

Case Study

The Death of Female Protestor Daw Tinnwe Yee

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 23 March 2022 (Updated: 23-March-2022)

Warning: This report contains graphic images

- **Location of incident:**
Yangon Division Education Office (16.7999628, 96.1260861)
- **Date/Time of incident:**
28 February 2021, between 0800 and 1200 local time
- **Attribution:** Myanmar Security Forces
- **Myanmar Witness conclusions:**
 - Utilising open-source investigation techniques, Myanmar Witness has identified the location in which Daw Tinnwe Yee had a heart attack after getting shot in her left arm during repression of a protest in Kyimyindaing, Yangon. She allegedly died in the ambulance while being transferred to the hospital. The shooting is claimed to have been by Myanmar Security Forces
 - These coordinates were identified through the comparative analysis of User Generated Content (UGC) alongside satellite imagery, news, social media imagery, and eye-witness testimony.
 - During the analysis, Myanmar Witness also discovered posts from an individual alleging to be her daughter that refute the pregnant teacher narrative.
 - The death of Daw Tinnwe Yee continues a worrying trend of individuals being both injured and killed in protest events against the Myanmar Military.



Executive Summary

This report documents the circumstances of the death of female protestor Daw Tinnwe Yee on 28 February 2021. In this investigation, Myanmar Witness has confirmed that Daw Tinnwe Yee was shot, likely during repression of a teacher's protest in Kyimyindaing followed by a heart attack after being transported into an ambulance. She is alleged to have died in an ambulance while being transported to hospital, as a result of a heart attack. Her exact time of death and location in the ambulance has not been able to be verified by Myanmar Witness, but according to media collected, she doesn't appear to have passed away before being lifted into the ambulance. The UGC also fell short of depicting the Myanmar security forces shooting at the protest – as was claimed on social media. This means Myanmar Witness is unable to attribute the death of Daw Tinnwe Yee to security forces. However, Myanmar Witness has been able to identify the Myanmar Police Force, specifically Division 3, in close proximity to the teacher's protest in Kyimyindaing on the same day Daw Tinnwe Yee was shot in the arm. Social media reports of the incident claim that she was pregnant, but Myanmar Witness has discovered no evidence to back up this claim and has identified social media posts that refute the claim. She was among the eighteen people who died on 28 February 2021, according to reports from [The New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), and [Aljazeera](#). This report is one of many by Myanmar Witness documenting violence against women in Myanmar and demonstrates the violence used against civilians exercising their right to freedom of assembly and association. A funeral service was held for Daw Tinnwe Yee at the Htain Pin crematoria on 2 March 2021. A commemoration protest was also held at the verified site of the incident.



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Introduction

Daw Tinnwe Yee died of a heart attack after getting shot in her left arm during repression of a protest in Kyimyindaing, Yangon on 28 February 2021. She was a 59-year-old middle school teacher at No.11 Basic Education Middle School, Hlaing Thar Yar (West) and was preparing to retire by the end of 2021 (Figure 1). Among the social media posts documented by Myanmar Witness, a photo of her with purple ink on her pinky finger shows that she voted in the 2020 Election (Figure 2). As a basic education school teacher, she was assigned to polling stations to help with the voting process and count the votes during the November 2020 election. Consequently, when the Myanmar military staged the coup on 1 February 2021 claiming election fraud. According to an account claiming to belong to her daughter, Daw Tinnwe Yee viewed this as a direct insult to teachers and their integrity and felt compelled to join the anti-coup movement (Figure 4). According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)'s [report](#) "Women Power in the Spring Revolution", she joined the Civil Disobedience Movement on 1 February 2021 and also participated in a 22 February 2021 protest.

Social media reports claim that Myanmar Security Forces were responsible for the repression of a teacher's protest that Daw Tinnwe Yee is alleged to have taken part in. Myanmar police force, specifically what looks to be Division 3, was seen to be present at the location of the protest on the day Daw Tinnwe Yee was killed. [The New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), and [Aljazeera](#) report her death among at least 18 people killed on that day, calling it the bloodiest day since the coup. A day before she died, she shared a post wishing for the return of Aung San Suu Kyi, showing her support for the pro-democracy party. Her Facebook profile picture, updated on 23 February 2021, also shows her support for the anti-coup movement (Figure 3).

According to social media testimonies of her close circle, she was a positive light and inspiration for those around her, especially to her former students. In a few videos on her personal Facebook, she was seen joyfully dancing the New Year traditional dance with her friends at two separate alumni reunion events in her hometown Kanaung in Ayeyarwaddy Division. She was mourned by many through commemoration protests and thousands sent condolences on her social media. Myanmar Witness had archived this content but redacted associated links to preserve the safety of her family, friends, and associates.

ပင်စင်ယူခါနီးကံကောင်းပီလို့ထင်ပါတယ်ကျေးဇူးတင်
ထိုက်သူအားလုံးကိုကျေးဇူးအထူးတင်ပါတယ်

← ထွဲအလက(၁၀) 820/828 →

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(၂၀၂၁ ခုနှစ်၊ ဇန်နဝါရီလ ၂၂ ရက်)
“ရုံးအမိန့်စာ”

အမှတ် ၈၁၁၅ ။ အခြေခံပညာဦးစီးဌာန၊နေပြည်တော်၏(၂၂-၁-၂၀၂၁)ရက်စွဲပါစာအမှတ်(၂၄-က)/
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Figure 1: Official announcement from the Ministry of Education on salary raise for middle school teachers, including Daw Tinnwe Yee's name and job position. She shared the announcement on her personal Facebook account, indicating that she felt lucky because the raise came when she was just about to retire.



Figure 2: The photo of Daw Tinnwe Yee showing the purple ink on her pinky fingers, indicating that she voted in the election. This was posted in her daughter's testimony recounting the 2020 election day.



Figure 3: Daw Tinnwe Yee updated her Facebook profile picture with the profile frame in support of the anti-coup movement.

အမေကကျောင်းဆရာမလေ အဖြူအစိမ်းကိုပဲထင်သာအောင်ဝတ်ရမှာပေါ့တဲ့
အဖြူအစိမ်းနဲ့ဆိုသူတို့အလောက်မလုပ်လောက်ပါဘူးဆိုပြီးထွက်သွားတာလေ
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ဝင်ပစ်တာခံလိုက်ရတယ်တဲ့လား တကယ်ကိုကမ္ဘာမကြေပါဘူးနင်တို့ကို
အမေပြောတဲ့စကားတခွန်းရှိသေးတယ်
အမေတို့က ပိုတောင်ထွက်ရမယ် ဘာလို့ဆို မဲသမာမှုဆိုပြီးခေါင်းစဉ်တပ်လိုက်တာအမေ
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ပြတ်တိုက်ရမယ်တဲ့

Figure 4: Testimony of someone who alleges to be Daw Tinnwe Yee's daughter, reciting a conversation with her mother going out to protest on the day of her death.

Translation of Figure 4: "You said, "I am a teacher, so I should dress to show off the white and green uniform. They won't crack down on us that much if we are wearing white and green." Now, unlike what you said, you were shot by a group of dogs even before you were able to line up for the protest?! We cannot forgive until the end of the world [referring to SAC]. There was another thing you said, "We have to protest even more because they termed this an election

fraud. This is a direct insult to us teachers. That is why I am going out to protest. I cannot let my daughters, your generation live like we did in 1988. We have to uproot these tyrants.”

Analysis of Daw Tinnwe Yee’s Death

Narratives around Daw Tinnwe Yee’s death

On the morning of 28 February 2021, posts claiming that a pregnant teacher had been shot dead by the Myanmar military in the repression of a protest began spreading on social media. The post included a photo of Daw Tinnwe Yee lying unconscious on the floor, surrounded by a few other teachers. Prominent women’s rights activists [Wai Wai Nu](#) and [Mizzima News](#) were among many people who reported on this news.

Reportedly, the incident happened during the teachers’ protest in front of the Yangon Division Education Office on the Lower Kyimyindaing Road in Yangon. According to testimonies, teachers were just starting to gather for protest when the police fired tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd. Social media content was unclear whether she was shot with rubber bullets or with live rounds, but media reports from the [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#) all suggest that rubber bullets were used during the incident. Daw Tinnwe Yee, who was allegedly pregnant at the time, was shot in one of her arms and, it is claimed by [local news media](#), later died of a heart attack.

In a video uploaded to social media, Daw Tinnwe Yee is identified unconscious on the floor while a woman attempts CPR. Another woman in the crowd was heard saying that she had been shot in the arms, pointing at the area of her left arm where she was shot. Another individual was seen trying to apply pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding. Based on a number of factors, including their white and green uniforms, their referential use of “Teacher (T-Chal)” for one another and the fact that the protest was a teacher’s protest, these three women were also identified to be teachers. The CPR attempt appears to have been successful, and the crowd prepares to transport Daw Tinnwe Yee into the ambulance at the end of the video.

In footage uploaded by the [Irrawaddy News](#) on the day of the protest, there features witness testimony by another teacher at the protest event. He claimed that a teacher from Hlaing Thar Yar was shot and died in the ambulance, seemingly referring to Daw Tinnwe Yee. Given that she was about to be put in the ambulance in the first video, as well as taking into account this testimony, it appears that she died in the ambulance. The [AAPP report](#) also confirms that “she died while being taken to the hospital.” Myanmar Witness is not able to verify the exact location of the ambulance when Daw Tinnwe Yee passed away, but has reconstructed the incident through a comparative analysis with satellite imagery.

Geolocation

Identified UGC from 28 February 2021 shows the scenes from the protest that day. Images uploaded to social media demonstrate what appears to be protesters walking south from Bagaya intersection towards the Yangon Division Education office (Figure 5). The location of the image is identified to be at coordinates 16.803987, 96.125946.



Figure 5: Protesters walking up south from Bagaya intersection towards Yangon Division Education Office.

With a snapshot from the [Irrawaddy News](#) video, Myanmar Witness was able to geolocate the location of the protest. The location in the footage can be verified as coordinates 16.799962, 96.126086. The tall tower visible in the video matches with the satellite imagery and Google Maps photos of the location (Figure 6).

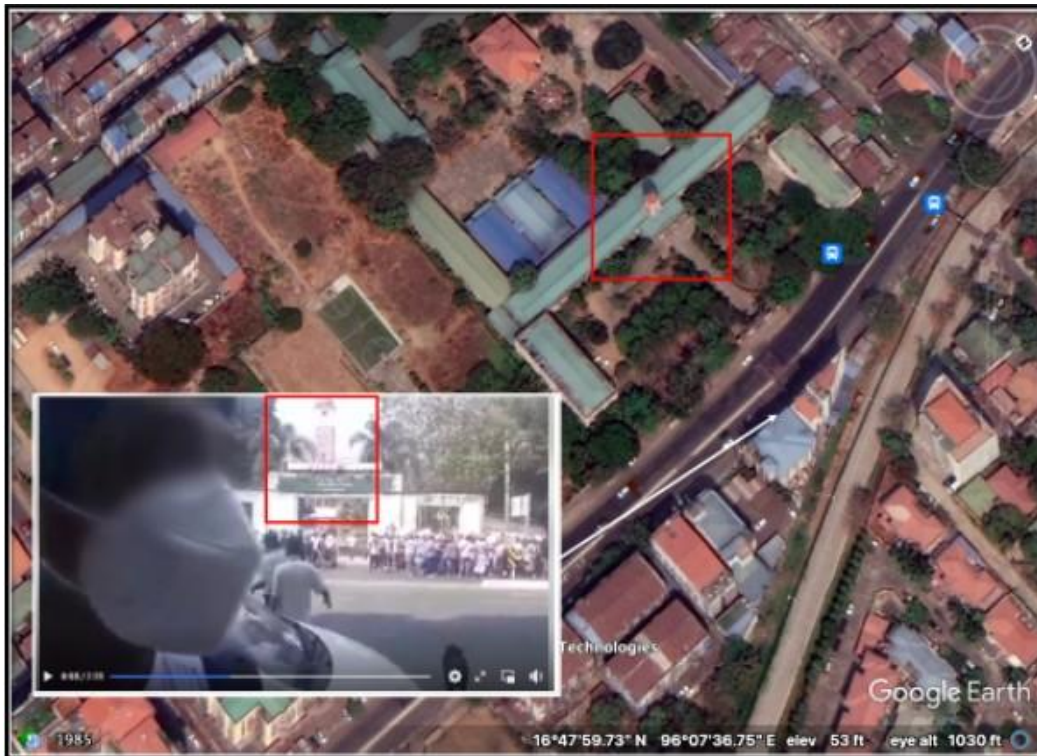


Figure 6: The tower from the snapshot of the protest location matches the tower seen in the Google Earth imagery.

