



## SPECIAL ISSUE JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD 2006 FORCED LABOUR IN BURMA

*By Janek Kuczkiwicz, Director of Trade Union Rights, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Brussels*

**FOR DECADES**, on any given day in Burma, hundreds of thousands of men, women, children and elderly persons have been forced to work against their will by the country's military rulers. Forced labour can include building military camps, roads, bridges, railways, etc. Refusal to work can result in arrest, torture, rape or even death.

Since it has began examining the situation in Burma in 1992, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) — became the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in 2006 — based in Brussels, Belgium, has documented tens of thousands of cases, which it submitted to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, based in Geneva.

Burma, which is controlled by a brutal and thoroughly corrupt military junta, is one of the worst dictatorships in the world today. Every day, army officers issue orders to village heads commanding them to send labourers to military camps, public works projects, or other gathering points. These officers make no attempt to cover-up their activities: the ITUC knows their units, rank, names and movements. There are only two ways to avoid forced labour: paying for a replacement, or, when money has run out, fleeing before the army comes to burn your village and kill you or your family.

The ILO has called on Burmese authorities to prohibit the use of forced labour, both in law and in practice, since the early 1960s. In 1997, the SPDC — the official name of the ruling junta — refused to cooperate with a special ILO Commission of Inquiry into violations by Burma of the ILO Forced Labour Convention No 29 (1930). In 1998, the SPDC refused to

allow the Commission into the country. In its report, the Commission of Inquiry declared that forced labour in Burma was a crime against humanity, likely to continue as long as the military stayed in power.

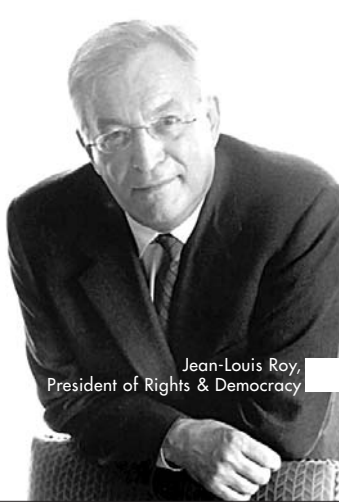
In June 2000, the annual ILO Conference adopted a Resolution calling on governments, employers, and trade unions to review their relations with Burma and sever any links that might aid its military junta to abet forced labour. The Resolution also called on all UN and other multilateral agencies to do the same.

Since that time, the ICFTU (now the ITUC) has called on all foreign companies present in or having business relations with Burma to cease all business with the junta. For us, the equation is simple: any business relations with Burma directly or indirectly benefit the ruling junta; the junta is directly responsible for forced labour; forced labour is a crime against humanity; therefore, whoever does business with the military is complicit, at least passively, in a crime against humanity.

Last October, we sent out a letter to forty companies that we had found to be conducting business with Burma. Two of these companies informed us — with proof — that they had already withdrawn from the country. The 38 remaining companies will soon join those on our "black list" of over 400 companies. One of these is Canadian mining company Ivanhoe Mines Ltd., which continues to operate in Burma. The Canadian Labour Congress has filed a complaint against this company with the Canadian National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises.

*continued on page 2*





Jean-Louis Roy,  
President of Rights & Democracy

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**THIS YEAR'S** John Humphrey Freedom Award laureate, Su Su Nway, is an exceptionally brave young woman who opposed the barbaric practice of forced labour in Burma. Selflessly, she rallied her community, challenged the authorities in her village and defied the machinations of her country's military junta.

The John Humphrey Freedom Award is meant to remind us of the courage and power of an individual or group to spark another small victory in our common struggle for freedom and justice.

Su Su Nway is a testament to the inalienable human spirit that sustains our belief in the universality of human rights. But, at the same time, this year's John Humphrey Freedom Award (JHFA) is a reminder of the tenacity of dictatorship, oppression and injustice in Burma. Su Su Nway cannot accept her award in person because her country is a prison camp. Although she might have found a way to come to Canada, she could never have returned to her village to continue nourishing her community's hope for a democratic future.

Rights & Democracy normally arranges a cross-country tour for our JHFA laureates to tell their story to Canadians. We will not allow Su Su Nway's absence to amount to silence. In the lead-up to International Human Rights Day, we will accompany Su Su Nway on a virtual tour throughout the country, mobilizing the media, groups and individuals to take action in solidarity for Su Su Nway. This year, we particularly appreciate the collaboration of Canada's trade unions for their engagement on forced labour in Burma and elsewhere around the world.

Su Su Nway asked me to relay this message to you: "If Burma was free, I would be there with you in Canada. Please tell Canadians that I will come once the rights you enjoy are ours as well."

And I ask you to join me in responding: "We'll redouble our efforts to promote human rights and democracy in Burma. Canadians want to see you soon."

# FORCED LABOUR IN BURMA MUST BE STOPPED

*continued from page 1*

As this document goes to press, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office (the secretariat of the International Labour Organization) is preparing to discuss measures aimed at forcing the junta to end the practice of forced labour. Among the possible courses of action being considered are: bringing the junta before the International Court of Justice (in The Hague, Netherlands), arraigning the Burmese military junta before the International Criminal Court (also based in The Hague), and a UN Security Council referral.

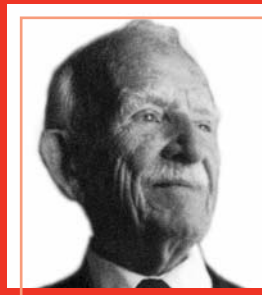
As it clings to power, illegally depriving the democratic movement of its leader, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the junta is most fearful of such measures on the part of the international community. Together with the 168 million workers that it represents across 307 affiliated organizations spanning 154 countries and territories, including Canada, the ITUC is determined to put a stop to the abominable practice of forced labour in Burma, even if it

means driving the junta out of power. What's fair is fair!

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, the ICFTU was dissolved during a special congress in Vienna, Austria. Joining with its sister organization, the World Confederation of Labour, and other national union organizations with no previous affiliations at the international level, it founded a new organization, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). There is no doubt that Burma will continue to be one of the top priorities on this new international institution's human rights agenda.

You can visit the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) web site at:  
[www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

## JOHN-HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD



**RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY** presents the John Humphrey Freedom Award each year to an organization or individual from any country or region of the world, including Canada, for exceptional achievement in the promotion of human rights and democratic development. It is named in honour of the John Peters Humphrey, the Canadian human rights law professor who prepared the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The winner is selected by an international jury composed of five members of Rights & Democracy's Board of Directors.

For further details, visit:  
[www.dd-rd.ca](http://www.dd-rd.ca) or write Anyle Côté ([acote@dd-rd.ca](mailto:acote@dd-rd.ca))

### WINNERS

- |      |  |      |   |
|------|--|------|---|
| 2006 | Su Su Nway (Burma)   | 1998 | Palden Gyatso (Tibet)   |
| 2005 | Yan Christian Warinusuy (West Papua)                         | 1997 | Father Javier Giraldo (Colombia)  |
| 2004 | Godeliève Mukasarasi (Rwanda)                                | 1996 | Sultana Kamal (Bangladesh)  |
| 2003 | Kimy Pernía Domicó (Colombia) and<br>Angélica Mendoza (Peru) | 1995 | Bishop Carlos F. X. Belo (East Timor)   |
| 2002 | Ayesha Imam, BAOBAB for<br>Women's Human Rights (Nigeria)    | 1994 | Campaign for Democracy (Nigeria) and<br>Egyptian Organization for Human Rights  |
| 2001 | Dr. Sima Samar (Afghanistan)                                 | 1993 | La Plate-forme des organismes haïtiens de<br>défense des droits humains (Haiti) |
| 2000 | Reverend Timothy Njoya (Kenya)                               | 1992 | Instituto de Defensa Legal (Peru)   |
| 1999 | Dr. Cynthia Maung and Min Ko Naing (Burma)                   |      |   |



# SU SU NWAY, AN EXAMPLE OF BRAVERY

BY THE BURMA LAWYERS' COUNCIL (BLC)

**THE BURMA** Lawyers' Council would like to put on record its appreciation for the John Humphrey Freedom Award presented to Su Su Nway and its gratitude to Rights & Democracy for its consideration. Su Su Nway's case is an example of bravery and public defiance against the military rulers' abuse and unjust persecution. She has consistently demonstrated determination and persistence in fighting local military authorities who misuse their power, often at great personal risk and under the threat of imprisonment.

As an example of the very real danger she has faced as retribution for her support of the rights of local people, in 2005, Su Su Nway was charged with threatening local authorities after bringing a lawsuit for the use of forced labour during the construction of a road joining two adjacent villages. Every household was required to pay 6,000 kyats. Su Su Nway refused to pay the fee and participate in the forced labour. In May, 2004, she brought the charges against the Chairman of the Township Kawmu and other local military authorities (VPDC) under Section 374 (unlawful compulsory labour) of Myanmar's Penal Code. Approximately ten student leaders and one hundred others came to hear the case. During the trial, news spread that the houses of three witnesses whose testimony supported Su Su Nway had been destroyed by Township authorities. In January, 2005, in a landmark case, a judge sentenced the VPDC Chairman and deputy to eight months in prison.

However, in October, 2005, in the Township Court of Kawmu, Su Su Nway was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment under sections 294(b) (singing, reciting or uttering obscenities in or near a public place) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of Myanmar's Penal Code. The complaint against Su Su Nway was filed by the VPDC Chairman, alleging that Su Su Nway had publicly abused and insulted him and threatened to remove him from his post. After examining the testimony of four prosecution witnesses and seven defense witnesses, the Court based its guilty verdict solely on the argument that it did

not believe the defense witnesses. The Court failed to provide any reasons why the evidence of the defense could not be believed. Consequently, Su Su Nway was jailed in Insein Prison, but was later released under pressure from the International Labour Organization, whose rules require member states to take action in matters of forced labour.

Su Su Nway, who suffers from heart disease, has been out of prison since June, 2006. Despite her condition and the great personal risk she faces in her fight for justice, she continues to defy and challenge abusive public authorities. BLC is honoured to be given the opportunity to express its admiration and appreciation of her work, and wholeheartedly supports the decision to give her the 2006 John Humphrey Freedom Award.

The Burma Lawyers' Council's web site can be found at: [www.blc-burma.org](http://www.blc-burma.org)

*Su Su Nway's case is an example of bravery and public defiance against the military rulers' abuse and unjust persecution.*



## BURMA STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT

**Population:** 50,520,000 (The Burman represent the largest single ethnic group. Other ethnic/indigenous groups include the Karen, Shan, Akha, Chin, Chinese, Danu, Indian, Kachin, Karenni, Kayan, Kokang, Lahu, Mon, Naga, Palaung, Pao, Rakhine, Rohingya, Tavoyan, and Wa.)

**Government:** Burma is ruled by a military junta known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The main democratic opposition party is the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won 82% of votes during the last elections.

**Last elections:** Parliamentary elections were last held in 1990, but the results were not honoured.

**Human Development Index (HDI) (rank / 177 countries):** Medium development: 129

**Number of Core Human Rights Treaties and Protocols ratified (possibility of 13):**  
2 (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women)



# FORCED LABOUR IN BURMA

BY KAREN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP (KHRG)

**FORCED LABOUR** is probably the most systematic and prevalent abuse committed by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) against villagers throughout Burma. Village heads are ordered to provide labourers for building roads and other infrastructure, portering for the Army, constructing and maintaining Army camps, performing sentry duty at Army camps and along roads, farming for the Army and many other jobs. In addition, villagers must use much of their time filling the constant demands from SPDC Army camps and authorities for large quantities of bamboo, roofing thatch, stones and gravel, logs, planks and other materials. Some of these materials are used for the construction and maintenance of roads, SPDC Army camps and other SPDC projects, while the rest is sold on the market for the personal profit of the Army officers.

Villagers are not provided with tools or food to complete the work and are often treated brutally, some dying as a result. The labour takes them away from their livelihood and leaves them very

little time to farm their fields or to earn a living. Whatever little money the villagers are able to get must be given to the SPDC in exchange for being left to their livelihoods. Village heads often receive demands from many different Army camps and SPDC authorities for various kinds of labour at the same time. Many villagers try to strike a balance by paying the 'fees' to avoid some of the labour while still regularly going for other forms of forced labour. To meet all of the demands the entire family must take part, such that children must go for forced labour even if this means pulling them from school, and women must leave infants at home and abandon their other work in order to do forced labour.

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the SPDC claims to have issued an order outlawing the use of forced labour and prescribing punishment for any soldier, officer or official who continues to demand it. A High Level Team (HLT) sent in September, 2001 by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) found that although a new



decree was issued, forced labour was still widespread. No one was prosecuted for demanding forced labour until 2004, when the first few cases were brought against SPDC civil authorities and resulted in convictions (Su Su Nway's case). Thus far only seven such cases have been prosecuted nationwide, a paltry total considering the extent of the abuse.

The ILO's critical reports, and the prosecutions of civilian authorities have not had much of an effect on the ground. Forced labour continues to be systematic, pervasive, and implemented with complete impunity, often for the sole aim of exercising military control over civilians.

Another tactic the SPDC uses to avoid international censure while increasing the number of forced labourers available to the Army is to use convicts for forced labour, particularly as porters. This is particularly common in areas like Papun District where SPDC units have difficulty catching enough villagers for their needs. A whole system has developed for sending convicts to transit camps where they are readily available to the Army. Most of the convicts are

serving sentences for petty crimes, but to feed the Army's needs innocent civilians are sometimes grabbed from the streets and turned into instant 'convicts' without charge or trial. Convict porters are treated particularly brutally and more and more of them are escaping throughout Karen areas.

Published with permission from the 17 January, 2006 report: "Surviving in Shadow": [www.khrg.org](http://www.khrg.org)

## libertas

### RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S NEWSLETTER

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# SU SU NWAY

JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD 2006 LAUREATE

Su Su Nway, 34, came to the world's attention last year for her inspiring efforts to see the junta's local representatives (VPDC) brought to justice for forcing her and her neighbours to repair a road without pay. Conscious of the dangers inherent to confronting Burma's military authorities, Su Su Nway's determination paid off last year when a judge sentenced the VPDC Chairman and a deputy to eight months in prison under an untested law passed in 1999 that bans forced labour. The verdict was the first ever against the military regime's long-standing practice of forced labour. Su Su Nway's legal victory was short lived, when a few months later she was charged with defamation of the new VPDC Chairman. She was sentenced to 18-months in prison in October 2005. Su Su Nway, who suffers from a heart condition, endured nine months in Insein prison before authorities finally bowed to international pressure and released her on June 6, 2006. Su Su Nway's defiant struggle for human rights and dignity has made her a symbol of resilience and courage to the people of Burma, who now honour her with the title, "Courageous Su Su Nway."



# REACTION OF SU SU NWAY ON HEARING NEWS THAT SHE IS TO BE GIVEN THE JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW BY DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA (DVB) ON AUGUST 31, 2006

"As it is an award recognizing the efforts for democracy and human rights and truth (in Burma), I want to say that we are feeling very happy and proud with public leader, Auntie Suu (Aung San Suu Kyi), who is struggling for democracy and human rights and the people of Burma. Although I am glad to hear that I received this award, I am feeling happier to know that it is becoming more obvious that all the people (of Canada) and the world are constantly supporting the struggle for democracy in Burma.

I especially want to thank the elders (jury members) concerned who gave me the award and the people of Canada. Although the prize was given to me, I regard it as a prize given to all the people of Burma.

I feel very encouraged by being given the award. When working for the truth, I am feeling very, very proud and happy because the award is like a tonic that helps me work much harder. I want to say that I will increase my efforts (and) struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma (and) do my best for matters regarding peace of the whole world."

## STATEMENT BY DR CYNTHIA MAUNG (BURMA)

CO-WINNER OF THE 1999 JOHN HUMPHREY FREEDOM AWARD

"Su Su Nway is one of the outstanding human rights activists of Burma. Her commitment encourages all of us to fight against oppression and violence."

## WHY SU SU NWAY IS NOT WITH US?

Burma has been described by some as "a country of 52 million prisoners guarded by an army of 500,000 soldiers". This outrageous reality is demonstrated by the fact that Su Su Nway, who has been released from the notorious Insein jail on 6 June 2006, is not among us to receive her John Humphrey Freedom Award.

For citizens of Burma to travel abroad is a privilege given mostly to people close to the military dictatorship. It is very difficult for pro-democracy activists to get a passport and if they do, they must be extremely careful while abroad. Speaking publicly against the military rulers could lead to direct persecution of their family members living in Burma, it could also put them at risk of not being able to return to their homeland, as in the Salai Tun Than's case. Similarly, a pro-democracy activist who agrees to meet a foreigner visiting Burma, might end up in jail for several years while the foreigner might be blacklisted and prohibited returning to Burma.

*"If Burma was free, I would be there with you in Canada. Please tell Canadians that I will come once the rights you enjoy are ours as well."*

*Su Su Nway,  
2006 John Humphrey Freedom Award winner*



# MIN KO NAING, CONQUEROR OF KINGS

BY AUNG DIN, POLICY DIRECTOR, U.S. CAMPAIGN FOR BURMA



**CO-RECIPIENT** of Rights & Democracy's 1999 John Humphrey Freedom Award, Min Ko Naing, which means "Conqueror of Kings", is the second most prominent leader of non-violent democracy movement in Burma, just after the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi. While he was a student at the University of Rangoon, Min Ko Naing secretly and

successfully organized Burma's largest national student organization, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), and led a popular national democracy uprising calling for democracy, human rights and an end of military rule in August 1988. For his leading role as Chairman of the ABFSU, he was arrested by the military regime and put in jail on March 23, 1989.

After serving almost 16 years in prison, mostly in solitary confinement, Min Ko Naing was released on November 19, 2004. He enjoyed his freedom, along with continuous harassment and threats from the military authority, for less than two years.

In September, 2006, Burma's military regime accuse him and his group of being puppets of the West, having links with the opposition groups in exile, creating unrest and committing terrorist acts. The regime arrested Min Ko Naing, once again, and four others, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho on September 27 and 30, 2006 respectively. They now await what will most likely be summary and unfair trials. Only a concrete and united action from the UN Security Council will make national reconciliation and the release of all political prisoners in Burma possible.

The U.S. Campaign for Burma's web site address is located at: [www.uscampaignforburma.org](http://www.uscampaignforburma.org)

# POLITICAL IMPASSE IN BURMA

BY TIN MAUNG HTOO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CANADIAN FRIENDS OF BURMA

**AFTER THE REPEATED** failure of 28 consecutive resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights, and the unsuccessful efforts of four Special Rapporteurs and two Special Envoys, the United Nations Security Council voted on September 15, 2006, for the first time in history, to place Burma on its formal agenda. The role of the UNSC must provide the impetus needed to break the prolonged and protracted political stalemate in Burma.

The publication in 2005 of a groundbreaking report commissioned by the Honourable Vaclav Havel and Bishop Desmond Tutu, entitled "Threat to the Peace: A Call for the UN Security Council to Act in Burma," created the momentum necessary for getting Burma on the UNSC's agenda. This appeal was intensified when the junta launched the largest military offensive in a decade in the eastern part of Burma in April, 2006. As a result of these brutal attacks, 15,000 ethnic Karen were forced to flee their homes and villages. While a few thousand of these refugees reached the Thai-Burma border, the vast majority ended up as internally displaced persons (IDPs). This latest incident, coupled with the 150,000 refugees already taking shelter on the Thai-Burma border and the alarming humanitarian crisis facing an estimated 500,000 IDPs, convinced a majority of Security Council members that the ongoing situation in Burma constitutes a "threat to peace and security" in the region.

Over the past year, a new phase appears to have opened up in the political landscape in Burma. Despite the fact that over 1,100 political prisoners remain in jail, more people are daring to speak out and to take greater risks and action for the sake of the country. There is no doubt that

this political culture has been enhanced by the undertaking of the UNSC.

Political defiance and dissent intensified soon after the re-arrest of five prominent student leaders, including Min Ko Naing, recipient of the 1998 John Humphrey Freedom Award. In early October, the "88 Generation Students Group" launched a series of peaceful political campaigns. Among other actions, the "Signature Campaign" collected more than half a million names across the country within a two-week period, garnering a level of support that is unprecedented in recent Burmese history. Although the military is extremely concerned with the mounting support for such activities, it has been relatively tolerant of these recent actions.

It is outrageous that one hundred and thirty political prisoners have already died in prison since 1988, the latest being student leader Thet Win Aung. Sentenced in 1998 to a lengthy 59-year jail term for calling for educational reform in the country, he died at age 34 in Mandalay prison on October 16, 2006.

Meanwhile, it is crystal clear that the military has no desire to relinquish power in the foreseeable future; instead, it is making every attempt to consolidate power in its hands. Since last year, the military has moved its capital city to a strategic location, Pyimana, while reconvening a so-called "National Convention" in October, with hand-picked delegates charged with drafting a constitution that would guarantee the military's control of Burmese politics for the foreseeable future.

