with armed group members.

At this scale and severity of documented violations, access to justice remains extremely limited for survivors, either in Myanmar or exile. Survivors face additional barriers, including legal restrictions, financial constraints, and limited access to legal assistance. As a result, impunity remains one of the defining features of Myanmar’s current conflict situation.

This report manifests that the cases of sexual violence and the evidence described in this report go far beyond isolated acts of sexual violence. It demonstrates the existence of a

larger reality where sexual violence is enabled through the armed conflict, militarization, discrimination, and impunity. As it is stated in the report, five years after the coup, victims of such violence still suffer from the consequences of the violation of their rights in all aspects, including physical, psychological, social, and economic.

This report highlights that the human rights situation in Myanmar has been concerning for decades. Since the military coup of 1 February 2021, Myanmar has experienced one of the most severe deteriorations in its human rights situation in its modern history. The illegal coup and the military junta's atrocities triggered nationwide resistance, the expansion of armed conflict, and unprecedented levels of violence across the country. Areas that had never directly experienced armed conflict before the coup, particularly in central Myanmar, became one of the active conflict zones. Alongside killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and mass displacement, CRSV emerged as one of the most serious human rights concerns in post-coup Myanmar.

This report finally reminds that Myanmar's crisis is not confined to its own border when it comes to addressing human rights violations in a corner of the world. As a member of the international community, Myanmar has obligations to respect, uphold, and fulfill human rights under international law and international human rights standards. Vice versa, the international community has an obligation to help Myanmar bring justice for the survivors of human rights violations, including CRSV. The international community must take concrete actions to recognize and support the Myanmar people's efforts to hold the perpetrators of heinous human rights violations, including CRSV, accountable.

“It is imperative that the cycles of impunity are broken and the perpetrators of these appalling crimes face justice.”

Pramila Patten

The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict

01

Introduction

Myanmar had enjoyed an ostensible and fragile democracy from 2011 to 2015 under two successive quasi-civilian governments led by the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a military-backed political party largely composed of former military generals, and the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, a long-term political opposition led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, for 10 years until the Myanmar military staged the coup on 1 February 2021.

The human rights situation in Myanmar had already been serious for decades prior to the 2021 coup. Over the past five years, however, Myanmar has experienced one of the most severe deteriorations in human rights in recent global history, exacerbating the already distorted human rights situation.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as of January 2026, up to 22,000 political opponents, activists, journalists, and

other dissenting voices had been detained on politically motivated charges.¹ More than 3.6 million people have been internally displaced as military operations and aerial bombardments continue to affect civilian communities across multiple regions, compounded by the impacts of a major earthquake.² At the same time, millions of people require humanitarian assistance amid acute food insecurity and the deterioration of essential public services.³ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), an organization monitoring conflict globally, further reported that approximately 95,000 people had been killed in conflict-related violence following the 2021 military coup as of June 2026.⁴

Within this broader landscape of violence, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) has emerged as one of the gravest and dire human rights concerns in post-coup Myanmar.

Despite growing attention to human rights violations in Myanmar in the aftermath of the 2021 coup, significant gaps remain in available information on the figures, patterns, and details of human rights violations, particularly with respect to CRSV in Myanmar. Documentation challenges, access restrictions, security concerns, and underreporting continue to limit understanding of the scale and nature of violations. Consequently, systematic documentation and analysis remain essential for understanding trends, supporting survivors, informing advocacy, and contributing to future accountability efforts.

Furthermore, understanding CRSV in a society with a complicated history of conflict settings and social dimensions, like Myanmar, requires attention not only to incidents of sexual violence themselves but also to the broader conflict dynamics, social structure, and power relations that enable, condone, and reinforce such violations.

This report seeks to contribute to that effort. Drawing on 217 documented CRSV cases involving 161 victims and/or survivors between February 2021 and December 2025. This report, examines figures and patterns of violations, survivor profiles, geographical distribution, perpetrator profiles, and the link between CRSV and other human rights violations while recognizing that documented cases are likely to represent only a fraction of the actual scale of violations occurring on the ground.

This report, *Enduring Silence*, is the second installment in EQMM's ongoing efforts to monitor, document, and analyze CRSV in Myanmar.

¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, on the fifth anniversary of the military coup, Geneva, 30 January 2026*, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/statements/20260130-med-stmt-sr-situation-myanmar-en.pdf>

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Myanmar* (web page), available at <https://www.unocha.org/myanmar> (accessed Feb. 10, 2026).

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026* (New York and Geneva: United Nations, January 2026).

⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), "Myanmar Conflict Monitor," June 2026, <https://acleddata.com/myanmar-conflict-monitor/>

02

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

Understanding CRSV

Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV) is a broad conceptual framework in which multiple forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) may fall, particularly within a context that is directly or implicitly linked to armed conflict. Currently, there is no single globally accepted definition of CRSV. It is defined differently by scholarly and academic institutions depending on their mandates and areas of focus.

Conceptually, CRSV is underpinned by two main concepts: conflict and sexual violence.

With respect to conflict, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, one of the world's leading providers of data on organized violence, defines armed conflict or state-based conflict as a "contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year."⁵ In addition to this technical definition, conflict can also be understood as a social and political process involving competing interests,

⁵ "UCDP Definitions – Department of Peace and Conflict Research – Uppsala University," May 29, 2024. <https://www.uu.se/en/departement/peace-and-conflict-research/research/ucdp/ucdp-definitions>.

incompatible goals, and the use of coercive means by opposing parties. Raymon Mack and Richard Snyder, political and social scientists well-known for their contributions to conflict theory, also identify the core characteristics of a range of conflict phenomena. These are: (a) the existence of two or more parties; (b) their interaction arises from a condition of resource scarcity or position scarcity; (c) they engage in mutually opposing actions; (d) their behavior is intended to damage, injure, or eliminate the other party; (e) their interactions are overt and can be measured or evaluated by outside observers.⁶

When it comes to sexual violence, the definition extends beyond one specific form. For instance, while rape is one of the most common forms of sexual violence, the spectrum



⁶ Raymond W. Mack and Richard C. Snyder, "The Analysis of Social Conflict: Toward an Overview and Synthesis," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 1, no. 2 (1957): 212–48.

extends far beyond it and has been defined by various international institutions. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its 2002 World Report on Violence and Health, defines sexual violence as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.” WHO further notes that sexual violence encompasses rape and other forms of assault involving not only genital organs but also the “mouth or anus”.⁷

Generally, the UN refers to CRSV as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.”⁸

Furthermore, despite the lack of a globally accepted definition of CRSV under an international convention or treaty, CRSV has been recognized in a series of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) over several years.

The Kinshasa Declaration on the Rights to Reparation and Co-creation of Survivors and Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, which was declared by survivors and victims of conflict-related SGBV from 12 African countries in 2022, also defines conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, as acts that include “not only rape but also enslavement, sexual slavery and slave trading, forced sterilization and forced abortion, forced marriage, trafficking for sexual exploitation, imposed motherhood, forced pregnancy, sexual mutilations, and any other serious form of harm or exploitation of sexual and reproductive capabilities”.⁹

The declaration also acknowledges that CRSV does not only apply to women and girls, but to all genders, as it states that a victim of conflict-related SGBV is “any person, regardless of age, gender identity or sexual orientation, having suffered conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, as well as their families and communities, directly or indirectly experience the harmful consequences thereof.”¹⁰

Through these definitions, it demonstrates that CRSV is not a single form of violence but an umbrella concept comprising several acts of sexual violence that occur in connection with armed conflict, and that CRSV does not mean a new specific type of sexual violence, but

⁷ World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002), accessed 11 December 2025, <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/a25476ed-8585-47f3-986e-9d0e7f5e9f1b/content>

⁸ The United Nations, “A Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) Survivor’s Journey: 15 Years On,” accessed November 9, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/exhibit/conflict-related-sexual-violence-crsv-survivors-journey-15-years>

⁹ Global Survivors Fund and the Mukwege Foundation, *Kinshasa Declaration on the Rights to Reparation and Co-creation of Survivors and Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*, adopted 30 November 2022, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/torture/sr/cfis/cfi-ga79/subm-identifying-documenting-investigating-cso-global-survivors-fund-annex.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

a great severity of sexual violence and GBV related to a phenomenon of conflict. Beyond the immediate physical and psychological harm inflicted on survivors, it may even impose a long-term or greater impact at the family and community level, as it can contribute to displacement, social exclusion, and reinforcement of violent social norms.

CRSV is considered one of the most serious human rights violations in situations of armed conflict around the world. It has become an increasingly prominent concern in the international legal framework and human rights instruments over the past three decades. The concept has evolved significantly through international legal developments, UN-level recognition, international criminal jurisprudence, and survivor-led advocacy, despite being a long and arduous journey.



Development of the International Recognition of CRSV

The recognition of sexual violence during wartime or armed conflict under international law has been a gradual and hard-fought process. For decades, various forms of CRSV were too often dismissed as inevitable “by-products” of war rather than recognized as a serious violation of international law. It was through persistent advocacy by survivors, women’s rights defenders, human rights organizations, and legal scholars that CRSV came to be acknowledged as grave violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and, in certain contexts, international crimes under international criminal law (ICL). Landmark developments, especially UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, subsequently on sexual violence in conflict, and jurisprudence from international tribunals, have progressively established that sexual violence in conflict is neither inevitable nor excusable, but a deliberate crime demanding accountability.

Hague Convention IV (1907) can be regarded as one of the earliest international treaties that implicitly prohibited sexual violence during armed conflict. However, this protection reflected the patriarchal gender norms of its time, about four decades before the adoption of the UDHR, as it was grounded in the protection of “family honour and rights” rather than the recognition of women’s individual dignity, bodily autonomy, or human rights.¹¹

As a significant step in the development, the Nuremberg Charter—the foundation charter for the establishment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg (IMT) in 1945 after World War II—defined crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Despite being a precursor to forthcoming international instruments prohibiting sexual violence and rape as elements of international crimes, the charter did not mention rape among the prohibited acts.¹² As a result, IMT, which is commonly considered the first-ever international criminal tribunal in world history, did not expressly prosecute sexual violence.¹³ Likewise, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), also known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, established through its charter in 1946, did not address the Japanese army’s enslavement of “comfort women”.¹⁴

A notable shift occurred in 1986 when P. Kooijmans, the United Nations Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on Torture, identified rape as a method of torture in his report to the UN Commission

11 K. Alexa Koenig, Ryan Lincoln, and Lauren Groth, “*The Jurisprudence of Sexual Violence*” (Working Paper, Sexual Violence & Accountability Project, Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley Law School, May 1, 2011), accessed December 6, 2025, <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/The-Jurisprudence-of-Sexual-Violence-SV-Working-Paper.pdf>

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

on Human Rights.¹⁵ This development marked an important step in universally recognizing sexual violence as an act capable of inflicting severe physical and psychological suffering.

Still, in international scholars’ and academia’s view, the situation at that time could be said to have shown that international law remained far from explicitly “articulat(ing) the elements necessary for the effective prosecution of rape and sexual violence.”¹⁶

In addition to it, there was no international court or tribunal directly and meaningfully addressing the sexual violence committed during wartime or armed conflict until the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in the 1990s.

