

not delivered



## Droits et Démocratie Rights & Democracy

Centre international des droits de la personne et du développement démocratique  
International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development



Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
3rd Session, 10- 21 May 2004, New York  
Agenda Item 4 (d): Human Rights  
17 May 2004

### **NGO Statement – Submitted by Rights & Democracy (International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development)**

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Delegates, Colleagues, Indigenous brothers and sisters,

My name is K'nyaw Paw. I am one of the Karen people, an indigenous ethnic group from Burma. I would like to draw your attention to the on-going sexual violence against indigenous women in Burma perpetrated by the Burmese military regime, also known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

There have been a number of well-documented reports on sexual violence committed by the regime's military in Burma's ethnic areas. In June 2002, the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) jointly released a report, *License to Rape*, that documented more than 173 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed by the Burmese troops in Shan State against more than 600 women and girls. Out of these 173 documented incidents, in only one case, and I repeat only one case, was the perpetrator punished.

Reports of sexual violence in Shan state continue to reach SWAN, despite the military regime's repeated denials and its attempts to block the flow of information. Since the publication of *License to Rape*, SWAN has documented the rape of a further 150 women and girls in Shan State by the SPDC military.

**Mr. Chairperson,**

A new report, *Shattering Silences*, released by the Karen Women's Organization, documents the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war by the Burmese military regime in Karen State. It documents 125 cases of sexual violence committed by the Burmese military troops in Karen State from 1988 until 2004, of which half of the rapes were committed by high-ranking military officers. Furthermore, 40% of those documented were gang-rape and in 28% of the cases, the women were killed after being raped.

*Abonnan D. ...*

*...*

*Shattering Silences* gives further evidence of the atrocities being committed against indigenous women by troops of the Burmese SPDC military regime. It also corroborates the findings of the SWAN report, that the Burma's military regime is allowing its troops to commit rape with impunity, systematically and on a widespread scale. Both reports illustrate a strong case that war crimes and crimes against humanity, in the form of sexual violence, have occurred and continue to occur in an effort to terrorize and subjugate the indigenous peoples in Shan and Karen States.

This pattern of sexual violence continues despite the truce declared as part of the ceasefire negotiations between the Burmese military regime and the Karen National Union. *Since the talks began in December 2003, at least four new cases of rape by the Burmese military against Karen women have been reported.*

Mr. Chairperson,

Sexual violence against Shan, Karen and other ethnic women by the SPDC soldiers persists, and the perpetrators go unpunished. The military regime in Burma has taken no serious measures to improve the situation, despite resolutions by the UN Commission on Human Rights and UNGA.

Without taking serious measures to eliminate violence against women in Burma, the upcoming National Convention on May 17, which the military regime claims is the first step in its "roadmap" to democracy, will be absolutely meaningless.

Only the restoration of genuine democracy and the protection of human rights can provide true safety for Burma's indigenous women.

Mr. Chairperson,

Therefore, we would like the Permanent Forum to:

- Strongly urge SPDC to implement an immediate, nationwide ceasefire and to withdraw its troops stationed in the indigenous ethnic states;
- Adopt a specific resolution condemning sexual and gender-based violations by the SPDC military against indigenous women in Burma;
- Strongly urge that the military regime immediately ban the use of rape as a weapon of war, respect the Geneva Conventions, in particular the common art.3 that prohibits rape as a weapon of war and to fully implement the resolutions adopted by the UNCHR and UNGA since 1992.
- Call on all international institutions operating in Burma, including UN agencies, to denounce publicly the atrocities committed by the SPDC against indigenous women.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.