

**International Human Rights Organizations Call for Accountability of
Lt. Gen. Ko Ko, Myanmar's Minister of Home Affairs
November 5, 2015**

We, the undersigned organizations, call for Lt. Gen. Ko Ko, Myanmar's Minister of Home Affairs and Minister for Immigration and Population, to be held accountable for his involvement in human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. On November 6, 2015, the United Nations Human Rights Council will review Myanmar's human rights record during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva. Regrettably, the Myanmar Government has appointed Lt. Gen. Ko Ko to head the committee responsible for its UPR process.

Hundreds of civil society organizations in Myanmar have signed a petition expressing their concern about Lt. Gen. Ko Ko's role in the UPR process, as well as the current impunity at the national level that exists for his involvement in abuses. They have called on the international community to take concrete steps to hold him accountable.

Lt. Gen. Ko Ko has a well-documented track record of human rights violations. He led Myanmar's Southern Command during a military offensive in Kayin State from 2005-2008. According to a report released by the Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic, there is sufficient evidence against him to satisfy the standard required to issue an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for his command over soldiers that intentionally attacked, killed, tortured, enslaved, and forcibly transferred civilians.

In his current position as the Minister of Home Affairs, Lt. Gen. Ko Ko has also been implicated in human rights abuses, including violations of the rights to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. For example, strong evidence exists that the Myanmar Police Force, which is under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs, has repeatedly used unlawful and excessive force against peaceful protesters. In November 2012, Lt. Gen. Ko Ko was accused of authorizing riot police to use white phosphorus munitions to disperse peaceful protesters—mostly monks and villagers—at the Letpadaung Copper Mine, resulting in severe chemical burns of more than 100 people. In March 2015, the police again used excessive force in the town of Letpadan against unarmed protesters calling for reforms to the National Education Law.

The Human Rights Council has called upon the Myanmar Government to take all necessary measures to ensure accountability and end impunity for violations of human rights. This recommendation also was made during Myanmar's previous UPR in 2011 and has been reiterated in advance questions for the forthcoming UPR this year. Similarly, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, recommended in both her March and October 2015 reports that the Government address impunity for human rights violations committed by security personnel.

In light of Lt. Gen. Ko Ko's track record, we call on the Myanmar Government to remove him as the head of its UPR process, and to initiate a prompt, independent, and thorough investigation into the allegations of his involvement in human rights violations and international crimes. The international community should lend support to any investigation and prosecution. If the Myanmar Government does not pursue accountability in a prompt and effective manner, the international community should initiate its own investigation into Lt. Gen. Ko Ko's responsibility for human rights violations and international crimes, and governments should pursue appropriate legal action against him if he enters their territory under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Organizational Signatures:

Altsean Burma

Burma Campaign UK

FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights

Fortify Rights

Global Justice Center

International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School

Justice Trust

US Campaign for Burma

World Organization Against Torture

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