



LAST MONTH IN BURMA

News from and about Burma

JUNE
2010

Words must be turned into action for Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi spent her 65th birthday in detention on 19 June. She has spent almost 15 years in detention since 1989. Demonstrations, concerts, performances, conferences, seminars, protests and numerous other events were held around the world to mark her birthday.

The United Nations has repeatedly ruled that her detention breaks international law. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued its latest judgment in February this year stating that Aung San Suu Kyi's detention is illegal and in violation of international law.

World leaders, including British Prime Minister David Cameron, US President Barak Obama and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, issued statements of support.

David Cameron said "Like my predecessor, I personally have long found your example deeply inspiring. I want to assure you that as Prime Minister, I will maintain a close interest in Burma. The British Government I lead will do all it can, both internationally, working through the United Nations, and bilaterally, to bring a brighter future for Burma and your people, in which they enjoy full human rights and true democracy."

On 17th June The Elders, which includes former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, called on the international community to support a UN led dialogue initiative for national reconciliation in Burma.

"We now need action as well as words," said Zoya Phan, International Coordinator at Burma Campaign UK. "Everyone knows the fake elections due in Burma will not bring real change. We cannot have a situation where Ban Ki-moon ignores member states and sits back hoping for change. While Ban Ki-moon dithers, more prisoners are tortured, more women are raped, more villages burned, and more children die from hunger and disease because the generals spent the money on guns and luxury homes."

UN must act on G8 call for Burma dictatorship to enter into dialogue

World leaders at the G8 summit have urged Burma's dictatorship to enter into 'substantive dialogue' with Burma's democracy movement, including ethnic groups. By calling for 'substantive dialogue' the G8 is recognising that elections due later this year will not solve the problems in Burma.

The call by the G8 for dialogue echoes similar statements already made by the United Nations Security Council, United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Human Rights Council, EU, ASEAN and USA. It will increase pressure on the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who is failing to act

on a mandate to persuade the dictatorship to enter into such dialogue.

The fact that the statement specifically calls on the 'Government' to enter into dialogue, rather than calling on 'all sides', as statements by the UN and some governments often do, is also welcome, as it is solely the dictatorship which refuses to enter into dialogue, not the National League for Democracy and ethnic groups.

The full G8 wording on Burma:
We urge the Government of Myanmar to take the steps necessary to allow for free and fair elections. Full and inclusive democratic participation is



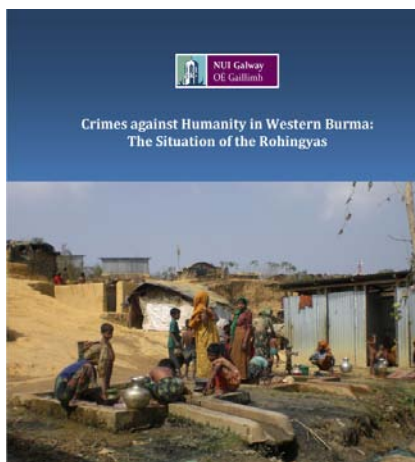
Celebration of Aung San Suu Kyi's 65th birthday in Rangoon, organized by NLD's Central Women's Wing. Over 1,000 people attended.

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essential to this. We urge the Government to release without delay all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and engage the democratic opposition and representatives of ethnic groups in a substantive dialogue on the way forward to national reconciliation.

New report on crimes against humanity against Rohingyas strengthens case for UN Inquiry

A new hard-hitting report, published by the Irish Centre for Human Rights, exposes how the Rohingya ethnic minority in Burma are subject to a range of human rights abuses which constitute, or may constitute, crimes against humanity.



The report was supervised by Prof Schabas, an expert on international human rights law, who served as one of the seven commissioners on the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The report states that; “there is a reliable body of evidence pointing to acts constituting a widespread or systematic attack against the Rohingya civilian population....These appear to satisfy the requirements under international criminal law for the perpetration of crimes against humanity.”

The report recommends that the United Nations Security Council establish a commission of inquiry into the crimes exposed in the report, and into potential crimes being committed in other parts of Burma. It also calls on the International Labour Organisation to reconsider referring Burma to the International Court of Justice unless there are “swift satisfactory changes.”

In March this year the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma also called for a UN commission of inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. So far Australia, UK, Czech Republic, and Slovakia have publicly stated that they support a UN commission of inquiry. On 17th June The Elders joined international calls for

the establishment of such an inquiry.

The report, Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The Situation of the Rohingyas, can be viewed at: http://www.nuigalway.ie/human_rights/projects/burma.html

Slovakia backs UN Commission of Inquiry

Slovakia has become the 4th country to support the call for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. Slovakia declared its support during the 14th session of UN Human Right Council in Geneva in June 8, 2010. Australia, Czech Republic and United Kingdom have already announced their support for a Commission of Inquiry.

Rosha Fedor, the Slovak representative, said “the first national elections in Myanmar could have served as a window to national reconciliation, respect for human rights, and democracy, but on the contrary, the new electoral fell far below international standards, seriously undermined the right of expression, assembly and association, and discriminated on the basis of political opinions. Slovakia supported the establishment of an inquiry into past gross and systematic human rights violations in the country.”

Burma’s nuclear programme

A new documentary by Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), and broadcast on Al Jazeera, has uncovered evidence that Burma is developing a programme to build nuclear weapons.

There have been allegations about a secret nuclear program for many years, but the latest reports are backed by documentation and photographs supplied by Burmese army defector Maj Sai Thein Win (pictured).



Nuclear scientist Robert Kelley, a former director in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said he spent months examining the material and concluded that the projects outlined in the material are “useful only for weapons.” The documentary also alleged that the dictatorship is working with North Korea to help develop the nuclear programme and that while Burma’s generals may be a long way from being able to develop nuclear weapons, the intent is clearly there.

ILO: no progress on forced labour by military

In a statement released at the International Labour Conference, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) committee on Burma said that the steps that Burma had taken to end forced labour were “totally inadequate”. The Committee said that none of the three specific recommendations from the ILO’s Commission of Inquiry had been implemented.

Speaking to AFP, Steve Marshall, ILO liaison officer in Burma, said, “there is no evidence of any change in attitude to the use of forced labour by the military.”

Election campaigning laws published

The dictatorship’s Election Commission has published new campaigning laws for political parties taking part in the elections in Burma later this year. The laws, announced in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper, place severe restrictions on the ability of political parties to campaign. Parties will have to give a week’s notice before holding public speeches and are banned from chanting slogans and waving flags. Parties are banned from giving talks or publishing material “that can spark disputes on racial affairs or religious affairs or individuals or others, and that can harm dignity and morality”.

Parties are also banned from criticising the constitution and existing laws: among the list of prohibitions is “failure to respect the constitution of the Union of Myanmar and existing laws.” The new constitution does not bring in any new freedoms or protect human rights and is designed to maintain dictatorship under a civilian guise.

The US State Department has recently said that it believes “elections planned for this year in Burma will not be free or fair and will lack international legitimacy.”

Burma: the ‘Worst of the Worst’ for human rights violations

Burma tops the world’s worst human rights violators, according to a report by human rights watchdog Freedom House.

The report lists the world’s most repressive regimes and human rights violators. The report gives each country a score from 1 to 7 where 1 represents the freest and 7 represents the least free. Burma received the lowest possible score of 7, for countries that have no freedom and rights in both political and civil liberties.

According to the report, the citizens of those countries live in extremely oppressive environments, persistent human rights violations, including forced relocation or displacement and very few or no basic rights.

Military deployment increases Arakan land confiscation

In Arakan State, Western Burma, land confiscation has dramatically increased as a result of increased military troops in the area. The number of infantry battalions has increased from 3 to 43 since 1988, according to a report by the All Arakan Students and Youth Congress (AASYC).

The Burmese dictatorship has increased the number of troops to provide more security to foreign investment projects such as the Shwe Gas project and Hydropower projects.

“The military government wants to develop more projects in Arakan State at an increased rate, and they don’t care about the human rights of the local people,” said Aung Marn Oo of the AASYC. “More and more troops will be deployed in the future, and we are going to see increased land confiscation, forced labour and human rights abuses against the local people.”



Villagers forced to build roads in Arakan State

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**for Human Rights, Democracy
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