

**Where Impunity Reigns Benedict Rogers New York Times 17 December 2009**

Benedict Rogers is the East Asia Team Leader with the human rights organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide, and author of several books on Burma, including “Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma’s Tyrant.” In this New York Times op-ed, Rogers calls on the United Nations to take a stand against the atrocities committed by the military regime in Burma against the Burmese people.

The world needs to be reminded, again and again, that the military regime in Burma (Myanmar) continues to perpetrate every conceivable human rights violation. (...)

In eastern Burma, the regime has been conducting a brutal military campaign against people of the Karen, Karenni and Shan groups. (...) The catalogue of terror includes the widespread, systematic use of rape as a weapon, forced labor, the use of human minesweepers and the forcible conscription of child soldiers.

In northern and western Burma, the predominantly Christian Chin and Kachin peoples also face systematic religious persecution. The Muslim Rohingyas, targeted for their faith and ethnicity, are denied citizenship, despite living in Burma for generations. Thousands have escaped to miserable conditions in Bangladesh. (...)

The United Nations has documented these atrocities. For years, General Assembly resolutions have condemned the abuses. Previous special rapporteurs have described the violations as “the result of policy at the highest level, entailing political and legal responsibility.” A recent General Assembly resolution urged the regime to “put an end to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.”

The U.N. has placed Burma on a monitoring list for genocide, the Genocide Risk Indices lists Burma as one of the two top “red alert” countries for genocide, along with Sudan, while the Minority Rights Group ranks Burma as one of the top five countries where ethnic minorities are under threat. Freedom House describes Burma as “the worst of the worst.” (...)

Trying to talk to the generals is right, but it needs to be accompanied by strong and unambiguous pressure. In short, little action has been taken by the international community. Countries continue to sell the regime arms, impunity prevails.

The violations perpetrated by the regime amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Harvard Law School's report, "Crimes in Burma," commissioned by five of the world's leading jurists, concludes that there is "a prima facie case of international criminal law violations occurring that demands U.N. Security Council action to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate these grave breaches."

Last week marked the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If that is to mean anything in Burma, the time has come for the U.N. to impose a universal arms embargo on the regime, to invoke the much-flaunted "Responsibility to Protect" mechanism, and to investigate the regime's crimes. The time to end the system of impunity in Burma is long overdue.

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