



International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 2017

Ending Torture, Addressing the Needs of Survivors is Key to Building Peace and Democracy

Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO), the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners (AAPP), Women's League of Burma (WLB), the Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma), and Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) are calling for an end to torture, and for rehabilitation of torture survivors.

VWO, AAPP, WLB, ND-Burma and AJAR are jointly organising a public event in Yangon (**14:00-16:00 at Royal Rose Restaurant, 221 Shwegondine Road, Bahan, Yangon**) to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. At the event torture survivors, and civil society organizations working with them, will share about their experiences and what can be done to assist victims of torture. The Burmese language version of the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) will also be launched at the event.

Torture is not a practice of the past; it continues to be used in Myanmar by State and non-State actors. The rise in reports of torture in ethnic areas affected by current conflicts is especially troubling. Torture is still used during detention and interrogation, often in an effort to procure information or to force confessions. Villagers suspected of being affiliated with ethnic armed groups are frequently captured by military and tortured indiscriminately. Torture also includes acts of sexual violence. It is the government's responsibility to stop and prevent torture in its jurisdiction.

The government must ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). It would be an important first step in eradicating torture in Myanmar. It would also be a symbolic pledge of solidarity with survivors.

Torture survivors have a right to reparations and support. Many face ongoing and serious health problems, which can lead to early and untimely death for some victims. Access to health care is an urgent need. Other needs include psychosocial support, vocational training, and public acknowledgement. Reparations and addressing the needs of torture survivors must be priorities of the government. They should be items for discussion in parliament and must be included in current peace process discussions.

In order to demonstrate its commitment to eliminating the practice of torture, we call on the government of Myanmar to implement the following recommendations:

- Put an end to armed conflict and demilitarise ethnic areas, in order to free civilians from torture, including torture that is committed by the military with impunity
- Sign and ratify the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), and implement it into national legislation
- Include the issues of reparations and support to survivors in peace process discussions
- Release all remaining political prisoners unconditionally
- Sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

We call on government and all non-State actor groups to stop practicing torture in any form.

Yangon, 26 June 2017

VWO, AAPP, WLB, ND-Burma, and AJAR

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About ND-Burma www.nd-burma.org

ND-Burma formed in 2004 in order to provide a way for Burma human rights organizations to collaborate on the human rights documentation process. Seven member organizations and nine affiliate organizations seek to collectively use the truth of what communities in Burma have endured to challenge the regime's power through present-day advocacy as well as prepare for justice and accountability measures in a potential transition. ND-Burma conducts fieldwork trainings; coordinates members' input into a common database using Martus, open-source software developed by Benetech; and engages in joint-advocacy campaigns. When possible, ND-Burma also collaborates with other human rights organizations in all aspects of its work.

About Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO)

Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO) is a community-based organization, which was created in 2009. Vimutti is a Pali word (Myanmar ancient literature), which means "freedom". All VWO members are socially minded volunteers. VWO is very active in communities doing social work, humanitarian support, and providing educational charity to children from poverty-stricken families. VWO is directly engaging with vulnerable people to create a healthy societal environment through research, advocacy, networking, and improving their collective capacity development. VWO has a special program for strengthening women former political prisoners.

About Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) www.aappb.org

AAPP was founded in 2000 by former political prisoners living in exile on the Thai/Burma border. Since then, the organization has been run by former political prisoners, and has opened offices inside Myanmar in Rangoon and Mandalay. AAPP advocates and lobbies for the release of remaining political prisoners and for the improvement of the lives of political prisoners after their release. The various assistance programs for political prisoners and their family members are aimed at ensuring they have access to education, vocational trainings, mental health counseling and healthcare.

About Women's League of Burma (WLB) www.womenofburma.org

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) is an umbrella organization comprised of 13 women's organizations of different ethnic backgrounds from Burma. WLB was founded on 9th December 1999. Its mission is to work for women's empowerment and advancement of the status of women, and to work for the increased participation of women in all spheres of society in the democracy movement, and in peace and national reconciliation process through capacity building, advocacy, research and documentation.

About Asia Justice And Rights (AJAR) www.asia-ajar.org

AJAR is a regional human rights organization based in Jakarta. AJAR works to increase the capacity of local and national organization in the fight against entrenched impunity and to contribute to building cultures based on accountability, justice and a willingness to learn from the root causes of mass human rights violations in Asia Pacific region.