Images uploaded to social media demonstrate those who appear to be protesters located close to signs written on the Lower Kyimyindaing Road that read “WE DON’T ACCEPT MILITARY COUP” (Figure 7). It appears to capture teachers walking away from the education office area. Cross-referencing UGC uploaded to social media shows smoke around the same area, geolocated to around coordinates 16.798993, 96.126112. (Figure 8).



Figure 7: Protest/protesters located at coordinates 16.798993,96.126112. The road reads "We don't accept military coup".



Figure 8: Geolocation of smoke in a similar area to Figure 7. The photo was located at 16.798993, 96.126112.

Images also depict security forces interacting with protesters, close to the approximate location of the teacher's protest at Yangon Division Education Office (Figure 9). Teachers in uniforms can be seen ducking on the road as the police, who give the impression of being part of Division 3 on account of their uniforms, appear to be trying to disperse the protest (Figure 10). The location of the photos was geolocated to 16.799967, 96.126090.



Figure 9: Using other social media imagery and Google Maps imagery, the location of this incident is verified as being at the front of the Yangon Division Education Office.



Figure 10: UGC on February 28, 2021 captures Myanmar Police Force, with the number '3' on their uniforms denoting Division 3, in close proximity to teacher's protest in front of the Yangon Division Education Office.

An image circulated on social media depicting Daw Tinnwe Yee lying unconscious on the floor on the same day. Notably, the floor tiles seem to be different from those outside the Yangon Division Education Office. Cross-referencing the aforementioned video on social media of Daw Tinnwe Yee receiving CPR, Myanmar Witness identified windows and structure of a building and plantation in the background (Figure 11). This led to the identification of the location of the footage to 16.799512, 96.125777.



Figure 11: Geolocation of where Daw Tinnwe Yee was taken after she was shot using Google and social media imagery.



Figure 12: Positions of the shadows in these three figures show that shadows are falling from east to west.

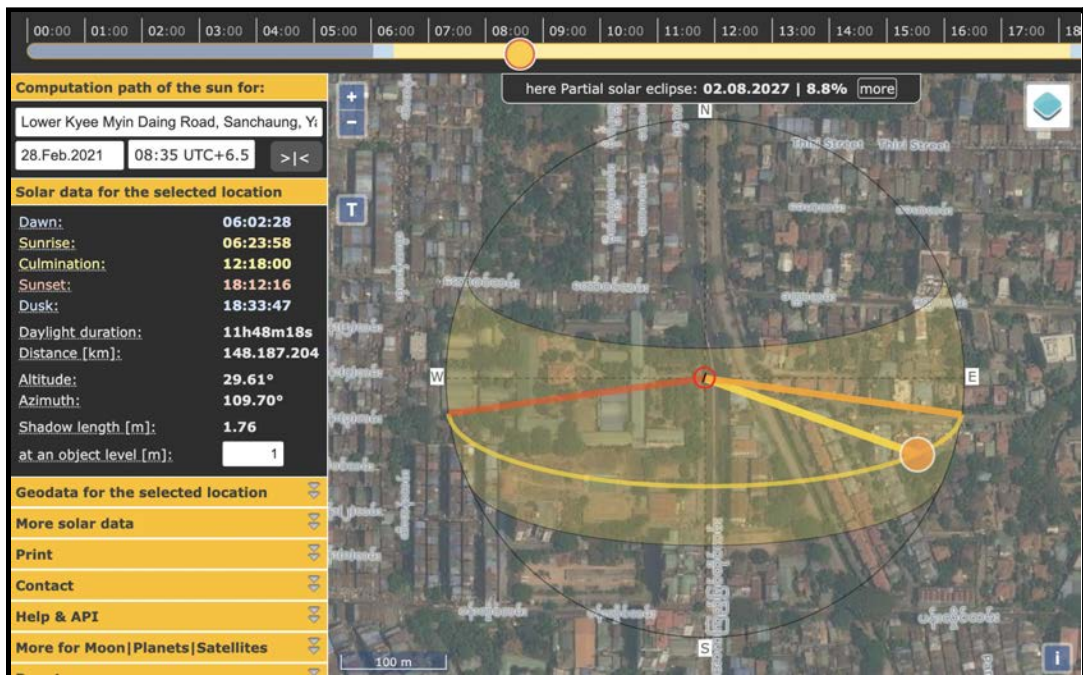


Figure 13: Chronolocation using shadow analysis in SunCalc that demonstrates the images were taken at around 0830.

