



# Rape & Sexual Violence in Conflict

## Letter Writing Guide

### Widespread and systematic

The Burmese army uses rape and sexual violence against ethnic women across the country with impunity. This has been going on for decades, and has been highlighted in a number of reports produced by women's organisations in Burma. UN reports have drawn upon this data to describe rape and sexual violence as widespread and systematic, and as a prevalent pattern of human rights violations in the country.

This letter writing guide gives an introduction to rape and sexual violence in conflict in Burma, and tells you how you can help by taking action.

### Only the tip of the iceberg

In a recent report "If they had hope they would speak" by the Women's League of Burma (WLB) in November 2014, the organisation concludes that over 100 cases of rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army have been documented since 2010. Due to the difficulty of collecting data, the shame and stigma attached to the crime, and the fear of the victims and their families, the cases documented are believed to be only the tip of the iceberg.

A recent example from early 2015 is the rape and murder of two Kachin teachers, 20 and 21 years old, in Northern Shan State, where the Burmese army has been attacking the Kachin people since 2011. The teachers were brutally raped by Burmese army soldiers that had recently come to their village. No one has yet been charged or put on trial for the crime.

### Condoned at the highest level

The Burmese government has repeatedly denied the overwhelming evidence of sexual violence being perpetrated by its army, and if taking any action at all, blames individual soldiers. But the fact that the practice is spread all over Burma, that many rapes are gang-rapes and include higher ranking officers, as well as the fact that the numbers documented are believed to be a fraction of the cases, all point to this being a widespread practice within the Burmese army, condoned at the highest level.

### The gang-rape of a grandmother

In May 2012, 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.

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.

## **Inaction of the British government**

The British government has led a global initiative to stop rape and sexual violence in conflict by setting up the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and by hosting a large conference in London on the issue in 2014. Although this is a welcome initiative, when it comes to Burma the British government seems to be reluctant to do anything that addresses the Burmese army's – and hence the Burmese government's - involvement in these crimes. British government funding for sexual violence projects is deliberately avoiding funding organisations that help victims of sexual violence by the Burmese army.

Instead, the British government has moved closer to the Burmese army, providing them with training that is costing the UK taxpayer around a quarter of a million pounds. This training is being provided without being conditional in any way on the Burmese army ending its use of rape and sexual violence.

## **An international investigation is needed**

It is clear that the Burmese government will do nothing to stop the practice of rape and sexual violence by its army, and at the moment it is not under any real international pressure to do so. This needs to change. Therefore, an international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army needs to be established, to help the victims, to address impunity, and to stop this heinous crime.

## **Campaigning works!**

The British government has been very reluctant to include Burma at all in its work on sexual violence in conflict. It was only after continuous campaigning by Burma Campaign UK and our supporters that Burma was finally included in the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. However, the British government does not support an international investigation into these crimes, or fund women's organisations that work on rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army specifically.

That is why we need to keep campaigning!

Write to the British government and urge them to support an international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army. Also urge them to provide support for women's groups working with victims of rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army.

Please also write to your MP and highlight your concerns about rape and sexual violence in Burma and urge your MP to put pressure on the British government to act.

You can find out who your local MP is here: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

Draft letters are available at the end of this briefing or you can download them here: <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/letter-writing-guide-rape-and-sexual-violence-in-conflict/>

Or you could write your own letter. Key points that you could include:

- An international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese military against ethnic nationality women and girls should be established, and the British government should take the lead to make this happen.
- British aid should be used to provide adequate funding for women's organisations that work with victims of rape by the Burmese army.
- The British government should stop training the Burmese army until the military agrees to deeper reforms and takes action to stop rape and sexual violence by soldiers, and to stop recruiting and using child soldiers.

Send your letters to:

Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE  
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Baroness Anelay is a Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and has newly been appointed by Prime Minister David Cameron to be a special representative on preventing sexual violence.

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

As Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Philip Hammond is responsible for British policy on Burma.

Rt Hon Desmond Swayne TD MP  
Minister of State for International Development  
22 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EG

Desmond Swayne is the Minister of State for International Development with the responsibility for Burma.

Your MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

**Please send us copies of any replies that you receive.**

### **Easy ways to send post**

If you live in the UK, you can now check how much postage will cost and buy and print stamps online via the Post Office website: <http://www.postoffice.co.uk/price-finder>

### **More information**

If you prefer to take action online, or would like to find out more information about rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army, including reports and briefing papers, visit:  
<http://burmacampaign.org.uk/take-action/stop-rape-and-sexual-violence-in-burma/>

### **Other Letter Writing Guides**

Letter Writing Guides on Political Prisoners and the Rohingya are available online here:  
<http://burmacampaign.org.uk/take-action/>

Or you can call 020 7324 4710 or email [info@burmacampaign.org.uk](mailto:info@burmacampaign.org.uk) for a copy.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rt Hon Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE  
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Dear Baroness Anelay

I am writing to you to ask you to support a UN Commission of Inquiry into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army.

The Burmese army uses rape and sexual violence against ethnic minority women with impunity. It has long been a tactic of war in its attacks on Burma's different ethnic groups. UN reports have described rape and sexual violence as widespread and systematic, and as a prevalent pattern of human rights violations in the country. The fact that rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army happens all over Burma, many rapes are gang-rapes and includes higher officers, as well as the numbers documented is believed to be only the tip of the iceberg, all points to this being a widespread and systematic practice within the Burmese army, condoned at the highest level.

The practice has continued under President Thein Sein and there is no justice for the victims of these crimes. The response by the Burmese government to the rape and murder of two Kachin teachers in early 2015 was denial, to threaten local organisations and individuals who accused the Burmese army of being involved, to try to shift blame to local people, and to intimidate witnesses. The results of forensic tests and the investigation have not been released, and no one has yet been charged or put on trial for the crime.

It is clear that the Burmese army will never investigate itself. That is why an international investigation is needed.

The British government has taken a world leading position in working against rape and sexual violence in conflict. This is an admirable position. Yet, when it comes to Burma the British government seems to be reluctant to do anything that addresses the Burmese army's – and hence the Burmese government's - involvement in these crimes. The British government should support the establishment of an international investigation into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army, and take the lead internationally to gather support from other states for an investigation.

The British government should also make sure that British aid is spent on women's groups that document the rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army, and who works with the victims. It is also of outmost importance that the British government stop all training of the Burmese army until they have stopped using rape and sexual violence against ethnic women.

Yours sincerely

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Dear Foreign Secretary

I am writing to you to ask you to support a UN Commission of Inquiry into rape and sexual violence by the Burmese army.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rt Hon Desmond Swayne TD MP  
Minister of State for International Development  
22 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EG

Dear Desmond Swayne MP

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ MP  
House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

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**for Human Rights, Democracy  
& Development in Burma**