ICTY and ICTR became the world’s first international tribunals to systematically prosecute rape and sexual violence. This significant development was highlighted by the Akayesu judgment of the ICTR in 1998, which recognized rape and sexual violence as acts capable of constituting genocide under certain circumstances, and the Furundžija judgement of the ICTY in 1998, which recognized rape as a form of torture under international law and clarified important elements of sexual violence crimes.¹⁷ The jurisprudence developed by those tribunals not only marked a great milestone in addressing heinous international crimes but also laid the foundation for the more comprehensive definitions and judicial efforts on CRSV, in judicial accountability. Significantly, these tribunals ensured the inclusion of rape and sexual violence in constituent violations under the crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

The adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998 and its entry into force in 2002 marked another major development in the recognition of sexual violence under international criminal law (ICL).¹⁸

Article 7 of the Rome Statute explicitly states that “Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” can constitute crimes against humanity under particular circumstances.¹⁹ Article 8 refers to “committed rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy....,

15 P. Kooijmans (Special Rapporteur on Torture), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture*, UN Commission on Human Rights, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1986/15 (1986), para. 119, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/CHR/report/E-CN_4-1986-15.pdf

16 Mark S. Ellis, “Breaking the Silence: Rape as an International Crime,” *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 38 (2006-07): 227

17 *Prosecutor v. Akayesu*, Case No. ICTR-96-4-T, Judgment (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 2 September 1998), https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instore/ICTR/AKAYESU_ICTR-96-4/Judgment_ICTR-96-4-T.html; *Prosecutor v. Kvočka et al.*, Case No. IT-98-30/1-T, Judgment (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2 November 2001), <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/kvočka/tjug/en/kvo-tj011002e.pdf>

18 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 90, arts. 7(1)(g), 8(2)(b)(xxii), 8(2)(e)(vi), entered into force July 1, 2002.

19 United Nations General Assembly, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, adopted 17 July 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 90, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>

enforced sterilization, and any other form of sexual violence constituting grave breach of the Geneva Conventions” as the elements of war crimes in international armed conflict, and the same acts “constituting serious violation of article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions” as the elements of war crimes in armed conflicts not of an international character.²⁰

In Article 6, the statute also provides the definition of genocide, which has five elements, including “Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group”.²¹

The Element of Crimes, the supplementary legal instrument adopted by the Assembly of States Parties (the Assembly) of ICC to assist in the interpretation and application of the Statute, clarifies that such conduct may include, but is not necessarily restricted to, “acts of torture, sexual violence, or inhuman or degrading treatment”, although sexual violence is not expressly listed among the acts constituting genocide under Article 6.²²

These developments established sexual violence as a matter of international criminal responsibility. However, growing recognition of the widespread and recurring nature of such violations in contemporary conflicts prompted a broader policy response within the UN system.

While the developments achieved through the ICTY, ICTR, and the Rome Statute significantly advanced the recognition of rape and other forms of sexual violence as international crimes, they primarily addressed these violations through the lens of criminal accountability. The emergence of the CRSV framework within the UN system represented further development. Beyond recognizing sexual violence as an international crime, the framework increasingly views such violations as issues affecting international peace and security that require prevention, monitoring, protection, survivor support, and accountability measures.

Through a long journey of struggle towards justice for survivors, CRSV has been recognized by the UN as a peace and security issue, particularly through a series of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on the WPS, which encompass prevention and response to CRSV.²³ Since 2000, the Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions addressing women, peace, and security and conflict-related sexual violence, including UNSCRs 1325, 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106, 2242, and 2467.²⁴ (See the infographic timeline of major development at the end of this section.)

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 International Criminal Court, *Elements of Crimes*, adopted by the Assembly of States Parties, September 9, 2002, ICC-ASP/1/3 (pt. II-B), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Elements-of-Crimes.pdf>

23 *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA), June 2020, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020.08-UN-CRSV-Handbook.pdf>

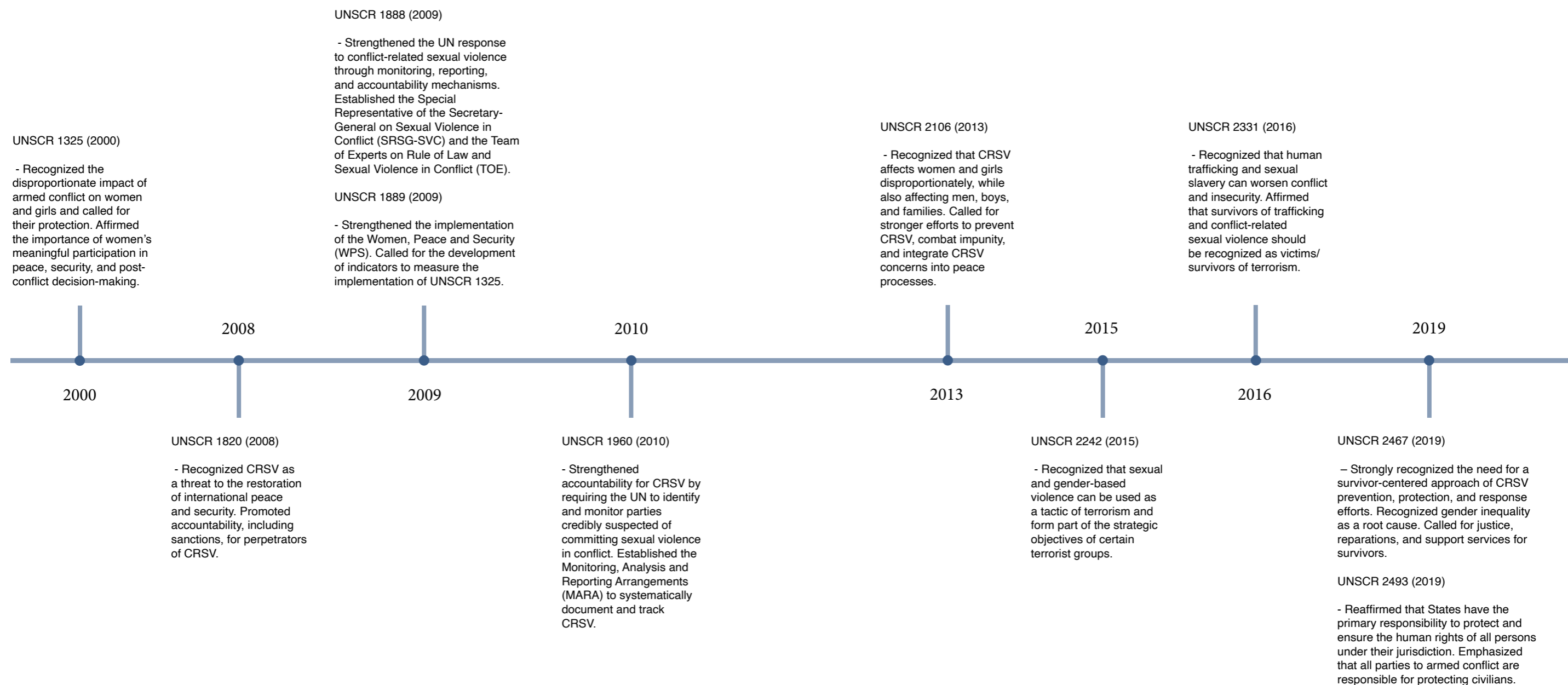
24 See, e.g., SC Res. 1820, S/RES/1820 (2008); SC Res. 1888, S/RES/1888 (2009); SC Res. 1960, S/RES/1960 (2010); SC Res. 2106, S/RES/2106 (2013); SC Res. 2467, S/RES/2467 (2019).

Significantly, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC) was established in 2009 pursuant to UNSCR 1888 (2009). Moreover, it is acknowledged that CRSV has different forms, as the UN highlights that “CRSV can be directly or indirectly linked to conflict and includes acts such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and other forms of sexual violence committed against individuals during times of war, conflict, or instability.”

In 2010, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1960, establishing the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA), which provides a structured and systematic framework for the collection, verification, and analysis of information relating to patterns of CRSV and alleged perpetrators.²⁵ The mechanism is intended to support accountability efforts and inform targeted measures by the UNSC and wider UN system.

25 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1960 (2010) on Women and Peace and Security: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, S/RES/1960(2010), adopted 16 December 2010, para. 8, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1960\(2010\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1960(2010))

Development of the United Nations Framework on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence



03

CRSV and Myanmar

General Landscape of CRSV in Myanmar

Armed conflict and sexual violence have long been features of Myanmar's history, which has experienced a long-standing and ongoing armed conflict for almost eight decades, since and prior to its independence.²⁶ Available documentation by women's rights organizations, international mechanisms, and human rights institutions indicates that CRSV has been committed by both state and non-state actors in Myanmar. The Myanmar military has consistently been identified as the principal perpetrator in documented cases, while incidents involving ethnic armed organizations and other armed actors have also been reported.²⁷

The Myanmar military had long been notorious for the perpetration of its systematic, widespread, and normalized sexual violence, especially against girls and women in ethnic minority communities or armed resistance areas, even long before Myanmar's 2017 Rohingya

²⁶ Myanmar officially gained independence from the British government on January 4, 1948.

²⁷ Women's League of Burma (WLB), *Speaking Truth to Power: Ending Military Impunity in Burma/Myanmar* (briefing paper, June 18, 2025), accessed December 6, 2025, <https://www.womenofburma.org/sites/default/files/202506/Speaking%20Truth%20to%20Power%20Paper.pdf>

Genocide and the 2021 coup, as highlighted in reports and papers of many ethnic women organizations and international human rights organizations.²⁸

International efforts to hold perpetrators of gross human rights violations in Myanmar accountable accelerated in the aftermath of these events. In March 2018, the Myanmar military was formally listed as a perpetrator of CRSV by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), following the atrocities, including rape and gang rape, against the Rohingya population, especially women and girls in Rakhine State in 2017.²⁹ Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IFFM), established by the UN Human Rights Council in March 2017, published its thematic report on sexual and gender-based violence in August 2019, highlighting the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence by the Myanmar military, Border Guard Police, Myanmar Police Force, and some EAOs.³⁰ In 2025, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), another international mechanism for Myanmar established by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 2018, reported the inclusion of torture and sexual violence in the post-coup crimes in Myanmar.³¹

International and local research institutes, organizations, or projects provide evidence that there is a chain of command of the Myanmar army in perpetration of human rights violations, thus its human rights violations are systematic since before the 2021 coup. The Security Force Monitor, a project of the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, which has conducted research on the chain of command of the Myanmar military, reveals in its 2023 report that 64 percent or 51 of all senior military commanders who had served between 30 March 2011—when Min Aung Hlaing became the Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Armed Forces—and 30 March 2023 had human rights violations, including killings, rape or torture perpetrated by units under their command. The report adds that 54 percent of those commanders were promoted in rank after no fewer than one instance of such human rights violations was committed by units under their command.³² Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica's 2025 report highlights the Myanmar military's systematic perpetration of atrocities, including aerial bombardments, artillery fires, and military operations against the civilian populations, with destruction of civilian property, including schools, hospitals, and houses, between February

²⁸ Shan Women's Action Network and Shan Human Rights Foundation, *License to Rape: The Burmese Military Regime's Use of Sexual Violence in the Ongoing War in Shan State, Burma* (Chiang Mai: SHRF/SWAN, May 2002), https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/vaw_license_to_rape_shrf_swan_2002_0.pdf; Human Rights Watch, "Sexual Violence by the Burmese Military Against Ethnic Minorities," August 2, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/25/sexual-violence-burmese-military-against-ethnic-minorities>.

