



International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 2020

Achieve Justice by Combating Impunity

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, Women's League of Burma (WLB), Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma), Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP), Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO) and Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) are calling for an end to torture, and for reparation and justice for torture survivors.

To mark this important day, and amidst restrictions to organise gatherings, we created an animation film entitled "**Achieve Justice by Combating Impunity**", which illustrates how torture is used in Myanmar and the impact it has on survivors. The animation links are available here: https://youtu.be/AqDow_MqNxA and <https://youtu.be/nQRUUuFKOrs>.

In Myanmar, torture is widely used in conflict areas. Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, despite a wide call globally and locally for an immediate ceasefire, the Myanmar army announced only a limited ceasefire which does not cover the most active conflicts. On the contrary, the army is intensifying fighting in several areas including in Rakhine State, which leads to additional human rights violations including torture, against civilians. In several recent cases brought to light by social media, the Myanmar army was forced to admit that their troops committed torture, but justice processes are still elusive.

In addition, sexual violence as a form of torture in ethnic conflict areas continues to be documented, as well as the use of torture in detention centers and interrogation centers, often in an effort to procure information or to force confessions. It is the government's responsibility to stop and prevent torture in its jurisdiction, and to prosecute and punish those who commit it. However, impunity still prevails and perpetrators remain unpunished.

In this context of the Myanmar government's failure to take action, the recent proceedings at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are welcome steps towards ending the culture of impunity and bringing justice for torture survivors.

The Myanmar government and the international community also have a duty to protect the rights of torture survivors and to provide appropriate remedies for the crimes committed against them. In addition to reparations, they must provide torture survivors with urgent interim relief, acknowledge the wrongs done to them, and prevent torture from recurring.

We call on the government of Myanmar to:

- Withdraw the army battalions stationed in ethnic areas and stop armed conflict,
- Prosecute and punish those who commit torture, sexual violence and other human rights violations against civilians,
- Release all remaining political prisoners unconditionally and stop arresting human rights activists,
- Sign and ratify the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), and implement it into national legislation,

- Collaborate with the international accountability mechanisms recently created to address torture and other human rights abuses,
- Establish reparation and rehabilitation mechanisms for victims of torture and other human rights violations,
- Establish meaningful transitional justice mechanisms to address victim's rights to truth and reparations, in particular rehabilitation programs for torture survivors and women and children victims of sexual violences.

ND-Burma, WLB, AAPP, AJAR and VWO

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About Women's League of Burma (WLB) www.womenofburma.org

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) is an umbrella organization comprised of 13 women's organizations of different ethnic backgrounds from Burma. WLB was founded on 9th December 1999. Its mission is to work for women's empowerment and advancement of the status of women, and to work for the increased participation of women in all spheres of society in the democracy movement, and in the peace and national reconciliation process through capacity building, advocacy, research and documentation.

Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma) www.nd-burma.org

ND-Burma formed in 2004 in order to provide a way for Burma human rights organizations to collaborate on the human rights documentation process.

The 13 ND-Burma member organizations seek to collectively use the truth of what communities in Burma have endured to advocate for justice for victims.

ND-Burma trains local organizations in human rights documentation; coordinates members' input into a common database using Martus, a secure open-source software; and engages in joint-advocacy campaigns.

About Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) www.aappb.org

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), also known as AAPP, is a non-profit human rights organization based in Mae Sot, Thailand. AAPP was founded in 2000 by former political prisoners living in exile on the Thai/Burma border. Since then, the organization has been run by former political prisoners, with two offices being opened inside Burma in 2012, one in Rangoon and the other in Mandalay. AAPP advocates and lobbies for the release of remaining political prisoners and for the improvement of the lives of political prisoners after their release. The various assistance programs for political prisoners and their family members are aimed at ensuring they have access to education, vocational trainings, mental health counseling and healthcare. Therefore, AAPP has tried to promote civil and political rights for all ethnic groups who live in Burma.

About Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO)

Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO) is a community-based organization, which was created in 2009. Vimutti is a Pali word (Myanmar ancient literature), which means "freedom". All VWO members are socially minded volunteers. VWO is very active in communities doing social work, humanitarian support, and providing educational charity to children from poverty-stricken families. VWO is directly engaging with vulnerable people to create a healthy societal environment through research, advocacy, networking, and improving their collective capacity development. VWO has a special program for strengthening women former political prisoners.

About Asia Justice And Rights (AJAR) www.asia-ajar.org

AJAR is a regional human rights organization based in Jakarta. AJAR works to increase the capacity of local and national organization in the fight against entrenched impunity and to contribute to building cultures based on accountability, justice and a willingness to learn from the root causes of mass human rights violations in Asia Pacific region.