

July 4, 2002

"We are appalled by reports that the Burmese military is using rape as a weapon of war against civilian populations in the Shan States. We have raised our concern with the Burmese regime and urged them to fully investigate any and all allegations of the systematic rape of ethnic minority girls and women in Burma and appropriately punish those guilty of such heinous crimes. We condemn the pervasive use of rape or other forms of sexual violence by military forces against a vulnerable population. If the alleged abuses in the report are true, the Burmese regime must take immediate steps to end such violence within its borders."

The Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), would like to express their gratitude to the U.S State Department for issuing the above comment on their report, "Licence to Rape". The SWAN / SHRF report describes how Burma's ruling junta, the "State Peace and Development Council" (SPDC), is using rape as a weapon of war against women in the country's minority areas. This is done systematically as a matter of policy, and not at random by individual soldiers.

SWAN and SHRF, also welcome and appreciate calls by Congresswomen Ileana Ros. Leehtinen and Cynthia McKinney on the SPDC to end such heinous of sexual violence and other atrocities.

SWAN and SHRF calls on the international community to speak out strongly against the military regime for their crimes, including sexual violence and other crimes. They also call on the United Nations to set up a fact-finding mission to investigate sexual violence and other crimes against humanity committed by the SPDC and its army.

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