

Increased Burma Army attacks target civilians

The Burmese Army have been increasing attacks against ethnic Karen civilians in Eastern Burma. On 23rd July Burma Army soldiers attacked Tha Dah Der village in Mutraw District, Karen State, burning 50 homes, a school and a church. Approximately 540 people from this and neighbouring villages fled into hiding in the jungle. Burma Army troops, along with troops from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), which is allied to the dictatorship, have stepped up a new attack so that hundreds more Karen civilians are fleeing to the Thailand border.

Earlier in the year, on 22nd March, a 5 month old baby boy, a 5 year old girl, and a 37 year old woman were killed in an attack by the Burmese Army on Khaw Hta village in Karen State, Eastern Burma.



This family was forced to flee a mortar bomb attack on their village in February 2010.

During a debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict at the UN Security Council on 7th July 2010, Philip Parham, Deputy Permanent Representative of the UK said, "The Burmese military regime continues to target civilians, particularly people from ethnic minorities. The use of rape and other forms of sexual violence remain a serious concern, as do the use of child soldiers and forced labour for military use."

Burma Campaign UK welcomed the British government bringing up Burma in the debate, and focussing on the situation of ethnic minorities, which rarely gets attention from the international community. However, although what Philip Parham described to the council are war crimes and crimes against humanity, he failed to describe them as such.

USDA transfers assets to USDP

On 6th July, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) was given permission to dissolve and transfer its assets and offices to the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). The USDP is the new regime-backed political party, which was formed by Prime Minister Thein Sein and 26 senior military officers and ministers on 29 April, when they all resigned their military commissions in order to contest elections in 2010. Under the regime's election laws government officials are not allowed to form political parties, but this and other election laws are not applied to the USDP.

The dictatorship created the USDA in 1993 and its patron was Senior General Than Shwe. Most

government personnel and students are forced to become members of the USDA, which claims to have 24 million members nationwide. It was the USDA which attacked Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy on 30th May 2003, in a failed attempt by the regime to assassinate her. Aung San Suu Kyi survived, but dozens of her supporters were beaten to death by USDA thugs.

US extends Burma sanctions

The US Senate and House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to extend sanctions on Burma.

President Barack Obama signed the extension into law on 27 July. Measures in the Burmese Freedom

and Democracy Act include import restrictions, a ban on loan and assistance from international financial institutions, freezing assets of the junta and their families and a visa ban.

Than Shwe given red-carpet welcome during visit to India

On 25 July, Indian officials welcomed Burma's dictator Senior General Than Shwe on a five-day visit aimed at strengthening diplomatic, military and economic ties. The two countries signed agreements on security cooperation, economic and bilateral trade deals and energy investment.

The visit was criticized by human rights organizations. In an open letter to Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), representing 164 organisations across the world, said "Considering the dismal human rights record of Burma, high-level visits between Burma and India that focus primarily on military and economic cooperation send the wrong message and serve to perpetuate the military dictatorship in Burma ... the Government of India should convey clearly and publicly to Burma's military leaders that there is an urgent need for genuine democratic reform."

North Korean Foreign Minister visits Burma

North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun visited Burma on July 29th for a 4-day visit, the highest level delegation visit to Burma since 2007, when the two countries restored diplomatic relations.

There are growing concerns that North Korea is providing the nuclear technologies to Burma. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "We continue to be concerned by the reports that Burma may be seeking assistance from North Korea with regard to a nuclear program. We will be discussing further ways in which we can cooperate to alter the actions of the government in Burma and encourage the leaders there to commit to reform and change and the betterment of their own people."

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