

Free Aung San Suu Kyi

On 19 June, Aung San Suu Kyi spent her 63rd birthday under house arrest. She has now spent more than 12 years under house arrest, banned from seeing family or friends and her phone line cut and post intercepted. There have been growing concerns about her health as she has not been allowed regular visits by her doctor. Her doctor was finally allowed to visit her after the cyclone, his first visit in four months, and NLD officials reported that she was in good health.

Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday was marked by events around the world and renewed calls for her release, including an appeal by Foreign Ministers of the G8 at their meeting in Japan in June. In Rangoon, about 700 National League for Democracy (NLD) members and supporters gathered at the party headquarters and released 63 doves. The event was disrupted by regime-backed thugs, who assaulted and beat several participants and arrested NLD members.



In the UK, Burma Campaign UK organised a delegation of six young women from Burma to meet Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The delegation was made up of young women from five of Burma's main ethnic nationalities, Burman, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, and Chin, demonstrating the unity of the people of Burma in their struggle against dictatorship. The delegation called for more pressure to be placed on the regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners. They also called for stronger targeted sanctions from the European Union, and a global arms embargo. Gordon Brown agreed that the international community should do more to address the problems in Burma and promised he would continue to push for more action on Burma.

Cyclone update

Even one month after the cyclone, there are still areas that have not received any aid and there are widespread food shortages, with many families struggling to find enough to eat. Preliminary findings from the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment team, led by the UN, reveal that 42% of food stocks were destroyed during the cyclone and that almost a third of households in the Irrawaddy delta have no food stocks and a further fifth have only one day's supply of food. 60% of households lack adequate access to clean water.

When UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon visited Burma in late May, he said that the emergency relief operation would need to last at least six months. But despite this, the regime ordered refugees from the cyclone to leave camps in Irrawaddy and Rangoon divisions and return to their devastated villages. In an interview with Mizzima News, an aid worker who had just returned from Kun Chan Kone Township

in Rangoon division said, "I saw refugees from two schools and a monastery in Kun Chan Kone leaving for their villages. Those who did not want to leave were being forcibly removed to an open field."

Meanwhile, the Democratic Voice of Burma reports that the regime has been seizing thousands of acres of land from farmers. In Bogalay, farmers had already received farming equipment and seeds bought on credit from the regime before their land was seized. "Now we have a debt of about 1.5 million kyat each and we have to repay it within three years," the farmer told DVB. "And now we have tillers but no farmland to use them on, but we can't return them to the agricultural department and we can't sell them."

The regime is also maintaining tight restrictions on cyclone survivors and stopping those trying to seek refuge in Thailand. The authorities have been sending anyone found bearing documents

identifying them as residents of the cyclone-afflicted region back to their towns or villages. Monasteries in the town of Myawaddy on the Thai border have been warned to refuse shelter to anyone from the cyclone-devastated region. On 2 June the Burmese navy arrested 65 people, including 15 children and 20 women, trying to flee the cyclone-hit Bogalay township by boat and take refuge in the refugee camps on the Thai Burma border.

The regime continues to harass and arrest private donors who have been organizing and distributing aid to cyclone victims and people who speak out about the cyclone and the relief effort. On 10 June 16 cyclone survivors were arrested outside the UN Development Programme (UNDP) office in Rangoon after approaching the UNDP to ask for help. Zargana, one of Burma's most popular comedians, was arrested on 4 June after he spoke publicly about shortcomings in the regime's aid efforts and the slow response by United Nations agencies. Zargana had organised a network of more than 400 volunteers to distribute urgently needed food aid to villagers affected by the cyclone. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported that ten private donors have been arrested since the beginning of June. The Burmese authorities detained three senior members of the pro-democracy group 88 Generation Students who formed a team to distribute aid to cyclone survivors.

The Ethnic Community Development Forum and other Burmese groups have issued a statement expressing concern that the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) may view the current humanitarian crisis as an opportunity to increase engagement with the military regime. They have urged the World Bank and ADB to focus only on facilitating relief efforts and to include community-based organisations advocating real political reform in any decision-making process regarding their activities in Burma. The World Bank has donated US\$850,000 to ASEAN for disaster assessment and recovery activities in the wake of the cyclone.

Security Council adopts resolution condemning sexual violence

On 19 June, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1820 condemning the use of sexual violence in conflict, noting that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and calling for an end to the impunity for such acts. Rape has been used for decades as a weapon in the Burmese military regime's war against ethnic nationalities. SPDC soldiers use women in conflict areas as porters to carry their military equipment and supplies during the day, and use them as sex slaves at night.

