

## Burmese Army attacks continue in ethnic states

In July, Burmese Army attacks continued in Kachin, Shan, and Karen States, resulting in serious human rights abuses including attacks against civilians, gang-rape, slave labour, and tens of thousands of people forced to flee their homes.

In Kachin State, an estimated 20,000 people have fled the fighting and are displaced. According to reports in Mizzima, the regime has told domestic NGOs not to give aid to Kachin refugees and threatened to withdraw their NGO registration unless they followed the order.

Under the new 2008 Constitution, the Burmese Army is the only permitted armed organisation allowed in the country. Armed ethnic organisations with ceasefire agreements took part in the National Convention, which drafted the principles of the Constitution. Every single one of their proposals which would grant some level of autonomy to ethnic states, and protection for ethnic rights and culture, were rejected by the dictatorship. Instead they were told to join the Burmese Army or face military attack.

The armed ethnic organisations are prepared to negotiate for political solutions, but the dictatorship refuses to enter into genuine dialogue.



Kachin villagers forced to flee the fighting.

## Soldiers given “orders to rape”

Since the dictatorship broke ceasefires in ethnic states, there has been a dramatic increase in human rights abuses, including rape by Burmese troops.

The Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT) has so far documented the rape of 32 women and girls in eight townships during the offensive, thirteen of whom were killed. One young girl was raped and killed in front of her parents. Refugees describe soldiers declaring they have “orders to rape women”.

In Shan State, the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) and the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) have documented horrific abuses and report that the Burma Army is using rape as a terror tactic in its offensive against the Shan State Army.

On July 5, 2011, a Burma Army patrol from Light Infantry Battalion 513 entered the village of “Wan Loi” and within hours had looted property throughout the village and raped four women and girls in separate incidents, including 12-year-old schoolgirl Nang Mon, who was raped in her home in front of her mother, who was struck when she tried to protect her daughter.

Nang Lord, who was 9 months pregnant, was pulled roughly to the ground and raped. Another woman, Nang Poeng, was caught outside the village, beaten, stripped naked and raped in a farm hut.

“Burma Army troops are being given free rein to rape children, the pregnant and the elderly,” said SWAN coordinator Hseng Moon. “We strongly condemn these war crimes.”

## Ban Ki-moon urged to act

In July, 2,500 letters and postcards from supporters of Burma Campaign UK were sent to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, calling on him to take the lead in international efforts to free political prisoners in Burma, and to persuade the dictatorship to enter into genuine high-level dialogue.

“Even though Burma is sliding into increased civil war, and political prisoners suffer in jail, Ban Ki-moon is not taking action,” said Aung Gyi, a former political prisoner who is Senior Advisor to Burma Campaign UK. “Ban Ki-moon should immediately appoint a new envoy on Burma. The envoy should prepare the ground for a major initiative by Ban Ki-moon to mobilise the international community to support a new UN led dialogue initiative. The release of all political prisoners and a nationwide ceasefire should be the top priorities.”

In the absence of UN leadership, many different countries and regional groupings have started their own low-level dialogue initiatives. This lack of coordinated international pressure plays into the hands of the dictatorship, allowing them to play countries off against each other, and avoid any real pressure.

## International Bar Association calls for UN Commission of Inquiry

On 12 July the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) launched a campaign to galvanise support for a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into allegations of serious violations of human rights law and humanitarian law in Burma. The IBAHRI has called on the world's lawyers to take action for justice in Burma.

Dr Mark Ellis, Executive Director of the International Bar Association said, “The most egregious crimes have been committed with impunity in Burma over an astoundingly long period of time. The international community must act to hold the perpetrators accountable and end this iniquity. It is imperative that the 2011 United Nations General Assembly establishes a UN Commission of Inquiry for Burma with urgency.”

The IBAHRI believes that the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry may significantly deter the commission of further crimes, sending a strong signal to the generals that human rights abuses must stop immediately.

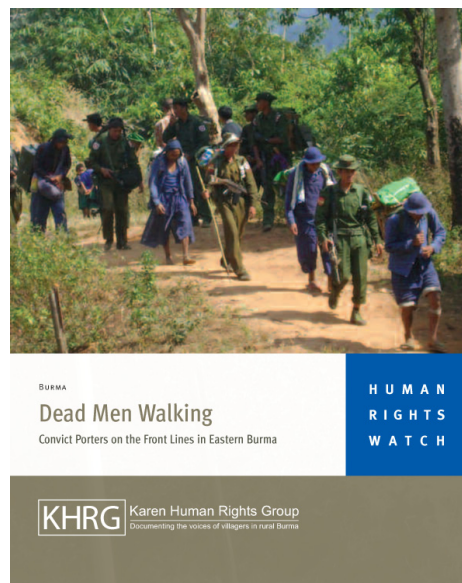
Murder, systematic rapes, sexual violence, torture, the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, arbitrary detention, widespread forced relocations, and forced labour are all crimes widely-reported to have taken place in Burma.

The International Bar Association is the world's leading organisation of international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies.

## New report reveals war crimes against convict porters

A new report by Human Rights Watch and the Karen Human Rights Group reveals how the Burmese army's abusive treatment of convicts who are forced to serve as porters under dangerous front-line conditions constitutes war crimes.

The report, “Dead Men Walking: Convict Porters on the Front Lines in Eastern Burma,” details abuses against convict porters including summary executions, torture, and the use of the convicts as “human shields.”



“Convict porters are the Burmese army's disposable human pack-mules, lugging supplies through heavily mined battlefields,” said Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Press-gangng prisoners into deadly front-line service raises the Burmese army's cruelty to new levels.”

Convict porters described witnessing or enduring summary executions, torture and beatings, being used as “human shields” to trip landmines or shield soldiers from fire, and being denied medical attention and adequate food and shelter.

“We were carrying food up to the camp and one porter stepped on a mine and lost his leg,” one escaped porter said. “The soldiers left him, he was screaming but no one helped. When we came down the mountain he was dead. I looked up and saw bits of his clothing in the trees, and parts of his leg in a tree.”

Human Rights Watch and the Karen Human Rights

Group found that serious abuses that amount to war crimes are being committed with the involvement or knowledge of high-level civilian and military officials. Officers and soldiers commit atrocities with impunity.

Human Rights Watch and the Karen Human Rights Group urged countries to support the inclusion of a UN commission of inquiry in the upcoming UN General Assembly resolution on Burma.

### **Aung San Suu Kyi meets regime official**

On 25 July, the dictatorship sent a low level official, Aung Kyi, to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung Kyi has had several meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi since he was appointed liaison officer in 2007, but the meetings have never led anywhere and he has no real negotiating authority. The main objective seems to be to try and fool the international community into believing that the dictatorship is willing to enter into dialogue.

### **Two senior diplomats defect from Burmese embassy in US**

Two senior diplomats at the Burmese embassy in Washington have defected and are claiming asylum in the United States.

Kyaw Win, who was the second-ranking diplomat at the embassy, defected on 4 July. First Secretary Soe Aung defected the following week after the regime ordered him to return to Burma for questioning in connection with the defection of Kyaw Win.

In a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton giving his reasons for defecting, Kyaw Win said that his efforts to improve US/Burma relations and calls for reform had “resulted in my being deemed dangerous by the government.”

He said that the new government in Burma was not interested in democratic reform but that “senior military officials are consolidating their grip on power and seeking to stamp out the voices of those seeking democracy, human rights and individual liberties. Oppression is rising and war against our ethnic cousins is imminent and at present threats are being made against Aung San Suu Kyi --they must be taken seriously.”

### **3,000 march on Martyrs' Day**

On 19 July, Aung San Suu Kyi led a march of over 3,000 people from the NLD headquarters to the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Rangoon in a public demonstration to commemorate Martyrs' Day. The day marks the anniversary of the assassination of Aung San Suu Kyi's father, the independence hero General Aung San and his colleagues in 1947. Aung San Suu Kyi also attended an official ceremony for Martyrs' Day.



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**for Human Rights, Democracy  
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