



Burma

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## Accountability for serious crimes essential to sustainable peace and national reconciliation in Burma

**Ahead of the general elections on November 7 in Burma, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Burma Lawyers' Council (BLC) are publishing the main interventions of their joint seminar held in Bangkok in May 2009, where leading exiled Burmese organisations, international and regional human rights NGOs, as well as renown international legal experts gathered to discuss the possibility of prosecuting the leaders of the military junta for the systematic and gross human rights violations perpetrated in Burma.**

The November 7 elections will take place in a context of extreme and continuous repression and violations of basic rights and freedoms. The military junta is paving the way to perpetuate its brutal rule of Burma in civilian clothes. "We know that there can be no effective treatment by simply wiping the slate clean and starting anew", wrote Ms Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Iran, in the Foreword to the report. She further stated that "Burma cannot claim international legitimacy by merely plastering onto one of the worst dictatorial systems in the world a mask of democracy that fools no one".

The debate, discussions on future strategy that took place throughout the seminar focused on the various possible mechanisms available to the international community with which accountability for systematic and gross human rights violations, by state and non-state actors in Burma, could be established. One of the recommendations that were discussed in-depth was an international commission of inquiry that would investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Substantial evidences and extensive documentation of severe rights abuses over the last decade strongly support such allegations.

In March 2010, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, Professor Tomás Ojea Quintana, recommended in his report to the Human Rights Council that the UN consider creating a Commission of Inquiry to address the issue of international crimes. 12 states thus far have expressed their support for such a commission.

"The international community cannot afford to adopt a wait and see approach and allow the Burmese junta to legalise a brutal dictatorship in full impunity", said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. *"The world must explore all possible tools at its disposal to support the Burmese peoples' quest for truth and justice for the sufferings they have to endure for so long"*.

*"Truth and justice is denied because the impunity of crimes is embedded in the State Policy of Burma (Myanmar). Preventive international mechanisms should be put into place through immediate action by the international community to stop all crimes against humanity and war crimes"*, said U Thein Oo, BLC Chairman.

<http://www.fidh.org/Accountability-for-serious-crimes-essential-to>