



**17<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on Burma/Myanmar**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Ms. Mariana Duarte on Behalf of  
Conectas Direitos Humanos**

**Wednesday, 8 June 2011**

Mr. President, Conectas Direitos Humanos, on behalf of the Burma Forum on the Universal Periodic Review (BF-UPR)<sup>1</sup>, wishes to draw the Council's attention to the deteriorating status and well-being of women in Burma/Myanmar, in particular due to the lack of political participation and scarce humanitarian assistance. Also, systematic and widespread sexual violence is being perpetrated against ethnic women by the Burmese army.

During the UPR Working Group session in January 2011, the government said "*The allegations of sexual violence against ethnic women and children are baseless and merely aimed at discrediting the Myanmar Armed Forces*". However, women's groups from Karen, Shan, Mon, Chin and Kachin states have documented over 1,000 cases of rape from 1988 to 2009. This number is a mere fraction of reality, due to the military's tight control and the fear and stigma affecting survivors. According to these groups' findings, none of the perpetrators have been punished by domestic courts.

In addition, the November 2010 election showed the complete absence of "affirmative action" to promote women's political participation, despite CEDAW's Concluding Observations in 2008. Out of 658 members of the Union Parliament, there are only 22 women; out of the 658 members of regional and state Parliament, only 3 are women; and the appointment of 30 ministers did not include any single woman. Under the Constitution 25% of the seats in Parliament are guaranteed to the unelected military, which has a discriminatory impact on women.

In the war-torn zones of the country, women and children's health and education are severely affected. Less than 4% of foreign aid reaches the conflict-affected areas and the authorities are not willing to remove the restrictions imposed on international and local aid agencies.

We therefore urge the government to implement the following recommendations without delay:

- Adopt strict legislation that criminalizes rape in every context and ensure legal punishment of the perpetrators including state agents, and reparation to victims;
- Allow communities and aid agencies to carry out humanitarian assistance across the border without any restriction.

Further, we call on this Council to act swiftly to establish an UN-mandated Commission of Inquiry to look into the violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the country, including sexual violence. Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>1</sup> Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma (AAPP-B), Arakan Rivers Network (ARN), Burma Fund UN Office, Burma Lawyers' Council (BLC), Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), Emergency Act Team vs Backpack Health Worker Team, Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB), Foundation for Education and Development (FED), Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land (HURFOM), Kachin Women's Organization Thailand (KWAT), Kaladan Press Bangladesh, Shwe Gas Movement, Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP)