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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On International Human Rights Day the Global Justice Center commends U.S. Ambassador Verveer for calling for prosecution of military crimes in Burma.

On December 5, 2009 U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer, made clear that Burma's military junta must be held accountable for human rights abuses and that "those guilty of crimes against women be prosecuted."

The Global Justice Center applauds the United States' call to end the impunity for military rapists in Burma. GJC President Janet Benshoof said, "*Ambassador Verveer's statements are further proof that the U.S. is stepping up to the plate to fulfill its legal obligations under Security Council Resolutions requiring all States ensure that military perpetrators of rape and other crimes of sexual violence against women in conflict areas are held criminally accountable.*"

Ambassador Verveer's statement, resulting from a meeting in Thailand with women's rights activists from Burma, follows the lead of Secretary of State Rodham Clinton, who cited to the use of rape in Burma as a "tactic of war" as an example of why the Security Council should adopt additional measures to protect women. These calls for accountability are reinforced by President Obama's December 10th speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, which underscored that the repression in Burma evokes "consequences."

Since 2000, the Security Council has unanimously passed four Resolutions finding that the growing use of violence against women in situations of armed conflict threatens international peace and security. Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 require that States and the United Nations take specific measures to ensure women's rights to equality and justice, both during and after conflict.

On July 15, 2009, Burma was reported to the Security Council by the Secretary-General as a country violating Resolution 1820, citing to the impunity afforded the military's systematic use of sexual violence against women as part of the junta assaults on ethnic populations. Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820 and 1888 note that such crimes against women can constitute war crimes, a crime against humanity or a constituent act with respect to genocide. The Resolutions require that all perpetrators of these crimes be prosecuted in either domestic or international courts; SCR 1820 specifically recalls the Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court and prohibits any amnesties for these crimes.

Benshoof states that, "*The Security Council has pledged to take further action in situations of noncompliance and Burma is such a situation. Ensuring criminal accountability of the Burmese military junta is not a political choice but a legal obligation, and one which the Security Council has recognized ultimately falls on them to fulfill. The Geneva Conventions and Council Resolutions require the Security Council to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court. The military junta has had a free ride in using crime, including rape as a weapon of war, to terrorize a country. The global community must join the United States in telling the ruling junta their crime spree is over.*"

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The Global Justice Center is a New York based international human rights organization that provides leaders with legal tools and strategies for enforcing human rights law. To arrange interviews or more information on the situation in Burma, please contact:

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