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## Dear GJC Friends and Supporters,

On July 17th the world celebrated International Justice Day, the anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the International Criminal Court.

In honor of this important landmark, the Global Justice Center reaffirms its commitment to enforcing these international human rights laws to create a more just world. In this **GJCnews**, we share how we are working to use the law to end the impunity of the military in Burma and ensure that the men, women, and children in Burma finally realize justice and peace.

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### **Making Justice for Burma a Reality**, by *Phyu Phyu Sann*, GJC *Burma Researcher*



*Phyu Phyu asks ICC Prosecutor O'Campo about Burma and the ICC*

I am part of a generation of people from Burma who grew up dreaming of and longing for justice. A generation that continues to be victimized by terrible acts of [mass atrocities](#) carried out by our own ruling regime. Extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced labor are prevalent; rape and sexual abuse by the military are rampant; and more than 200,000 civilians were forcibly displaced in the east. In regions where armed conflict is ongoing, villagers have been used as human minesweepers and the forcible conscription of child soldiers is widespread.

More that 2,100 of my fellow country women and men who dedicated their lives to the ideals of justice and democracy are now languishing in

remote prison labor camps far from their homes, in atrocious conditions, enduring mental and physical torture and summary executions at the hands of the military.

***This is what is on my mind as I honor International Justice Day.***

When I was inside Burma, the widespread repression and atrocities made me feel desperate and hopeless - that we were on our own and no one could help us to end this circle of impunity. As part of the Global Justice Center team working to uphold international commitments to the rule of law and enforce the people of Burma's rights to criminal accountability, my sense of desperation has changed to one of hope. The [international legal tools exist](#) to give the people of Burma justice, and the GJC is working tirelessly to see that this happens.

This fall, the military regime will entrench its power permanently through elections that will trigger the full implementation of a criminal Constitution that codifies the military control over the government. What's more, this Constitution gives the military amnesty for the crimes it is committing against its people and ensures that no civilian judge can ever hold a member of the military accountable.

This aggressive and deliberate act by the military to enshrine impunity as a "right" is a serious breach of peremptory norms striking at the heart of Burma's obligations under the Genocide and Geneva Conventions, customary international law, and UN resolutions on women, peace and security and the use of sexual violence in conflict.

***The Global Justice Center refuses to let the Burmese junta continuously thwart the international justice system.***

We are preparing a draft Security Council Resolution declaring the Burma 2008 Constitution and any elections arising therefrom null and void, as it did with the South African apartheid Constitution in 1984. The pivotal precedent set by UN Security Council Resolution 554 on South Africa provides a framework for addressing analogous constitutions and election processes that entrench repressive regimes. In the upcoming months we are seeking avenues to bring this resolution before the Security Council and asking the global community to respect its commitment to international justice by joining us in calling for a referral of the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court.

If the elections in Burma take place this fall, the threat that Burma poses to global peace and security will continue to escalate. This is our opportunity to show the world's dictators that global rule of law will not be flouted.

***The dream of justice for the people of Burma - one that I have***

***held onto my entire life - must become a reality.***

Read a speech by GJC President Janet Benshoof on advances in international law to end impunity in Burma [here](#).

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**With Burma on Our Minds: The Bright Future of International Human Rights**, by Caroline Chiappetti, GJC Program Intern and Rising Senior at Williams College

On Friday afternoons, staff and interns at the Global Justice Center put their own work aside and meet in the conference room for lunch and an hour-long conversation inspired by a member of the GJC's team's experience working abroad, breaking news or an aspect of our work.

Last Friday, the catalyst for discussion was the screening of a documentary, "[Burma: An Indictment.](#)"

Burma is one of the GJC's biggest projects, but like many of those sitting around the table



*Caroline (second from the right) and members of the GJC team at a protest in honor of Aung San Suu Kyi*

who are new to the GJC this summer, I knew little about the story of Burma before arriving here. In sixty minutes, the documentary exposed sixty years of atrocities occurring within Burma by collecting firsthand accounts from the military junta's victims; from members of the NLD who have been tortured as political prisoners, to those who have been displaced and now live in refugee camps. My colleagues and I watched as our work at the GJC suddenly became very real. A few moments of stunned silence followed the film. Then we launched into impassioned discussion.

With images of land mine victims and child laborers etched into our memories we asked questions we all felt we should have been asking earlier- questions Janet had been asking for years that led her to establish the GJC.

***How is this happening? Why can't we do anything? Can we do anything? Our emotion poured out.***

But the conversation soon shifted to trying to figure out what we actually could do, given existing legal tools. If we want to use

international law, what are our choices? Can we argue that Responsibility to Protect applies? How do we engage the international community and the Security Council to speed up the ICC referral process?



*GJC Law Fellow Alexia asks a probing legal question about Burma*

Alexia, a law fellow who arrived at the GJC in May after five months of interning at the ICC Liaison Office at the UN, spoke up. The creative thinking of the GJC had inspired her to pursue an idea. She outlined a new argument on how to get non-state parties to the statute to fall within the jurisdiction of the ICC. We all looked to the GJC staff for their reactions and they just smiled. This new argument, developed further, could be an innovative new approach to get the situation in Burma referred to the ICC and hold the military accountable for its crimes.

***Thinking like Alexia's defines the Global Justice Center.***

The roadblocks to justice in Burma are so infuriating that Friday could have left us feeling hopeless, but the discussion that occurred around the table is just one example of how our staff and interns refuse to accept problems as intractable - finding creative new ways to use and enforce law to bring the people of Burma justice. Those of us who are interns and law fellows will take this innovative style of legal thinking with us when we return to our universities in a few weeks, before going on to become leaders in the fields of human rights and international law.

***With this in mind, on Friday the future of international human rights looked bright.***

*GJC Law Interns from the Leitner Institute for International Law and Justice at Fordham are blogging about their work at the GJC. Read their post about Burma [here](#).*

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The Global Justice Center ● 25 East 21st Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10010  
Tel: 212-725-6530 ● Fax: 212-725-6536 ● [www.globaljusticecenter.net](http://www.globaljusticecenter.net)

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