

# BULLETS IN THE ALMS BOWL

An Analysis of the Brutal SPDC Suppression  
of the September 2007 Saffron Revolution



**Human Rights Documentation Unit**

NATIONAL COALITION GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF BURMA



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**March 2008**



This report is dedicated to the memory of all those who lost their lives for their part in the September 2007 pro-democracy protests in the struggle for justice and democracy in Burma.

May that memory not fade  
May your death not be in vain  
May our voices never be silenced

# Bullets in the Alms Bowl

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Written, edited and published by the Human Rights Documentation Unit  
March 2008

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The Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) is indebted to all those who had the courage to not only participate in the September protests, but also to share their stories with us and in doing so made this report possible. The HRDU would like to thank those individuals and organizations who provided us with information and helped to confirm many of the reports that we received. Though we cannot mention many of you by name, we are grateful for your support.

The HRDU would also like to thank the Irish Government who funded the publication of this report through its Department of Foreign Affairs.

**Front Cover:** A procession of Buddhist monks marching through downtown Rangoon on 27 September 2007. Despite the peaceful nature of the demonstrations, the SPDC cracked down on protestors with disproportionate lethal force [© EPA].

**Rear Cover (clockwise from top):** An assembly of Buddhist monks stage a peaceful protest before a police barricade near Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon on 26 September 2007 [© Reuters]; Security personnel stepped up security at key locations around Rangoon on 28 September 2007 in preparation for further protests [© Reuters]; A Buddhist monk holding a placard which carried the message on the minds of all protestors, Sangha and civilian alike. [unknown].

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The Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) is the research and documentation department of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB). This report, along with all other reports published by the HRDU may be viewed on the NCGUB website at [www.ncgub.net](http://www.ncgub.net). Questions or comments can be submitted to the HRDU by email at [enquiries.hrdu@gmail.com](mailto:enquiries.hrdu@gmail.com).





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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

### Acronyms

<b>AAPPB</b>	Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma
<b>ABFSU</b>	All Burma Federation of Student Unions
<b>ABMA</b>	All Burma Monks Alliance
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AFP</b>	Agence France Presse
<b>AHRC</b>	Asian Human Rights Commission
<b>AI</b>	Amnesty International
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>AP</b>	Associated Press
<b>APPPB</b>	Asia Pacific Peoples Partnership on Burma
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of South East Asian Nations
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>BCUK</b>	Burma Campaign UK
<b>BEW</b>	Burma Economic Watch
<b>BSI</b>	Bureau of Special Investigation
<b>BSPP</b>	Burmese Socialist Program Party
<b>CCSDPT</b>	Committee for the Coordination of Services for Displaced Persons in Thailand
<b>CID</b>	Criminal Investigation Department
<b>CNG</b>	Compressed Natural Gas
<b>CNN</b>	Cable News Network
<b>DVB</b>	Democratic Voice of Burma
<b>EPA</b>	European Pressphoto Agency
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FIDH</b>	International Federation for Human Rights
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GTI</b>	Government Technical Institute
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>HRDP</b>	Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
<b>HRDU</b>	Human Rights Documentation Unit
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IB</b>	Infantry Battalion
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IMNA</b>	Independent Mon News Agency
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Government Organization
<b>IPS</b>	Inter Press Service
<b>ISP</b>	Internet Service Provider
<b>ITUC</b>	International Trade Union Confederation
<b>KHRG</b>	Karen Human Rights Group
<b>KNG</b>	Kachin News Group
<b>KNLA</b>	Karen National Liberation Army
<b>KNU</b>	Karen National Union

<b>LID</b>	Light Infantry Division
<b>MDC</b>	Myanmar Development Committee
<b>MEC</b>	Myanmar Economic Corporation
<b>MIC</b>	Myanmar Investment Commission
<b>NaSaKa</b>	Burma Border Security Force (Western border)
<b>NCGUB</b>	National Coalition Government Of The Union Of Burma
<b>NDD</b>	Network for Democracy and Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organization
<b>NLD</b>	National League for Democracy
<b>NLM</b>	<i>New Light of Myanmar</i>
<b>NPED</b>	National Planning and Economic Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PDC</b>	Political Defiance Committee
<b>PSRD</b>	Press Scrutiny and Relations Department
<b>RFA</b>	Radio Free Asia
<b>RSF</b>	Reporters Sans Frontieres
<b>SAS</b>	<i>Swan Arr Shin</i> ; 'masters of physical force'
<b>SaYaPa</b>	Military Security Force military intelligence
<b>SB</b>	Special Branch (of police)
<b>SCUK</b>	Save the Children Foundation - UK
<b>SEAPA</b>	South East Asian Press Alliance
<b>SESG</b>	Special Envoy of the Secretary General
<b>SHAN</b>	Shan Herald Agency for News
<b>SMNC</b>	<i>Sangha Maha Nayaka</i> Committee
<b>SPDC</b>	State Peace and Development Council
<b>TPDC</b>	Township Peace and Development Council
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UMEH</b>	Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd.
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNIC</b>	United Nations Information Centre
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSG</b>	United Nations Secretary General
<b>USCB</b>	US Campaign for Burma
<b>USDA</b>	Union Solidarity and Development Association
<b>VOA</b>	Voice of America
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>WLB</b>	Women's League of Burma