²⁹ United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence*, UN Doc. S/2018/250 (23 March 2018), <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2018/250>

³⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence," Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, OHCHR, accessed December 6, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/myanmar-iffm/sexualviolence>

³¹ Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), *Report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar*, UN Doc. A/HRC/60/18 (2025), <https://iimm.un.org/sites/default/files/2025/08/IIMM%20Annual%20Report%202025%20EN.pdf>

³² Wilson, Tony. "Under Whose Command? Myanmar Army Chain of Command and Allegations of Abuse." *Security Force Monitor*, November 1, 2023. <https://securityforcemonitor.org/2023/11/01/under-whose-command-myanmar-army-chain-of-command-and-allegations-of-abuse/>

2021 and November 2025.³³

Structural and Societal Dimensions in Myanmar

CRSV may generally be an impact of multidimensional issues. In Myanmar's context regarding CRSV, two important dimensions are particularly interconnected: gender norms and accountability. While the long-standing culture of impunity and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable, particularly members of the Myanmar military, have contributed to the persistence and recurrence of CRSV, patriarchal social structures, misogyny, and militarized forms of masculinity continue to generate and shape attitudes and behaviors that normalize SGBV, especially against women, girls, and transgender individuals.

Patriarchy is very strong in Myanmar's culture, which often frames femininity as inherently weaker or subordinate, shaped by longstanding cultural traditions, religious interpretations, and social expectations.³⁴ Women and girls are often positioned as bearers of family, community, ethnic, or religious "honor," with their bodies symbolically tied to collective identity and reputation. This construction places disproportionate obligations on women to uphold social standards, while simultaneously rendering them vulnerable to punishment or control when perceived to transgress these norms.

CRSV also intersects with multiple forms of vulnerability and discrimination. Women and girls, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities (PWDs), ethnic and religious minorities, children, and people on the move (PoM) often face heightened risks of violence during armed conflict. In Myanmar, all those social factors are relevant for ethnic community members, and women have a greater impact. ethnic women's organizations have extensively documented incidents of sexual violence against women and girls from ethnic minority communities, including Kachin, Karen, Mon, and Shan populations. Reported violations include rape, torture, trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse. Many of these violations have been attributed to military operations conducted in conflict-affected areas, highlighting the disproportionate impact of CRSV on marginalized communities.³⁵

The corrupted and weakened judiciary and law enforcement agencies under the successive dictatorship regimes also play a role in supporting and condoning gender-based discrimination and sexual violence, with impunity for the perpetrators. Scholars and researchers have

³³ Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica, စစ်ရာဇဝတ်မှု ဘယ်လိုကျူးလွန်နေကြသလဲ?, December 2025.

³⁴ Aye Nwe, "Gender and Transitional Justice in Myanmar: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Participation," *China Perspectives*, no. 1 (2016): 131–139, https://cca.org.hk/ctc/ctc-xxvi-1/131-139_aye_nwe.pdf

³⁵ Woman and Child Rights Project & Human Rights Foundation of Monland, "Catwalk to The Barracks", July 2005; The Shan Human Rights Foundation & The Shan Women's Action Network, "License to Rape", May 2002; John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Pulich Health & Kachin Women Association Thailand, "Estimating Trafficking of Myanmar Women for Forced Marriage and Childbearing in China", December 2018; Karen Women's Organization, "Stop Violence Against Women in Burma", November 2022

argued that this situation is exacerbated by the "over-representation of men" in law enforcement agencies, such as the police.³⁶

This intersectionality of CRSV reveals that CRSV in Myanmar is both a strategic weapon of war or armed conflicts and a symptom of broader societal structures of gender inequality and impunity. Addressing CRSV, therefore, demands not only accountability for perpetrators at the highest levels, but also sustained efforts to challenge and transform the discriminatory norms that sustain vulnerability and silence survivors across all levels of society.

Myanmar's International Obligations for CRSV

Myanmar has obligations to address CRSV under international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL), international criminal law (ICL), and customary international law (CIL).

As a UN member State and a state party to several international human rights treaties, Myanmar has binding international obligations to prevent CRSV, protect survivors, ensure accountability, and advance gender equality and equity under IHRL. Currently, Myanmar is a State Party to the following four of the nine core international human rights treaties:

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

³⁶ Cate Buchanan, *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: Constitution Assessment for Women's Equality Series No. 3* (Constitution Brief, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 07 July 2022), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/preventing-gender-based-violence-in-myanmar-CAWE3.pdf>

Under IHRL, the State of Myanmar is legally obliged to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of women, girls, children, persons with disabilities, and all individuals at heightened risk of SGBV and CRSV. These tripartite obligations encompass:



More importantly, Myanmar acceded to CEDAW in 1997. However in 2008, 11 years after its accession, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern about the severity of domestic violence and sexual violence in Myanmar.³⁷ For more than two decades after accession, Myanmar continues to lack appropriate and effective constitutional amendments or the enactment of laws to address GBV, SGBV, and CRSV, despite repeated recommendations from the treaty committee.³⁸

Myanmar is not a State Party to the other five out of the nine core human rights conventions: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED).

However, the absence of ratification on these four conventions and other important international treaties does not exempt Myanmar from obligations arising under customary international law (CIL), which obligates every state to respect certain jus cogens, or peremptory norms, that include the non-derogable prohibition of torture, genocide, and slavery.³⁹ When such violations occur, the law of state responsibility requires the responsible state to cease the

³⁷ Women's League of Burma (WLB), *Speaking Truth to Power: Ending Military Impunity in Burma/Myanmar* (briefing paper, June 18, 2025), accessed December 6, 2025, <https://www.womenofburma.org/sites/default/files/202506/Speaking%20Truth%20to%20Power%20Paper.pdf>

³⁸ Cate Buchanan, *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: Constitution Assessment for Women's Equality Series No. 3* (Constitution Brief, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 07 July 2022), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/preventing-gender-based-violence-in-myanmar-CAWE3.pdf>

³⁹ See Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrong Acts (2021).

wrongful act, provide assurances of non-repetition, and make full reparation.⁴⁰

Moreover, Myanmar's obligations under the aforementioned sources of international human rights law are further reinforced by relevant UNSCRs resolutions on WPS and CRSV, discussed in the previous chapter, which recognize sexual violence in conflict as a threat to international peace and security and emphasize the responsibilities of states and conflict parties to prevent violations, protect affected populations, and ensure accountability for perpetrators (see the UNSC resolutions in the last chapter).

Myanmar also has obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) as a State Party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, which it acceded to in 1992.⁴¹ Under international humanitarian law (IHL), which governs the conduct of parties involved in armed conflict, state armed forces and non-state armed groups are strictly prohibited from committing rape and other forms of sexual violence against civilians and persons who are no longer involved in hostilities, including prisoners of war and detainees. Common Article 3 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 explicitly forbids "violence to life and person," "cruel treatment and torture," and "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." These protections extend to sexual violence, whether committed as isolated acts or as part of broader patterns.⁴²

Under ICL, acts falling under CRSV are recognized as serious international crimes capable of constituting war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, in certain circumstances, acts of genocide, particularly with the codified crimes in the Rome Statute. Although Myanmar is not a State Party to the Rome Statute, many of these prohibitions are also recognized under CIL. Consequently, individuals responsible for such crimes may incur criminal responsibility regardless of whether the state concerned has ratified the Rome Statute.

Despite not being a State Party to the Rome Statute, Myanmar is also a State Party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), which imposes a dual obligation: to prevent genocide and to punish those responsible for its commission. International criminal jurisprudence, particularly that of the ICTR, has affirmed that systematic or widespread rape and other forms of sexual violence may constitute serious bodily or mental harm and, when committed with the requisite genocidal intent, may amount to genocide.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ International Committee of the Red Cross, "Accession of the Union of Myanmar to the Geneva Conventions," *International Review of the Red Cross* no. 290 (October 1992): 505.

⁴² Gloria Gaggioli, "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts: A Violation of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law," *International Review of the Red Cross* 96, no. 894 (2014): 511–12, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383115000211>

⁴³ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, December 9, 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277, arts. I and II(b); United Nations Treaty Collection, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," status table, accessed January 19, 2026

In Myanmar’s current context of non-international armed conflicts, widespread and systematic repression, and escalating militarization since the 2021 coup, these overlapping regimes of international humanitarian law (IHL), international criminal law (ICL), and the Genocide Convention impose clear, non-derivable, and peremptory obligations on all parties, and these obligations include:

Refraining from committing, ordering, or condoning CRSV in any form;

Exercising due diligence to prevent such violations by state forces and, where feasible, by non-state armed actors operating under their influence or control;

Promptly and impartially investigating credible allegations of CRSV

Holding perpetrators criminally accountable at all levels, including through the principle of command responsibility for superiors who knew or should have known of crimes and failed to prevent or punish them;

Providing survivors with effective remedies, including access to justice, truth, reparations, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

At the regional level, Myanmar also bears responsibilities as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While ASEAN’s human rights instruments are generally not legally binding in the same manner as international treaties, they reflect important regional commitments and normative standards. In this regard, Myanmar endorsed the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Although the declaration does not create legally enforceable obligations, it demonstrates a regional commitment to preventing and eliminating violence against women and reinforces expectations regarding state conduct in addressing sexual and gender-based violence.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Cate Buchanan, *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: Constitution Assessment for Women’s Equality Series No. 3* (Constitution Brief, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 07 July 2022), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/preventing-gender-based-violence-in-myanmar-CAWE3.pdf>

National Legal Framework

Myanmar does not have a specific law to explicitly protect women from SGBV and CRSV. There are only a few sections in the outdated 1861 Penal Code of Myanmar, which can be workable to prosecute some offenses regarding gender issues. The military-drafted 2008 Constitution prohibits⁴⁵ the state from discriminating against any citizen based on “race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex, and wealth”, despite the lack of a definition of equality or discrimination, as required by CEDAW.⁴⁶ Between 2011 and 2020, Myanmar’s parliament passed several laws. Women’s rights organizations criticised that certain laws, regulations, and policies “directly and indirectly discriminate” against women, and that Myanmar does not have an appropriate constitutional clause or a law that addresses the violence against women and girls.⁴⁷ In addition to this, marital rape is inadequately addressed under Myanmar law.⁴⁸

Instead, under the quasi-civilian government led by the former military general Thein Sein, the parliament, in its last year of the presidential term, dominated by the USDP, passed a package of “Laws on Protecting Race and Religion”—Monogamy Law, Religious Conversion Law, the Myanmar Buddhist Women’s Special Marriage Law, and Population Control Law in 2015. Three out of these four laws explicitly focus on restricting the fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to marriage and the right to having children, rather than providing protections for and respecting the rights of women, while the Religious Conversion Law, which apparently aims to prevent or hinder someone from converting into another religion or belief by complicated and bureaucratic procedures, has apparently come out from a patriarchal notion and view that women are a fortress in protecting religion.⁴⁹

Efforts to have a law protecting women from violence in accordance with the standards of CEDAW once emerged in Myanmar, with women’s rights organizations advocating for and introducing the drafted Prevention of Violence Against Women Law (PoVAW) in 2014.⁵⁰ After

⁴⁵ Myanmar has had three constitutions since its independence in 1948: The 1947 Constitution, the 1974 Constitution, and the 2008 Constitution. The existing one is the 2008 Constitution. However, in the aftermath of the 2021 coup, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), the legitimate legislative body assembled by MPs elected in the 2020 General Election, announced the abolition of the 2008 Constitution on 31 March 2021.