Many women, and their family members, have been brutally killed to eliminate evidence of these crimes. The Women's League of Burma (WLB) welcomed the resolution and called on the Security Council to refer Sr Gen Than Shwe to the International Criminal Court under the new resolution.

Human Rights Council adopts Burma resolution

On 18 June, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution condemning the SPDC's "ongoing systematic violations of human rights." The resolution expressed concern that the regime has not heeded previous council resolutions as well as UN Security Council Presidential Statements, criticised the intimidation surrounding the constitutional referendum and the disregard for international standards of free and fair elections and called on the junta to engage in a real process of dialogue and national reconciliation. The resolution also called on the SPDC to honor its promise to allow relief workers "immediate, full and unhindered access" to cyclone-affected communities and to stop sending cyclone survivors back to areas where they would not have access to emergency relief.

1000 flee military offensive in Karen State

Despite the start of the rainy season, the regime continued its military offensive in Eastern Burma. On 4 June, SPDC Army troops from Infantry Battalion 240 attacked Te Mu Der village in Papun District, Karen State. Soldiers burned rice stores, destroyed homes, farms, and damaged a church. Over 1,000 people from Te Mu Der and the nearby villages fled to the jungle.



Amnesty International report 'crimes against humanity' in Karen State

A new report by Amnesty International describes the ongoing violations against civilians in Eastern Burma as crimes against humanity. The report says that nearly 150,000 people have been internally displaced in Kayin State and the eastern Bago Division. Many have also been subjected to unlawful killings; enforced disappearances; forced labour, as well as the destruction of villages, crops and food-stocks and other forms of collective punishment. Amnesty International says that it is concerned that the violations are the result of official State Peace and Development Council and Tatmadaw (Burma Army) policy. Amnesty has called for an immediate halt to all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and for UN Security Council to impose an arms embargo on Burma.

Burmese defector describes atrocity

In an interview with Voice of America, regime defector Aung Lin Htut described how junta leader Than Shwe ordered the murder of unarmed villagers and Thai fishermen. Aung Lin Htut, a senior diplomat and military intelligence officer, defected to the US in 2005. He used to be stationed on Zadetkyi Island, a military base close to the Thai border. In the interview, Aung Lin Htut described how 81 people, including women and children, were shot and buried on the island in 1998. He said "I was a witness to the two incidents in which a total of about 81 people were killed. All of them were unarmed civilians." He described how one general hesitated to kill the civilians, fearing the commander who had given the order was drunk, but was told the instruction came from "Aba Gyi" - the term used to refer to General Than Shwe.

ASEAN can impose sanctions

Malaysia's Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has said that ASEAN can impose sanctions on members that breach its new charter. "The charter does not provide for specific sanctions for charter breaches or noncompliance. But this does not mean that there will be none," he said. The comment has been seen as a sign of ASEAN's growing impatience with Burma over its failure to make any progress towards democracy. ASEAN is hoping to ratify the charter, which includes human rights standards, by the end of the year. While the charter does not mention the issue of sanctions, it says that any violations would be referred to ASEAN heads of state.

Political prisoners need urgent medical attention

Two political prisoners, Myo Yan Naung Thein and U Ohn Than, are suffering serious medical problems in the prison. Myo Yan Naung Thein, who is a member of the '88 Generation student group which played a leading role in last year's protests, was arrested in December last year. He was severely beaten around the head and abdomen during interrogation. His injuries led to partial paralysis and he can no longer walk unaided. When he requested to see a neurologist, he was punished by being placed in solitary confinement. The authorities are still refusing to let him see a neurologist.

U Ohn Than, who is serving life imprisonment for his solo protest in front of the US Embassy, is suffering from cerebral malaria, which is said to be at an advanced stage. If the disease is left untreated, it is almost always fatal. Initially he was held in Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison. Later he was moved to north-west Burma where malaria is very common.

Monastery closed down without warning

Government authorities closed down the Sasana Theikpan monastery in Rangoon without advance notice according to Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB). The authorities arrived and ordered the four resident monks to leave the premises immediately. There used to be nine resident monks, but five of them are already in prison.

Burmese Monks call on EU to bring Than Shwe to ICC

Burmese activist monks are urging the Council of the European Union to back a call to bring Burma's dictator Senior General Than Shwe to be tried in the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. "The Burmese military junta has used the devastated situation of the people of Burma after the attack of Cyclone Nargis to consolidate its grip on power, and to exploit the generosity of the international community for its own benefit," said the All Burma Monks' Alliance.

EU-US Summit Declaration

During the EU-US Summit in Slovenia on 10 June, leaders of the European Union and the USA expressed concern for the situation in Burma in their summit declaration. They expressed concern for the victims of Cyclone Nargis and called on the Burmese authorities to meet their commitments to grant access to foreign aid workers to the cyclone affected areas. The statement continued: "[we remain] deeply concerned at continued repression in Burma/Myanmar as well as the lack of progress toward national reconciliation and a credible transition to legitimate civilian government. We reiterate our support to the Good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary General, and will continue to pressure the Burmese authorities; including implementing targeted sanctions, to embark on an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders in the country, including Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic and ethnic minority representatives."

Natural gas tops Burma exports in 2007-08

Natural gas topped Burma's exports during 2007-08 financial year, reaching US \$2.594 billion, according to official statistics. Natural gas exports were up 27.7 percent from 2006-07's 2.03 billion dollars, representing 42.9 percent of the total exports during 2007-08.

The New Dirty List

In June the Burma Campaign UK launched the new Dirty List, exposing more companies that directly or indirectly fund Burma's brutal regime. 50 new companies have been added to the 'Dirty List'. Major companies named and shamed include, BBC Worldwide, Toyota, Qantas, TOTAL Oil, Orient

Express, Kuoni, Schlumberger, Lonely Planet, Daewoo, China National Offshore Oil Corp and Hutchison Whampoa, owner of 3 Mobile. The new companies added to the list are the result of new information and an influx of new investment in Burma's gas sector.

30 companies on the list are in the tourism sector – either operating tours to Burma or promoting tourism through guides. 33 companies on the list are in the oil & gas sector. Since the Dirty List was first published six years ago over 100 companies have withdrawn from Burma including PwC, Rolls Royce, DHL, Swiss Re and Willis.

'The Real Disaster in Burma'



In the wake of the devastating cyclone that hit Burma on 2 May, Burma Campaign launched a powerful new video and poster campaign to highlight the ongoing disaster in Burma – the military dictatorship. The animated film 'The Real Disaster' was created by Ogilvy Advertising and is narrated by top comedian Ricky Gervais. It tells the story of a little girl called Khin Mar, who survived Cyclone Nargis but whose village is later destroyed by the military dictatorship. The message is 'The real disaster in Burma is the government'.

As well as an online viral campaign, an advertising van displaying the poster toured London, stopping off at the Burmese Embassy and outside the Houses of Parliament, and the video was projected onto Waterloo Station. Watch the video here: <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/therealdisaster.html>

European MPs Form New Parliamentary Caucus On Burma

MPs from 7 European countries launched a new Parliamentary caucus on Burma in June, to coincide with the 63rd birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi on 19 June. The caucus aims to raise awareness of Burma in Europe and pressure European governments to do more to bring about democratic transition in Burma. John Bercow, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary group for Democracy in

Burma in the British Parliament and member of the new caucus said: "We are creating this European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma because it will enable parliamentarians from across Europe to share information and to lobby together for more effective measures to bring the regime to heel and to speed up the progress to democracy for the long suffering people of Burma."

India provides Burma millions in loans and credit

India has signed three new major economic cooperation agreements with Burma worth millions of dollars. India agreed to provide Burma with US\$84 million in loans and credits to build power transmission lines and an aluminum plant. The two countries also signed an agreement to facilitate banking.

Relations between Burma and India have been growing in recent years. India is Burma's 4th largest trading partner after Thailand, China and Singapore and also Burma's second largest export market after Thailand, receiving 25 percent of its total exports. According to regime figures, India's contracted investment in Burma reached US \$219.57 million as of January 2008.

Democracy campaigner wins Anna Lindh prize

Democracy activist Khin Ohmar won this year's Anna Lindh Memorial prize for her tireless campaigning to bring democracy to Burma. Khin Ohmar was a student activist in the 1988 uprising, after which she had to flee to Thailand. She is a leading figure in the democracy movement and coordinates the Burma Partnership network, a network of democracy organisations and activists in the Asia Pacific region. The Anna Lindh prize was established in memory of Anna Lindh, the Swedish foreign minister who was stabbed to death in 2003. It supports those fighting prejudice and oppression.

