

Reproduction of Womanhood Among the Karenni Armed Forces

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Abstract

Military victory is widely considered the most important thing in the ongoing revolution in Burma. However, this focus often blurs recognition of every labour essential to reproducing revolution. While the existing literature draws attention to the social reproduction labour in the contexts of the capitalist system and armed revolution, the two realms tend to seem separated. This study bridges that gap by applying Marxist Feminists' Social Reproduction

Theory (SRT) and the concept of militarized social reproduction to the resistance armed forces, with a specific geographical focus on Karenni State. Analyzing the primary data collected from the field, this study argues that social reproduction labour within armed forces— encompassing cooking, office work, and logistical maintenance – is

systematically undermined and seems less important than direct combat. This devaluation is not accidental; it is actively reinforced by a rigid gendered division of labour and the persistence of militarized patriarchal norms within the armed forces. In this context, the militarized patriarchy devalues social reproduction labour even when it is performed by men. By extending the framework of SRT from capitalism and patriarchy into militarism, this study challenges the separation of the “frontline” and the “rear,” by assuring that the survival of the revolution depends on social reproduction labour. This study employs a qualitative research methodology and conducts 30 in-depth interviews with military personnel, including central committee members, those from gender or women

departments, logistic units, and adjutant offices, people with disabilities (PWDs), from Karenni resistance armed forces, including both ethnic revolutionary organizations (EROs) and resistance forces formed after the 2021 revolution. This study includes participants of different gender groups in order to examine different experiences. Data collection takes place in Karenni in April and May 2026.