

## UNITED CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR SHAN WOMEN OF BURMA

We heard, we read, we know.

And we are outraged.

We, from various international and regional organizations, come together to express our collective disgust and anger over the widespread and systematic use of rape as a weapon of war by the Burmese military regime. We ask the international community to take immediate action to end these practices and to protect the victims.

The data that has been documented by the brave women of the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), published as *"Licence to Rape"*, has brought to public attention what, up until now, has been whispered in fear throughout the communities that have been ravaged by these acts of terror. *"Licence to Rape"* documents the irrefutable and horrific claims of the hundreds of women and girl-children identified as victims of the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) terror tactic that uses rape as a weapon of war in their violent anti-insurgency campaign against citizens of the Shan state.

According to the report, which documents 173 cases, 83% of the rapes were committed by officers and, in most cases, in front of their troops. The rapes often involved extreme brutality and torture, and 25% of the rapes resulted in death. 61% were gang-rapes, and in some cases, women were detained and raped repeatedly for periods of up to four months. Only once was a perpetrator punished by their commanding officer.

All of these crimes took place within military bases and in forced relocation sites and have been committed with impunity.

We condemn these brutal acts of the SPDC against the women, girls and other members of Shan communities. We deplore the brazen denial by the SPDC of the information documented in *"Licence to Rape"*.

*"Licence to Rape"* provides the platform for condemnation of this violent military regime and sets the groundwork for international cooperation and intervention. The members of SWAN and SHRF, together with the survivors of these heinous crimes, have taken the courageous step to document and publicize these offenses. All of those involved in the documentation and publication are now the subjects of threats and intimidation. They will not be covered into silence. Our organizations will do everything in our power to support their efforts. We are now asking for the collective support of the international community to recognize these offenses and to help bring an end to these unspeakable crimes.

We cannot stand idly by while the SPDC claims it is taking steps towards peace, democracy and reconciliation when it continues to silence people who expose the regime's atrocities, through brutal intimidation, and often extermination. We cannot stand by as it continues to commit these atrocities. The report indicates that the recorded incidences of rape committed by the Burmese military in 2001 have drastically increased since 1996. Our silence gives them strength. Our inaction makes these acts permissible.

**We urge the SPDC:**

1. To immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire in order to stop militarization and anti-insurgency campaigns in the ethnic states;
2. To begin tripartite dialogue with representatives of non-Burman ethnic nationalities and the democratic opposition on the country's political future; and
3. To stop sexual violence against ethnic women and to end the culture of impunity.

**We appeal to the international community:**

- to voice its concern about the contents and findings of the report; and
- to request the UN Secretary-General to employ his good offices, through his Special Envoy Ambassador Razali Ismail, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and through the Special Rapporteurs on the Human Rights Situation in Burma and Elimination of Violence Against Women to investigate the contents and the findings of the report.

**We appeal to the international community and international institutions to discontinue all financial assistance and other forms of aid to the SPDC until genuine steps are taken towards peace and democracy in Burma.**

We are asking the Royal Government of Thailand to take action to protect the victims that have fled across the border. There is nowhere for the rape survivors to turn to inside Shan state for any medical or social support, let alone for legal recourse. Furthermore, those who have fled to Thailand have been denied any humanitarian assistance and are constantly under threat for their security and for their lives.

**We, therefore, urge the Royal Government of Thailand:**

- to allow Shan civilians seeking asylum to cross the border into Thailand, to access refugee camps and UNHCR;
- to allow rape survivors access to services provided by international humanitarian organizations, particularly psychosocial and medical services;

- to not repatriate Shan women directly to Burmese military and to exercise particular caution in relation to the deportation of Shan migrants as many are genuine refugees;
- to suspend its repatriation program until such time that an independent body determines the safety and security of the refugees and to allow the international community and UN agencies, particularly UNHCR and the IOM, to participate in any discussions, negotiations and/or repatriation programs involving Burmese migrants. Such discussions must address the root causes for the outflow of migrant workers; and
- to ensure the safety and security of the people involved in the documentation and publication of "*Licence to Rape*".

Please join us in our collective efforts to protect the victims, to put the perpetrators to justice and prevent these acts of terror from continuing unimpeded.

**Justice for the victims of rape!**  
**Peace and democracy to the women and men of Burma!**

26 August 2002

Pls find the petition on Stop Licence to Rape in Shan State, Burma.  
<http://www.petitiononline.com/Forumasi/petition.html>

Sign by individuals or organisation name in this petition.  
The closing date of petition is on 25 November 2002 (Stop Violence against Women day)