## Abbreviations, Terms and Units of Measurements

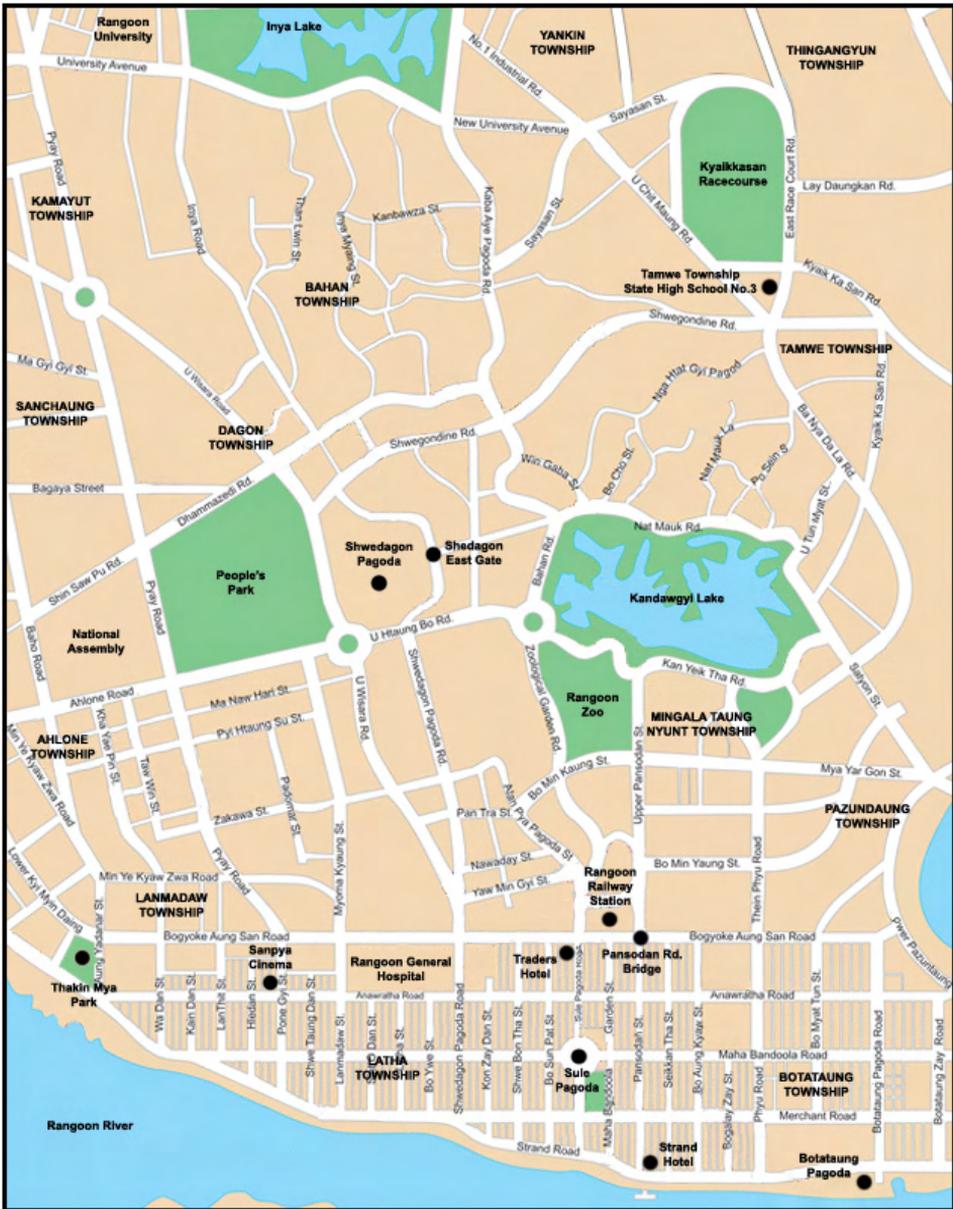
<b>a.k.a</b>	also known as
<b>acre</b>	1 acre = 4,840 sq. yards = 0.407 hectare
<b>approx.</b>	approximately
<b>baht</b>	Monetary unit of Thailand. US\$1 = 30 baht
<b>basket</b>	Unit of measurement equivalent to two tins or roughly 25 kg of rice
<b>Brig.</b>	Brigadier (General)
<b>Capt.</b>	Captain
<b>Col.</b>	Colonel
<b>Cpl.</b>	Corporal
<b>Daw</b>	Burmese honorific used to address an adult female
<b>ft</b>	foot/feet
<b>Gen.</b>	General
<b>kg</b>	kilogram
<b>km</b>	kilometre
<b>Ko</b>	Burmese form of address to a young male
<b>kyat</b>	Monetary unit of Burma. US\$1 = 1,200 kyat (6 kyat at official rate)
<b>longyi</b>	Burmese sarong
<b>Lt.</b>	Lieutenant
<b>m</b>	metre
<b>Maj.</b>	Major
<b>Maung</b>	Burmese form of address to a young male
<b>mm</b>	millimetre
<b>n.a.</b>	not available
<b>Sangha</b>	Buddhist monastic community
<b>Sayadaw</b>	Presiding monk of a Buddhist monastery
<b>Sen.</b>	Senior (General)
<b>Sgt.</b>	Sergeant
<b>U</b>	Burmese honorific used to address an adult male in Burma
<b>viss</b>	1 viss = 3.6 lbs / 1.63 kg

## Spelling Conventions

The following report employs British (UK) English throughout.

Since there are no standardised rules for transliteration from Burmese or many of the other languages spoken in Burma into in the Roman alphabet, words can be spelt in a variety of different ways according to those who translate them. As such, some of the spelling conventions employed by HRDU for this report may differ slightly from those used in reports by other organizations.





**Above:** Map of central Rangoon (Yangon) showing the locations of several of the demonstrations dealt with in detail in this report. Many other protests were also staged in other parts of Rangoon not indicated on this map.

**Opposite:** Map of Burma showing the locations of all reported demonstrations staged across the country throughout August and September 2007. During this time, 227 separate protests were reported to have taken place in at least 66 separate towns and cities in all of Burma's 14 states and divisions.



## I. Executive Summary

Beginning in August and continuing into October 2007, the people of Burma took to the streets in the hundreds of thousands, making a variety of demands, all of which reflected their dissatisfaction with continued military rule, and the policies of the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). It has been reported that at least 227 distinct protests were staged during this time in no fewer than 66 towns and cities throughout the country in each of Burma's seven states and seven divisions.<sup>1</sup>

Such open dissent is rare in the authoritarian country, where fundamental freedoms, such as the rights of assembly, association and expression are severely curtailed through a series of repressive and draconian laws. Those who have opposed the regime have habitually found themselves arrested, tortured or even killed. Consequently, demonstrations of this magnitude have not taken place in Burma in almost two decades. The last time such large scale protests were seen in the country, in 1988, the response of the military is widely believed to have resulted in the deaths of an estimated 3,000 people.

This report is based upon the detailed testimonies of over 50 eyewitnesses to the demonstrations and the SPDC's brutal response. Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) researchers have interviewed monks, activists and civilians who were involved in the protests, many of whom have subsequently fled Burma out of fear for their safety, while a network of researchers working clandestinely inside Burma have interviewed a number of those who have gone into hiding but remained within the country. The information gathered from these interviews has been supplemented by reports from various independent organizations and credible news sources. Together, they provide insight into a campaign of brutality, the intended design of which was antithetical to the very foundations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and serve to contextualize the protests and their suppression within the general practice of SPDC governance.

The majority of those interviewed for this report by HRDU and our working network inside were witnesses to the violence on the streets of Rangoon, and though dozens of other locations around the country were also host to demonstrations, HRDU has been unable to obtain eyewitness testimonies for many of these other protests. As such, this report focuses primarily upon the events that occurred in Rangoon. All other protests which were held in other parts of the country are beyond the scope of this report and have not been focussed on. Further investigation into the crackdowns on these protests is required. Notwithstanding this, this report represents the most comprehensive report detailing the events leading up to, during and following the protests thus far produced to date.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: "Maroon Revolution in Numbers," APPPB, October 2007.

This report begins with a detailed analysis of the structural violence which gave rise to the protests, in terms of both the militarization of society and the concurrent impoverishment of the general population. This section assesses both fiscal and monetary policy – including budget allocation, monetary expansion and inflation, state monopolies over natural resources, exchange rate manipulation and corruption; as well as the more overt economic abuses associated with militarization in Burma; such as forced labour, extortion and land confiscation.

Following this is a series of detailed sections focusing on the protests and the SPDC's response. These begin with an examination of the initial signs of overt economic discontent in early 2007, followed by an account of the August protests and their suppression, including eyewitness accounts of assaults and arrests conducted by military, police, USDA and SAS members. The entrance of the monastic community into the protests is analyzed in terms of their relationship with both the SPDC and the Buddhist lay community, before a descriptive section on the growth of the protests leading up to 25 September. The days of the crackdown, from 26 September to 2 October 2007, are then reported using detailed eyewitness testimonies of brutality.

