

WLB Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

25 November 2005

Today, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations around the world are marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by organizing awareness-raising activities in their communities.

In order to end violence against women and girls, governments in other countries are taking necessary measures from the community to the state level, amending domestic legislation to protect the rights of women and girls, and to empower women.

However, in Burma, the Burmese military regime, namely SPDC, has continued committing systematic violence against women and girls. SPDC is neglecting the education, health, and social welfare of the people while abusing national revenue to hold onto power and prolong military rule in Burma.

Instead of working to promote the welfare and well-being of the people of Burma, SPDC is abusing national revenue for its own benefit, and seeking to control any political opposition and possible political opponents. Early this month in November, SPDC moved its officials and civil servants from their headquarters to Pyinmana, a town about 400 km north of Rangoon. They were ordered to move at only one or two days' notice, and forced to go far away from their families.

Far from working for the elimination of violence against women, SPDC is manipulating women inside Burma. SPDC has forced women to join its women's wing, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWWAF), and using them as their mouthpiece, forcing women to organize rallies denouncing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and opposition groups, including the Women's League of Burma, as well as UN agencies such as the ILO.

Besides systematic violence against women, SPDC has continued to bring unlawful charges against women who speak out against their acts. Recently, SPDC sentenced Su Su Nway, a youth member of the National League for Democracy from Kawmoo Township, who had made a complaint to the ILO about SPDC's use of forced labour. She has been accused by the local authorities of "besmearing their reputation" and allegedly swearing at them, and charged with "disrupting authorities on duty."

Moreover, SPDC is using its media to propagate all kinds of rumors and propaganda which will lead to violence. In the November 13 issue of the Myanmar Alin, a columnist named *Kyaw Myint Naing* wrote an article called "Negotiation is NOT the solution for Burma's democracy." WLB sees this as evidence that SPDC is opposing a peaceful solution to bring about democracy. WLB also sees that the political problems stemming from military rule and oppression have badly affected Burma's neighbouring countries, and that SPDC misrule is a major threat to peace and stability of the region.

In order to end violence against women and to protect the lives of women in Burma, we would like to urge all countries in the region and ASEAN countries, particularly Burma's immediate neighbours:

- § To publicly raise their concerns with the SPDC about their systematic human rights abuses, particularly violence against women and girls
- § To use all diplomatic channels to pressure the regime, including placing Burma on the UN Security Council agenda

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