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ICL Delegation Meet Myanmar Comrades in Thailand

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For several years now, the Asia Working Group of the ICL has repeatedly organised campaigns in collaboration with the FGWM.

On occasions such as May Day or the Feminist Day of Action, we have successfully supported various labour struggles in factories where brands such as H&M, Hunkemöller and Zara have their products manufactured. Our comrades in Myanmar face many different challenges: not only does the military dictatorship threaten their lives on a daily basis, but the also long-term effects of natural disasters make their everyday lives difficult. Now, additionally the price increases associated with the war against Iran are taking their toll as well.

We are all the more delighted that, following the numerous campaigns we have successfully carried out together over the past few years, the FGWM is now applying to become an equal member of our international confederation. A vote on this by the ICL sections is still pending.

To support FGWM, we travelled to Thailand as an ICL delegation at the end of March. There, we were able to meet some comrades in person, prepare for their possible affiliation in several plenary sessions, and discuss possible joint actions in the future.

There were six of us travelling for two weeks, mainly in Mae Sot and Chiang Mai, where many activists from Myanmar are currently living in exile. During our trip, we not only spoke with members of the FGWM, but also tried to meet as many other groups as possible to expand our network. In total, the ICL delegation was able to engage with 17 initiatives and organisations.

This gave us valuable insights into the work of groups that support labour struggles and workers in the region. For example the *Yaung Chi Ooo Workers Association* and the *Arakan Workers Organization* in Mae Sot, which in different ways support migrant workers from Myanmar who are particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to their precarious situation. We were also able to get a tour through the Thai Labour Museum in Bangkok and met with the *Thai Workers Union* who are inspired by the history of ICL sections such as the IWW and CNT. They seek to build a mass militant unionism in contradiction to the reformist unions which they see as dominating the labour scene in Thailand.

Besides labour topics, the struggle against the junta remains a central issue for our comrades from Myanmar.

Although the rebels lack everything – ammunition, weapons, food and even drinking water – they are not giving up and continue to receive unwavering support from the civilian population. Whilst the junta is backed by the states of Russia, China and Iran, the rebel groups are largely left on their own. There is no international support, no defence systems and not even any warning systems. A radio

station (*Federal FM*) partly takes on this role: broadcasting from the jungle, it transmits air raid warnings, among other things. Federal FM is just one example of the creativity and DIY culture of the resistance against the regime in Myanmar.

However, due to numerous other international conflicts and crises, the civil war in Myanmar is barely noticed in other parts of the world. The people were delighted that we took an interest in their stories and their struggle. The encounters were something special for both sides: the people we met are actively involved in a revolution that is actually taking place right now. They are not only fighting a military dictatorship and thus against fascism – they are simultaneously working to build a new society.

For us, the meetings and stories of our comrades were a great source of motivation to continue and intensify our international networking. Since our last joint campaign on March 8th 2025 for menstrual products and better sanitary facilities inside the factories, there has indeed been a lasting impact: At the Hang Kei textile factory in Yangon's industrial zone, which employs more than 1,000 people, management remains committed to providing sanitary pads for female workers, ensuring toilets are cleaned regularly, and making rest rooms available for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

As an international confederation, we have the power to put pressure on brands and support local labour struggles along the global supply chain. Through international cooperation, we can take our share of responsibility and put pressure on the brands that have their products manufactured in factories in Myanmar (and other parts of South and Southeast Asia) and profit from exploitation.

Together we can make a difference; we have already proven that.

It's worth it! **Solidarity is our weapon!**