

Aung San Suu Kyi's trial continues

The regime's trial of Aung San Suu Kyi continued throughout June amid international outrage at her continued detention.

Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested on 14 May and charged with breaking the terms of her house arrest, which forbids visitors, after John Yettaw, a United States citizen, swam across Inya Lake and refused to leave her house. Her trial began on 18th May and is being held in closed-door hearings in Insein Prison. Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers appealed for more of her defence witnesses to be allowed to testify but the regime rejected all but one further witness. The trial has been adjourned until 24 July. The regime appears to be delaying the verdict in an effort to dissipate international anger.

Aung San Suu Kyi's trial has provoked a global outcry. World leaders, including Prime Minister Gordon Brown, President Obama and the UN Secretary General have all condemned the actions of the Burmese regime. Campaigners welcomed the unprecedented number of statements in support of Aung San Suu Kyi, but called for words to be turned into real pressure, in terms of a global arms embargo, a UN investigation into crimes against humanity being committed in Eastern Burma, and high-level diplomacy.

Following Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest, Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, said that the EU should consider toughening sanctions on the SPDC over its trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. "It's not the moment to lower sanctions, it's the moment in any case to increase them," he said. The European Council said that unless Aung San Suu Kyi is released, with all other political prisoners "the EU will respond with additional targeted measures."

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari made a two day trip to Burma at the end of June to discuss UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's planned visit to Burma in July. As with previous visits, Gambari was not allowed to see Senior General Than Shwe, Burma's dictator.

Another birthday under arrest

On 19 June Aung San Suu Kyi spent her 64th birthday under house arrest, her 14th birthday in detention. To commemorate her birthday, protests and events were held in over 20 cities across the world.

A new website, 64forSuu.org, calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, and all of Burma's political prisoners, was launched with the backing of major celebrities and a coalition of NGOs and trade unions.

Tens of thousands of people across the world left a 64 word message, video or Twitter message for Aung San Suu Kyi's 64th birthday, including many high-profile supporters such as Paul McCartney, George Clooney, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Vaclav Havel, David Beckham, Yoko Ono, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Stephen Fry, Eddie Izzard, Kevin Spacey and Sarah Brown.



UNISON national conference in Brighton

Thousands Flee Burmese Army in Karen State

Up to 6,000 ethnic Karen civilians have fled a new military offensive by the Burmese Army and its allies, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army. Most have fled to Thailand.



Karen villagers fleeing from Ler Per Her (FBR)

Ler Per Her, a camp for internally displaced people in Karen State on the Thailand Burma border, was evacuated on 5 June as around a thousand soldiers from the Burmese Army and its allies, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), moved into the area. The camp housed around 1,200 people who already had to flee their villages because of human rights abuses and attacks by the

Burmese Army and DKBA. The camp itself has twice been forced to relocate after previous attacks.

There are already around 150,000 people from Burma in refugee camps in Thailand, and around half a million internally displaced people in Eastern Burma, which has levels of poverty and disease equivalent to the worst conflict hit African country. More than 3,300 villages in Eastern Burma have been destroyed in the past 15 years.

Tensions rise between regime and ethnic ceasefire groups

Tensions between the Burmese military junta and ethnic ceasefire groups are rising amid fears that the country may be sliding towards civil war. In preparations for its sham elections in 2010, the regime has been pressuring ethnic ceasefire groups to transform their armies into border guard forces under the control of the Burma Army. All of the major ceasefire groups have rejected these regime plans.

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of the strongest ethnic armed groups in the country, has reportedly been recruiting former soldiers and mobilising troops in preparation for a possible confrontation with the regime.

The United Wa State Army (UWSA), another major ethnic armed group with a ceasefire agreement with the junta, has also rejected the regime's border guard plans. An official of the UWSA told Mizzima News, "We have decided that we cannot allow our

army to be under the Junta's control, because it is impossible for us. All the members rejected the idea."



So far, six of the seventeen official armed ethnic ceasefire groups in Burma have turned down the junta's demand to transform into a border guard force under SPDC control.

The regime's new constitution, which will come into force after the elections next year, 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. Among the many undemocratic measures in the new constitution, the military have an effective veto over decisions made by the new Parliament and government.

Burma - North Korea links deepen

New evidence has emerged that North Korea has been assisting the regime in building an extensive network of between 600 and 800 underground tunnels across the country.

Democratic Voice of Burma has released images of a number of tunnel sites which show North Korean advisers present. Several government budget files also reportedly show evidence of foreign aid and loans being used to fund construction work. Leaked engineering designs show that some sections of the tunnels are wide enough to allow trucks to enter and leave. There is storage space for food and weaponry, and separate rooms that would hold around 600 personnel for several months. The documents also reveal plans to hold large rockets and satellite communication command centres inside the tunnels. It is not known if the tunnels are linked to Burma's reported efforts to develop nuclear technology, in which North Korea is also allegedly involved.

In June a North Korean ship, the Kang Nam, was tracked by the US navy as it was suspected

of carrying weapons destined for Burma. UN Resolution 1874 bans all exports of weaponry from North Korea. The ship was eventually forced to turn around.

This incident follows the arrest of two Japanese and one Korean man suspected of trying to illegally import equipment from North Korea into Burma that could be used in the development of missiles.

Burma's Political Prisoners' lives at risk from appalling conditions

According to a report by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), the conditions of detention for political prisoners in Burma and their state of health are seriously deteriorating.

Political prisoners are held in remote prisons all over Burma and in many cases they are denied medical treatment and not allowed to receive letters, to get food or medicine from their family or to see their families. Many of the pro-democracy 88 Generation Students group, which started the protest that led to the democracy uprising in September 2007, are being kept in these appalling prison conditions.

Mya Aye, one of the leaders of 88 Generation Students, is suffering from heart disease and has to take medication. He was sentenced to 65 years and 6 months imprisonment and sent to Loi Kaw prison. Even though he is suffering from heart disease there is no doctor in the prison to check his health.

It was also reported that five political prisoners in Rangoon's Insein prison have been held in punishment cells (military dog cells) and banned from receiving family visits since 11 May 2009.

AAPP reports that 127 political prisoners are in poor health and 19 of them need urgent medical care. The Burma Campaign UK is calling on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to make securing the release of all Burma's political prisoners an urgent priority before they die in Burma's jails.

Global Day of Action for freedom fighters on trail in India

On 22nd June the Karen Community Association UK together with Arakanese Community UK organised a global day of action to call for the release of 34 Arakan and Karen freedom fighters who have been in jail in India since 1998.

In 1998 the freedom fighters were lured to an Indian island by a rogue Indian intelligence officer, who had offered them co-operation but who betrayed them. The officer killed six of their leaders and the rest were arrested. The freedom fighters spent 8 years in

prison without trial, and the trial now has been going on for 2 years. If found guilty, they could be jailed for many more years, or could be deported where they could face persecution by the Burma's military regime.

The campaigners called on the Indian government to end the trial, release the freedom fighters, and allow them to resettle in a third country.

Karenni villagers tortured by Burmese soldiers

Five villagers from Shardaw Township, Karenni State were recently arrested and tortured by the Burmese Army, according to Kantarawaddy Times. The arrests and the torture followed a clash between Wa and Burmese Army troops in Shan state last month when a number of Burmese Army soldiers were killed and their weapons seized. The villagers were arrested and interrogated about the weapons. They were beaten, tied up and kept in the jungle for two nights.

The village has about 20 houses with 70 people. According to the report, villagers are afraid to live in their village and flee to other villages because of the army threatening and torturing them.

Teenage Karen women raped and murdered by Burmese Army

On 12 June, two teenage women, one eight months pregnant, were raped and murdered by Burmese Army soldiers, according to local Karen sources and the Free Burma Rangers.

Nay Pay was 18 years old and eight months pregnant. Naw Wah Lah was 17 years old and had a six month old baby. They came from Kwee Law Plo village in Lu Pleh township. The soldiers who committed the rape serve in Light Infantry Battalion 205 and were taking part in a new military offensive in Karen State which has driven around 6,000 people from their homes.

Australian Senate supports global arms embargo against Burma

The Australian Senate has unanimously passed a motion calling on the Australian government to support a global arms embargo against Burma's military dictatorship. Burma Campaign Australia spokesperson Dr Myint Cho said that while the motion was welcome, "the Australian government needs to take a stronger stance by supporting a global arms embargo."

Australia has an arms embargo against Burma, but China, Russia, India, North Korea and other countries continue to sell arms to the regime.

Climber scales Lloyds building to protest Burma links

On June 18th 2009, UK climber Mike Robertson solo-climbed the outside of the Lloyd's fourteen-storey, 88m-high building in the City of London – without ropes, climbing equipment or permission. He erected a 5 metre-high banner urging the insurance underwriters Lloyd's of London to cease financial dealings with Burma, and timed his protest to coincide with the eve of Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday.

Campaigners are calling on the EU to impose targeted financial sanctions including a ban on the provision of insurance services to companies in Burma. This would make it much more difficult and expensive to buy insurance for the companies that operate in Burma, damage the confidence of investors in Burma and discourage new investment.



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