



# LAST MONTH IN BURMA

## News from and about Burma

AUGUST  
2010

### Dictatorship announces date for sham elections

The dictatorship announced in August that their sham elections will be held on 7 November. The Election Commission also set 30 August as the deadline for political parties to submit their list of candidates for the election.

On 19 August, the Election Commission issued further rules for election campaigning, including that candidates must apply for permission at least seven days in advance before making a public speech; candidates cannot give speeches or distribute materials that criticise the constitution, "tarnish" the image of the state or the military, or "harm security" and no chanting of slogans or flag carrying during rallies.

There were also reports in late August of a major reshuffle of senior military officers, including a reported 15 senior generals who resigned their military posts in order to stand in the election.

Following the reports of the military reshuffle, the US said it did not signify any meaningful change. US State Department spokesperson Philip Crowley said, "a dictator in civilian clothing is still a dictator. The fact that they are moving out of uniform but still constricting the political space within Burma is a problem for Burma, and we haven't changed our view. Just taking the current political challenge and civilianizing it is not the answer."

Burma Campaign UK has long been describing the regime's sham election process as a transition from a military to civilian dictatorship and is calling on the UN, EU and others to stop trying to reform the generals' roadmap and elections and instead focus on a UN-led dialogue between the regime, Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD, and genuine ethnic representatives.



### Opposition party leaders withdraw from election

Some of the opposition political parties that had decided to take part in the elections have expressed increasing frustration with the regime's restrictions.

The chairman of the Union Democratic Party (UDP), Phyo Min Thein, resigned in August, saying the elections would not be free and fair. Phyo Min Thein told The Irrawaddy, "I made this decision so that the international community will be aware of the real situation regarding the elections."

National Democratic Force (NDF) party leader Khin Maung Swe also announced that he is withdrawing from the election because of Election Commission restrictions.

### USA backs UN Burma Crimes Inquiry

On 17th August the USA became the fifth country to publicly support a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. The other countries are Australia, UK, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

However, the EU has so far remained silent on the March recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma that the UN establish an Inquiry. Some EU members which favour a softer line towards Burma's generals, such as Germany, Austria and Italy, as well as Commission officials, effectively play down the seriousness of human rights abuses in Burma by remaining silent about them.

To subscribe to Last Month in Burma, simply send a blank email to:  
[burmabriefing-subscribe@lists.burmacampaign.org.uk](mailto:burmabriefing-subscribe@lists.burmacampaign.org.uk)

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB), representing MPs from 15 European countries, has called on EU member states to officially support the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry on Burma.

“The ongoing atrocities in the country demonstrate the need and urgency for stronger action by the international community. Individual states and EU must take action and officially support a UN Commission of Inquiry which would be a crucial and effective preliminary step towards putting an end to the constant perpetration of grave abuses and crimes in Burma,” said Silver Meikar, executive member of EPCB.

### **Junta sets new deadlines for ethnic ceasefire groups to disarm**

The regime has issued new deadlines to Burma’s armed ethnic groups on ceasefire to disarm and join a Border Guard Force (BGF).

The United Wa State Army (UWSA), the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) have been told to join the BGF by the first week of September.

The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) has also been ordered to disarm by 1 September. According to Mizzima News, the deadline was delivered by Military Affairs Security chief Lieutenant General Ye Myint, who said that if the KIO failed to surrender its arms by the deadline, the ceasefire would end.

In preparation for its sham elections in November, the regime has been intensifying its pressure on ethnic ceasefire groups to transform their armies into Border Guard Forces under the control of the Burma Army.

The regime’s new constitution, which will come into force after the elections on 7 November, is designed to entrench military rule and does not provide any democratic or ethnic rights. During the drafting of the constitution, the regime rejected every proposal made by the ceasefire ethnic groups.

### **Barclays fined for breaking Burma sanctions**

Barclays Bank has agreed to pay a \$298m (£190m) fine for breaking US sanctions against several dictatorships, including Burma. The bank was charged with breaking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the Trading with the Enemy Act between 1995 and 2006. The countries involved were Burma, Cuba, Iran, Libya, and Sudan.