⁴⁶ 2008 Constitution of Myanmar, *Article 348*; Women’s League of Burma, *Long Way to Go: Continuing Violation of Human Rights and Discrimination Against Ethnic Women in Burma* (July 2016), accessed January 6, 2026, https://www.womenofburma.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/2016-July_CEDAW_Longpercent20Waypercent20Toppercent20Gopercent20-percent20English.pdf

⁴⁷ Cate Buchanan, *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: Constitution Assessment for Women’s Equality Series No. 3* (Constitution Brief, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 07 July 2022), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/preventing-gender-based-violence-in-myanmar-CAWE3.pdf>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Radio Free Asia, “Civil Society Groups Urge Myanmar to Drop Bills to ‘Protect’ Religion, Race,” *Radio Free Asia*, January 29, 2015, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/bills-01292015150834.html>;

⁵⁰ Global Justice Center, *Myanmar’s Proposed Prevention of Violence Against Women Law: A Failure to Meet International Human Rights Standards*, Global Justice Center, accessed December 7, 2025, <https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/myanmar-s-proposed-prevention-of-violence-against-women-law-a-failure-to-meet-international-human-rights-standards/>; See *Prevention of Violence Against Women Law at https://www.womenofburma.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/WLB_PoVAW_Analysis_Burmesepersent20percent28percent20Finalpercent29.pdf*

being stalled for approximately seven years, the draft PoVAW law appeared to the public, with several flaws, including failures to comply with CEDAW standards. However, even the rays of hope for the drafted PoVAW have immediately been abrogated by the 2021 military coup.⁵¹



04

Situation of CRSV in Myanmar After the 2021 Coup

Conflict settings in Myanmar have rapidly changed and deepened since the 2021 February coup. The Myanmar military junta, which staged the illegal coup, has intensified its commission of heinous human rights violations against political opposition, human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, those organizing and supporting the civil disobedience movement (CDM), journalists, and civilian populations. The military's atrocities and brutality finally led to the emergence of new armed resistance by those who had no other alternative but to take arms against the Myanmar military, joining the ethnic resistance organizations (EROs)' already existing decade-long armed resistance movement. While the Myanmar military junta, along with its security forces, affiliated vigilante groups, and proxy networks, remain the primary drivers of Myanmar's human rights crisis and bear the greatest responsibility for violations, the proliferation of armed actors following the coup has further expanded the scope of militarization across the country. Regardless of their motivations or objectives, the increasing presence of multiple armed groups has contributed to a more complex conflict environment and heightened protection risks for civilian populations across the country.

This chapter presents findings on the situation of CRSV in Myanmar in the aftermath of the 2021 coup, accompanied by relevant statistical infographics and case study analysis. The findings are based on 217 CRSV cases verified across different areas of Myanmar and one

⁵¹ Cate Buchanan, *Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Myanmar: Constitution Assessment for Women's Equality Series No. 3* (Constitution Brief, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [International IDEA], 07 July 2022), accessed January 6, 2026, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/preventing-gender-based-violence-in-myanmar-CAWE3.pdf>.

area outside Myanmar, covering the period from February 2021 to December 2025. In these 217 cases, EQMM identified a total of 161 CRSV victims and/or survivors, with recognition that many individuals experienced more than one type or form of CRSV.

Victim/Survivor Profile

Gender Profile

The findings of the data indicate that women and girls are mostly targeted by sexual violence directly or implicitly related to conflict in Myanmar over the past five years, following 2021 February.

Of the 161 identified survivors and victims, 147 individuals, or 91 percent, are female. Among those 147, or 24 percent, solely represent girls, as 39 victims and survivors were identified as girls.

These figures explicitly show the horrible situation where women and girls are mostly targeted by sexual violence, directly or implicitly related to conflicts in the aftermath of the coup in Myanmar. This is also a dire signal that the increment of conflict and violence in post-coup exacerbated the vulnerability of women and girls in the context where gender-based discrimination and violence are already normalized through patriarchal social norms, arms, and the collapsed rule of law.

At the same time, the findings show that CRSV is not confined to women and girls. LGBTQIA+ persons, men, and boys are not exempt from experiencing CRSV following the coup, despite a significantly lower proportion compared to women and girls in this almost five-year post-coup period. Figures indicate that there are eight survivors/victims identified to have “other gender identity”, followed by six survivors who were male, including three boys.

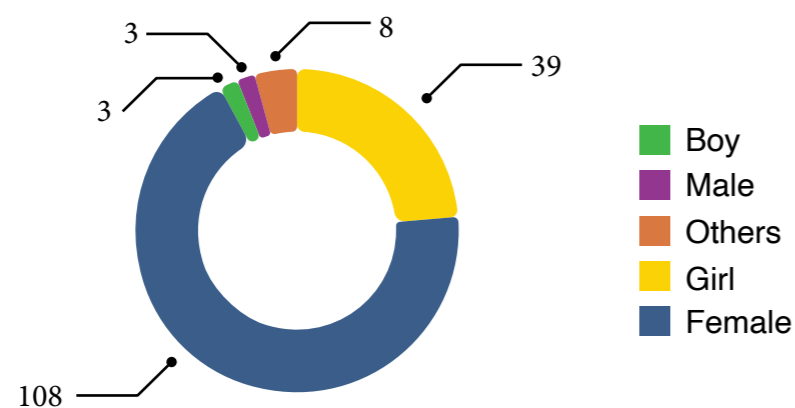


Chart 1: Distribution of CSRV Victims/Survivors by Gender Identity

Age Profile

While the largest group of victims/survivors by gender is women, the largest group of victims/survivors by age is those aged between 19 and 35, equivalent to 40 percent of the total victim/survivor population. This group is followed by the second largest group, aged 18 and below, constituting 26 percent of the total victim/survivor population.

These findings highlight that in the past five years, a myriad of individuals who can be identified as youth in accordance with Myanmar’s youth policy have experienced CRSV. Terrifyingly, the findings also importantly highlight that one in four victims/survivors of CRSV documented in post-coup situations is a child. Furthermore, among the under-18 survivors/victims, two individuals were children aged between 10 and 15, and another two were even under 10.

The findings also indicate that older people were also subjected to CRSV. 21 percent or 35 victims/survivors are aged 36–60, while about two percent were those aged over 60. More than eight percent of victims/survivors had unreported or unidentified ages.

Taken together, the findings indicate that women aged 19–35 constitute the largest identifiable demographic group among documented victims and survivors of CRSV.

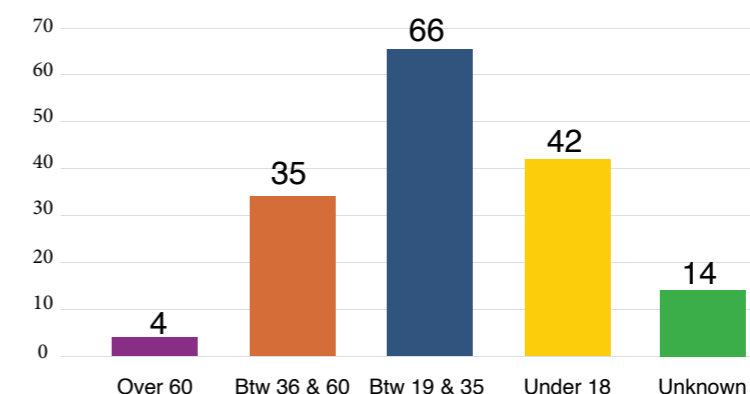


Chart 2: Distribution of CRSV Victims/Survivors by Age

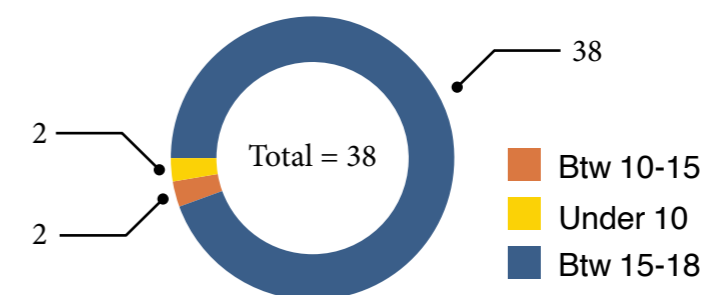


Chart 3: Victims/Survivors Under 18

Geographical distribution

The geographical distribution of documented CRSV cases demonstrates a clear concentration in conflict-affected areas of central Myanmar, underscoring the close relationship between CRSV and active armed conflict.

Although cases were documented across multiple parts of the country, Sagaing Region emerged as the most affected area, accounting for 55 victims and/or survivors, amounting to 38 percent of the total. Mandalay Region followed with 31 individuals, or 21 percent, while Magway Region recorded 24 individuals, or 16 percent.

Particularly noteworthy is the concentration of CRSV within Myanmar’s Dry Zone—locally known as Anya area—consisting of several parts of Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing Regions in the post-coup context. Anya, home to the Bamar ethnic people, used to be a primary recruitment source for the Myanmar Armed Forces, had never directly experienced armed conflicts and fighting before the 2021 coup.

The emergence of CRSV in these regions following the 2021 coup reflects the profound transformation of Myanmar’s conflict landscape. As armed resistance erupted across central Myanmar, military operations increasingly targeted areas that had previously remained largely unaffected by conflict. The concentration of documented CRSV cases in these regions suggests that such violations are closely linked to military offensives and the broader militarization of civilian spaces.

Meanwhile, the findings affirm that ethnic minority areas continued to experience CRSV in the post-coup period. Other conflict zones also reported significant numbers, including eight victims and survivors in each of Chin State and Bago Region. Shan State saw six victims and survivors (four in North and two in South). Relatively lower numbers were recorded in Yangon Region, with six, while Ayeyarwady Region, Kachin State, Rakhine State, and Tanintharyi Region each reported a single case. No verified cases were documented by EQMM in Mon, Kayin (Karen), or Kayah (Karenni) States during the reporting period. This should not be interpreted as an absence of CRSV in these areas but may reflect documentation constraints, security concerns, reporting barriers, or limitations in access.

EQMM acknowledges such limitations of the monitoring and documenting process on the ground, where survivors, witnesses, family members of victims, or data collaborators are at high risk. Still, these findings, which may represent only the tip of an iceberg, reflect the connection between CRSV and active conflict zones, with Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay standing out as the most affected areas, while documentation challenges remain in other contested regions.

