

August 10, 2002

STATEMENT OF CONCERN REGARDING INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO  
BURMA

We, the Shan Women Action Network, with the Shan Human Rights Foundation jointly released a report, 'Licence to Rape' on June 19, 2002, which reveals how the Burmese military regime is allowing its troops to systematically and on a widespread scale commit rape with impunity to terrorize and subjugate the ethnic peoples of Shan State. The report documents incidences of sexual violence against 625 Shan women by Burmese Army soldiers from 1996 to 2001.

In its efforts to refute the contents of the report, the Burmese military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), is now using the presence of UN agencies and international NGOs in Shan State as evidence that these incidences of sexual violence have not occurred.

At their press conference held in Yangon on 30 July, 2002, the regime stated:

"The international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the NGOs and the UNDCP are visiting Shan State during their official tours. Mr Pinheiro, who presented the special UN report on human rights in 2001 had visited the Shan State. If the reports on the rape cases were real, these organizations would have heard about them. But these organizations said nothing about the rape cases."

We, the Shan Women's Action Network, are not surprised at the Burmese regime's outright denial of their crimes, as this is their usual response. However, we are appalled that they are now using the international aid agencies working in Shan State as a shield to hide their sexual crimes against ethnic Shan women.

In view of this, we reiterate the demand in "Licence to Rape" for the international community to withhold all forms of aid to the regime until irreversible changes are made towards democratic reform in Burma. The regime must be pressured to immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire in order to stop increased militarization and anti-insurgency campaigns in the ethnic states, and must begin tripartite dialogue including representatives of non-Burman ethnic nationalities.

We therefore appeal to fellow international activists to support our demands.

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