Pregnancy Allegations

The news of her death was widely spread on social media as a “pregnant” middle school teacher who was shot by the police and died as a result. Since even the local media outlets such as Mizzima News were posting it, this narrative became dominant. It was difficult to tell from just the photos and videos if this claim was true, but there were some accounts, replying to Mizzima News, refuting the claim that she was pregnant (Figure 14). Later, an individual claiming to be her daughter refuted in a Facebook post that it was her mother Daw Tinnwe Yee who died and that she was not pregnant at the time of her death (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Social media accounts replying to Mizzima News refuting that she was pregnant.

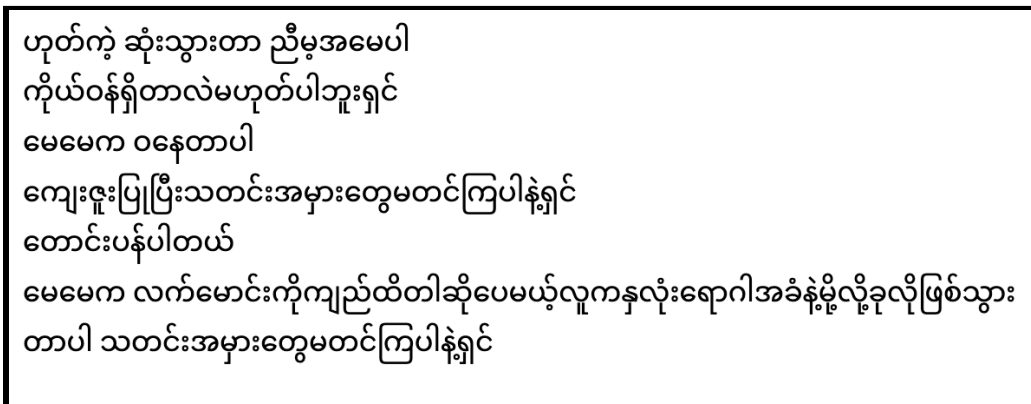


Figure 15: An individual claiming to be Daw Tinnwe Yee’s Daughter posted to Facebook on 28 February 2021, 1216 local time, refuting the pregnancy allegations.

Translation: “The person who passed away is my mother. It’s not true that she was pregnant. She is only overweight. I am sorry but please do not post false information. My mom was shot in the arm but this happened because she has an underlying heart condition. Please do not post false rumors.”

Funeral

According to Daw Tinnwe Yee's funeral invitation (Figure 16), she was cremated at 1000 on 2 March 2021 at the Htein Pin crematoria in Yangon at coordinates 16.889646, 96.024962. The announcement claims that she died at 0835 on 28 February 2021. She left a husband, two children, and two grandchildren. She was mourned by many, and some youths were seen holding a poster at her funeral that attributed her death to the Myanmar Security Forces and praised her as a martyr.

The funeral announcement for Daw Tinnwe Yee confirmed many of the details Myanmar Witness has identified about the case: that she was 59 years old when she died on 28 February 2021. It reads that she died at 0835 on 28 February 2021, and her funeral would be held on 2 March 2021, with a funeral procession leaving from her Hlaing Tharyar home at 0800. There was also a funeral donation scheduled for 6 March 2021.