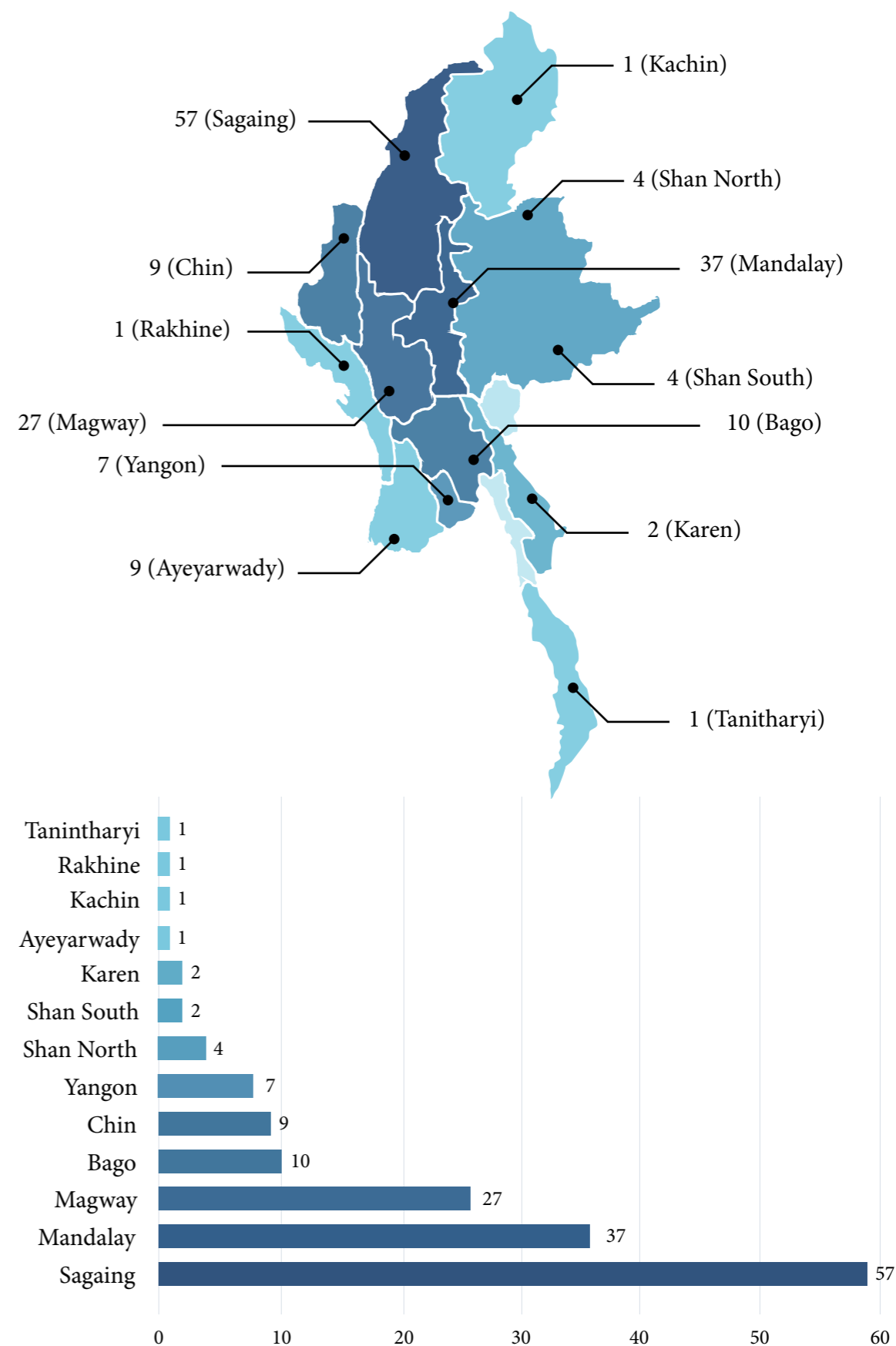


Chart 4: Distribution of the CRSV Victims/Survivors in Different Areas of Myanmar (Note: One CRSV survivor outside Myanmar is not shown in the map and the chart.)

Chronological Distribution

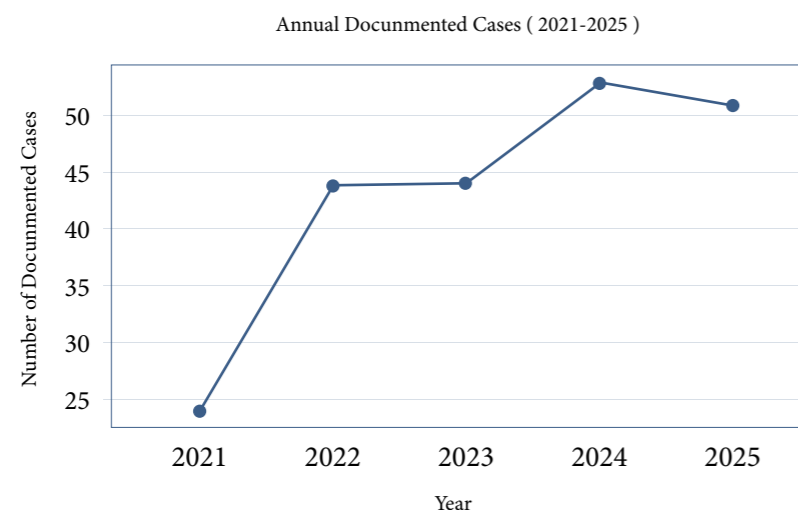


Chart 5: Number of Year-to-Year CRSV Cases

Examining the chronological distribution of documented CRSV cases provides important insight into how patterns of sexual violence evolved during the five years following the 2021 coup. Changes in the number of documented cases over time may reflect shifts in conflict dynamics, military operations, territorial control, civilian vulnerability, and access to documentation. While annual figures do not capture the full scale of violations due to persistent under-reporting and documentation constraints, they nevertheless provide an important indication of broader trends and help illustrate how CRSV has developed within Myanmar's rapidly changing conflict environment.

The number of documented CRSV cases increased significantly between 2021 and 2024 before recording a slight decline in 2025. Shortly after the coup, the number of documented CRSV cases increased dramatically from 24 in 2021 to 44 in 2022, representing an 83.3 percent rise within a single year. This sharp escalation constitutes the most significant year-on-year increase recorded during the reporting period and suggests a substantial deterioration in the protection environment following the February 2021 coup.

The figure remained at 44 cases in 2023, indicating that the elevated level of violations had become consolidated at nearly double the 2021 baseline. The upward trajectory continued in 2024, with documented cases rising to 53, representing a further 20.5 percent increase over the previous year. Although a marginal decline to 52 cases was observed in 2025, reflecting a 1.9 percent decrease from 2024, the overall pattern remains one of sustained

high incidence. Compared with 2021, the number of documented annual cases more than doubled by 2025, representing a cumulative increase of 116.7 percent over the five-year period.

These figures indicate that CRSV in Myanmar is neither episodic nor incidental. Rather than reflecting isolated or temporary spikes in violence, the data reveals a pattern of persistent violations that has been sustained throughout the post-coup period. The persistence of documented cases over the reporting period indicates that CRSV has become embedded within a broader environment of insecurity and human rights violations.



Perpetrator Profile

The findings of the data indicate that the Myanmar military junta, as a primary perpetrator of human rights violations in Myanmar, is highly responsible for most of the CRSV cases in the post-coup situation.

Of the 217 documented CRSV cases recorded between February 2021 and December 2025, 87.1 percent, or 189 cases, were attributed to the Myanmar military junta and its affiliated forces.

The data also indicate that armed resistance forces were implicated in 12 documented cases, which constitute 5.5 percent, and EROs were identified as perpetrators in six documented cases, equivalent to 2.8 percent. While considerably fewer in number than those attributed to the Myanmar military, these cases nevertheless raise concerns regarding the armed forces, which were established to bring justice and equal rights and to ensure compliance with IHL and ICL. Moreover, these incidents, even though significantly lower compared to the Myanmar military, demonstrate that CRSV can be committed by multiple parties to the conflict, while there is effective accountability mechanisms.

A further 10 cases (4.6 percent) were attributed to other perpetrators, including civilians, proxy actors, or unidentified individuals. These incidents occurred in circumstances where attribution could not be directly linked to the principal armed actors or where information on the perpetrators' identities remained incomplete.

Taken together, the perpetrator profile demonstrates a marked concentration of documented CRSV cases involving the Myanmar military junta and its affiliated forces. This pattern is consistent with qualitative findings documented in this report, including incidents of rape, gang rape, sexual torture, and killings associated with sexual violence during military operations and detention.

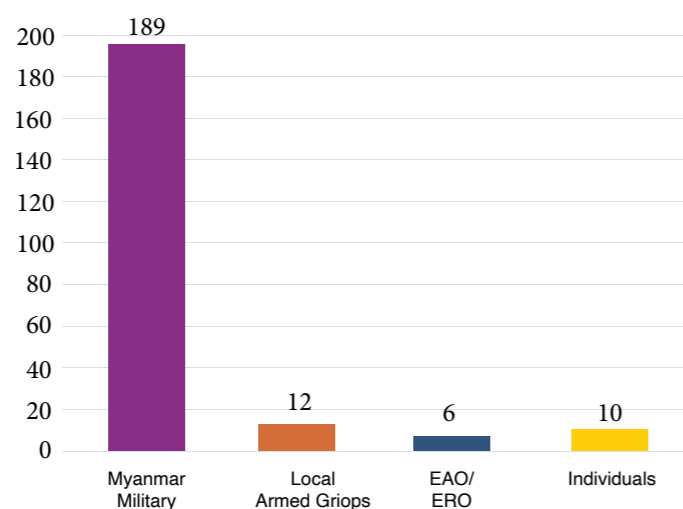
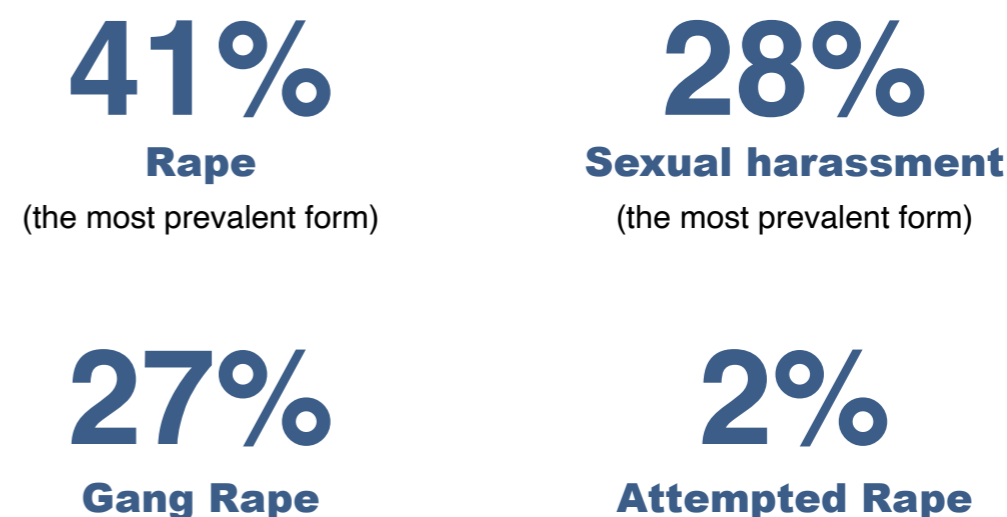


Chart 6 : Distrbution of Perpetrators Per Case

Types and Patterns of CRSV Pattern

EQMM's Documentation Team analyzed the forms, patterns, and characteristics of CRSV documented between February 2021 and December 2025. While the victim and survivor profiles presented above provide insight into who was affected, an examination of incident types offers a deeper understanding of how CRSV manifested in Myanmar's post-coup conflict environment.

