

# *Women's League of Burma*

## **PRESS RELEASE** **For Immediate Release**

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"Ethnic minority refugee women from Burma are facing multiple discrimination in neighboring countries and the international community should ensure that these refugees from Burma are not to be repatriated as long as the military is in power in the country", said Naw Musi, a Karen woman from Burma at the on-going World Conference Against Racism NGO Forum at Durban in South Africa.

She was speaking at a regional discussion forum being held as a part of preparations for the final NGO declaration, which will come out at the end of the conference.

"We are treated with disrespect and dislike in the best cases, and with cruelty and hatred in the worst. We are unwelcome guests in the host country, but we have nowhere else to go", said Naw Musi who is living in a refugee camp in Thai-Burma border.

"The Burmese regime also must acknowledge the problem of racial and ethnic prejudice within the country. Racism is like a disease. It creeps across borders and travels back and forth freely", added Naw Musi, who is here as a part of Women's League of Burma (WLB) delegation to the conference.

More than 7,000 delegates from all over the world are participating in the conference to discuss the issues relating to racism and other related issues including gender, religious intolerance, ethnic cleansing, globalization, militarization, poverty and indigenous people. The conference is being held from the 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August.

A six-member delegation from the Women's League of Burma (WLB) is participating in the conference to raise the issues of multiple discrimination faced by the people under the military government in Burma and to raise the awareness on the struggle of Burmese people for the restoration of democracy and human rights. Panel discussions and exhibition on Burma are also being organized in the conference.

Three other Burma delegates also addressed at different panels on Burma today, speaking on militarism in Burma, discrimination against ethnic Nationalities by the Military regime, and lives of refugees/migrants and Internally Displaced Persons from Burma.

Women's League of Burma was an umbrella of eleven women organizations of Burma and it was formed in December 1999. It is seriously concerned about the decades-long civil war,

due to the unsolved political settlement between the ethnic nationalities and ruling authorities in Burma.

In July, 2001, it launched a signature campaign among the people of Burma in exile and in the refugee camps to add "Burma, Country-specific situation and recommendations" to the Declaration of the NGO forum, WCAR in Durban, South Africa and it collected more than 50,000 signatures in support of WLB's campaign at WCAR.

"Racism is one of the route causes of Burma's problems. By sharing experiences with other international delegates and raising the issues of ethno-politics, militarization and racial discrimination in Burma, we hope that the international community will support for the meaningful political changes towards democratization in Burma", said Khin Ohmar, another delegate of WLB.

"Burma desperately needs stronger pressure, even tougher economic sanctions for dramatic changes. If the policies of the governments towards Burma continue as it is now, the military dictatorship in Burma will go on forever" said a presidium board member of the WLB.

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