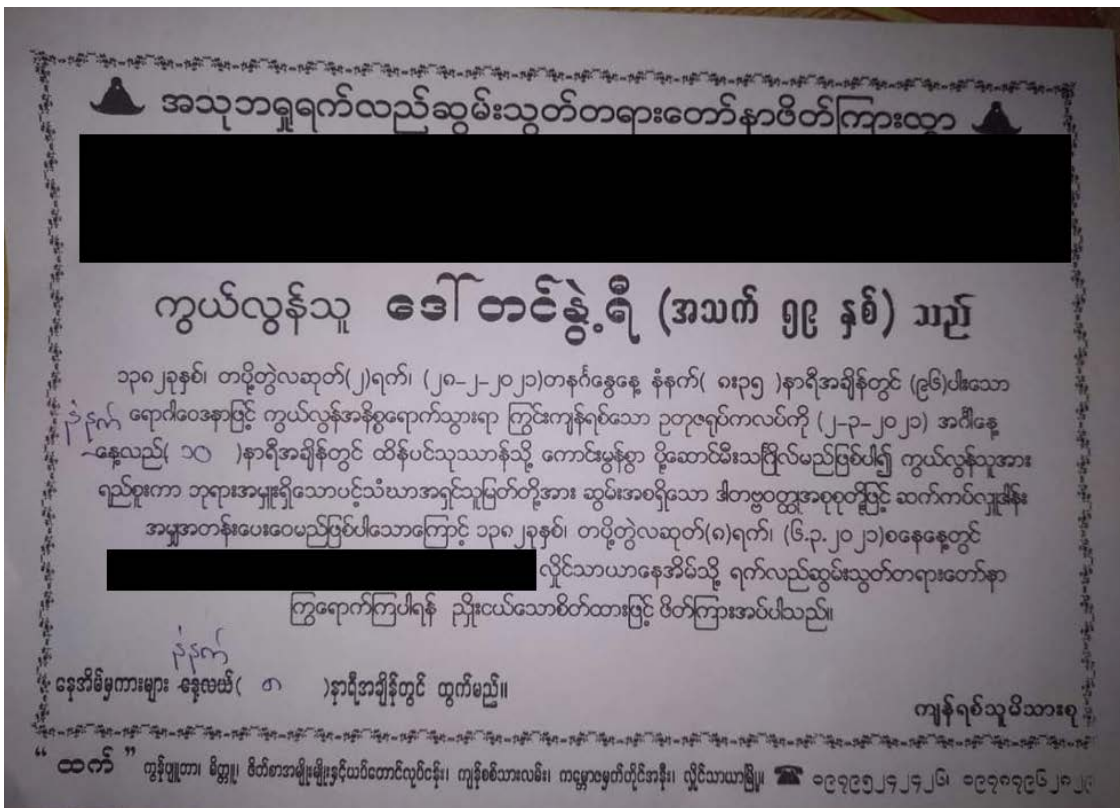


Figure 16: An image shared on social media is allegedly the funeral announcement of Daw Tinnwe Yee. The leaflet includes the information that Daw Tinnwe Yee (59 years old) died on 28 February 2021 at 0835, with her funeral scheduled for 1000, 2 March 2021 (Tuesday) at Htain Pin Crematoria. It also contains details of funeral donations and when the procession would be leaving her Hlaing Thar Yar home.

A commemoration was also held in front of the site of the incident of her death, in front of the Yangon Division Education Office (Figure 19). The scenes from the commemoration further confirm Myanmar Witness's geolocation of the incident. Myanmar Witness identified images of teachers attending the commemoration event; the background buildings match those identified in this area on Google Maps imagery, opposite Yangon Division Education Office (Figure 20).



Figure 19: Commemoration protest for Daw Tinnwe Yee in front of the Yangon Division Education Office.



Figure 20: Protesters used slippers and flowers to commemorate Daw Tinnwe Yee's death. This is in reference to her bloodstained school teacher slippers, which appear to have become the symbol of her resistance.



Figure 21: The buildings behind the teachers at the commemoration event match with the Google maps imagery of the buildings opposite Yangon Division Education Office.



Conclusion

Myanmar Witness verified many of the circumstances surrounding the school teacher Daw Tinnwe Yee's death, including the circumstances of her death after being shot in the arm. However, allegations of her pregnancy were refuted online and by a Facebook account alleging to be her daughter. This continues to suggest that non-violent protesters have had their right to protest repressed since the February 2021 coup. It cannot be confirmed that those who shot Daw Tinnwe Yee were Myanmar's security forces, but our analysis supports claims that Myanmar security forces were in the area at, specifically at a teacher's anti-regime protest event, around the time Daw Tinnwe Yee was shot. This report is one of many by Myanmar Witness documenting violence against women in Myanmar and demonstrates the violence used against civilians exercising their right to freedom of assembly and association.