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Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 25 November 2011 "End Militarism to Eliminate Violence Against Women"

On 17 December, 1999, the 83rd Session of the 54th United Nations General Assembly designated the 25th of November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by Resolution 54/134.

On International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) appeals to the people of Burma to participate in the struggle that will bring peace and an end to the militarism in Burma.

Women and girls in Burma are suffering physical, mental and sexual violence in their homes, in their communities and by the State on daily basis. WLB holds the firm belief that all the forms of violence against women in ethnic areas, including rape and killings, are a direct result of militarism.

The Burma military raped 81 women and girls - 36 of whom they killed – during the 8 month-long armed conflict between the Burmese army and the ethnic armed groups in Shan and Kachin States, after the collapse of ceasefire agreements, as reported by Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Kachin Women's Association-Thailand (KWAT), 2011. Given the status of violence against women in ethnic areas, it is evident that the army of the President Thein Sein's government is still using rape as a weapon of war exactly as the armies of the previous regimes of SLORC and SPDC.

We welcome the reports that the government held cease-fire talks with delegations from the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Shan State Army (SSA-South) recently. We urge the government to continue the talks with other ethnic armed groups including Kachin, in order to move forward with a genuine political dialogue.

As women and children suffer the most during wartime and armed conflict, it is imperative that women's voices are heard at every peace talk. The WLB is thrilled that Naw Zipporah Sein was included as a female member of KNU's peace talk delegation. Women participants need to be included and participate in other ethnic delegations' peace talks.

We welcome the 2011 UNGA resolution, which suggests that human rights violations including rape and other forms of sexual violence against women in Burma remain to be addressed. The Burmese regime, however, has successively continued to neglect the previous over 30 resolutions. We therefore would like to appeal to the United Nations and international community to take greater effective action against the Burmese government to implement the resolution.

The WLB would like to request Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to take into account the regime's use of sexual violence against women as a weapon of war when striving for rule of law, internal peace and constitutional reforms. We also would like to appeal to her to initiate the establishment of a federal union based on political equality for every ethnic nationality in Burma.

In Burma, women make up half of the total population. We therefore would like to encourage all ethnic women to unite and work together in the struggle for sustainable peace and an end of militarism that has gravely impacted the women of Burma.

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