

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission

Brussels, 7 April 2011
Our Ref: B1066

Dear Ms. Ashton,

Time for accountability for grave human rights violations in Myanmar

In view of current discussions on the renewal of the European Union (EU) Common Position on Myanmar, we urge the EU to maintain a focus on improvement to the human rights situation in the country, including by taking action on impunity. We urge the EU and its member states to use this opportunity to lend political weight to the establishment of an internationally appointed investigation into serious human rights violations, including by reflecting their support for this in the EU Common Position.

At the time of the Foreign Affairs Council's consideration of the EU's future policy options in Myanmar in November 2010, we conveyed our concerns that the human rights situation in that country remains substantively unchanged, and that there is an urgent need for the Myanmar authorities and the international community to take effective action to address it (see our letter of 18 Nov. 2010, Ref. B1018).

We remain deeply concerned about the government's failure - its new name and composition notwithstanding - to acknowledge the gravity of the human rights situation in the country or commit to taking any comprehensive remedial action. Our concerns are outlined in greater detail in the enclosed statement, issued at the UN Human Rights Council session of March 2011.

It is disappointing that references to possible crimes against humanity and war crimes were removed from the Human Rights Council's most recent resolution on Myanmar (A/HRC/RES/16/24), adopted on 25 March 2011. This was despite the fact that the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar on several occasions recommended that the UN consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry into alleged grave human rights violations, including crimes against humanity and possible war crimes. Most recently, the Special Rapporteur in his March 2011 report reiterated the need for independent, impartial and credible investigations.

In 2008, Amnesty International determined that crimes against humanity were committed by the Myanmar army in the context of counter-insurgency operations. We therefore support the UN Special Rapporteur's call for independent international investigations, and urge the EU to do so as well.

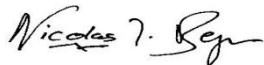
In light of the Myanmar authorities' long-standing failure to establish accountability for grave human rights violations, it is of great importance that all states and inter-governmental bodies - including the EU - ensure that impunity in the country is addressed. It is time the EU lent its support for the establishment of an international Commission of Inquiry in Myanmar.

Appreciating the attention accorded by the EU to the promotion and protection of human rights in Myanmar, including through support for the UN Special Rapporteur as well as action taken at the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council, we call on the EU and its member states to:

- Use all opportunities to call for an end to impunity in Myanmar, including by calling for the establishment of an internationally appointed investigation into serious human rights violations; and take action to ensure that it becomes a reality, including by reflecting the importance of accountability for human rights violations in the EU Common Position.
- Raise concerns at the serious human rights situation - including the continued imprisonment of prisoners of conscience - with the government of Myanmar.

We would appreciate information on the EU's efforts to address human rights in Myanmar, and remain at your disposal for further information.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Nicolas J. Beger
Director

Cc:

Viorel Isticioaia-Budura, Managing Director, Asia Department
James Moran, Director, Asia Department
Veronique Arnault, Director, Human Rights and Democracy Department
Olof Skoog, Chairperson of the Political and Security Committee
Boguslaw Majewski, Chairperson of the Asia-Oceania Working Party
Engelbert Theuermann, Chairperson of the Council Working Party on Human Rights

Attachment:

Amnesty International Public Statement: "No international compromise on human rights in Myanmar",
11 March 2011