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**17<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council  
Item 6: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Plenary on Burma/Myanmar**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Mr. Thaung Htun on Behalf of  
Worldview International Foundation**

**Wednesday, 8 June 2011**

Thank you, Mr. President. Worldview International Foundation makes this statement on behalf of the Burma Forum on the Universal Periodic Review (BF-UPR)<sup>1</sup>.

Mr. President, we deeply regret that the State maintained its blatant denial of the existence of 2,000 prisoners of conscience during the UPR Working Group session in January 2011. The so-called amnesty recently issued by the government only reduced the sentences by one year and commuted the death penalty to life imprisonment. Despite the release of 51 prisoners of conscience with less than a year left to serve, it is clear that the amnesty had no impact on the vast majority, most of whom are serving excessively long terms. The fact that all UPR recommendations pertaining to the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience were rejected is telling of the State's total disregard towards meaningful and inclusive democratic transition and national reconciliation in the country.

Meanwhile, we are extremely concerned that torture is routinely used with impunity as a punishment and to force confessions, in places of detention. In addition, authorities deliberately aggravate prison conditions and deny medical care to prisoners, causing a level of suffering amounting to torture. Since 1988, 146 political activists have died in custody as a direct result of severe torture or from the denial of food and medical treatment. The conditions in prisons and the treatment of prisoners fall far short of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which the State claimed to be implementing in its intervention during the UPR Working Group session.

Mr. President, last month, 30 prisoners of conscience staged a hunger strike with a list of six demands calling for better prison conditions and the realization of their rights outlined in the Prison Manual, including family visits. Although the strike ended on 25 May with authorities promising to meet various demands, the Prison Department then issued a wholesale rejection of them all. Furthermore, those striking have been punished by being placed in solitary confinement and are denied family visits. We urge the State to immediately allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) unimpeded access to all prisons in the country without interference from the State authorities.

Finally, Mr. President, we strongly condemn the State's failure to accept the UPR recommendations to end the practice of torture by security forces, prosecute the perpetrators and ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). There is no domestic mechanism available inside the country to effectively and impartially establish justice and accountability. Failure to independently investigate those widespread and systematic violations of human rights will only make further abuses inevitable. Therefore, it is incumbent upon this Council to act swiftly to establish an UN-mandated Commission of Inquiry to look into the violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Burma/Myanmar. Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>1</sup> Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma (AAPP-B), Arakan Rivers Network (ARN), Burma Fund UN Office, Burma Lawyers' Council (BLC), Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), Emergency Act Team vs Backpack Health Worker Team, Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB), Foundation for Education and Development (FED), Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB), Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land (HURFOM), Kachin Women's Organization Thailand (KWAT), Kaladan Press Bangladesh, Shwe Gas Movement, Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP)