Visit the Canadian Friends of Burma's (CFOB) web site at: [www.cfob.org](http://www.cfob.org)

# AUNG SAN SUU KYI



Suu Kyi was put under house arrest for the 3rd time on May 30, 2003 after the Depayin Massacre. — First time placed under house arrest on July 20, 1989 and released on July 10, 1995; Second time arrested September 23, 2000 and released May 6, 2002. — Her term of house arrest was extended for another year until May 2007.

In 1990, the National League for Democracy in Burma won 82% of the seats in the Burmese elections. Yet the military remains in power and continues to violate human rights. Rights & Democracy joined the struggle for democracy in Burma in 1990.

**AS OF DECEMBER 6, 2006** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will have spent altogether 4,058 days of her life in detention, the equivalent of 11 years and 11 days under house arrest. 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma, Aung San

*"We want the world to know that we are prisoners in our own country."*

*Aung San Suu Kyi*

To support this cause, contact Mika Lévesque, Rights & Democracy's Regional Agent for Asia, at [www.dd-rd.ca](http://www.dd-rd.ca)

# FORCED LABOUR, FORCED SEX, FORCED LEGITIMACY

BY THE WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA (WLB)

**THE USE OF FORCED** labour by the military regime in Burma has been well documented by international agencies, including the UN. In June 2000, the ILC (the ILO's annual conference) adopted a resolution under Article 33 of its constitution calling on governments, employers and trade unions to take action against the Burmese military junta (SPDC – State Peace and Development Council) until it complies with the ILO's recommendations to end the practice of forced labour. Ironically, instead of making progress toward ending forced labour and taking action against those responsible, the regime has prosecuted, imprisoned, and even killed those who have made complaints about forced labour. On top of this, women have suffered rape and sexual violence, and sometimes been killed while being forced to work for the SPDC army.

In recent years, the SPDC has increased the number of battalions in ethnic/indigenous areas. These battalions have been conscripting villagers to work for them without payment, requiring them to contribute "voluntary labour" as part of a so-called "self-reliance program." This includes forcing women to make food and fetch water and firewood for troops, as well as work on military agricultural projects. Women have also been forced to work on the construction of railways, motor roads, bridges, dams and other state infrastructure projects. This has rendered women extremely vulnerable to rape or gang-rape by troops in charge of such projects.

Even more alarmingly, evidence has been documented by WLB (Women's League of Burma) members and other local human rights organizations that SPDC troops have been deliberately conscripting women for the purpose of sexually attacking them, using forced labour as a pretext. For example, several incidents have been documented this year of patrols of SPDC troops ordering groups of four to six young women from rural villages to accompany them as local "guides" through the countryside for several days, and then gang-raping them each night. The women were then ordered not to tell anyone what had happened.

Such sexual attacks fit into the pattern identified by the WLB whereby SPDC troops have been systematically using rape and various forms of sexual violence against women and girls in ethnic/ indigenous areas as a strategy of war.

It is extremely perplexing to us that efforts to increase pressure on the regime over the issue of sexual violence and forced labour have fallen on deaf ears. We do not understand why the international community has persistently taken a "wait-and-see" attitude towards the military regime in Burma, which is abusing its power by raping women and by raping the country's natural resources for its own benefit and to prolong its military rule. Now, once again, using the recent visit of UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, the SPDC is taking credit for letting him meet briefly with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and observe its "National Convention," which is drawing up a new constitution aimed at legitimizing military rule.

We have witnessed the lies and tricks of successive military regimes in Burma. How much longer will we have to wait as the world continues with its wait-and-see attitude?

Women in Burma have endured forced labour, forced sex, and now, it seems, "forced legitimacy" from an illegitimate regime.

For more information, please email: [wlb@womenofburma.org](mailto:wlb@womenofburma.org) or visit [www.womenofburma.org](http://www.womenofburma.org)

## MYANMAR OR BURMA?

**FOLLOWING ITS INDEPENDENCE** and under an elected government, the country's name was the Union of Burma. In 1989, the ruling military junta issued a decree changing the names of several cities, rivers and regions as well as the country's official name from Burma to Myanmar. "Myanmar" is a transliteration of "Burma" in

Burmese language—the language spoken by the country's largest ethnic group—the Burman.

The pro-democracy movement from Burma (inside as well as outside Burma) rejects the name "Myanmar" for at least three reasons:

- 1) The name of the country was changed by decree from the military dictatorship. Only an elected Parliament would have the legitimacy to change the name of the country by adopting an act of parliament.
- 2) Using Myanmar, derived from the

Burmese language, ignores the fact that Burma is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country with a large indigenous population for whom Burmese is a second or even third language. (The population is also made up of the Karen, Shan, Akha, Chin, Chinese, Danu, Indian, Kachin, Karenni, Kayan, Kokang, Lahu, Mon, Naga, Palaung, Pao, Rakhine, Rohingya, Tavoyan, and Wa ethnic/ indigenous groups.)

- 3) The army and most positions of power are dominated by Burmans. Burmese military rulers have been highly criticized for

their gross human rights violations of ethnic/indigenous peoples. Some experts consider these violations as a form of genocide or ethnic cleansing. For many people, the use of "Myanmar" shows support for the military regime's efforts to "Burmanize" the country.

Most countries, including Canada, the European Union and the United States, have chosen to use Burma. Because the military regime represents Burma at the UN, all UN documents must refer to the country as Myanmar.

# CANADA'S BURMA MOTION

ON MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2005, following several years of hard work by Canadian civil society groups, Canadian Parliament finally adopted by a majority vote a motion on Burma based on the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT).

Canada's Parliament committed itself to taking action against the systematic abuse of human rights in Burma. The Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP voted in favour of this motion, which called for comprehensive economic measures against the military regime and concrete support for Burma's democratic institutions. These institutions, which include Burma's government in exile, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) and the Members of Parliament Union (MPU), or other institutions such as the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and the Burma Fund (TBF) have large needs with respect to their operational budgets and are dependent on foreign government funding.

Rights & Democracy therefore ask the Canadian Government to:

1. Provide political and financial support to the democratic institutions of Burma.
2. Impose economic sanctions on Burma's military regime.
3. Work towards a binding resolution on Burma at the UN Security Council.

Detailed documents can be found on our web site at: [www.dd-rd.ca/humphreyaward](http://www.dd-rd.ca/humphreyaward)



# RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY'S WORK IN BURMA

FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS, Rights & Democracy has been supporting efforts aimed at securing a peaceful transition toward democracy in Burma. Rights & Democracy opened its doors in 1990, the year of Burma's democratic elections. On December 18, 1990, when the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) was created, Rights & Democracy was able to react swiftly and was the first institution in the world to support the government-in-exile. Its support continues to this day.

Moreover, Rights & Democracy has earned international recognition for its strong support for Burma. In 1993, the institution organized a mission to Thailand comprised of Noble Peace Prize laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Betty Williams, Mayread Corrigan, Adolfo Perez-Esquivel, Oscar Arias and the President of Rights & Democracy. More recently, in the fall of 2005, Rights & Democracy co-organized a full day of activities in Ottawa with Prime Minister Sein Win, leader of the NCGUB, to mark the 10-year anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest. In addition, Rights & Democracy works closely with Burma's government-in-exile and Canadian NGOs in order to bring the Burmese cause to the attention of Canadian, regional and international bodies. The organization also supports the Burmese Women's Union, a group that promotes the participation of women in the pro-democracy movement, and works on Burma's borders with Thailand, China and India.

# TAKE ACTION! PUT AN END TO FORCED LABOUR IN BURMA

IN RECOGNITION of her selfless courage and determination in the name of human rights and Democracy in Burma, Rights & Democracy is proud to present its 2006 John Humphrey Freedom Award to Su Su Nway. Since its inception in 1992, the John Humphrey Freedom Award has recognized the exceptional achievements of human rights advocates around the world, primarily in developing countries.

Su Su Nway and the people of Burma are counting on Canada to act on its promises.

**SIGN THE LETTER** addressed to the Canadian Government and **MAKE A DONATION** For Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) (AAPP):

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) supports political prisoners and families. Since the 1988 popular democracy movement was crushed in a ruthless crackdown by the military regime, thousands of people have been arrested, tortured and given long prison sentences for their beliefs and political activities. Moreover, even after political prisoners are released, they continue to face intimidation and harassment by the junta:

Su Su Nway, John Humphrey Freedom Award 2006, released from Insein prison in June 2006, her security is still compromised.

Min Ko Naing, John Humphrey Freedom Award 1990, released in 2004 after 16 years in prison, was arrested again in September 2006.

Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner, is still under house arrest.

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT**, please visit our web site at [www.dd-rd.ca](http://www.dd-rd.ca)