The raids conducted on monasteries during this time, both in Rangoon and in other areas of the country, are also covered in a section including firsthand accounts from Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery and the killing of a civilian serving as a night watchman for his local monastery in Thaketa Township, Rangoon Division. The SPDC's systematic campaign of arrest during and since the crackdowns is also examined and supported by eyewitness testimonies which attest to the arbitrary and systematic nature of these arrests, the lack of any proper procedure, the arrest of family members in lieu of those they were unable to apprehend and the collective punishment of entire neighbourhoods where protests were conducted.

Following this, a section focusing on detention and judicial procedure includes reports on over twenty deaths in custody. It also includes testimony on the grossly substandard conditions, the treatment of monks, the use of varied methods of torture during interrogation, and the denial of medical treatment.

A further section focussing on the days of the crackdown provides an analysis of SPDC actions. It assesses SPDC intent through an investigation of tactics used, including the use of civilian militias, the penning in of protest groups, the use of live ammunition on unarmed civilians, apparent targeted killings, the removal of the dead and injured, reports of secret cremations, the denial of treatment to the injured, the suppression of information and targeting of journalists, and the defamation of the Sangha.

On 15 August 2007, the SPDC suddenly and without any forewarning announced sharp increases in domestic fuel prices. Overnight, the price of diesel was doubled; the cost of petrol was increased by over 60 percent and the price of compressed natural gas (CNG) was increased a staggering 500 percent. The effect of this unexpected rise in fuel prices on the general

population was immediate, and served to highlight the ever-worsening economic plight of the populace. It was this fuel price rise, and its effects on basic commodity prices that initially sparked the mass protests.

On 19 August 2007, over 500 activists demonstrated against the fuel price rises in Rangoon (Yangon), including various leaders of the 88 Generation Students' Group who had led the mass protests two decades earlier. A number of similar demonstrations were also conducted on the days that followed.

At first the SPDC showed some degree of restraint, but responded by mobilizing two hostile yet ostensibly civilian organizations under its command. Members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), an SPDC-controlled social welfare organization known for its involvement in political violence, and members of the *Swan Arr Shin* (SAS; 'masters of physical force'), a civilian militia formed largely from the poor and unemployed, were armed with catapults (slingshots) and sticks and deployed on the streets of Rangoon to counter any further protests.

Through the violent disruption of demonstrations by USDA and SAS members, and over 150 arrests made both during the protests and in night time raids on activists' homes, the protest movement in Rangoon was largely suppressed by the end of August.

Nevertheless, the protests had spread throughout the country, and on 28 August 2007, despite heavy restrictions placed on the secular activities of Buddhist monks in the country, members of the monastic community joined the protests for the first time, when around 200 monks took to the streets in Sittwe, the capital of Arakan (Rakhine) State. Burma's monastic community is reliant upon the general population for their material survival, and many reports have testified to the fact that since the fuel price rise, many civilians were no longer able to support the monks in addition to their own families.

Then, on 5 September 2007, a significant catalyst to the subsequent growth of the protests occurred in the town of Pakokku in Magwe Division when SPDC army soldiers fired warning shots over the heads of a group of an estimated 500 monks, and alongside USDA and SAS members then assaulted a number of the monks in the process of breaking up the demonstration. At least one monk was tied to a lamppost and severely beaten by the soldiers with their rifle butts, while other unconfirmed reports have claimed that one monk was killed during the crackdown. In retaliation to the violence visited upon them, monks from the Maha Visutarama Monastery in Pakokku took almost 20 SPDC officials hostage the following day, and set fire to their vehicles.

Outraged over the events of the previous days, on 9 September, an underground coalition of monastic organisations, known as the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), demanded that the SPDC issue a public apology for the mistreatment of monks, reduce fuel and commodity prices, release all political prisoners, and begin meaningful dialogue with democratic opposition groups. The ABMA gave the SPDC a little over a week to respond to these

demands, at which time, in the absence of any resolution, they would call for the boycott and excommunication of the SPDC and all of its agents and associates. The SPDC failed to address any of the monk's demands, so, on 17 September 2007, thousands of monks took to the streets across the country in protest against the SPDC, at which point the excommunicative order was recited.

During the week from 18 to 24 September, tens of thousands of Buddhist monks led massive anti-junta demonstrations throughout most of Burma's 14 States and Divisions. Thousands of Burmese civilians quickly joined the rallies, in the largest peaceful protests against the military regime in almost two decades.

On the evening of the 24 September, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, Minister of Religious Affairs, was quoted on state television as threatening that action would be taken against the monks should they continue with their protests. On the same evening, trucks mounted with loudspeakers toured Rangoon's streets, warning those who continued to participate in the protests would be dealt with under Burmese law.

On 25 September 2007, despite such threats, tens of thousands of people once again took to the streets of Rangoon in protest. That evening, the trucks bearing loudspeakers yet again toured the streets, announcing the imposition of a night time curfew and repeated the decree banning all assemblies of more than five people. Monasteries across Rangoon were visited by security forces who threatened the monks with arrest if they continued to participate in demonstrations.

On the morning of the 26 September, and despite such overt threats, tens of thousands of protestors once again took to the streets. SPDC army soldiers and riot police had been stationed throughout the city, and numerous monasteries were cordoned off by security forces, trapping the monks inside.

Beginning on 26 September and continuing over the next two days, combined security forces made up of soldiers, riot police, USDA and SAS attacked peaceful protestors on the streets of Rangoon, firing live rounds into crowds, and beating monks and civilians, sometimes to death. Their systematic resort to means far beyond that which was necessary revealed an intention to brutalise and cow the protestors, who were treated as valid military targets.

Particularly violent crackdowns occurred on 27 September in South Okkalapa and Tamwe Townships and in the vicinity of Sule Pagoda, and scores of protestors are known to have been killed in these three events alone, both through shooting and severe beatings. In several instances no warning was given of an impending crackdown by security forces, and protestors were at times deliberately penned in by the authorities, often immediately followed by the firing of live rounds into the trapped crowds.

While in many cases shooting into crowds was conducted indiscriminately, in other instances it is apparent that the security forces deliberately targeted

certain individuals, either due to their apparent leadership role, or simply because they were brandishing a camera and could document the crackdowns.

For the majority of those persons killed during the protests, the SPDC has denied any knowledge of the event, made no attempt to identify the dead, investigate the cause of death, return the bodies to their families, or to give them even the minimum Buddhist funerary rites. Instead, numerous testimonies gathered from those present have revealed a strategy in which bodies were removed from the scene of each crackdown to cover up the extent of the violence. Persistent reports have also testified to the fact that Ye Way Crematorium in North Okkalapa Township was operated throughout the night by security forces beginning on 27 September through to 30 September, most probably to dispose of the bodies of those who were killed.

To ebb the flow of information, the SPDC cut the majority of the country's Internet and telephone networks. Similarly, journalists, and those who spoke to them, were attacked and arrested. Concurrent to this, the SPDC-controlled media launched a smear campaign to defame those monks who had participated in the demonstrations, while continuing to denounce internal and external agitators "*intent on destabilizing the union*" as being the underlying cause of the protests.

