

THIRD-LEVEL PEACEBUILDING: EXILED ACTIVISTS FILL THE VOID IN THE WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENT IN MYANMAR

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For decades, the nonviolent contestation of the Myanmar's military regime has come from diaspora outside the country. Their activities comprise what Yossi Shain calls the "third level" of peacebuilding. A primary example of third-level peacebuilding, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) illustrates how diaspora peacebuilding fills a political gap in global politics. WLB was able to overcome the ethnic and political divisions plaguing much of the exile community and formed an alliance of ethnic minority women's organizations in refugee camps in Thailand and in India. In this transnational space on the borderlands of Myanmar, they grew in strength and skill, building transnational networks and a cadre of well-trained, experienced leaders, many of whom are now heads of civil society organizations (CSO) in Myanmar. Once the country opened politically and the diaspora was invited to return, WLB became the "main actor" in the women's movement in Myanmar, filling a political void by taking on controversial political issues, challenging the military, and modelling nonviolent alternatives. This study shows that women's refugee organizations can develop the capacity to make unique contributions to third-level peacebuilding.
