

ICRtoP Secretariat attends Oslo conference "An international and a Norwegian Responsibility to Protect – Crimes against humanity in Eastern Burma?"

Burma, crimes against humanity and calls for action

The situation in Eastern Burma was the subject of a seminar on April 23rd, organized by the Norwegian Parliaments support group for Burma, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Burma Committee, the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), the Norwegian Baptist Union and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights. The seminar, entitled "An International and a Norwegian Responsibility to Protect -Crimes against Humanity in Burma?" examined the human rights situation in Burma, arguing that the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Eastern Burma amounted to crimes against humanity. Speakers discussed how Norway and the international community should exercise their responsibility to protect. Marion Arnaud from the

ICRtoP

attended the conference and will be sharing a report of the seminar soon.

[See for more info on the event](#)

As featured below, the organizers of the seminar followed the event by writing a [letter](#) to Ban Ki-moon to encourage him to establish an international group of experts to report on whether serious violations of international humanitarian law have been committed in Eastern Burma, and to urge the Government of Burma to permit access to all parts of the country for international humanitarian assistance (see the letter below).

US campaign for Burma has issued a [call to stop mass atrocities in Burma](#) by pushing for the United Nations to

[send Burma to the International Criminal Court](#)

or establish an international criminal tribunal to arrest and prosecute Burmas military regime. This call was issued just as five of the world's leading international jurists have commissioned [a report](#)

from the International Human Rights Clinic at the Harvard Law School, calling for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to establish a Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma act on what they describe as more than 15 years of condemnation from other UN bodies on human rights abuses in Myanmar.

Letter calls for the UN to investigate the atrocities in Eastern Burma etter to Ban Ki-moon
Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights
06 May 2009

Your Excellency

As co-organisers of a conference in Oslo on 23 April 2009 on the situation in Eastern Burma (Myanmar) n International and a Norwegian Responsibility to Protect rimes against Humanity in

Eastern Burma? e take the liberty to address you regarding the precarious situation in the eastern part of Burma (Myanmar).

As you know the population of Eastern Burma (Myanmar) consists mostly of different ethnic groups. This is the scene of what is widely considered the worlds longest lasting internal armed conflict. It has lasted without interruption since the country gained independence in 1948.

As documented by the Thai Burma Border Consortium and others, the Burmese Government is waging a brutal war not only against the armed resistance movements but also against the local civilian population. Renowned organizations are of the opinion that crimes against humanity are committed as part of the military campaign in Eastern Burma (Myanmar). Among other things, the junta controls the worlds largest child army. Members of the Burmese armed forces forcibly recruit and use children down to the age of 11 in the army and compel them to witness and commit violations themselves. Additionally, members of the Burmese armed forces resort to the use of land mines, forced labor, rape and other forms of sexual violation, unlawful executions and torture as means of warfare. The Government does little or nothing to investigate and prosecute these violations.

Our initiative is based on the international norm of a **responsibility to protect**, the statement adopted by states leaders during the World Summit in September 2005, and the later, unanimous endorsement by the Security Council in Resolution 1674 in April 2006, establishing that the international community has a

responsibility to protect

the population in sovereign states when the states themselves are unwilling or unable to protect their own citizens from the most serious human rights violations including genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Against this background, the Norwegian Parliaments support group for Burma, Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Burma Committee, the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), the Norwegian Baptist Union and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights joined forces to organize the above-mentioned conference. We wish to convey to you two recommendations for your consideration and follow-up:

- First, to urge the Government of Burma (Myanmar) to ensure the immediate, safe and unhindered access to all parts of the country for the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable parts of the population in Burma (Myanmar); and
- Secondly, to encourage the establishment of an international group of experts to report to the United Nations General assembly and the Human Rights Council on whether serious violations of international humanitarian law are committed in Eastern Burma (Myanmar) and, if so, whether these violations amount to a failure to protect the citizens of Burma (Myanmar) from war crimes and crimes against humanity. ()

Kjell Magne Bondevik, Director, Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights
Hans Olav Syversen, Member of Parliament, Norwegian Parliamentary Caucus for Burma
Inger lise Husy, Director, Norwegian Burma Committee

shild Kols, Program Leader, International Peace Research Institute
Atle Sommerfeldt, General Secretary, Norwegian Church Aid
Magnar Mland, General Secretary, the Baptist Union of Norway

Full letter: [Read the full text to the UN Secretary General here](#)

Source:

http://www.oslocenter.no/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=182&Itemid=1

For more information: see Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)s October 2008 report, [Internal displacement and international law in eastern Burma](#) for a survey compiling 2008 abuses in relation to the legal framework for crimes against humanity.

New report from Harvard Law School entitled [Crimes in Burma](#) finds that UN documents on Burma provide grounds for investigation into international crimes; calls for the UN Security Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma.

East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta and the Burma Lawyers Council ready to appeal to the ICC to charge Snr-Gen Than Shwe with criminal acts, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 May 2009:

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=15688