At the same time that they were conducting their violent crackdowns on protestors on the streets of Rangoon, security forces took steps to remove the monastic community from the protests during a series of night time raids. Exploiting the cover of its curfew, SPDC security forces raided a number of prominent monasteries around Rangoon, assaulting and arresting those monks residing within. Many of these raids were especially violent. Monks were badly beaten, shots were fired, and monastery property was either looted or destroyed. Between 25 September and 6 October 2007 over 50 monasteries were raided across the country. A steady stream of further raids has also been reported to have occurred right through October and November 2007. Many other monasteries were ordered to send their monks back to their home towns and villages in other, more remote parts of the country so that they could not continue to take part in the demonstrations.

The violence visited on protestors, the massive number of arrests both on the streets and during night time raids, especially those which targeted the monasteries, combined with a greater military presence on the streets of Rangoon assured that by 28 September 2007, the scale of the protests had dramatically decreased. Nevertheless, thousands continued in their attempts to demonstrate, and the SPDC again responded by beating and arresting protestors and firing live rounds into the crowds. By 2 October 2007, the large-scale protests had been all but quashed.

It has been estimated that approximately 6,000 people, including as many as 1,400 monks, were arrested for their involvement in the protests. Of this number, it was reported that, at the time of publication, over 700 remained in detention.

Those detained in relation to the protests were subjected to conditions of detention which fall far below any minimum international standards and consistent reports have emerged of the use of torture to extract information during repeated interrogation sessions. Numerous detainees who suffered injuries during their initial apprehension or subsequently while in detention have also reported that they were denied adequate medical care and that over 20 deaths had occurred in custody.

The response to the protests highlights the SPDC's complete unwillingness to either reform or govern in the interests of the people. The regime relied upon violent repression to quell the demonstrations, has attempted to cover up the extent of this violence, and refused to address any of the underlying causes which initially sparked the protests. Nor has the SPDC shown any genuine willingness to cooperate with international efforts to mediate reconciliation with pro-democracy groups.



A column of monks marching in protest of the SPDC and their continued oppression on 23 September 2007 following the announcement of the excommunicative order and the declaration of nationwide protests. Monks and lay persons alike turned out on the streets in their thousands despite heavy rains and flooding in Rangoon at the time. [© Reuters].

## II. Government by Exploitation: The Burmese Way to Capitalism?

*“[O]ver the last decade, opposite to virtually every other country in Asia where slowly poverty is being gnawed away at and food security is becoming more commonplace, in Myanmar there are more people living below the poverty line and more people facing food insecurity”.*<sup>2</sup>

The recent demonstrations and their subsequent brutal suppression in Burma brought the economic plight of the Burmese people to the attention of the world. The protests had initially been sparked by a sudden and marked increase in fuel prices, the impact of which was considerable on a population whose livelihoods have long been compromised by decades of military rule.

While Burma is a resource rich country, the general population struggles daily to survive at bare subsistence. In 2006, Burma’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was only US\$281, making it one of the ten poorest countries in the world, and the poorest outside Africa.<sup>3</sup> An estimated 95 percent of the population live on less than US\$1 a day, with 90 percent surviving on less than 65 cents.<sup>4</sup> The Regional Director of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has estimated that at least five million people within the country do not have enough food to eat,<sup>5</sup> with reported rates of malnutrition of more than 30 percent in children under the age of five.<sup>6</sup>

In early 2007, the United Nations (UN) calculated that the average proportion of household expenditure spent on food was as much as 70 percent of the entire family budget; a damning indictment of the very low income level of the population.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Burma is the only country in the world where beriberi, a disease caused by a deficiency of thiamine (vitamin B1), is one of the leading causes of infant mortality. Such a statistic is directly attributable to the inability of families to diversify their food intake.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Source: WFP official cited in: “The hardship that sparked Burma’s unrest,” BBC News, 2 October 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Indicators on Income and Economic Activity*, United Nations Statistic Division, accessed at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/socind/inc-eco.htm> on 5 December 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Results of a yet to be published UNDP survey, cited in: *Burma’s ‘Saffron Revolution’ is not over: Time for the International Community to Act*, ITUC-FIDH, December 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Source: *Humanitarian Situation UPDATE April 2007*, Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator. for Myanmar, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

In certain areas of the country the situation is even more acute. The UN has identified more than 70 percent of the population of Chin State as living in poverty, with 40 percent simply not having enough food with which to survive.<sup>9</sup> The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) has reported that in some areas of Thaton District of Karen State,<sup>10</sup> less than a quarter of the population has enough food to feed themselves.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, in Arakan State, 60 percent of those under five years old are reported as being moderately underweight.<sup>12</sup>

The endowment of the country with a wealth of natural resources has ironically contributed to such impoverishment under military rule. The SPDC holds a monopoly on the export of oil and natural gas, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) placed SPDC gas revenues at US\$1,235.6 million in 2006. This amount constitutes approximately 43 percent of Burma's export earnings. The bulk of other export earnings are provided by the sale of timber, gems, copper and pulses.<sup>13</sup> It is this extraction and export of energy, gems, copper and timber, alongside other natural resources that enables the ruling Generals to enrich themselves without concern for the general welfare of the economy, or investment in human capital. By way of example, the Yadana natural gas fields off the Arakan coast provide the SPDC with US\$360 million in export earnings per year, while only accounting for the employment of 270 Burmese staff.<sup>14</sup>

The SPDC's pervasive military apparatus is also an important factor in permitting the military oligarchs to exploit the country's natural resources while neglecting the economic situation of the civilian populace. As one Burmese writer forced underground following the September crackdown has stated, "*We are the military's slaves. We want democracy. We want to wait no longer. But we are afraid of their guns*".<sup>15</sup> Though it are these "guns" which suppress opposition to the regime's exploitative rule, the cost of sustaining such a military force, itself, places a further and significant burden on the population's ability to survive.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> There are many disputes between the Karen and the SPDC regarding the delineation of borders in Karen State. Thaton District is demarcated by the Karen as part of Karen territory and under the patrol of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the KNLA. Thaton District falls mostly in the SPDC demarcated area of Mon State, while the area to the east of the Donthami River lies within SPDC demarcated Karen State.

<sup>11</sup> Source: *Hunger Wielded as a Weapon in Thaton District*, KHRG, 20 September 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Source: *Humanitarian Situation UPDATE April 2007*, Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Myanmar, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Source: "Burma's Poverty of Riches: Natural Gas and the Insatiable State", Sean Turnell, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *Burma's Saffron Revolution is not over: Time for the International Community to Act*, ITUC-FIDH, December 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Source: "In Myanmar, Fear Is a Constant Companion," *New York Times*, 20 October 2007.

Rather than governing in the economic interests of the population, the SPDC dictates and manipulates macroeconomic policy both for its own profit and to support its armed forces. Such fiscal and monetary policy formulations are made to the considerable detriment of the general state of the economy, private enterprise and social welfare. Moreover, the SPDC sanctions the widespread abuse and exploitation of local populations by the military, particularly in rural and ethnic minority areas, so as to support their continued presence in those areas.

The machinations of this exploitative system are given explicit evidence in the increased militarization which invariably accompanies SPDC cash projects such as hydroelectric dams, mining concessions and natural gas pipelines, and the concomitant increase in abuse of local populations.

## Macroeconomic Policy

*“Macroeconomic policy-making in Burma is coloured by one overwhelming fact – the irresistible demand of the state upon the country’s real output”.*<sup>16</sup>

At the core of economic dysfunction within the country is the fact that the SPDC spending habitually exceeds its capacity for revenue generation. The resultant demand placed upon the economy by the state has resulted in the crippling of the financial sector and rampant levels of inflation. Moreover, the misallocation of these resources, the majority of which are directed towards the military, has resulted in the chronic neglect of other areas that would contribute to economic development and social welfare, such as health, education and the supply of electricity.

## Fiscal Policy

The junta is widely estimated to spend upwards of 40 percent of its national budget on defence.<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) report this figure to have been as high as 50 percent in recent years,<sup>18</sup> while Burmese economist, Mya Maung, asserts that if all expenses related to defence and security functions were included, they may be as high as 60 percent of the national budget. This latter figure factors in defence spending made under the aegis of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs, the

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<sup>16</sup> Source: *Burma’s Economic Prospects; Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs*, BEW, 29 March 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Source: *Burma: Security Council Should Impose Arms Embargo: Weapons Sales by India, China and Russia Fuel Abuses, Strengthen Military Rule*, HRW, 10 October 2007; *The Gathering Storm: Infectious Diseases and Human Rights in Burma*, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the University of Berkeley, July 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Source: *Sold to be Soldiers: The Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers in Burma*, HRW, October 2007.

Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and even the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, the SPDC has also spent large sums of money on unnecessary and as yet unjustified projects, such as moving the site of its capital out of Rangoon. In November 2005, the regime initiated this abrupt relocation to the remote site of Naypyidaw in Mandalay Division, which included the forcible transfer of thousands of civil servants. While the motives for this move remain the subject of much speculation, the IMF has estimated that “*about 1–2 percent of GDP has been spent in the last few years by the government on the move*.”<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the health and education sectors have been grossly under-funded for the entirety of the SPDC’s tenure. Even if official figures provided by the regime are taken at face value, they serve to underscore this fact. According to official figures, the budget for the Ministry of Health in the 2006/2007 fiscal year accounted for just 0.8 percent of the total national budget, while allocations for the Ministry of Education comprised 1.9 percent of SPDC expenditure.<sup>21</sup> Keeping in mind the regime’s consistent overestimation of official figures, it is quite likely that even these appallingly small budget allocations are an exaggeration of the reality.

The effects of under-funding are readily evident in the standard of healthcare throughout the country. In 2000, Burma’s healthcare system was ranked 190<sup>th</sup> out of 191 surveyed nations by the World Health Organisation (WHO).<sup>22</sup> The funding of HIV/AIDS programs, in particular, serves as useful indicator with which to judge the regimes spending priorities. Estimates by the United Nations put the number of HIV/AIDS sufferers in Burma at anywhere up to 610,000 people, or approximately two percent of the population.<sup>23</sup> In the face of such statistics, the total national budget for HIV/AIDS in 2005 was a mere US\$137,000.<sup>24</sup> To put this in perspective, the following year SPDC Chairperson Senior General Than Shwe spent some 290 times this amount, when he lavished an estimated US\$40 million on his daughter’s wedding.

Similarly, Burma’s deteriorating education system is largely the result of disproportionately low investment by the regime. Despite SPDC assertions of free education for all, under-funding means families are forced to shoulder the financial burden of buying school supplies, as well as paying for the teachers’

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<sup>19</sup> Source: *Burma Economic Review 2005-2006*, The Burma Fund, June 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Source: “As Myanmar’s new capital emerges, analysts question its true costs,” AFP, 6 April 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Source: *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices-2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Source: *World health report 2000. Health system: improving performance*, World Health Organisation, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Source: “Burma to tackle sex education in schools,” *Irrawaddy*, 25 January 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Source: *The Gathering Storm: Infectious Diseases and Human Rights in Burma*, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the University of Berkeley, July 2007.

food and travel expenses. As tuition fees and associated costs rise, poor families are forced out of the educational arena in increasing numbers. Though the SPDC claims that 90 percent of the nation's children are enrolled within the education system, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) places this figure at closer to 55 percent.<sup>25</sup> In a three township survey conducted in 2005 by the UK-registered Save the Children Foundation (SCUK), more than half of out-of-school children reported "*cannot afford schooling costs*" as their reason for leaving school.<sup>26</sup> Burma historian Josef Silverstein has commented on the status of the education system within the country in stating "*[m]aybe that is what the military really wanted, the elimination of an educated population. Whether it was or not, that is what has occurred*".<sup>27</sup>

Funding for important infrastructure projects such as the power sector has also been largely neglected by the regime. As a result, in 2006, Burma only possessed a national electricity generating capacity of 1.8 million kilowatts. This can be compared to its ASEAN neighbour, Vietnam, which had a national generating capacity of 55,300 million kilowatts of electricity in 2006.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has reported that electricity usage in Burma actually fell by 32.4 percent during the 2004-05 fiscal year.<sup>29</sup>

*"The electricity always cuts out. In the summer, we are only given electricity for some parts of the day. If the electricity comes at six in the morning, it will go off at eleven in the morning. If the electricity comes at eleven in the morning, it stops at six in the evening. If it comes late at night, we have to work through the night because we cannot do our work without the electricity. Even during these times, it can cut out at any time".<sup>30</sup>*

*"We only get electricity for about three days a week. They supply it in rotation. At times when we have no electricity we have to use a generator for power. Even when we do get electricity, it is a lower voltage than it should be, so we often still have to use our generator".<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Source: "Barriers to Education for Poor Families in Southern Burma," *Kaowao News*, 26 June 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Source: *Situation of the Children in Myanmar*, SCUK, June 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Source: "Chaos could come if Myanmar Junta Falls," AP, 24 October 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Source: "Fuel price hikes inflame Burmese people," *Altsean Burma*, 14 September 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Source: *Burma's Economic Prospects; Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs*, Burma Economic Watch, 29 March 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Khin Oo", 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007. The names of all interviewees have been changed to protect them from repercussions from the SPDC. All names cited in the footnotes for HRDU interviews are pseudonyms.

<sup>31</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Nay Lin Naing", 43-year-old female civilian, 7 November 2007.

While the general population struggles with the acute shortage of electricity, Naypyidaw and other large scale military installations are reported to receive an almost constant supply of power – typically at the expense of the general population.<sup>32</sup>

## Monetary Policy

As a result of budgetary deficits, SPDC spending is largely financed through Central Bank loans, as well as loans from private banks within the country. As a consequence of such a heavy demand being placed upon them, the capacity of these institutions to provide the private sector with credit is significantly diminished.<sup>33</sup> For instance, 80 percent of those working in the rural economy do not have access to any form of formal credit.<sup>34</sup> In a country where the agricultural sector accounts for approximately 70 of the labour force,<sup>35</sup> this means that a mere 14 percent of the population has access to credit. Furthermore, the junta has instituted strict limits on interest rates within the country, as a means to minimise repayments on its own loans. As these rates are far outstripped by rates of inflation, the prospect of depositing money in one of the country's banks guarantees a negative return, further negating the role of the financial sector in the country's economic development.<sup>36</sup> In 2007, for instance, the Central Bank directed all private banks to limit the amount of deposits they could accept from their customers. This directive was issued because SPDC interest rate limits meant no profit could be made on loaning these deposits out again.<sup>37</sup>

When SPDC spending is funded through loans from the Central Bank, this financing is largely provided for through the printing of more money. Such 'running of the printing presses' has been the major cause of monetary expansion within the country. Evidently sharing this view, Allison Vicary of Burma Economic Watch (BEW) has stated, in reference to printing more money, that "[n]o one with a modicum of economic understanding, would recommend this policy. ... It is actually one of the stupidest policies imaginable – there is no other outcome, than bigger problems".<sup>38</sup> In 1988, there was 20 billion kyat circulating inside Burma. By 1997, just under 10 years later, the amount of money in circulation had reached almost 200 billion kyat. Since this time, the

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<sup>32</sup> Source: "Myanmar's remote capital is still a work in progress," *New York Times*, 5 October 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Source: "Burma's Economic Prospects; Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs", Burma Economic Watch, 29 March 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Source: *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, HRDU, 24 June 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Source: *The Economic Follies and Fundamentals of Military Rule in Burma*, Burma Economic Watch Supplement, October 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Source: *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, HRDU, 24 June 2007.

SPDC has not released any further statistics on the matter. Nevertheless, economists, using sources such as the consumer price index, have been able to estimate that the total amount of money in circulation is now 1.3 trillion kyat.<sup>39</sup>

Such monetary expansion has inevitably been accompanied by attendant high levels of inflation. Widely accepted estimates claim the rate of inflation in Burma to have already reached chronic levels of between 40-60 percent prior to the rise in fuel prices, with the price of good quality rice reported to have increased 100 percent through 2006.<sup>40</sup>

Chronic levels of inflation are further aggravated by periodic shocks, of which the recent hike in fuel prices was only the latest example. In October 2005, the SPDC cut fuel subsidies, leading to increases in fuel prices of almost 900 percent. The price of a gallon of fuel in November 2005 was 1,500 kyat, up from 180 kyat the previous month.<sup>41</sup>

On 1 April 2006, the SPDC awarded a 10-fold salary increase for all estimated one million civil servants throughout the country. The increase was reportedly instituted through fears of discontent over the move of the capital to Naypyidaw,<sup>42</sup> and was largely financed through the running of the printing presses.<sup>43</sup> While middle and lower ranking civil servants were in desperate need of such an increase, the SPDC then announced that 10 percent of their incomes would be withheld on their behalf, though they were not provided with the bankbooks or allowed to access this money.<sup>44</sup> Fringe benefits, such as free bus travel and subsidised electricity rates were also lost following the salary increase.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, the cost of basic goods such as rice and tea jumped by up to 30 percent within days.<sup>46</sup> Fuel prices also increased within days of the pay rise, further affecting the already spiralling commodity prices.<sup>47</sup> Then, on 1 May 2006, only a month after the salary hikes (and the abolition of subsidised

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<sup>39</sup> Source: "Burma struggles to make ends meet: Runaway inflation illustrates there is nothing sustainable about the current economic situation," *Bangkok Post*, 3 November 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Source: "Food Prices Spark Open Dissidence," *Mizzima News*, 28 February 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Source: "Fuel price hikes inflame Burmese people," *Altsean Burma*, 14 September 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Source: "Paper Money: Burma Junta Confirms Salary Hike for Civil Servants," *DVB*, 26 March 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Source: "Burmese Kyat Hits All-Time Low," *Irrawaddy*, 29 March 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Source: "Burmese Civil Servants Forced to Save 10% of Their Salary", *DVB*, 5 June 2006.

<sup>45</sup> Source: "Paper Money: Burmese Civil Servants Still Facing Hardship Despite Salary Hike", *DVB*, 16 July 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Sources: "SPDC's Attempts to Control Commodities' Prices", *IMNA*, 4 April 2006; "Myanmar Takes Measures in Stabilizing Commodity Prices", *Xinhua*, 6 April 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Source: *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, HRDU, 24 June 2007.

rates for those civil servants), the SPDC Ministry of Electric Power increased electricity rates by 1,000 percent.<sup>48</sup>

*“My salary with the ‘XXXX’ Ministry stands at 46,000 kyat a month, which is about 40 US dollars. The lowest paid employee gets 15,000 kyat. Before the pay rises in 2006, my salary was around 10,000 kyat and the lowest salary was 7,000. But it didn’t make much different for our lives as basic commodity prices came up along with the pay rise. So, the money I make isn’t really enough to survive on. Also, the pay rise we got is nothing compared to the pay rise of senior officials such as Directors [and high ranking military officers]. Their salary which stood around 50,000 kyat was raised to more than 200,000 kyat. That’s the same thing with all the government ministries.”*<sup>49</sup>

The concomitant rise in commodity prices ultimately negated the benefits of the salary increase for civil servants. Meanwhile, salaries for those who work in the private sector remain appallingly low, averaging about 1,000 kyat a day. The situation for pensioners is particularly illustrative of the situation. In 2007, one 72-year-old retiree pointed out that his pension of 700 kyat a month was “not even enough for my tea”.<sup>50</sup>

While the SPDC’s own fiscal mismanagement has been the leading factor in inflation, the regimes response has been targeted at regulating prices, and fining and punishing those traders who charge more than the set price for certain goods.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, prices have continued to rise.

Such chronic levels of inflation have also led Burma’s unofficial or ‘black market’ exchange rate to increase exponentially over the past decade. On 15 October 2007, this rate stood at 1,325 kyat to the US dollar, having increased from 240 kyat to the US dollar over the past decade.<sup>52</sup> While this rate is reflective of the true value of the kyat, the official fixed exchange rate continues to tie the kyat to the IMF ‘Special Drawing Rights’ at a rate roughly equivalent to 6 kyat to the US dollar; over 200 times less than the unofficial, albeit more accurate, rate.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Source: “Fuel price hikes inflame Burmese people,” Altsean Burma, 14 September 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Naing Than”, 27-year-old male civil servant, 19 October 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Source: “In Myanmar, Fear Is a Constant Companion,” *New York Times*, 20 October 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Source: “Burmese Rice Merchants Told to Sell Their Goods at Half Price”, DVB, 12 August 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Source: *Burma’s Economic Prospects; Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs*, Burma Economic Watch, 29 March 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

These divergent and distorted exchange rates are maintained by the SPDC for the purpose of short term economic benefit. The ability to purchase dollars at the official rate (which, only those affiliated with the regime are permitted to do) allows an immediate profit, through nothing more than a manipulation of economic reality. Those able to access foreign exchange at the official rate can make immediate and sizeable profits by immediately selling it back into the unofficial market. In addition, foreign exchange can be used to buy goods from abroad at prices far cheaper than anyone else can in Burma, vastly increasing an importer's profit, or simply providing the well connected with access to distortedly cheap luxury goods.

