



## **Sexual Violence Against Ethnic Minority Women Must Be Addressed at the UN Human Rights Council**

[Geneva - 8 March, 2016] Today on International Women's Day, Burma Partnership and Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) call on permanent representatives of member and observer states of the United Nations Human Rights Council to seriously address human rights concerns in Burma/Myanmar, including the ongoing sexual violence against ethnic and religious minorities.

During Burma/Myanmar's upcoming annual examination at the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council, it is imperative that the member and observer states maintain the country under Item 4 ("*Human rights situations that require the Council's attention*") and support a resolution on Burma/Myanmar that institutes a set of clear and concrete benchmarks that will act as a roadmap for the future of human rights in the country.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Ms. Yanghee Lee, will be presenting her report on the human rights situation in Burma/Myanmar on 14 March, 2016 during the 31st session of the Council.

A recent letter signed by 121 civil society organizations also strongly cautioned the UN Human Rights Council against lowering its guard in the face of an increasingly dire human rights situation, and called attention to the ongoing and systematic use of rape and sexual violence, mainly by the Burma/Myanmar Army in ethnic areas, which continues with complete impunity. Cases such as the rape and murder of the two ethnic Kachin school teachers in Shan State, Maran Lu Ra and Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin, continue unresolved and as stated by the former Special Rapporteur, Tomas Ojea Quintana, these abuses are, "a state policy that involves authorities in the executive, military and judiciary at all levels."

As highlighted in a joint briefing paper "Human Rights Situation in Burma/Myanmar" by Burma Partnership and FORUM-ASIA, the reality for the National League for Democracy is that "impunity remains deeply entrenched in the key institutions and structures of governance and the Burma/Myanmar Army- the main perpetrator of pervasive human rights violations and abuses in the country for decades- remain untouched and still wield far-reaching powers." The recent signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) and the following Union Peace Conference has also not signalled any improvements, as fighting intensifies in ethnic areas.

A delegation of women human rights defenders (HRDs) from Burma/Myanmar will be raising the aforementioned issues this week in Geneva. They will also be addressing concerns regarding the growing number of internally displaced persons and gross human rights abuses related to armed conflict. Additionally, the delegates will also join other HRDs from Burma/Myanmar to participate in the upcoming adoption of Burma/Myanmar's Universal Periodic Review on 17 March, 2016.

In particular, the delegation of women HRDs will participate in a side event on the continued use of sexual violence by the Burma/Myanmar Army in armed conflict. Among others, the event will explore issues of justice and accountability in the context of political reforms in Burma/Myanmar.

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*The joint briefing paper "Human Rights Situation in Burma/Myanmar" by Burma Partnership and FORUM-ASIA provides an update on the current situation of human rights in Burma/Myanmar for the consideration of member and observer states of the UN Human Rights Council and presents critical recommendations that will need to be implemented if the country is to look forward to a new and progressive era of democracy. The briefing paper can be viewed here:*

[http://www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HRC31\\_Burma\\_Myanmar-Briefing\\_Paper-1.pdf](http://www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/HRC31_Burma_Myanmar-Briefing_Paper-1.pdf)