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BURMA UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma calls for commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, has told the UN Human Rights Council that human rights violations perpetrated by Burma's military regime may include crimes against humanity and war crimes, and that the UN should establish a commission of inquiry.

In a major breakthrough, the Special Rapporteur's report to the UN Human Rights Council concludes that "there is a pattern of gross and systematic violation of human rights" which has been continuing "over a period of many years". Mr. Quintana says the violations "are the result of a state policy that involves authorities in the executive, military and judiciary at all levels". In an unprecedented move, he argues that "the possibility exists that some of these human rights violations may entail categories of crimes against humanity or war crimes under the terms of the Statute of the International Criminal Court".

The Special Rapporteur, who recently made his third visit to Burma, recommends that the UN should "consider the possibility to establish a commission of inquiry with a specific fact finding mandate to address the question of international crimes".

CSW has advocated the establishment of a UN commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes for several years, alongside other international campaign groups.

Benedict Rogers, CSW's East Asia Team Leader, who recently returned from a fact-finding visit to the Thailand-Burma border, said: "We warmly welcome the Special Rapporteur's report, and are delighted that he has not only concluded that the violations perpetrated by the regime may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, but that he is now calling on the UN to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate these crimes. Such a step is much-needed and long overdue. It is vital that the international community act decisively to end the culture of impunity that prevails in Burma today."