



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

UN Special Representative Patten condemns the continued use of sexual violence against civilians as a tactic of war and political repression in Myanmar and calls for renewed attention and urgent action from the international community to address the plight of survivors of sexual violence and meet their unique needs

Press Release: For Immediate Release

New York, 3 February 2025: Four years since the military seized power from the democratically elected Government in Myanmar and plunged the country into chaos, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, strongly condemns the continued use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a tactic of war and political repression and strategy to punish and terrorize communities across Myanmar.

Since the military seized power, civilians of diverse ethnicities, religions and gender identities, including women and children, have been killed, arbitrarily detained, tortured and subjected to sexual violence and other abuses. There are persistent and alarming reports about the continued use by the Myanmar security forces and their affiliates of sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, predominantly against women and children, but also men and LGBTQI persons, during ground operations, village raids, at check points and in detention settings. In July 2024, the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar reported that it had collected evidence of sexual and gender-based crimes, including rape and gang rape, in relation to ongoing armed conflict and in detention. The escalating conflict has compounded longstanding patterns of sexual violence, with some disturbing reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Ethnic Armed Organizations and People's Defence Forces also emerging.

Escalating conflict, poverty, food insecurity and mandatory conscription have resulted in increased reports of sexual violence, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation of women and children. The continued hostilities in Rakhine State have been accompanied by reports of Rohingya women and children being raped and trafficked as they fled to neighboring countries.

Special Representative Patten urgently calls on the Myanmar military and all armed groups to immediately cease all acts of sexual violence, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. *"It is imperative that the perpetrators of these heinous crimes take effective measures to prevent sexual violence crimes and that perpetrators face justice"* said Special Representative Patten. *"Breaking the cycle of impunity is urgent to shift the stigma of sexual violence from the survivors to the perpetrators"*. Special Representative Patten recalled that since 2017, the Myanmar Armed Forces has been listed in the annex of the annual reports of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a party credibly suspected of committing rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Survivors of CRSV in Myanmar continue to experience enduring physical, psychological, reproductive and socioeconomic impacts and face severe limitations to access service provision and care, particularly in conflict-affected areas. *“It is crucial that all survivors receive adequate medical care and mental health, psychosocial, livelihood and socio-economic support, which is essential to rebuild their lives,”* said Special Representative Patten. *“Survivors’ dignity, safety and healing are paramount. I call for sustained international and regional support to meet the unique needs of survivors.”*

Special Representative Patten commends the courage and resilience of Myanmar’s women’s rights and local organizations who, at great personal risk, continue to be on the frontlines supporting survivors and affected communities, tackling stigma around sexual violence and dismantling gender discrimination in Myanmar. Special Representative Patten echoes the calls of the Secretary-General to all parties to the conflict to exercise maximum restraint, uphold human rights and international humanitarian law and prevent further incitement of violence, including sexual violence.

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