



# LAST MONTH IN BURMA

## News from and about Burma

NOV  
2009

### UK MPs call for investigation into crimes against humanity in Burma

High profile MPs from across all parties in the UK have called for an investigation into crimes being committed by the military regime in Burma by supporting a new Early Day Motion on Burma tabled by members of All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma (APPG Burma).

The MPs are concerned about widespread and systematic human rights abuses, including torture, forced displacement, sexual violence, extra-judicial killings and forced labour being perpetrated against the people of Burma by the military dictatorship. The Motion calls upon the British Government to urge the United Nations to establish a Commission of Inquiry into these crimes and to support the International Labour Organization referring the dictatorship's use of forced labour to the International Court of Justice.

### US delegation visits Burma

In November, two senior US diplomats, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific and Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs Scot Marciel, conducted a two-day visit to Burma.

They met numerous regime officials, as well as meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD representatives. However, they were not allowed to meet regime leader Than Shwe.

Following the visit, Scot Marciel said that elections in Burma could not be regarded as free and fair if Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD were not allowed to participate. He also said that the US would not lift its sanctions on the regime unless the regime makes concrete progress toward democratic reform.

### ILO threatens legal action over forced labour

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has criticised Burma for failing to abolish forced labour and for imprisoning victims of forced labour who have made complaints.

The Governing Body of the International Labour Organization adopted a resolution on 19 November stating that it is "deeply concerned about the continued imprisonment of a number of persons who have complained of being subjected to forced labour or who have been associated with such complaints." It went on to say that if the situation is not promptly remedied, it will "examine potential legal implications of the failure to comply."

### Burma 3rd most corrupt country in the world

The corruption watchdog, Transparency International, in its 2009 report, Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), ranked Burma as the third most corrupt country in the world. The report also placed Burma at the bottom of the list as South East Asia's most corrupt country. According to the report, the five most corrupt countries are Somalia, Afghanistan, Burma, Sudan and Iraq.

In another of Transparency International's reports, Global Corruption Report 2009, that ranks countries on factors such as bribery and police corruption, corporate fraud, cartels, corruption in supply chains and transnational transactions, places Burma second to last.

### Than Shwe visits Sri Lanka

Burma is developing increasingly close ties with Sri Lanka. Than Shwe, received a red carpet reception during a four-day state visit to Sri Lanka in November.



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In June 2009, Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, visited Burma to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

### **'Burma VJ' short-listed for Oscar**

The award-winning documentary 'Burma VJ' has been placed on the Oscar short-list for best feature-documentary.

'Burma VJ' is one of 15 documentaries on the list and the final short-list of five finalists will be announced in February 2010. The film has already won 33 awards, including the Sundance Film Festival and the Berlin Film Festival.

'Burma VJ' tells the remarkable story of the brave young video journalists from the Democratic Voice of Burma who, using hidden cameras, put their lives on the line to tell the real story of the 2007 uprising in Burma and the subsequent crackdown by the ruling military regime. Several of the video journalists were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Many others are in hiding.



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