Humanitarian, Human Rights Organizations Call for Urgent UN Security Council Action on Burma

NGOs from 20 Countries Ask UN Security Council to Take Action on Burma

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(Washington, DC) Over thirty non-governmental organizations from twenty countries today sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and members of the United Nations Security Council, calling for a peaceful, binding resolution on the Southeast Asian country of Burma. The letter adds to a growing chorus from the international community calling for action on Burma.

The letter states: “The Burmese junta has ignored 28 UN General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights resolutions. Now is the time for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and members of the UN Security Council to move beyond discussion and take action in the Council. The situation for Burma’s 53 million people grows more desperate and horrific each day."

The crisis in Burma has escalated in recent months with a brutal military offensive by the Burmese regime against Karen villagers, displacing up to 20,000 civilians. More than 2,000 of the displaced have fled to neighboring Thailand, while others are desperately trying to survive in the jungle with little or no access to food, water, or safety. The Burmese army has planted thousands of landmines to prohibit the fleeing villagers from accessing humanitarian aid, and barred all humanitarian groups from the area. These 20,000 displaced Karen villagers join more than 1 million that have already fled the country and more than 500,000 living in fear as internally displaced persons.

The use of rape as a weapon of war continues unabated throughout Burma’s ethnic areas, including Shan State. Burma’s military junta is the world’s leading user of child soldiers, forcibly recruiting up to 70,000 children.
In December 2005 the United Nations Security Council held its first-ever briefings to discuss Burma, followed by one this past May. The letter refers to the 2005 discussion: “It is essential for the United Nations Secretary-General and Security Council to follow up the historic December and May consensus discussions with concrete and urgent action to address the escalating catastrophe in Burma.”

Organizations signing the letter include:

American Jewish World Service (United States)
Action for Democracy in Vietnam (France)
Alliance for Reform & Democracy in Asia (Hong Kong)
Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition of 15 organizations from 11 countries (APSOC) (Philippines)
Australian Catholic Relief in Cambodia,
Canadian Friends of Burma (Canada),
EarthRights International (United States),
FORUM-ASIA (Thailand),
France Libertés – Fondation Danielle Mitterrand (France),
Foundation for Media Alternatives (Philippines),
Globe International (Mongolia),
IBON Foundation Inc. (Philippines),
Initiatives for International Dialogue (Philippines),
International Movement for a Just World (Malaysia),
Jesuit Refugee Service (United States),
Jubilee Campaign (United States),
Umzbalazo we Jubilee (South Africa),
Korean House for International Solidarity (South Korea),
Network of Women in Growth (Ghana),
People in Need Foundation (Czech Republic),
Peoples Forum for Human Rights and Development (Bhutan),
Polish Helsinki Committee (Poland),
Pontis Foundation (Slovak Republic),
Refugees International (United States),
Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières) (France),
Rencontre Africaine Pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme (RADDHO) (Senegal),
TENAGANITA (Women’s Force) (Malaysia),
The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights, Bergen (Norway),
U.S. Campaign for Burma (Unite States),
United Lao Action Center (France), and
WARIPNET, West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network (Senegal).

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