

**FOUNDERS:**

Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976
Máiread Maguire, Ireland - 1976
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

united for peace with justice and equality

Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

September 6, 2011

RE: Establishment of a Commission of Inquiry on Burma

Dear Secretary Clinton,

When the United Nations General Assembly meets in September 2011, we urge you to publically and unequivocally support the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. Further we ask that the US government works with all relevant governments to include language, in the UNGA resolution, which: "Calls on the Secretary-General to establish a Commission of Inquiry into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious human rights abuses and report back to the General Assembly at its next session."

Despite recent elections and a promise to institute democratic reforms, the Burmese government continues to perpetrate mass human rights abuses. Women have been particularly affected, with the state breaking a ceasefire and launching military offensives in the northern Shan and Kachin provinces. The military regime commits serious crimes against the ethnic populations with complete impunity. Dozens of women have been raped since January 2011, and refugees noted that government soldiers declared they were ordered to do so, adding to previous evidence of sexual violence as a weapon of war within Burma.

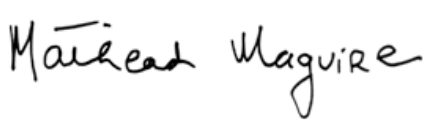
Our partners, the Kachin Women's Association Thailand and the Shan Women's Action Network, are continuing to document the ongoing cases of sexual violence perpetrated by the Burmese government forces, declaring that a "humanitarian crisis is looming in Kachin state." In spite of the meticulous evidence, as well as calls by civil society and the international community - including the UN General Assembly - there has been no investigation into these and other human rights violations against the population. The Burmese state continues to ignore all appeals for it to adhere to international humanitarian law and human rights law.

It is an opportune time for world leaders to end the impunity of this regime through the peaceful means of international justice. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma has called for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma several times. In her testimony before the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific in July, Nobel Laureate Aung Sang Suu Kyi expressed her desire that the US government give full support in implementing the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, including the formation of a Commission of Inquiry. Numerous legislators within the US government have conveyed their outrage that the Burmese government continues to commit violence against the population with complete impunity. The alarming use of rape as a weapon of war has particularly affected many, including twelve senators who, in an open letter in August, called on the US to support a Commission of Inquiry.

To date, sixteen countries have signed on in support of the UN Special Rapporteur's recommendation. Your favourable vote – and leadership in gaining support – is needed to reach majority.

We hope you will take a stand in supporting the population of Burma by preparing a resolution supporting a Commission of Inquiry that will begin the long road to accountability and demonstrating that crimes against humanity and war crimes are not tolerated. A resolution calling for a Commission of Inquiry would lend tremendous support to the people of Burma who have been toiling for so long for an end to the injustice in their country, and be a most powerful deterrent against such acts being repeated by others, elsewhere, time and again.

Sincerely,



Mairead Corrigan Maguire



Rigoberta Menchu Tum



Jody Williams



Shirin Ebadi



Wangari Maathai

CC:

William J. Burns, Deputy Secretary of State

Susan Rice, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Derek Mitchell, Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma