August 31, 2009

United States Mission to the United Nations
Ambassador Susan Rice
140 East 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Ambassador Rice:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) concerning the finding of several humanitarian organizations that human rights abuses are occurring in Burma under the military regime of Than Shwe. At our August 7-9, 2009 annual meeting, the members of the SSSP passed a resolution asking the SSSP to urge you to call for a United Nations' Security Council investigation into possible crimes against humanity committed by Burma's military regime. The SSSP is an organization of over 1,600 social science scholars and practitioners whose mission is scholarship in pursuit of a just society. A copy of the resolution is enclosed.

A team of researchers at Harvard University's Law School this summer released a report in which they compiled evidence that the United Nations itself has already documented warranting such an investigation. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and other organizations have concluded that Burma's military regime has committed serious human rights abuses which also qualify as crimes, including rape, extrajudicial executions, torture, slave labor, and the conscription of tens of thousands of children as soldiers. The regime also has forced over a million refugees and internally displaced persons to flee the country. Over 2,100 individuals have been incarcerated for their political views. Among them is the only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Aung San Suu Kyi.

In addition to calling for an investigation of these acts, the SSSP urges the United States to call for a global ban on weapons sales to Burma's military regime. We support and admire your efforts and the stated intentions of President Obama to restore the United States' standing in the world. These events in Burma provide the United States with an excellent opportunity to show the world that our belief in human rights is unequivocal and unconditional, and that we are prepared to back up this belief with action.

We know that you are very busy, but if you, or a member of your staff, can respond to this letter, to assure us that it was read and our request considered, we would appreciate it very much. Thank you and best wishes as our ambassador to the United Nations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Héctor L. Delgado
SSSP Executive Officer

Enclosure

RESOLUTION #4: UN Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in Burma
From: Global Division

WHEREAS: a team of researchers at Harvard Law School released a major report in June, 2009, commissioned by five of the world's leading judges -- some of whom served at the International Criminal Tribunals on Rwanda and Yugoslavia, that concludes there is sufficient evidence to launch an official investigation by the UN Security Council into crimes against humanity committed by Burma's military regime; AND

WHEREAS: similar investigations, known as "Commissions of Inquiry" have already been carried out in reference to the situation in Darfur, Sudan; the former Yugoslavia; and Rwanda; AND

WHEREAS: numerous human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have concluded that war crimes and crimes against humanity are indeed taking place under the rule of Burma's regime, which is led by General Than Shwe; AND

WHEREAS: these abuses include the conscription of tens of thousands of child soldiers, rape of ethnic minority women, extrajudicial killings and torture, modern-day slave labor, and the flight of at least one million refugees and internally displaced persons; AND

WHEREAS: Than Shwe's regime in Burma is incarcerating over 2,100 prisoners of conscience, including the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Society for the Study of Social Problems strongly condemn these violations of international human rights and humanitarian law; AND

BE IT RESOLVED that the Society for the Study of Social Problems send a letter to the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, urging the United States to propose the establishment of an official investigation by the UN Security Council into crimes against humanity committed by Burma's military regime; AND

BE IT RESOLVED that the Society for the Study of Social Problems send a letter to the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, urging the United States to propose a global ban on weapons sales to Burma's military regime.