

Media Release from European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma
For Immediate Release 19th August 2010

**European MPs call on EU to support a UN Commission of Inquiry
on Burma**

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB), representing MPs from 15 European countries, is calling on EU member states to officially support the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry on Burma.

The call from European MPs comes just days after the USA became the fifth country to publicly support a UN Inquiry. The EU is currently drafting the next UN General Assembly resolution on Burma, which should include the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry.

The military regime in Burma is responsible for planned, widespread and systematic violations of human rights and freedoms in the country. The abuses include rape and sexual violence, the deportation and forcible transfer of civilians, the recruitment of child soldiers, the persecution of ethnic minorities, the use of torture and other war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The EPCB believes that a UN Commission of Inquiry that would allow a thorough investigation and documentation of these crimes, along with the formation of recommendations on future actions and policies, is a crucial step that the international community should support.

In March 2010 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, included in his report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, the recommendation of the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, outlining the "gross and systematic" nature of the abuses taking place in Burma.

In June 2010 a new report – Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The Situation of the Rohingyas – was published by the Irish Centre for Human Rights, also recommending that the United Nations Security Council establish a Commission of Inquiry into the crimes exposed in the report.

"The ongoing atrocities in the country demonstrate the need and urgency for stronger action by the international community. Individual states and EU must take action and officially support a UN Commission of Inquiry which would be a crucial and effective preliminary step towards putting an end to the constant perpetration of grave abuses and crimes in Burma." Silver Meikar, executive member of EPCB, says.

For more information contact the Caucus administrators: Zoya Phan on +4420 7324 4712, or Kristina Prunerova on +420 777 787 917.

See below the text of the letter:

Dr. Michael Spindelegger,
Foreign Minister of the Republic of Austria
Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs
Minoritenplatz 8
A-1014 Wien,
Austria

17th August 2010

Re: Request for support for a UN Commission of Inquiry on Burma

Dear Dr. Michael Spindelegger,

We, members of the European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB), an organization founded in June 2008 to raise awareness on Burma in Europe and promote human rights and democracy in the country, are writing to you regarding the serious situation of human rights in Burma, and the urgent need for support for the establishment of a United Nation Commission of Inquiry.

We call your attention to the ongoing widespread and systematic violation of human rights and freedoms in Burma by the military regime. The grave abuses include sexual violence, the deportation and forcible transfer of civilians, the recruitment of child soldiers, the constant imposition of discrimination policies and violence to ethnic nationalities, the use of torture and numerous other war crimes and crimes against humanity. At the same time the Burmese dictatorship is holding sham elections while thousands of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's democracy leader and Nobel Peace laureate, are arbitrarily kept in prison.

In March 2010 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, included in his report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, the recommendation of the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry, outlining the "gross and systematic" nature of the abuses taking place in Burma. Taking into consideration the importance of the establishment of facts, a Commission of Inquiry, which will allow a thorough investigation and documentation of the current situation in Burma along with the formation of recommendations on future actions and policies, is a crucial step that the international community should support.

We acknowledge that at the current time the possibility of the United Nations Security Council voting for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry is weak due to opposition from Russia and China. However, we firmly believe that it is crucial for individual states and the European Union to express their support in principle in order to build a strong consensus and increase the possibility of such an establishment in the future.

With regard to the current situation in Burma, we urge you to follow the example of the United Kingdom, Australia, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic, and officially support the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry. The ongoing atrocities in the country demonstrate the need and urgency for stronger action by the international community and a United Nation Commission of Inquiry would be an important and effective preliminary step towards putting an end to the constant perpetration of crimes in Burma.

We thank you in advance for taking our request into consideration and encourage you to contact us if you have any questions or need further information.

Yours sincerely,



Silver Meikar

Executive Member of EPCB

About EPCB: *The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma was founded in June 2008 to raise awareness on Burma in Europe and promote human rights and democracy in Burma. It represents 16 European countries with more than 160 MPs.*

Administrative support for the European Parliamentary caucus on Burma is being provided by Burma Campaign UK and People in Need in the Czech Republic.

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