



## **UN Special Representative Patten expresses grave concern over reports of sexual violence in detention setting in Myanmar**

*Press Release: For Immediate Release*

**New York, 25 June 2021:** United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, strongly condemns the Myanmar military's widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, especially women and children, as well as other serious violations of human rights since it seized power on 1 February 2021. Night raids, arbitrary arrests, sieges of townships and neighborhoods, torture and deaths in detention, attacks on locations and sites where civilians are gathered or have fled, and reports of sexual violence in detention sites, particularly sexual assault, torture, physical and verbal abuse and intimidation, have become an alarming feature of daily life. These alleged reports of sexual violence may amount to violations of international criminal law for those who commit, command, or condone them.

The patterns of sexual violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw against women from ethnic and religious minority groups, as well as against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity, as documented by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, is extremely concerning. These patterns of sexual violence have also been documented in successive reports of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence to the UN Security Council since 2011. In 2017, the UN Secretary-General listed the Tatmadaw as a party “credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council” and, with its integrated Border Guard, remains listed to this day.

Special Representative Patten urges the Tatmadaw to cease all acts of sexual violence with immediate effect, which it is required to do following its listing in 2017 and pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 2106 (2013). Relatedly, an arms embargo is also a critical step towards ensuring the cessation of sexual violence. Special Representative Patten recalls that in December 2018, a Joint Communiqué to address and prevent sexual violence in conflict was signed between the then Government of Myanmar and the United Nations. Myanmar is also a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which entails a positive obligation to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish and provide reparations for acts of gender-based violence.

“The emerging reports of sexual violence in detention settings are very disturbing. I call for an end to all forms of violence against women, as well as unimpeded access to independently investigate the alleged reports.” Special Representative Patten said.

At a time when Myanmar faces a continued threat from the spread of COVID-19, and access to public health services has been severely impacted by the political crisis, some public health facilities have also suspended their operations due to serious concerns related to attacks on, and the occupation and looting of health facilities and hospitals. “The current crisis is disrupting essential health and social services, including safe pregnancy and childbirth. In the midst of this civilian suffering, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that appropriate multi-



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sectoral services are available to all civilians including non-discriminatory care for survivors of sexual violence, and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to provide essential lifesaving services,” SRSG Patten added.

“I recognize and commend women’s rights organizations who are on the frontlines providing services and support at a time of heightened individual and collective security risks. The dignity and safety of survivors is paramount including access to timely medical care, as reinforced by Security Council Resolution 2467 (2019). My Office stands ready to support the UN Secretary-General’s renewed call to respect the will of the people and act in the greater interest of peace and stability in the country.”

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