



အမျိုးသမီးများအဖွဲ့ချုပ် (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ) Women's League of Burma

Statement on the 60th anniversary of Burma's Independence Day

4 January 2008

Today marks the 60th anniversary of Independence Day for Burma. However, the people of Burma have not had a chance to enjoy the fruits of independence. Instead, until today, most people in Burma have been suffering from the military dictatorship's oppression, unlawful acts, brutality and militarized slavery.

Because of abuse of power by the military regime, currently called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which has prioritized military expansion above all else, Burma has become one of the poorest countries in the world. Public health and education services have declined dramatically and social, economic and political aspects of life in Burma have been deteriorating.

The events in August-September last year provided clear evidence of the atrocities that the military regime has been inflicting on the people of Burma for decades. The world witnessed again brutal and violent crackdowns on the peaceful monk-led demonstrations. To date, at least 100 women human rights defenders who were at the forefront of the uprising are still in detention and have reportedly been tortured by the regime. Other women activists who played a leading role in organizing the peaceful protests have been on the run, away from their families, because the regime has branded them as agitators and terrorists and has been hunting them down.

In order to achieve long-lasting peace in Burma, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has repeatedly invited SPDC for dialogue, as well as the UN and the international community.

However, the SPDC has continued to refuse to engage in meaningful dialogue, which is vital for a political settlement. SPDC has merely let UN Special Envoy Mr. Gambari and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma Mr. Pinheiro visit the country. And now the SPDC is boldly challenging not only the people of Burma but also the UN and international community with their usual cosmetic gestures.

Therefore we, the WLB, reiterate our calls to the international community and the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon to maintain their increased pressure on SPDC to immediately release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, including women human rights defenders so that the process of tripartite dialogue can begin, and facilitate a mission of inquiry by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to Burma, so that women activists will be able to reunite speedily with their children and other family members, with guarantees of safety. Moreover, we would like to call on ASEAN members to pressure the Burmese regime, which has been tarnishing the image of ASEAN, and follow the lead of the Philippines, which stated that it would not sign the ASEAN Charter until the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The WLB will continue to work for the realization of genuine independence so that all people in Burma can be free from half a century of militarized slavery. WLB will also intensify efforts to work strategically with other political forces, and the people of Burma, for the realization of independence and freedom in Burma.

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