



Burma

7 June 2011

Government's rejection of human rights recommendations demonstrates no intention for real change

Paris-Bangkok, 7 June 2011. The Burmese government's contempt for internationally recognised human rights will be on display yet again tomorrow as the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva considers the outcome report [1] of Burma's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) which took place in January 2011, when the Burmese delegation rejected 70 recommendations, including those calling for meaningful and inclusive dialogue with all national stakeholders, immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, and a full and independent investigation into allegations of international crimes perpetrated, said the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organisation, the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean-Burma).

While Burma has accepted 74 other recommendations, its dismal human rights record over the past decades and the on-going gross and systematic abuses cast serious doubt over the government's intention and will to truly implement them and to effect real positive reforms. For example, it has accepted recommendations to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms, but it has failed to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma, Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana, to visit since February 2010.

"The Burmese regime makes a mockery of the UPR process with its deceit, including denying there are any political prisoners in the country," said Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President. *"It also told the Human Rights Council that it is committed to investigate any violations and would hold perpetrators to account, all the while serious international crimes, including attacks on civilians in ethnic nationalities areas, continue to be documented and perpetrated in a context of entrenched impunity and perpetual military dominance of the government,"* Ms Belhassen added.

The Burmese delegation has also expressed support for recommendations to, among others, end and prohibit torture and forced labour, prevent and combat violence against women, and hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account. However, Mr Quintana said in his statement following his recent mission to Thailand in May 2011 that serious human rights abuses such as forced labour, internal displacement, extrajudicial killings and sexual violence continue to take place, are widespread, and "remain essentially unaddressed by the authorities."

The Thein Sein administration continues to refuse to release the more than 2,000 political prisoners behind bar, despite repeated calls by the international community, including the United Nations, and the Burmese democracy movement. Their immediate and unconditional release is one of the key benchmarks the Burmese regime has been called on to meet in order for genuine national reconciliation to take place. A hunger strike in late May by at least 22 political prisoners, including seven women, in the Insein Prison to demand better treatment and protection of their rights is not only a reminder of the harsh and degrading conditions under which political prisoners are being held, but also a clear example of the insincerity of the Burmese government's acceptance of certain recommendations of the UPR, one of which calls for improving the conditions in all prisons and compliance with international standards, including the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

The international community should recognise real change is still not within sight and must continue to insist with the

Burmese regime to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, and it should seriously take up the responsibility to establish accountability for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws in Burma, stressed FIDH and Altsean-Burma. In light of the on-going lack of actions by the Burmese authorities to conduct full and independent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses, the creation of a UN Commission of Inquiry (CoI) remains urgent and necessary to ensure accountability for victims of serious international crimes and contribute to national reconciliation and democratic transition in Burma, the two organisations added. The establishment of a CoI is supported by the Special Rapporteur, 16 countries around the world, and the democratic movement in Burma, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

"Members of the UN Human Rights Council should not allow themselves to be duped into tolerating ongoing serious crimes in Burma or the state framework designed to sustain the perpetration of such crimes," said Debbie Stothard, Coordinator of Altsean-Burma.

Ms Stothard, who is also FIDH Deputy Secretary-General, emphasized: *"It is the junta's direct actions that have forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of people, depriving them of their right to food and livelihoods. It is the junta that is directly involved in the arbitrary detention, torture and degrading treatment of Burma's political prisoners. It is the junta's 'four cuts' military strategy that directly targets civilians in conflict areas."*

FIDH and Altsean-Burma Joint Submission on UPR of Burma can be accessed [here](#).

[1] A/HRC/17/9.

<http://www.fidh.org/Government-s-rejection-of-human-rights>