

## Women in Parliament

Written by Phanida

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(Mizzima) – *Burma's newly formed Parliament has a total of 659 elected members. Of these, 20 are women. National Democratic Force (NDF) MP Khin Waing Kyi, 64, talked with Mizzima reporter Phanida about her role in Parliament, women MPs and the topics and issues women can bring to the debates and actions in the new lawmaking body. No women have been appointed or elected to serve as ministers in Burma's new government.*

### ***Q: How do you see women's participation in politics in Burma?***

#### **Biographical profile:**

Name:	Khin Waing Kyi
Age:	64
Date of birth:	February 10, 1947
Native:	Bamo District, Shwegu Township
Parents:	Kyaw Hlaing and mother Kyi Thein
Children:	two daughters
Spouse:	Khin Maung Myint (marketing officer with the Agriculture and Irrigation Depa
Education:	Second Year, Physics, Mandalay University
Occupation:	worked as middle school teacher in Mandalay
Political movement:	worked as BSPP party youth organizing committee member in Madaya Tow

A: I'm proud to see women participate in politics. Some women are terribly intelligent, but they have not yet entered the political world. There have been many women presidents in the world. I feel happy to see women in parliaments. The role of women should not be only in the family. I believe they should do something for politics too.

### ***Q: How will you work for more women's participation in politics?***

A: Now the people are following the news. Both men and women are interested in whatever appears in the media. I believe some women are not yet ready to take part in the political movement, but they are getting themselves ready for this work and like to see women MPs in Parliament sessions. The role of women will be much improved in the next five years with more women MPs elected and more knowledgeable women, including better performances by women MPs.

### ***Q: Why should women take part in politics?***

A: Women and men each have their own ideas about what are the important issue facing the country. Moreover, nowadays one's capacity and qualifications are more important than one's sex.

### ***Q: Have you faced barriers in the male-dominated politics?***

A: So far, I have not yet faced any obstructions and harassment. I see the State has accepted the role of women to some extent. We received a hearty welcome. It's routine in dealing with other MPs and in doing Parliament business. Seeing this, I think most people have no objections at all to women and their participation in politics.

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### ***Q: What are your chances of raising women's rights issues in Parliament?***

A: So far, we haven't had the opportunity. We can move our motions, we can raise objections to other motions, and we can raise our voice in Parliament, but in a democratic system, the dominant party always wins through its votes. Anyway, we can make our voice heard in the Parliament. Right now, the current business is forming the Union-level institutions, issuing regulations, etc.

### ***Q: How many women MPs take part in joint Parliament session?***



A: Aung Thaug gave a gift of a piece of 'cheik' sarong to each woman MP a few days ago. There were a total of 20 women on his list. So, there are 14 women MPs in their party (the United Solidarity and Development Party).

### ***Q: How about the living situation for women MPs in Naypyidaw. Do you have any difficulty?***

A: The women MPs from the USDP party stay at separate hostels. I live with women MPs from ethnic parties. Now we are like siblings. We have no problems among us, and we do everything by consultation and discussion. They are so active. We have no difficulty. The only difficulty for us is having the same menu for most of our meals.

### ***Q: How do you feel about not giving any ministerial posts to women MPs?***

A: This is the first Parliament session in many years. There are just a few women MPs. The ministers must have the caliber and capacity to perform their jobs. I think women can do this work, but if we push someone who can lift only 10 viss (36 lbs) to carry 100 viss (360 lbs), it will be a heavy burden. So I understand the exclusion of women MPs in the union cabinet at this time.

### ***Q: Have you already experienced political differences in Parliament sessions?***

A: We can see antagonisms everywhere. In Parliament, you propose something, and I propose

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something else. There will be differences in opinions. That's why we have a voting system to resolve the differences.

### ***Q: How important are women rights?***

A: When the new State is built, there will be many sectors, including women affairs. If the person who assumes charge of women affairs can cooperate with other people at all levels of society, then women's roles will be improved. Both the top and the bottom are important. The people on the ground are equally important in implementing change.

### ***Q: Who will take charge of women affairs?***

A: It's difficult to predict. We don't know how the government will consider the qualifications and criteria to do this job. I don't know what their education qualifications and other criteria will be.

### ***Q: What topics will you address in women rights?***



A: We have not yet submitted any women rights issues. The NDF party has selected points to address in Parliament. Please be patient. For instance, everybody is interested in the military service law and women conscripts. It's a much discussed issue. We shall present all issues such as women trafficking, guarantees for the safety of women and rights of women, etc. We will present all of these things as soon as we can.

### ***Q: How did you get into politics?***

A: I worked as a school teacher after graduation from Mandalay University. Then I joined the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) while I was working as teacher. I worked on Madaya Township BSPP Youth organizing committee, but it lasted only about one year. It coincided with the political movements and unrests of 1974-1975. I served as a joint general secretary of a trade union in Jute Enterprise under the Ministry of Industry No. 1 and I was an executive committee member of the Ministry of Industry No. 1. Then I was forced to retire when the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) took power by a coup in the same year. Then I joined the NLD party and did worked in the political movement. But I lost contact with the NLD

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when it decided not to engage in politics (when it refused to re-register with Election Commission and contest in the recent election). Then I joined the Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics party led by Aye Lwin in 2008-09 and served as Rangoon Division party vice chairman and a member of the central executive committee. Then I resigned from that.

### ***Q: How did you campaign in this election?***

A: I contested by saying I would represent the feelings and beliefs of the people in Parliament on their behalf. It is not for my own personal interests or for my ego. I did politics for the country and the people in the past, and I will do so in the future and am doing so at the moment.

### ***Q: Why did you stand for election as a NDF candidate?***

A: My thoughts, my viewpoints and my stand are the same as NDF leaders Khin Maung Swe and Dr. Than Nyein. So I joined with them. I am currently serving as a central executive committee member. We have respect for each other. So our work is smooth and efficient as our strategy and tactical lines are the same. I like the path I'm on. I joined this party because I believed I could do real politics with them.

### ***Q: What else would you like to say?***

A: I think this is a rare opportunity to take part in a political movement of the people and the state going into the future together. All the people should take part in this movement. We should put aside issues of right and wrong and love and hate for the moment, and we should give priority to constructive thinking. I feel proud to speak and work for different types of people, such as women and farmers. I wish other people would join in this movement.