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20110353

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Statsminister  
Fredrik Reinfeldt  
Statsrådsberedningen  
103 33 STOCKHOLM

Mr Prime Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) regarding the serious and on-going human rights violations in Burma.

In 2010, the government of Sweden voted in favour of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution on Burma/Myanmar which once again called on the government of Burma to respect international law. The Resolution stated that the General Assembly, “Expresses grave concern at the continuing practice of arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and urges the Government of Myanmar to undertake without further delay a full, transparent, effective, impartial and independent investigation into all reports of human rights violations, and to bring to justice those responsible in order to end impunity for violations of human rights, and, regretting that previous calls to that effect have not been heeded, calls on the Government to do so as a matter of priority and, if necessary, drawing on the assistance of the United Nations”. LO reminds you that human rights in working life are also human rights. Human rights in working life are ILOs core conventions.

This UNGA Resolution was the 20<sup>th</sup> on Burma and the 18<sup>th</sup> time the UNGA called for human rights abuses to be investigated. As with previous UNGA Resolutions, the government of Burma wilfully ignored this request. In February 2011, the government of Burma also rejected 16 separate requests for investigations into human rights abuses made at the UN Human Rights Council as part of the Universal Periodic Review. In addition, there have been more than 40 visits to Burma by UN Envoys and Human Rights Rapporteurs, whose calls for change and an end to human rights abuses have also been flouted. This must not be allowed to continue – for the sake of the Burmese people and for the legitimacy of the international system.

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**The Swedish Trade Union Confederation**

In March 2010, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma called for a UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed in Burma. The establishment of a COI is the only way that these crimes committed by the state can be thoroughly investigated. Further, the findings of the COI could help to develop a roadmap to ensure that such violations do not take place again. This call is supported by the leader of Burma's democracy movement, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories (and to which my union is affiliated) as well as the governments of sixteen countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The elections held last year in Burma provided no reason to hesitate as to whether to support a COI. The elections were neither free nor fair. Further, they have done nothing to change the situation in the country. Credible reports by human rights organizations show that serious human rights abuses continue unabated. Attacks against ethnic minorities have escalated in recent months. The military has targeted several ethnic communities and has subjected the inhabitants to serious human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killing, torture and rape, in addition to forced labour, including forced portering.

I urge you on behalf of the government of Sweden to support the recommendation of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma and support a UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses in Burma/Myanmar. Time is running out. The EU is preparing the draft UNGA Resolution on Burma now. Please let the EU know immediately that you want the establishment of a COI to be included in the draft Resolution. Of course, we hope that you would support such a resolution at the UNGA.

I have enclosed briefing material for your review. In case you require further information on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact us. We would be happy to honour such a request and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

  
Ulla Lindqvist  
Vice President

Encl:  
UN Burma COI Backgrounder

cc Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs