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WLB Applauds the Call from the USA to End Impunity in Burma

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The Women's League of Burma (WLB) welcomes the decisive decision from the Obama Administration on August 18, calling for a Commission of Inquiry on Burma.

The US joined the growing number of countries refusing to turn a blind eye any longer and called for the establishment of an inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma.

So far, the UK, Australia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have called for a Commission. As the US has consistently been a strong supporter of the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma, it sends a strong statement to other countries to join them in publicly supporting a UN inquiry.

The need for the establishment of an investigation into crimes against humanity is long overdue. In power since 1962, the military regime has brutally treated all people of Burma, especially ethnic minority groups. Through tactics of systematic and widespread rape, sexual slavery, torture, forced relocation, forced labor, extra-judicial killing, extortion, and confiscation of property, the people of Burma have been made to bear extreme brutality at the hands of the regime.

Women have particularly suffered under their rule. Widespread and systematic rape and other acts of sexual violence against women are used as tools of war by the regime to demoralize ethnic communities with the dual intention of exterminating their cultural origins and gaining control of their land and resources. While the military remains in control, rule of law remains absent, and to this day incidents of rape committed by regime's troops with impunity continue unabated.

Impunity is about to be written into law in Burma. The November elections will be a step towards enforcing the 2008 Constitution, which grants amnesty for all prior government actions, a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1820. It is up to the international community and its courts to end General Than Shwe's, top leader of the Burmese military junta, and cronies' ability to evade justice.

"There are countless women of Burma who are survivors of heinous sexual crimes, and impunity for these crimes needs to come to an end" said Thin Thin Aung, Presidium Board's member of WLB.

WLB believes that a campaign to bring the top leaders of the junta before the ICC or some other international judicial body would send a strong warning to other officers in Burma, to realize that they must stop supporting the dictator Than Shwe and committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As an organization pursuing the advancement of the status of women and working towards a peaceful and just society within Burma, the WLB is focused on ending the impunity that continues to allow the military regime to unjustly persecute the people of Burma. We call for an international investigation into these crimes as well as the prosecution of those responsible by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

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