New hydropower dam for Burma's capital to displace thousands

Over 3,500 people, including many ethnic Kayan, will be displaced by a new dam being built in the Pyinmana Hills that will provide power to Burma's military leaders.

A new report, "Drowning the Green Ghosts of Kayanland" by the Kayan Women's Union, reveals how the Upper Paunglaung Dam, being built with Chinese investment, and due for completion in December 2009, will flood a fertile valley 26 miles east of Burma's new capital Naypyidaw. Burma Army troops deployment to provide security for the dam construction has caused increased forced labour and other abuses for local villagers.

**Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy
Open Letter to Aung San Suu Kyi, June 19,**

Dear Aung San Suu Kyi,

We wish to use this opportunity, on the occasion of your birthday, to reaffirm our commitment to your lifelong struggle to achieve democracy and humanity in Burma. You have sacrificed your freedom for the freedom of others. You have shown exceptional courage and dedication to your people.

Your release from house arrest and your freedom to participate in Burma's political future remain essential. We believe the recent referendum lacks credibility as a genuine reflection of the people's will and the new constitution cannot provide a sound basis for Burma's future political development. We call on the Government of Burma to set in motion, without delay, a fully inclusive political process which involves representatives of the full range of civil opposition and ethnic groups.

We welcome your readiness to have a genuine and meaningful dialogue with the military leadership to find a way out of the current stalemate. We are convinced that this voice of humanity and reason will be heard, as people must now realize that bold initiatives and compromises are required and that the present situation is neither satisfactory nor sustainable.

We are very concerned by the humanitarian situation following Cyclone Nargis, and greatly saddened that Burma's people, already deprived of basic human freedoms and economic opportunities, have fallen victim to such a major natural disaster. We were further deeply saddened that offers of international aid were not taken up at a sufficient scale at the outset, but we are pleased that ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Secretary General were able to initiate a response, and that Ban Ki-Moon has given his personal support to the process. The work of the regional and international aid agencies has been encouraging, however more needs to be done to ensure aid reaches all the people in acute need and to prevent further suffering and loss of life. The UK and France have immediately committed themselves to helping the relief effort and will support the ASEAN mechanism for longer term reconstruction. The success of the international effort will rely on the actions and conditions set by the Government of Burma.

We admire your strength in reconciling the hopes of Burma's many groups and dedication to the country's national integrity. We will not forget you or your people in this struggle.

Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy

**National League for Democracy Statement
10 June 2008**

1. In accordance with the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law and the authorities' promises after the 1990 General Election in Burma, "the Union of Myanmar Draft Constitution," for which a referendum was conducted in Burma on 10 and 24 May 2008, was drafted illegally. As per the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law, the Members of Parliament elected in the 1990 General Election by the people of Burma were legally responsible for drafting the constitution. Instead, "the Union of Myanmar Draft Constitution" was written solely by handpicked representatives and associates of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Officially and legally elected Members of Parliament, let alone citizens, were prohibited from reviewing or discussing the content of this constitution. The drafting process did not provide any opportunities for political parties, ethnic nationality groups, or democratic organizations to review or critique the constitution.

2. The above mentioned facts directly contradict the following laws and statements issued by the authorities:

a) Section 3 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law, issued with the Law Number 14/89 by the authorities on 31 May 1989, states that: "Hluttaw [Assembly] must be formed with the Hluttaw representatives who have been elected."

b) Paragraph 12 of Statement 1/90, issued by the authorities on 27 July 1990, states that: "Section 3 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law requires Hluttaw to be formed with the elected representatives of the Hluttaw from the respective constituencies. According to this provision, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) will be held responsible for convening the Hluttaw."

c) Paragraph 20 of Statement 1/90, issued by the authorities on 27 July 1990, states that: "under the present circumstances, the representatives elected by the people are those who have the responsibility to draft the constitution for the future democratic state."

3. Prior to the referendum, the draft constitution's content was not explained to or discussed with voters through State media sources, such as the daily newspaper or radio and television programming. The draft constitution was not for sale or available for people to read and study it throughout many State and Division townships.

The draft constitution was issued without collecting or incorporating people's recommendations and requests and solely for approval. More importantly, the authorities held the referendum one month after releasing the draft constitution, which provided an extremely short timeframe for people to study the entire constitution. Authorities systematically managed this process so that they could gain support for the draft constitution through injustice force.

4. During the fourteen (14) year National Convention period, the Chairman of the Working Committee of the National Convention determined and detailed the principles for the constitution. This same person then became the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee and drafted the constitution based on the principles he established. This same person then became the Chairman of the Referendum Convening Commission, allowing him to commit unjust and biased acts. Other members of the Referendum Convening Commission had also participated in the National Convention or in the constitution drafting. This process was not fair or acceptable for the people. The Referendum Convening Commission was not an independent organization but instead was completely influenced by the SPDC.

5. Authorities violated their own Referendum Law and Technical Law by using blackmail, threats, cheating, misinformation, coercion, and persuasion to obtain votes supporting the constitution. Authorities also disregarded the principle rule of a referendum: a secret voting system. According to reports and documents submitted to the headquarters by State, Division, Township, and Ward/Village Organizational Committees, important facts are as follows:

a) Authorities at all administrative levels as well as their supporting organizations had the right to organize people and propagate information freely. However, NLD members were restricted and harassed. NLD pamphlets and statements were seized, and NLD members were interrogated, threatened, and arrested using Law Number 5/96 and Referendum Law.

b) Advanced voting ballots were distributed by each polling station, and the results were fixed and controlled to secure supporting votes. Advanced voting ballots were collected from civil servants, workers, civilians and Cyclone Nargis victims, which violated the provision in the Referendum Law that only granted advanced voting privileges to people who had to travel, were sick, were disabled, or were elderly.

c) People who wanted to vote against the constitution faced many threats from authorities including but not limited to: a three year prison sentence and a 300,000 kyat fine, trial, confiscation of their farms and their businesses, being fired from their jobs, being expelled from school, and being required to report how other people voted.

d) Police officers in uniform and members of organizations supported by authorities were present at various polling stations.

e) Police officers permitted voters who wanted to cast "Yes" votes and prevented voting by people who wanted to cast "No" votes.

f) Voters were forced to vote using pre-marked "Yes" ballots.

g) One family/household member was required to cast votes on behalf of the entire family/household.

h) One person representing the authorities cast votes on behalf of a large group of people formed by the authorities.

i) Polling station and Referendum Commission staff cast "Yes" votes for some voters.

j) Commission members cast additional "Yes" votes in the ballot boxes.

k) Some polling stations closed early and prior to 4:00pm, which was prohibited by the Referendum Law.

l) The people were prevented from seeing the counting of "Yes" votes, "No" votes, and invalid votes at all levels of the commissions.

m) At some polling stations, "No" votes were burned or destroyed

6. Section 23 of Chapter 9 of the Referendum Law states that: "after the Referendum, the Commission must announce the Referendum result by combining and accounting for votes by all eligible votes at all locations." However, the Referendum Commission declared the result on 15 May 2008 by issuing Statement Number 10/2008, which stated that: "The result of the previous referendum was 92.4 percent supportive votes." This statement disregarded the Referendum Law, as it was announced before the referendum was held for the people living in the forty-seven (47) Townships affected by Cyclone Nargis.

7. The record and list of eligible voters was collected before Cyclone Nargis. However, that list was no longer valid after the storm devastated the seven (7) Irrawaddy Division Townships on 2 and 3 May 2008 and left thousands of people dead and missing. The Cyclone also destroyed many national identity cards. The authorities did not revise their list of eligible voters; thus, the “Yes” votes in Irrawaddy Division cannot be vindicated.

8. The referendum does not represent the real will of the people, as it was neither free nor fair. A constitution is a contract between the ruler and the ruled. In this respect, because the referendum is not representative of the people’s free will, its results are automatically nullified according to international law and standards. A contract cannot be ratified based on unlawful acts.

9. The Referendum Convening Commission issued Statement 12/2008 on 26 May 2008 and declared the referendum’s result approving ‘the Union of Myanmar Draft Constitution.’ The State Peace and Development Council issued Statement 7/2008 on 29 May 2008 declaring that ‘the Union of Myanmar Constitution’ was approved. However, these declarations were not legal or lawful, as the referendum violated provisions in the above mentioned laws and statements. The National League for Democracy, mandated by the people during the free and fair 1990 General Election in accordance with the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law, does not accept ‘the Union of Myanmar Constitution.’

As per the decision in the meeting of the Central Executive Committee held on 6 June 2008.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy
Yangon

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**CAMPAIGNING
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA**