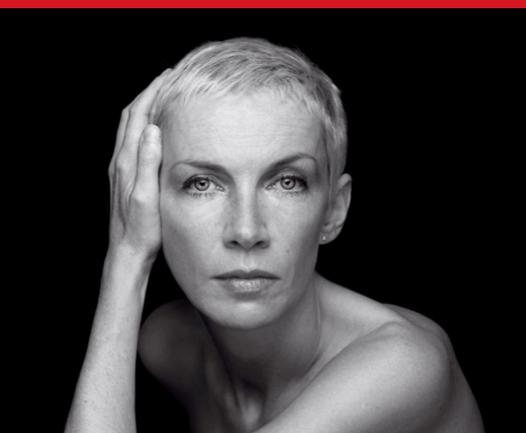


# Standing with the women of Burma to end rape and sexual violence



[www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk)



# 110 high profile women stand with the women of Burma to end rape and sexual violence

110 high profile women, including Dame Judi Dench, Annie Lennox, Jo Brand, Gillian Anderson, Imelda Staunton, Julie Walters and Zoë Wanamaker, are standing with the women of Burma to end rape and sexual violence. In the pledge the high profile women, who also include activists and politicians, have vowed to support:

- An investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese military against ethnic women and girls.
- An end to impunity for rape and other forms of sexual violence in Burma.
- Support for victims.
- The inclusion of women at every political level in Burma including the peace negotiations between the Burmese government and the ethnic armed political groups.
- Burma's Rape Law to be in line with international human rights standards to outlaw rape in marriage.

## Rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army

- The use of rape and sexual violence by Burma's armed forces is ongoing with impunity and reports of rape have increased over the last years.
- Although winning a landslide victory in national elections in November 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, will not have control over the Burmese army when it takes office in April 2016. Therefore, there is a possibility that army rape will continue even with the new NLD-led government in place.
- The NLD has not yet published any report or made their policy on rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army clear.

Since Burma's independence in 1948 there has been ongoing conflict between the Burmese army and ethnic armed political groups. The Burmese army has used rape and sexual violence against women for decades as part of their warfare against ethnic minority groups in the country. This has been done with impunity and denial. With the new NLD-led government taking office in April 2016, there is the possibility of some of these issues being addressed, but not all. It is possible for the new government to initiate a domestic investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army, to make sure support for victims is available, to include women in peace negotiations and politics overall, as well as repealing laws such as Burma's rape law which discriminate women.

However, the conduct of the army will be outside government control since the new government will have no control over the military, and hence there is a possibility that army rape continues. This is because under the Burmese constitution, the army is not under the control of the government. The army could also prove uncooperative with a possible investigation into rape and sexual violence. The international community needs to support the NLD-led government if it takes any action on this issue, and pressure it if it doesn't.

## Military rape in Burma – a background

UN reports have described rape and sexual violence as "widespread and systematic" and as a prevalent pattern of human rights violations in Burma. Cases of women and girls being raped by soldiers from the government's forces include the rape of a 12 year old girl in front of her mother, and of a disabled woman. Many of the victims were gang-raped, and many killed afterwards. This is in breach of international law, and constitutes a war crime.

## Gang-raped in a church

Ngwa Mi, a 48 year old grandmother with 12 children, was sheltering alone in a church near the Kachin-China border town of Pang Wa in May 2012. Burmese army soldiers found her and about 10 troops beat her with rifle butts, stabbed her with knives, stripped her naked and gang-raped her over a period of three days in the church. Another villager, a man who had stayed behind to care for his paralyzed wife, had been captured and brought to the church, and was tortured and forced to watch. After being taken to hospital, Ngwa Mi has been reunited with her family, but has become mentally unstable.



Rape cases have increased dramatically in Shan and Kachin states in North Eastern Burma since the Burmese army broke ceasefire agreements in March and June 2011 respectively. Between March and October 2011 alone, the Women's League of Burma, an umbrella organisation of many ethnic women's groups in Burma, has reported 81 cases of rape in Shan and Kachin states. Due to the difficulties in documenting these violations, the actual number of cases is believed to be much higher.

## The rape and murder of two Kachin teachers

Two female Kachin teachers, Maran Lu Ra (20 years old) and Tangbau Hkawn Nan Tsin (21 years old) from the Kachin Baptist Convention, were brutally raped and killed by the Burmese Army in January 2015. The attack took place in Kaunghka village, Northern Shan State. This area had been facing increased conflict since 2011, when the Burmese Army broke a 17-year-old ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Army. No one has yet been charged or put on trial for the crime.



*Maran Lu Ra (20 ning)*



*Shy Tangbau Hkawn  
Nan Tsin (21 ning)*

## Denial

The previous military dictatorships as well as the military-backed government between 2010-2015 in Burma repeatedly dismissed reports by women's organisations on rape and sexual violence as black propaganda. This politics of denial continued under President Thein Sein, who was hailed internationally as a reformer, who said in October 2012: "Our military is very disciplined, there is no reason for the military to commit acts of rape or murder". On the rare occasions the Burmese army has admitted that rape has taken place, it is always claimed that these are one-off incidents.

## Lack of women's involvement in peace negotiations

Armed conflict has been ongoing in Burma since independence. In 2011 peace negotiations were initiated between the Burmese government and ethnic armed groups. The sincerity from the government's side in these negotiations has been questioned but in October 2015 the government signed a ceasefire agreement with eight out of around twenty ethnic armed groups. But women have been largely missing from the negotiations and many ethnic minority women's groups are now pointing to the lack of inclusion of gender-related issues in the agreements, including rape and sexual violence in conflict.

## **Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI)**

In 2012, the then UK Foreign Secretary William Hague announced the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) as a new measure to stop the use of rape and sexual violence in conflict, support victims and tackle impunity. The British government did not initially include Burma in the PSVI as one of the focus countries, until coming under pressure from NGOs and the UK Parliament to do so. Although Burma then was included, there has been no specific support for victims of army rape by the British government. The new NLD-led government should be provided support by the PSVI to tackle rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army.

As part of the PSVI, many countries around the world signed up to a declaration to end rape and sexual violence in conflict. The declaration contains practical and political commitments to end impunity, promote accountability, and provide justice and safety for victims of sexual violence in conflict. In 2014 the government of Burma finally signed the declaration but has since then taken no steps to implement it.

### **Time to act**

Women's groups in Burma have long been highlighting the use of rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army against ethnic minority women. While there now is a possibility of a domestic investigation into this under the new NLD-led government, if the Burmese army proves uncooperative and rape and sexual violence continues, the international community must consider an international investigation to address these crimes. The international community should also offer proper support to survivors, and to support women in peace negotiations and the inclusion of women at every political level in Burma.

## **The 110 women supporting the pledge:**

Angela Smith MP, Labour MP  
Anna Roberts, Burma Campaign UK  
Annie Lennox OBE, Singer  
Baroness Bakewell DBE, Labour Peer  
Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville MBE, Liberal Democrat Peer  
Baroness Berridge, Conservative Peer  
Baroness Campbell of Surbiton, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Coussins, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Cox, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Deech DBE, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Flather DL, Crossbench Peer  
Baroness Golding, Labour Peer  
Baroness Goudie, Labour Peer  
Baroness Gould of Potternewton, Labour Peer  
Baroness Harris of Richmond DL, Liberal Democrat Peer  
Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town, Labour Peer  
Baroness Hilton of Eggardon QPM, Labour Peer  
Baroness Hodgson of Abinger CBE, Conservative Peer  
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb, Green Party Peer  
Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead, Labour Peer  
Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE, Labour Peer  
Baroness Mallalieu QC, Labour Peer  
Baroness Meacher, Crossbench Peer

Baroness Nye, Labour Peer  
Baroness Sharp of Guildford, Liberal Democrat Peer  
Baroness Stedman-Scott OBE DL, Conservative Peer  
Baroness Thornton, Labour Peer  
Baroness Uddin, Non-affiliated Peer  
Baroness Warnock DBE, Crossbench Peer (retired June 2015)  
Baroness Wheatcroft, Conservative Peer  
Caroline Lucas MP, Green Party MP  
Carolyn Harris MP, Labour MP  
Catherine West MP, Shadow Foreign Minister  
Charlotte Leslie MP, Conservative MP  
Cheery Zahau, Chin activist  
Chris Keates, NASUWT General Secretary  
Cilla Black OBE\*, Singer, TV-presenter  
Dame Janet Suzman DBE, Actor  
Dame Judi Dench CH, DBE, FRSA, Actor  
Debbie Stothard, Altsean-Burma, The International Federation for Human Rights  
Diane Abbott MP, Labour MP  
Dr. Cynthia Maung, Mae Tao Clinic  
Fern Britton, TV-presenter  
Fiona Bruce MP, Conservative MP  
Fiona O'Donnell, Former Labour MP  
Frances O'Grady, Trade Union Congress, General Secretary  
Gillian Anderson, Actor  
Hannah Bardell MP, Scottish National Party MP  
Heidi Alexander MP, Labour MP  
Helen Goodman MP, Labour MP  
Helen Hayes MP, Labour MP  
Honor Blackman, Actor  
Hseng Moon, Shan Women's Action Network  
Imelda Staunton CBE, Actor  
Jessica N-Hkum, Kachin Women's Association Thailand  
Jo Brand, Comedian  
Jody Williams, Nobel Women's Initiative - Received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997  
Julia Marip, Women's League of Burma  
Julie Walters CBE, Actor  
Karin Valtersson, Burma Campaign UK  
Kate Hollern MP, Labour MP  
Kerry McCarthy MP, Labour MP  
Khin Ohmar, Burma Partnership  
Khon Ja, Kachin Peace Network  
Lorraine Kelly OBE, TV-presenter  
Margaret Ritchie MP, Social Democratic & Labour Party MP  
Margot James MP, Conservative MP  
Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Actor  
Marie Rimmer MP, Labour MP  
Mary Creagh MP, Labour MP  
Maureen Lipman CBE, Actor  
Maw Moe Bu, Karenni activist  
May Sabe Phyu, Kachin Peace Network  
Meg Hillier MP, Labour (Co-op) MP

Moon Nay Li, Kachin Women's Association Thailand  
Naomi Long, Former Alliance MP  
Naw K'Nyaw Paw, Karen Women's Organisation  
Naw Wah Ku Shee, Karen Women's Organisation  
Nicky Gavron AM, Labour London Assembly Member  
Rachael Maskell MP, Labour (Co-op) MP  
Ronni Ancona, Actor  
Rosalinn Zahau, Chin Human Rights Organisation  
Rt Hon Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Blackstone, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Corston, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Hughes of Stretford, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Baroness Royall of Blaisdon, Labour Peer  
Rt Hon Caroline A Spelman MP, Conservative MP  
Rt Hon Dame Joan Ruddock, Former Labour MP  
Rushanara Ali MP, Labour MP  
Sandra Osborne, Former Labour MP  
Sappho Dias, Burma Justice Committee  
Sarah Champion MP, Labour MP  
Sarah Parish, Actor  
Sharon Hodgson MP, Labour MP  
Sheila Reid, Actor  
Soe Soe Nwe, Women's League of Burma  
Susanna Hla Hla Soe, Karen Women Empowerment Group  
Tin Tin Nyo, Burmese Women's Union  
Val McDermid, Author  
Valerie Vaz MP, Labour MP  
Vera Baird QC, Police and Crime Commissioner - Northumbria  
Victoria Roberts, Chair, Burma Campaign UK  
Victoria Wood CBE, Comedian  
Virginia McKenna OBE, Actor  
Wai Hnin Pwint Thon, Burma Campaign UK  
Yasmin Qureshi MP, Labour MP  
Yoko Ono, Artist  
Zoë Wanamaker CBE, Actor  
Zoya Phan, Burma Campaign UK

\*Signed the petition before she died in August 2015



# Time to End Rape and Sexual Violence in Burma

## I am standing with the women of Burma

I pledge my support to the women of Burma in their struggle to end rape and sexual violence.

Rape has been used as a weapon of war by successive dictatorships for decades. Soldiers enjoy complete impunity. For many ethnic women, rape and sexual violence remain a continuing threat to their security.

Since Thein Sein became President in 2011, reports of rape and sexual violence perpetrated by the military have increased. Many of the victims were gang-raped, and many killed afterwards. This is in breach of international law, which constitutes a war crime. Despite signing the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, the government of Burma has taken no steps to implement it.

### I support the following demands made by the women of Burma:

- An international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese military against ethnic women and girls.
- An end to impunity for rape and other forms of sexual violence in Burma.
- Amendment of the 2008 Constitution that guarantees impunity for military perpetrators, so further sexual violence can be prevented.
- The inclusion of women in the peace negotiations between the Burmese government and the ethnic armed political groups, where the issue of rape and sexual violence in conflict is properly addressed.
- The inclusion of women at every political level in Burma.
- Burma's Rape Law to be in line with international human rights standards to outlaw rape in marriage.
- The British government should provide funding for the Women's League of Burma and its members to support their work in documenting cases of rape and providing support for victims of sexual violence.

**Title:**

**First name:**

**Last name:**

**Address :**

**Postcode:**

**Email:**