Campaigners, including Burma Campaign UK and

the TUC, urged Barclays to come clean and disclose in full all financial payments made involving Burma.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said, “It’s a disgrace that Barclays has been violating US sanctions and doing business in Burma. Foreign financial services are helping Burmese generals to loot the country’s natural wealth and to fund a military accused of committing horrendous crimes against humanity. Barclays must come completely clean on whether it has been a part of this, or no amount of London Cycle Hire schemes can save its reputation.”

### **Burmese Political Leader’s case taken to International Court**

The case of Ko Mya Aye, a leading pro-democracy leader serving a 65 year prison sentence in Burma, has been taken to court at the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention by the Burma Justice Committee.



The case is being pleaded by Sappho Dias and Adam Zellick, Chairman and Vice-chairman respectively of the Burma Justice Committee, which comprises some of the leading lawyers at the English Bar.

Ko Mya Aye is one of the leaders of 88 Generation Students Group, which led protests in 1988 and again in 2007. He is currently serving a 65 year jail term for his role in organising the democracy uprising in 2007. He is being denied medical treatment for a serious heart condition.

### **Junta denies medical care to political prisoners**

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) (AAPP), General Hso Ten was transferred to three different prisons in one week. General Hso Ten is a 74-year-old senior Shan ethnic politician and is currently serving a 106-year prison sentence. He suffers from heart problems, diabetes and has cataracts. He has become very weak due to the prison transfers but the authorities have denied him medical treatment and keep transferring him further and further away from his family.

“The total disregard for the health and well being of this elderly and well respected Shan leader is indicative of the regime’s total disregard for genuine national reconciliation with opposition and ethnic groups,” said Bo Kyi, Joint-Secretary of AAPP.

Another political prisoner, Myo Win Wai has a serious medical condition and needs to have surgery. He is serving a five year prison sentence because he volunteered for relief work with prominent comedian Zarganar after Cyclone Nargis hit in 2008. He has been waiting for one and half years to have surgery for severe haemorrhoids but the authorities have denied him treatment and moved him to a remote and difficult to reach prison in the northwest.

There are currently over 2,100 political prisoners in Burma and more than 138 political prisoners are in need of urgent medical care, including U Tin Yu, Ko Mya Aye and U Khin Maung Cho. The dictatorship continues to deny medical assess to many political prisoners and moves them to remote prisons where families and friends cannot travel easily.

### **Aid visas stopped**

The regime has announced a halt to Nargis-related visas for humanitarian relief workers.

On 16 August, the Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR) told international NGOs and UN agencies that no Nargis-related visas would be extended, and no new visas would be granted because the post-Nargis Delta recovery would be "mainstreamed into development activities" and coordination for Nargis activities would go to different Ministries.

However, recent assessments conducted in the delta concluded that some areas of Labutta and Bogale are still in an emergency state, more than two years after Cyclone Nargis hit in May 2008.

There have also been reports that visas on arrival for tourists will be stopped from 1 September.

### **New publications: Burma Briefing**

Burma Campaign UK has launched a new publication - Burma Briefing, which provides comment, briefing and analysis on Burma issues.

The following were published in August:

#### **Burma's transition to civilian dictatorship**

Burma Briefing No. 1

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/burma-briefing/title/burmas-transition-to-civilian-dictatorship>

#### **The United Nations General Assembly & Burma**

Burma Briefing No. 2

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/burma-briefing/title/the-united-nations-general-assembly-burma>

#### **Burma's nuclear programme could be bad news for human rights**

Burma Briefing No. 3

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/burma-briefing/title/burmas-nuclear-programme-could-be-bad-news-for-human-rights>

To receive Burma Briefing directly, send a blank email to:  
[burmabriefing-subscribe@lists.burmacampaign.org.uk](mailto:burmabriefing-subscribe@lists.burmacampaign.org.uk)

**Published by The Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT  
[www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk) tel: 020 7324 4710 fax: +44 20 7324 4717**



**for Human Rights, Democracy  
& Development in Burma**