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Women's League of Burma calls on UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to send fact-finding mission to Thai-Burma border to investigate sexual violence committed by Burmese Army

On August 30-31, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) attended the annual Asia-Pacific NGO Consultation Meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms Radhika Commaraswamy, in Colombo, Sri Lanka and called for her to send a fact-finding mission to the Thai-Burma border to investigate sexual violence committed by the Burmese Army.

At the meeting the WLB representative submitted a Burma country report on state violence committed by the Burmese Army against ethnic women. The report detailed sexual violence committed by Burmese Army troops in Arakan, Karen, Karenni, Mon and Shan States, and Tenneserim Division of Burma, from 1996 till as recently as July 2002.

The report "Licence to Rape" issued by the Shan Women's Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation in June 2002, has focussed international attention on the systematic use of sexual violence by the Burmese Army. The WLB report gives clear evidence that these crimes are taking place throughout the country.

In the meeting, the WLB called for the Burmese military regime to immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire to stop increased militarization and anti-insurgency campaigns in the ethnic states, and to begin tripartite dialogue with representatives of non-Burman ethnic nationalities and the democratic opposition on the country's political future.

"The civil war in Burma is the context for the systematic sexual violence. Unless the regime admits this and genuinely addresses the grievances of the country's ethnic peoples, the nightmare of sexual violence will continue indefinitely," said WLB representative.

The WLB urged all women's groups in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the globe to organise campaigns in their countries and through their networks to support WLB's demands for genuine political change in Burma.

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) is an umbrella organization comprising 11 women's organizations of different ethnic backgrounds of Burma. WLB's mission is to work for the women of Burma in striving for solidarity, empowerment and national reconciliation.

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