Among the 161 victims and survivors identified by EQMM, many individuals reported experiencing more than one form of abuse. As a result, the documented cases total 217 CRSV incidents. The quantitative breakdown of documented forms of CRSV is as follows:



Rape was the most frequently documented form of CRSV, accounting for 41 percent of all recorded incidents. Sexual harassment constituted 28 percent of documented incidents, making it the second most common form of violation, followed closely by gang rape at 27 percent. Attempted rape accounted for two percent of documented incidents. Overall, it is noteworthy that rape and gang rape accounted for approximately two-thirds of all documented incidents.

The distribution of documented forms of CRSV indicates that severe forms of sexual violence, particularly rape and gang rape, constituted a substantial proportion of all documented cases. The prevalence of these violations across the reporting period suggests that sexual violence remained a significant protection concern in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. The frequency of sexual harassment cases further highlights the diverse ways in which CRSV manifests, extending beyond acts of rape to include other forms of sexual abuse, intimidation, and coercion.

EQMM also analyzed qualitative information associated with documented cases to identify recurring patterns, methods, contexts, and impacts of CRSV. This analysis reveals not only what forms of sexual violence were most abundant, but also how such violations were committed, the circumstances in which they occurred, and the ways in which they affected victims and survivors. The following sections examine the principal patterns and manifestations of CRSV documented between February 2021 and December 2025.

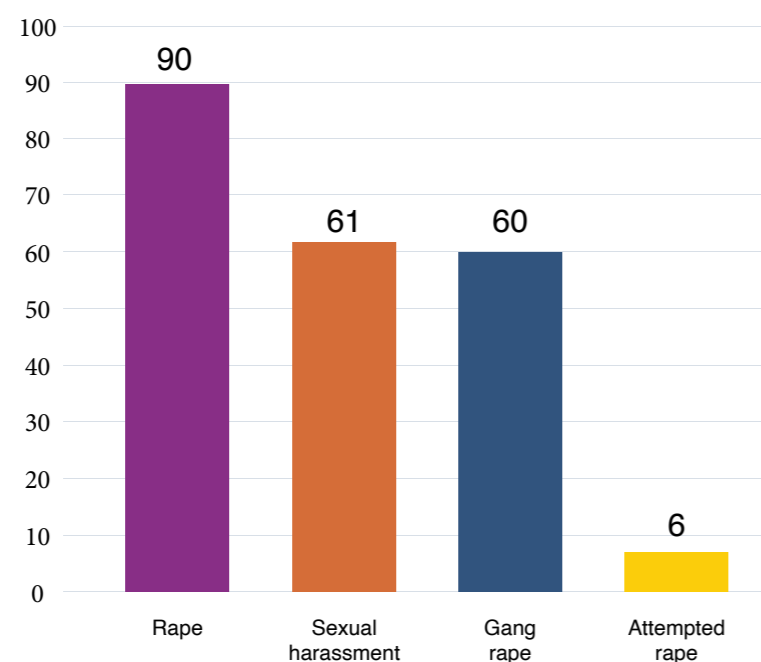


Chart 6: Comparison Between Different Types of Violations in CRSV Cases

Rape

As aforementioned in recent sections, rape was found as the most common pattern of CRSV that perpetrators have committed in the context of armed conflict since the 2021 coup, accounting for almost half of all cases, as shown in Chart 6. However, in addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative evidence of testimonies and incident reports reveals that rape has been used in a symbolic way as a means to oppress and terrorize the community or population. In many cases, the perpetrators even commit gangrape against survivors or victims.

In many documented cases of rape, the members of the Myanmar military junta and its proxy-networks, such as Pyu Saw Htee, raped women, including elderly women and girls, in their military raids or military offensives against the civilian populations. In a instance case that occurred in March 2025, the members of Pyu Saw Htee raped four women in a village in Sagaing Township, Sagaing Region, where they also burned houses.⁵²

⁵² Equality Myanmar’s Documented Case

Rape committed by members of the armed forces, especially the Myanmar military, should not always be understood solely as a strategic tool to terrorize civilian populations. It should also be considered an act normalized and enabled by systemic impunity. In the militarized context, whereby perpetrators are neither investigated nor punished, sexual violence becomes routinized as a form of normalized practice by perpetrators with arms or power. Data from many cases and field reports indicate that rape is frequently committed in contexts absent of immediate tactical necessity, suggesting that such acts function not only to instill fear but also to satisfy perpetrators’ desires, release aggression, and assert dominance. The absence of accountability, combined with a hierarchical military culture that dehumanises civilians—particularly women and girls—creates conditions in which sexual violence is perceived as permissible.

In a case of an ethnic woman aged 62 in Kutkai township, Shan State, in November 2021, a Myanmar military junta soldier approached her under the guise of asking for a meal from her and raped her in the field of corn and paddy when her female friend left her in the farm to feed pigs.⁵³ In another case, more than 30 girls aged between 14 and 17 were arrested and taken by two vehicles of the Myanmar military junta forces in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, in February 2025. The girls were divided into groups, with five individuals in each group, which were brought into a shop and raped by the soldiers.⁵⁴ This perpetration of rape in these cases shows their blatant desire for rape, when there was no armed clash.

The members of armed resistance forces, who claim to resist and fight back against the military dictatorship and the brutal Myanmar military junta, are found among the perpetrators of rape.

As a significant example, the founder of a prominent armed resistance group in central Myanmar, who is also one of the well-known actors in the armed resistance movement, raped a 17-year-old girl in a military camp and another 16-year-old girl with her hands tied in September and October 2024.⁵⁵ In other cases, a member of the township-level local PDF in Shwebo district raped an 11-year-old girl in uniform and armed, sparking public outrage in the area, and a member of the PDF committed an attempted rape against a married woman in a village in Magway Region in January 2025.⁵⁶

In August 2022, PDF arrested seven young people in a village in Chaung-U Township, Sagaing Region, on charges of theft. Those arrested included three girls aged 15 and a woman who was the mother of two children. The company delegated the village-level PDF to detain and interrogate the seven individuals. Following interrogations and checks

⁵³ Equality Myanmar’s Documented Case

⁵⁴ Equality Myanmar’s Documented Case

⁵⁵ Equality Myanmar’s Documented Case

⁵⁶ Equality Myanmar’s Documented Case

with external sources, the village PDF leader concluded that the detainees were acting as informants for the Myanmar military junta and found that three of them had parents serving in the Myanmar military. In August 2022, the leader of the village PDF and three other village PDF members raped the four female detainees and subsequently killed all seven detainees. These acts were carried out without any judicial process and in direct disregard of the company's communications.⁵⁷

There are civilian perpetrators of rape, too, possibly encouraged by the collapse of the judiciary in a large part of the country and very limited or no access to justice in exile communities due to many restrictions. A 20-year-old lady from a village in Tedim Township, Chin State, was found dead with injuries of rape and physical assault on her naked body, a day after she was requested by a 17-year-old boy from the same village to go to a shop. The suspect fled to Mizoram, where he had been repeatedly detained for using illegal drugs, after the incident.⁵⁸

Although the majority of documented rape cases were linked to armed actors, the existence of civilian perpetrators demonstrates how prolonged conflict, displacement, weakened institutions, and limited access to justice can contribute to broader patterns of violence and insecurity beyond formal conflict actors.

Gang Rape

According to the WHO, a rape case, where the number of perpetrators is two or more, means gangrape.⁵⁹ Gang rape could be considered a more extreme form of rape against the survivors and/or victims.

Gang rape was the second most frequently documented form of CRSV, accounting for 27 percent of all recorded incidents. The findings show that, while it accounts for the second largest type of CRSV, all gang rape cases were perpetrated by the Myanmar military forces.

In March 2023, an armed clash between the PDF and the Myanmar military junta forces erupted after a column of the junta forces launched a military offensive against a village in Yinmabin Township, Sagaing Region. The military forces arrested three villagers, including a 25-year-old woman, who was later gangraped by the captain and other soldiers overnight. The next morning, the woman was shot to death, with her dead body being burned.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

⁵⁸ Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

⁵⁹ World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002), accessed 11 December 2025, <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/a25476ed-8585-47f3-986e-9d0e7f5e9f1b/content>

⁶⁰ Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

In another case, the military junta forces gangraped a 37-year-old woman at the place where they violently arrested her during their raid in a village in Seikphyu Township. In another case, a woman was subjected to severe torture and gang rape by junta soldiers in Magway Region in July 2022. According to her husband, who witnessed the incident from nearby and managed to evade arrest, the couple encountered junta forces while briefly returning from their place of refuge to their home to feed their pigs. The soldiers targeted only his wife. As she attempted to flee, she slipped and fell, at which point the soldiers apprehended her. The husband reported that the soldiers tortured her by pressing heated daggers against her legs and breaking her hands, before gang raping her at the scene. He stated, "They did not chase me, although I was running. They stopped where my wife fell. They had a clear intention to rape her, acting with inhumane cruelty because she was a woman." He further confirmed that his wife died because of the torture, and that her body bore no gunshot wounds.⁶¹

Men and boys are also targeted by the Myanmar military junta when it comes to rape. A male CDM civil servant from the Ministry of Transport was tortured and gang-raped by the Myanmar military junta soldiers at an unknown place in Yangon in August 2022 after they discovered his ID card and old photos of him participating in anti-coup protests.⁶²

The participation of multiple perpetrators, often acting openly and in the presence of fellow soldiers, suggests an environment in which such acts are tolerated, enabled, or insufficiently deterred. The recurrence of gang rape across multiple incidents raises concerns regarding the normalization of sexual violence within military operations and the broader climate of impunity in which such violations occur.

Compared to incidents of rape, which occurred across military operations, detention, and civilian settings, gang rape appears much more closely associated with military operations and collective military conduct.

Rape or Sexual Violence as Torture

In this section, the type of CRSV may be identical to those in the upper sections. The purpose of this section is to highlight how armed actors, especially the Myanmar military soldiers, used the same type of sexual violence as a different means: torture.

In a number of documented cases, survivors and victims were subjected to torture in conjunction with rape and other forms of sexual violence, most often when they are in detention, custody, or abduction. As discussed in Chapter 2, international jurisprudence increasingly recognizes rape itself as a form of torture under certain circumstances. The

⁶¹ Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

⁶² Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

findings further indicate that members of the Myanmar military frequently used sexual violence as a method of punishment, coercion, humiliation, and torture against individuals perceived as “enemies” or “supporters of enemies” who include members of the CDM, PDF, and anti-coup activists.

The case of a 28-year-old female nurse exemplifies the symbolic and punitive use of sexual violence by the Myanmar military against those perceived as resisting military authority. After joining the CDM following the 2021 coup, the young nurse continued to provide medical assistance to civilians and members of the local PDF. In January 2023, she was arrested by Myanmar military forces at a security checkpoint while returning from a mother she provided care for during childbirth. Testimonies indicate that she was subsequently subjected to gang rape by soldiers while in custody, before being killed. Her body was deliberately degraded through acts intended to humiliate and dehumanize, and her remains were discovered by local residents in February 2023.

This case illustrates how sexual violence is deployed not only to punish individuals but also to convey a broader message of terror, impunity, and domination, particularly against women healthcare workers whose humanitarian roles directly challenge the military’s control over civilian life.

An extremely distressing case occurred in June 2023. In a village in Sagaing Township, Sagaing Region, Myanmar, military junta soldiers committed gang rape and other forms of torture against two local PDF members. Both were female, one of whom was a 17-year-old girl. The acts were carried out as torture and were so severe that both victims lost control of their bodily functions, including the loss of bowel control, and subsequently died as a result of their agony.⁶³

Sexual violence as a form of cruel punishment and coercion was documented as being more intentional against LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly in detention settings. In several cases, LGBTQIA+ persons are subjected to sexual violence primarily on the basis of their gender identity or sexual orientation in detention, jail, or in encounters with military soldiers. In June 2021, the Myanmar military junta soldiers tortured and perpetrated sexual violence against a 25-year-old LGBTQIA+ person in a street in Yangon.⁶⁴ Another LGBTQIA+ political prisoner in Monywa Prison experienced a case of attempted rape in which a prison officer forced them to give oral sex to him.⁶⁵ Another LGBTQIA+ political prisoner in Tharyarwady Prison experienced an attempted rape by a criminal, who was sentenced to death. During the rape attempt, the criminal also hit the political prisoner with a stone, resulting in severe

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injury.⁶⁶

In conclusion, these cases indicate that rape and gang rape were frequently accompanied by acts of torture or sometimes were carried out as acts of torture themselves. By transforming sexual violence into a tool of domination, the military reinforces its message of absolute power and impunity, while simultaneously silencing survivors and obscuring accountability. In this way, rape and gang rape emerge as an emblematic method of torture of the Myanmar military’s violence against its own people.

Sexual Harassment and Exploitation

Instances of sexual harassment and exploitation have increasingly happened across the country, not only in rural areas, but also in urban areas. Sexual harassment cases are commonly found in custody, interrogation, and detention, while sexual exploitation cases are more intertwined with conflict-related situations, for example, in the refugee camps or shelters of internally displaced people (IDPs), especially women, in areas often affected by armed clashes.

In August 2021, a 19-year-old student from Yenanchaung University was arrested at her home by five male police officers on allegations of supporting and fundraising for revolutionary forces. She was taken to the Township Administrative Office, where her mobile banking applications accounts were examined. The student was subsequently detained at Yenanchaung Township Police Station under Section 50(j) of the Penal Code. During her detention, she was subjected to sexual harassment by police officers, including sexually explicit verbal abuse. The officers asked her, “Do you know what sex chat is?”, delivering the remark in a sexually provocative and intimidating manner.⁶⁷

Women arrested by police and military forces for organizing and participating in peaceful protests also face sexual harassment and abuse in interrogation centers. A young woman in Yangon, who was interrogated in the 9.5 Mile Interrogation Center and the Shwe Pyi Thar Interrogation Center, experienced sexual harassment by one of the security force members, who never wore a military or police uniform. The soldier tried to unnecessarily grab her hands while taking her from one place to another, she recalls. She also describes the situation she often encountered at the women’s hall in the interrogation center. “The situation was worse at night, when the soldiers got drunk, played guitar, and then verbally assaulted us. We did not respond and closed the doors. Then, they came and forced us to open the door”.⁶⁸

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These incidents illustrate how detention and interrogation environments create conditions in which women are vulnerable to sexual harassment, intimidation, and abuse by those exercising authority over them.

Moreover, women and girls are vulnerable to arbitrary arrest or abduction by armed groups during military raids against the civilian population as they serve as caregivers for the elderly at home, while many adult men are actively involved in armed resistance movements.

In July 2024, a group of 70 military soldiers, police officers, and members of the Pyu Saw Htee terrorist network raided a village in Myaing township, Magway Region. During that raid against the 700-household village, the civilians, including girls, women, children, and the elderly, were taken hostage, where a 35-year-old woman was killed with injuries that seemed to have been inflicted by a gun heel⁶⁹. In another case, some female IDPs were kept as hostages in a monastery in Indaw town for months, during armed clashes between the armed resistance forces and the junta forces. The hostages had to exchange sex for rations with the junta soldiers to survive till the end of the clashes, which lasted longer than expected. The details of the case are as follows:

A coalition of armed resistance forces launched a military offensive against junta forces in Indaw Township, Sagaing Region, on 16 August 2024, and captured the township on 7 April 2025, after about eight months of fighting. At the outset of the operation, residents sought refuge at a local monastery. However, a junta military camp located near the monastery subsequently raided the religious site and detained the internally displaced persons (IDPs) sheltering there, holding them as hostages.

According to women who were released after months of captivity, more than one thousand hostages were detained at the monastery, including women, children, and elderly persons. An independent media outlet quoted a woman in her thirties as stating:

“We fled to the monastery when the PDF started fighting in the town, expecting the fighting would end shortly. Instead, the operation unexpectedly lasted for about eight months. We only had rations for three months. We managed to survive for another three months with additional rations and drinking water provided by the monastery. After that, we faced severe hardship, mainly due to food shortages. At that point, the soldiers took advantage of the situation and tried to exchange rations for sex.”

The woman further reported that some women felt compelled to form relationships with individual soldiers who approached them, as a means of protecting themselves from harassment and abuse by other soldiers. Among the hostages were non-CDM women teachers and non-CDM women medics. The medics reportedly sold contraceptive pills to women involved in relationships with junta soldiers but refused to assist in abortion in cases

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of unwanted pregnancy. As a result, four women reportedly got pregnant by junta soldiers during their captivity.⁷⁰

Linkage to Other Human Rights Violations

Analysis of data also found that CRSV is rarely an isolated violation; instead, it is frequently accompanied by lethal violence and other forms of abuse. In addition, sexual violence as the primary violation in CRSV cases, incident reports revealed other serious human rights violations linked to these acts. Systematic use of different forms of sexual violence is associated with those additional crimes that the perpetrators commit in addition to sexual violence, such as illegitimate arrest, abduction, detention, killings, murders, and others.

Among the 163 victims and survivors, 68 people, or 60 percent, suffered sexual violence, while 40 people, or 27 percent, were reportedly killed in murders or extrajudicial killings. Additionally, 12 survivors were subjected to arbitrary arrest, which is linked to the CRSV they experienced.

Killings Associated with Sexual Violence, Murder, and Extrajudicial Killings

Through its analysis, EMQQ found that many incidents of sexual violence resulted in the deaths of victims, in some cases accompanied by the mutilation, public humiliation, or dispersal of victims' remains, as well as the concealment of bodies. Moreover, victims of extrajudicial killings associated with CRSV account for nearly one-third of the total number of documented CRSV victims and survivors, as already shown. The majority of rape and gang rape cases were followed by the killing of the victim and the concealment of the body, as illustrated by the cases presented in the preceding section.

The victims of killings after sexual violence, murder, and extrajudicial killings included four women of different ages: 25, 28, 43, and 60, who were tortured and shot to death by members of the Pyu Saw Htee terrorist network in a village in Myingyan township, Mandalay Region, in January 2024. Among those, the two younger women experienced rape, too.⁷¹

In April 2022, Myanmar junta soldiers and members of the Pyu Saw Htee terrorist network burned a 14-year-old girl and her father, who was in his 50s, alive, after committing gang rape against the teenage girl in Magway Region, after abducting the father and the daughter

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during their raid against a village in Gangaw township.⁷²

Enforced Disappearance

In similarity with the killings after sexual violence, many victims of CRSV in the post-coup were subjected to enforced disappearance, while the individuals in detention, custody, interrogation centers, or any other forms of arrest or abduction, held incommunicado, are believed to have died of violence or torture, including sexual violence. This act of atrocity highlights the systematic and normative culture of the Myanmar military forces' destruction of living evidence. Moreover, as a cross-cutting issue, the concealment of the dead body not only renders psychological anxiety and false expectations to the remaining family members but also damages the cultural or religious traditions and dignified burial of their beloved person. There would be many cases of enforced disappearance associated with CRSV in Myanmar, similar to the case of a sniper lady from armed resistance forces in post-coup Myanmar.⁷³ On 29 January 2023, a young woman from Indaw Township, Sagaing Region, was arrested at a military checkpoint at the entrance to Indaw town by Myanmar junta forces. She was initially taken to Indaw Police Station, where she was detained and interrogated. According to eyewitness testimony from other female detainees, the lady was subjected to severe physical torture during interrogation. Detainees reported hearing prolonged beatings and later observed extensive injuries on her body, including open wounds and heavy bruising, indicating serious abuse. Reports further indicate that she was partially unclothed, restrained, and assaulted by multiple officers during interrogation, including sexualised torture and gender-based humiliation.

Several days after her arrest, she was removed from police custody by the junta soldiers and transferred to a military base known locally as the "Japanese Cave" in Indaw. From that point onward, her whereabouts were concealed, and no official charges or judicial proceedings were initiated against her. A former police officer later confirmed that no case was formally registered, effectively placing her outside any legal protection.

Since her transfer to military custody, the sniper lady has remained forcibly disappeared. Subsequent information obtained after the capture of Indaw town by resistance forces in April 2025 indicates that she was likely killed at the military base. However, her fate has never been officially acknowledged, and her family has not received confirmation or access to her remains.

⁷² Equality Myanmar's Documented Case

⁷³ Mandaing, "ဂျပန်လိုက်ဂူမှာ ငျောက်ဆုံးသွားတဲ့ စခိုက်ပါဆုရ အမျိုးသမီး," Facebook, December 17, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CHAwN5X7T/>

Access Denial to Justice

Access to justice for survivors of CRSV in Myanmar remains severely limited. Following the 2021 coup, the country's already fragile judicial system has largely collapsed, leaving survivors with few or very limited avenues to seek accountability or redress. In areas under military control, cases involving CRSV are adjudicated in military courts, which operate in secrecy and deny survivor the opportunity to participate in proceedings, while many of the perpetrators are members of the military. In regions governed by resistance forces, including PDF under NUG, EROs, customary justice mechanisms, or emerging justice mechanisms may be applied, yet these systems frequently fail to align with survivors' needs or expectations for justice.

Even when formal legal avenues exist, survivors face a complex web of social, logistical, and psychological barriers. Stigma, fear of retaliation, and social norms often discourage victims from coming forward, while limited transportation, financial constraints, and safety risks further restrict access to legal remedies. The diasporas of anti-coup and pro-democracy communities in exile found it difficult or impossible to access justice through the national legal framework of the host country due to legal restrictions, such as requirements for legal documents of status, legal costs, or language barriers. Meanwhile, the NUG has not yet been able to demonstrate an effective judiciary, justice system, or paralegal support in liberated or border areas, either. The resulting environment leaves survivors without support, perpetuates impunity for perpetrators, and undermines the broader pursuit of accountability and protection for those affected by CRSV.

The accusation of a juvenile rape case in the Thai-Myanmar border areas epitomizes the denied access to justice in the Myanmar context after the 2021 coup.⁷⁴

In April 2023, it was reported that a five-year-old girl, the daughter of a CDM associate professor who resided in Thailand's Mae Sot city, in the Thai-Myanmar border area, was sexually assaulted. The alleged perpetrator is the Secretary of the Executive Committee of Twantay Township, Yangon Region, and an affiliate of NLD. According to the complaint, the assault occurred within a shared residential compound where the child and the suspect were staying. Based on the child's statements, the suspect allegedly committed acts of sexual abuse against her. Following the disclosure, the child's mother sought an initial physical examination by a CDM nurse.

The family formally submitted a complaint to the NUG in May 2023. NUG stated that it would pursue legal action in cooperation with Thai authorities and, if necessary, through international legal mechanisms to secure the suspect's arrest. NUG reportedly arranged relocation and

⁷⁴ "NLD ပါတီဝင်တို့ သက်ငယ်မှုဒိမ်းမှုဖြင့် တိုင်ကြားခံရ," The Irrawaddy, May 9, 2023, <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2023/05/09/334787.html>

psychosocial support for the mother and child. NLD also stated that it would take disciplinary action against the suspect if the allegations were substantiated and emphasized adherence to due process.

However, civil society actors and political activists have raised concerns over the lack of clarity and effectiveness of NUG’s judicial mechanisms, citing delays in investigations and the absence of tangible outcomes in similar cases. To date, justice for the minor survivor in this case remains in limbo, highlighting persistent gaps in accountability and protection for survivors of sexual violence in Myanmar.

KEY TREATIES RATIFIED/ACCEDED BY MYANMAR

- UN Membership (1948)
- CRC (1991)
- CEDAW (1997)
- CRPD (2011)
- ICESCR (2017)

CRSV remains a grave, widespread, and ongoing violation in Myanmar. Accountability, survivor-centered support, and structural reforms are essential to end impunity and achieve justice.

Myanmar: A Timeline of Key Events

PERIOD	Key Events
1948	Myanmar becomes a member of the United Nations.
1962	Military coup. Myanmar enters decades of military rule, marked by armed conflict, human rights violations, and impunity for sexual violence.
2011	Commencement of political reforms and quasi-civilian transition.
2017	Myanmar military listed as a perpetrator of CRSV by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC).
2018	UN Human Rights Council establishes the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (FFM).
2018	UN Human Rights Council establishes the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (FFM).
2018	Myanmar military listed as a perpetrator of CRSV by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC).
2019	UN Human Rights Council establishes the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).
2019	The Gambia officially filed the genocide lawsuit at the World Court.
2021	Military coup. Political crisis, widespread human rights violations, and armed conflict escalate across the country. CRSV used as a weapon of war and political repression.
2021-25	Dramatic increase in CRSV incidents, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and trafficking. Severe under-reporting due to fear, stigma, displacement, and breakdown of institutions.

05

Conclusional Remark

Sexual violence itself is an inhumane, abhorrent, and ignominious act in the world of humanity. When it converges with armed conflicts, it becomes even more monstrous, especially to vulnerable people.

This report has discussed global efforts to recognize sexual violence in conflict-related situations as a legal crime, which is a long and arduous journey. Still, many parts of the world, including Myanmar, continue to struggle to deliver justice and accountability for CRSV.

On February 2, 2026, the OSRSG-SVC made an official press release. In the press release, Pramila Patten, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, condemned the continued use of sexual violence, including rape and gang rape against civilians, as a tactic of war and political repression in Myanmar.

Ms. Patten strongly urged, “It is imperative that the cycles of impunity are broken and the perpetrators of these appalling crimes face justice.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, “UN Special Representative Pramila Patten Calls for Accountability as Sexual Violence Continues Five Years after Myanmar Military Seized Power,” press release, February 2, 2026, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/un-special-representative-pramila-patten-calls-for-accountability-as-sexual-violence-continues-five-years-after-myanmar-military-seized-power/>
Now

When Ms. Patten made this official condemnation, it had been five years since the coup. Still, the efforts of the Myanmar people and the international community to hold the perpetrator of these cruel crimes, including CRSV, accountable are still distant from achieving this goal.

Alice Edwards, the incumbent UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, emphasizes that “the pain and suffering are of such severity in these crimes that it should be categorized as torture.” Edwards also asserts that no limitation could be applied to the investigation if sexual violence were considered within the CAT.⁷⁶

Regardless of legal classifications, sexual violence remains one of the most wicked forms of human rights abuse that deeply insults inherent human dignity.

Actually, the coup of 1 February 2021 did not create impunity in Myanmar. It entrenched and reinforced it by ensuring impunity for perpetrators of CRSV. Decades of unaddressed violations, particularly in ethnic minority areas, cultivated a culture in which perpetrators of sexual violence were shielded from investigation and prosecution. In such a context, CRSV persists not because it is invisible, but because it is protected and normalized. Therefore, efforts to address CRSV must confront the reality that sustainable peace and justice cannot coexist with entrenched military impunity.

In this regard, EQMM reiterates that the international community must recognize that the Myanmar military junta has been the primary root of Myanmar’s crisis and severe human rights situation for decades, and must actively support the Myanmar people’s efforts to hold the perpetrators accountable for their atrocities.

Myanmar’s crisis is not confined to its territory. As a member of the international community, Myanmar is bound by international obligations under IHRL, while both state actors and non-state actors engaged in conflict are also subject to relevant obligations under IHL.

Vice versa, Myanmar’s crisis is not and must not be only a national tragedy. It is an international commitment and responsibility to the universality of human rights. Failure to act decisively would not merely represent a failure of policy; it would be a failure of humanity. The path forward is arduous, but the alternative, continued silence in the face of systematic sexual violence, is indefensible. The responsibility to end these atrocities rests not only with those who wield power within Myanmar, but with the global community that has pledged, time and again, to ensure that such crimes do not go unanswered.

⁷⁶ Alice Jill Edwards, “Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,” UN Doc. A/79/181, July 18, 2024.



06

Recommendations

To the Myanmar Authorities and Relevant Governance Actors

1. Ensure the protection of all children, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, migration status, or geographic location.
2. Uphold obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, and protection from violence.
3. Strengthen birth registration and civil documentation systems to prevent statelessness and facilitate access to essential services.
4. Guarantee safe and equitable access to education, healthcare, child protection, and social services for all children, including internally displaced and migrant children.
5. Prevent and respond to grave violations against children, including recruitment and use of children by armed actors, attacks on schools and hospitals, arbitrary detention, and gender-based violence.
6. Support child and youth participation in decision-making processes affecting their lives and communities.
7. Facilitate humanitarian access to conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas through transparent and non-discriminatory mechanisms.

To Local and International NGOs

1. Prioritize child-centered and rights-based programming that addresses immediate protection concerns while strengthening long-term resilience.
2. Expand community-based child protection mechanisms, including case management, psychosocial support, and referral pathways.
3. Increase investment in inclusive education, non-formal learning opportunities, and digital learning solutions for displaced and migrant children.
4. Strengthen safeguarding policies and accountability mechanisms to ensure meaningful and safe participation of children and youth.
5. Promote localization by supporting community-based organizations and youth-led initiatives with flexible and direct funding.
6. Enhance cross-border coordination to address protection risks faced by migrant, refugee, and displaced children.
7. Improve evidence generation and documentation of child rights violations to inform advocacy and policy responses.

To International NGOs (INGOs)

1. Increase flexible, multi-year funding for local civil society organizations and community-based groups operating in conflict-affected areas.
2. Strengthen partnerships with local actors through equitable collaboration, capacity sharing, and risk-sharing approaches.
3. Support integrated programming that combines protection, education, health, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and livelihoods assistance.
4. Invest in innovative approaches to reach children in hard-to-access areas, including digital services and cross-border assistance mechanisms.
5. Ensure programs are conflict-sensitive, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and culturally appropriate.
6. Facilitate regional and international advocacy to elevate the voices and experiences of Myanmar children and youth.

To Donors

1. Increase long-term, flexible, and core funding for local women's rights organizations, survivor networks, and human rights documentation groups.
2. Prioritize funding for CRSV prevention, response, documentation, and accountability initiatives.
3. Support cross-border humanitarian operations and locally led protection mechanisms.
4. Invest in mental health and psychosocial support services for survivors and frontline human rights defenders.
5. Fund evidence preservation, digital security, forensic documentation, and accountability initiatives.
6. Ensure funding mechanisms are accessible to grassroots organizations and do not impose excessive administrative burdens.
7. Support programs that address structural drivers of CRSV, including gender inequality, discrimination, militarization, and impunity.

To the United Nations System

1. Scale up coordinated humanitarian and protection responses for conflict-affected, displaced, refugee, and migrant children from Myanmar.
2. Strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms on grave violations against children and ensure accountability for perpetrators.
3. Increase support for education in emergencies and child protection services through sustainable funding mechanisms.
4. Promote cross-border humanitarian assistance where access constraints prevent adequate support inside Myanmar.
5. Ensure meaningful participation of children, youth, women, and marginalized communities in humanitarian planning and response processes.
6. Strengthen collaboration among UN agencies, civil society organizations, and regional actors to improve service delivery and protection outcomes.

To ASEAN

1. Place child protection and humanitarian concerns at the center of regional engagement on Myanmar.
2. Facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, including children and displaced families.
3. Strengthen regional cooperation on migration, refugee protection, trafficking prevention, and access to services for migrant children.
4. Support regional mechanisms for monitoring and responding to child rights and protection concerns.
5. Promote dialogue and cooperation among member states to ensure the protection of children affected by conflict and displacement.

To the International Communities and Development Partners

1. Increase predictable, flexible, and multi-year funding for humanitarian and development responses addressing the needs of Myanmar children and families.
2. Support local civil society organizations, community-based organizations, and youth-led groups as key actors in protection and service delivery.
3. Expand resettlement pathways, education opportunities, and protection measures for refugee and migrant children.
4. Strengthen diplomatic efforts to promote accountability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.
5. Support cross-border and regional protection mechanisms that address the needs of displaced and migrant populations.
6. Invest in long-term solutions that address the root causes of displacement, poverty, exclusion, and vulnerability.
7. Ensure that all assistance prioritizes child rights, gender equality, inclusion, and the meaningful participation of affected communities.

This report is dedicated to survivors and victims of conflict-related sexual violence in Myanmar, and to all those working for truth, justice, and accountability.

Equality

Myanmar

ENDURING SILENCE