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**“In the Shadow of the Junta”
CEDAW shadow report reveals systemic gender discrimination in
Burma**

Women’s organizations are today launching a shadow report revealing systemic gender discrimination in Burma, which will be used to review Burma at the 42nd Session of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee in Geneva on November 3, 2008.

The Women’s League of Burma, together with other community-based organizations around Burma’s borders, has compiled extensive data in the report on how the regime’s failed policies have impacted women and girls, particularly in the areas of education, health, rural development, and violence against women. The findings strongly contradict the claims in the country report by the ruling military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), that women in Burma “enjoy their rights even before they are born.”

The report exposes how the regime is profiting from the sale of the country’s natural resources to build up the military and its GONGOs, and how systematic militarization and prioritization of military expenditure has reinforced the existing patriarchal system. It analyzes how the regime’s new constitution not only fails to effectively promote gender equality, but guarantees that the armed forces, an almost exclusively male institution, will control a quarter of seats in the government.

The report states: “The face of public life in Burma is male, because the culture of Burma today is profoundly militarized. The military presence pervades every village, town and city, every branch and level of its administration, and every situation involving power and status.”

The report exposes how national women’s organizations are merely for show. They are led by wives of SPDC commanders, who promote the regime’s policies and abuse their power at every level.

The report reiterates that there can be no advancement of the lives of women and girls in Burma, and no protection and promotion of their rights while the military and its proxy organizations remain in power.

“The regime’s road map to disciplined democracy is simply a road-map to further patriarchy,” said Nang Yain (General Secretary of the Women’s League of Burma) “We need genuine political reform to work for gender equality in Burma.”

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