

**HISTORIC ADVANCE FOR UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS:
UNOCAL TO COMPENSATE BURMESE VILLAGERS**

Dan Stormer, Anne Richardson	626-585-9600
Terry Collingsworth	202-347-4100
Jennifer Green	212-614-6431
Paul Hoffman	310-396-7255
Richard Herz	860-233-4938
Judith Chomsky	215-782-8367

(April 2, 2005) The US oil company Unocal has agreed to compensate Burmese villagers who sued the firm for complicity in forced labor, rape and murder. The abuses were committed in the mid-1990's by soldiers providing security for Unocal's natural gas pipeline in southern Burma.

In addition to compensating the villagers, most of whom are destitute and living in hiding from the Burmese regime, the settlement funds will also enable the plaintiffs to develop programs to improve living conditions, health care and education and protect the rights of people from the pipeline region. These initiatives will provide substantial assistance to people who suffered hardships in the region.

The settlement ends a series of cases filed by two groups of plaintiffs in both federal and California state court. These landmark cases, *Doe v. Unocal* and *Roe v. Unocal*, are now closed.

The *Roe* and *Doe* actions were litigated together by a team of lawyers that included Dan Stormer, Anne Richardson and Cornelia Dai of Hadsell & Stormer, Terry Collingsworth and Natacha Thys of the International Labor Rights Fund, Paul Hoffman of Schonbrun, De Simone, Seplow, Harris and Hoffman, Katie Redford, Tyler Giannini and Richard Herz of EarthRights International, The Law Offices of Judith Chomsky and Jennifer Green of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

The Legal Team has jointly issued the following statement:

The fifteen individuals who brought these cases suffered horribly at the hands of the Burmese military, with the complicity of Unocal. They risked their lives for the last eight years seeking justice through these suits. These villagers, ethnic minorities from a remote region, living under a brutal dictatorship, took on a major US multinational oil company in court - and won. We are thrilled for our clients and gratified that the settlement will provide funds benefitting other victims of the Yadana pipeline.

More generally, this is a historic victory for human rights and for the corporate accountability movement. Corporations can no longer fool themselves into thinking they can get away with human rights

violations. This case will reverberate in corporate boardrooms around the world and will have a deterrent effect on the worst forms of corporate behavior.

On behalf of the plaintiffs, we thank the many people and organizations working tirelessly to promote democracy in Burma. Our colleagues in the "Free Burma" movement have been instrumental in calling public attention to Unocal's complicity in the abuses suffered by so many in the pipeline region. We look forward to the day that freedom and democracy will come to Burma; a time when its citizens will live with hope rather than fear, under law rather than tyranny, and when the people of Burma will never again suffer egregious military abuses, whether in support of political repression or the corporate greed of companies like Unocal.

John Doe IX, a plaintiff who had done back-breaking forced labor in the mid 1990's, said, "I don't care about the money. Most of all I wanted the world to know what Unocal did. Now you know."

Louisa Benson, a California resident who served as a plaintiff representing the people of California, added "I am gratified for two reasons. First, there is now awareness that corporations need to be accountable for their partners' actions as well as their own. Second, many people have lost their lives on this project, but those that still remain can now begin to get their lives back together."

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