The tremendous discrepancy between official and unofficial exchange rates have directed the SPDC to institute other, 'semi-official', rates which fall somewhere between the two. For instance, a rate of 450 kyat to the US dollar applies for all funds brought into Burma by UN agencies and international non-government organizations (INGOs), as well as in calculating excise paid by many importers and exporters. Even these semi-official rates provide the regime with a ready means of profit, as UN agencies and INGOs provide the SPDC with foreign exchange at less than half the prevailing market price.<sup>54</sup> As a result, the SPDC is directly profiting from the efforts of these organizations working to alleviate the humanitarian situation in the country.

The effect of distorted exchange rates on the broader economy are immense; ranging from the extraordinary corruption incentives that they promote, to the dramatic misallocation of resources to activities that do not match Burma's comparative advantage, but rather the channels carved out by the exchange rate. The crippling effects that such a system has on the economy are in urgent need of being addressed. However, as Sean Turnell of BEW states, "[s]uch a reform program is *unlikely from a regime that is clearly the existing system's leading beneficiary*".<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Source: *The Economic Follies and Fundamentals of Military Rule in Burma*, Burma Economic Watch Supplement, October 2007.

## The Economic Cost of Militarization

Despite high levels of military spending, the SPDC has struggled to meet the financial demands of maintaining its pervasive security apparatus while still turning a profit for itself and its cronies. In response, it has provided military-run companies with a monopoly in important sectors of the economy, and directed all important foreign investment into establishing joint ventures with these organizations.

Two of the most significant military-controlled conglomerates are the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd. (UMEH) and the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), who together dominate key sectors of the economy. Their activities are largely directed towards building the military's resource base, further enabling privileged economic treatment of high ranking military personnel. Moreover, the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), which is comprised of many members of the SPDC cabinet and their cronies and thus entirely controlled by the military, approves all foreign investments in Burma. This enables the junta to direct foreign investment towards companies such as UMEH and MEC, with all major foreign investors entering into joint ventures with UMEH. In turn, these 'State enterprises' turn a significant profit for the ruling Generals and direct finances towards the maintenance of its military machinery, at the expense of other business interests.

In addition, the SPDC has allowed rampant corruption at all levels of the military-controlled economy and private sector to go largely unchecked. In 2007, Transparency International, a global watchdog against corruption, ranked Burma, alongside Somalia, as the most corrupt polity on the planet. In producing its listings, Transparency International ranks countries according to the abuse of public power for private benefit, such as the bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds and the strength of anti-corruption policies. In allowing such unbridled corruption the SPDC is indirectly providing an economic reward to its military cadres at no direct cost to itself.

Even more drastically, the SPDC has sanctioned the systematic abuse and exploitation of local populations by and for the benefit of its military units stationed in those areas; including the systematic practices of forced labour, extortion, and land confiscation.

Since 1997, frontline SPDC army battalions have been directed to "*live off the land*" under the Self-Reliance Program. Under this program, SPDC army units are not only permitted but also expected to obtain food and rations by their own means from local communities. In March 2007, a leaked internal SPDC army document contained implicit instructions for the continued sanctioning of such abuses. It instructed SPDC army battalion commanders to continue to raise funds through agriculture and the sale of seized goods, and accused those

commanders who failed to do so of “sucking oil” from the War Office.<sup>56</sup> The economic effects of such abuses on rural populations are crippling.

Arguably, the most pervasive of abuses which occurs as a result of the Self-Reliance Program is the use of forced labour. In 1996, a year before the Self-Reliance Program was introduced, the US Embassy in Rangoon estimated that the annual market value of forced labour employed by the junta on public works projects totalled 17.5 billion kyat, at that time equivalent to 3.7 percent of Burma’s GDP.<sup>57</sup> Since that time, and with the initiation of the Self-Reliance Program, the practice has continued unabated despite strong and sustained pressure from the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the issue. Thousands of villagers and townsfolk across the country have testified to the effects that forced labour has had on their lives.

*“I cannot remember that we have ever experienced such bad times. The NaSaKa (Burma Border Security Force) and the Army joined together to suck all our energy and money. How will the poor survive with so much forced labour? When will this end? Soon we won’t be able to stay in Burma. Another famine is already looming”.*<sup>58</sup>

Any time spent performing forced labour for the military ultimately results with less time in which to tend to one’s own livelihood. Those forced to perform the labour have little choice other than to do as ordered and are rarely paid for their effort. Furthermore, they are obliged to supply not only their own food and tools, but also all necessary building materials, placing an even greater strain on available resources.

The Self-Reliance Program also encourages widespread extortion and looting. SPDC army battalions regularly issue demands to nearby communities for the supply of food, cash, building materials, or just about any other item that they are in need of. In many areas, this extortion is continuous, with some villages being forced meet competing daily demands from numerous different sources. Such demands naturally severely impact the day-to-day survival of local populations.

Similarly, thousands of acres of farmland have been confiscated by the military without any form of compensation. While much of this land confiscation has been carried out to make way for new roads, army camps, or other infrastructure or development projects, vast amounts have also been seized under the Self-Reliance Program. In other instances, local SPDC army commanders order the confiscation for their own profit, often in the absence of any form of justification, and while this practice is most pervasive in ethnic

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<sup>56</sup> Source: “Myanmar Army Document Spotlights Low Morale,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 27 March 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Source: *Burma Economic Review 2005-2006*, The Burma Fund, June 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Source: *No Rest from Forced Labour*, The Arakan Project, 31 May 2006.

minority areas, farmers throughout the country have no security of land tenure. Under existing laws in Burma, all farmland belongs to the state, and farmers are only permitted cultivation rights over the land that they live and work on. As such, the SPDC can confiscate any land that they choose without paying compensation to the farmers for the loss of their land and livelihoods.



Prominent labour rights activist Daw Su Su Nway (centre) struggles with plainclothes security officials in Hlaedan Township, Rangoon as they attempt to apprehend one of her colleagues on 28 August 2007 during the early economic protests. [© DVB/Reuters].

## The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back

The SPDC maintains a monopoly over the sale of fuel in Burma. Without warning, on 15 August 2007, the SPDC declared a five-fold increase in the price of compressed natural gas (CNG), a doubling in the cost of diesel fuel and an increase in the cost of petrol prices by two-thirds. The effect of this unexpected rise in the price of rationed fuel on the general population was immediate. Compressed Natural Gas, in which the steepest increase was introduced, had been widely promoted by the SPDC for use in commercial vehicles, and the majority of public buses in the cities of Burma are powered by it. As a result bus fares increased sharply.

With discretionary income largely non-existent, steep increases in transport costs severely impacted people's ability to feed themselves and their families. Many Burmese workers, particularly those living in the poor suburbs and satellite towns of Rangoon, earning around 1,000 kyat a day, now had to pay anywhere up to 800 kyat for transport, leaving only 200 kyat a day for food. This represents a virtual reversal on their spending ratio prior to the hike.<sup>59</sup>

*"I want to talk about a woman who lived in Hlaing Tharyar, on the outskirts of Rangoon. She worked doing people's laundry and travelled to the downtown area by bus to work. Her daily income was between 1,000 and 1,500 kyat. Before the fuel prices were increased, she spent 400 kyat for her travel fees. Although, since the rise, she must spend 800 kyat for her daily bus fare. I don't know how she survives".<sup>60</sup>*

*"I live in North Okkalapa [Township] and to get to Sule [Pagoda] I now have to spend 200 kyat on bus fare. If I want to go somewhere else downtown I need to spend 100 kyat more. By the time I come home I have spent 500 kyat on transport. It is too much. The ordinary worker gets less than 30,000 kyat a month and they cannot manage their income and daily expenditures. It is a big problem for the ordinary people to survive".<sup>61</sup>*

*"I gave up my job as a taxi driver after the fuel price was raised. By driving a taxi I could not even get enough money to give back to the owner of car. Some of my friends also gave up their jobs".<sup>62</sup>*

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<sup>59</sup> Source: "A People Running on Empty," IPS, 24 August 2007; "Soaring petrol costs deepen woes," *Bangkok Post*, 20 August 2007; *Burma Bulletin*, Altsean Burma, August 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Shwe Naing", 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>61</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Lwin Soe", 33-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007.

<sup>62</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thein Soe", 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

*“After the price hike, each student had to spend at least 20,000 kyat for monthly transport costs from his or her home to attend classes. If a student’s home was farther from classes, it would rise to 30,000 kyat! Most of the students could no longer attend their classes after the fuel price rise”.*<sup>63</sup>

Prior to the fuel price hike, as much as 70 percent of household income was dedicated to the purchase of food; strongly indicative of an impoverished population. However, the apparent decrease in this figure is patently unreflective of higher income levels. Rather, it is symptomatic of a rapidly deepening humanitarian crisis throughout the country.

*“Previously we couldn’t save any money as living costs for our whole family under high commodity rates was at about 2,000 kyat per day. After the fuel price hikes, bus fares jumped up about three-times higher than before, bringing a greater struggle to the average person’s life. We had to reduce the amount of food we ate daily. [The fuel price hikes] also made my siblings’ education more difficult because it made the prices of basic accessories, such as notebooks, increase”.*<sup>64</sup>

*“When the government increased the fuel prices some people could no longer afford to eat rice so they had to eat rice soup. Others could not even afford to eat rice soup so they just ate corn”.*<sup>65</sup>

Increased transport cost have not only forced members of the population to allocate fewer funds towards the purchase of food but the increase in fuel costs created an associated change in the price of this food. The agricultural industry depends on fuel for irrigation, processing, and transportation of crops, while shops and small businesses must use diesel to run generators amid the frequent electricity blackouts. All such increased costs are ultimately passed on to the consumer.

*“Most of the civilians in Sittwe Township [in Arakan State] are workers earning a basic living. Now, 90 percent are facing difficulties to travel and maintain their livelihoods after the rise in fuel prices. They have to buy commodities which have doubled in price from traders who have come from other regions. Some of the poor families have to share their rice to survive. The students are also faced with difficulties, particularly those who must come from out of town each day, who must spend 700 – 800 kyat on travelling costs. Most of the students*

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<sup>63</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Aye Maung”, 22-year-old male NLD Youth member, 24 October 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thu Nyunt”, 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

*do not receive electricity and now they cannot even afford to buy the candles so they can study at night”.*<sup>66</sup>

*“The electricity for the industrial zone where our factory is situated is not supplied regularly. Sometimes the government would provide [electricity for] 12 hours and sometimes there was no electricity for the whole day. So normally, we would use 4 or 5 or 6 gallons of diesel per day to run the generator. So, when the fuel prices were raised, the daily expenses for our factory were increased significantly”.*<sup>67</sup>

By the end of August 2007, the price of food, clothing, and other basic commodities had increased significantly. The price of rice had jumped 10 percent, meat 15 percent, and a standard plate of noodles at a food stall had tripled.<sup>68</sup> However, prices continued to rise. According to Altsean Burma, by the end of September, the price of a kilogram of rice had increased from around 300 kyat to 500 kyat, while a dozen eggs had doubled in price from 600 kyat to 1,200 kyat.<sup>69</sup>

*“I sold the best quality rice at my rice shop last year. In 2006, I charged 15,000 kyat per basket. Since I have fled, my wife has phoned me and told me that that it now costs 35,000 kyat per basket. But then there is also the low quality rice. Almost all of the people depend on that rice as their staple food. When I ran my rice shop, it only cost 9,000 kyat per basket. After the fuel prices rose, it costs nearly 30,000 kyat per basket”.*<sup>70</sup>

In the absence of any real context, the price rise in fuel can be defended as an unfortunate but necessary fiscal adjustment to bring the price in line with the prevailing global markets. While, the price of fuel in Burma had previously been kept artificially low through heavy SPDC subsidising, the ever-increasing global oil prices have nearly doubled the SPDC’s expenses for importing fuel oil over the past year. Meanwhile, according to a report released by the IMF, the budget deficit of the regime has risen from five percent of GDP in 1998 to seven percent in 2007.<sup>71</sup> It has even been reported that the IMF had actually advised the junta against such

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<sup>66</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Naing Thuang”, 27-year-old male student, 5 October 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Zaw”, 30-year-old male civilian, 27 October 2007.

<sup>68</sup> Sources: “Protests over commodity prices point to structural damage beyond a quick political fix,” *Mizzima News*, 22 August 2007; “Soaring petrol costs deepen woes,” *Bangkok Post*, 20 August 2007; “Food Prices Spark Open Dissidence,” *Mizzima News*, 28 February 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Source: *Burma Bulletin*, Altsean Burma, September 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Source: “Staff Report for 2006: Article IV Consultation Report on Myanmar,” IMF, 15 September 2006.

large scale subsidising of fuel, as a means to balance these deficits.<sup>72</sup> However, an understanding of the reasons behind these deficits and the root causes of impoverishment within the country expose SPDC economic policy to be entirely indefensible, and based upon a model of government by exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few.



Member of the 88 Generation Student's Group, Mie Mie (right) leads a protest through Rangoon on 22 August 2007 in protest of the sudden and dramatic increase in domestic fuel prices. Mie Mie was subsequently arrested on 12 October for her role in the protests. [© DVB/AFP].

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<sup>72</sup> Source: "Protests over commodity prices point to structural damage beyond a quick political fix," *Mizzima News*, 22 August 2007; "The hardship that sparked Burma's unrest," BBC, 2 October 2007; "Fuel price policy explodes in Myanmar," *Asia Times*, 24 August 2007.

### III. Growing Discontent: The Economic Protests

#### Early Signs of Dissatisfaction

Existing laws in Burma permit the state almost total control over the assembly of the people. Following the nationwide demonstrations of 1988; Order #2/88 was enacted on 18 September 1988 and prohibits the “*gathering, walking or marching in procession by a group of five or more people regardless of whether the act is with the intention of creating a disturbance or of committing a crime*”. This order is stringently applied by the junta as a means to suppress any activity that stands in opposition to its continued and absolute rule. Nevertheless, the deteriorating state of the economy compelled rare occasions of open dissent to the military regime, in early 2007, even before the hike in fuel prices.

On 22 February 2007, an estimated 25 people joined a peaceful demonstration in Rangoon to protest against the increasing costs of living. The demonstration was organized by a group calling themselves the Myanmar Development Committee (MDC). Placards carried by the protestors read “*Down with consumer prices*”, and “*We want 24-hour electricity*”. Nine persons were arrested in relation to this protest. They were later released on 27 February 2007 without charge.<sup>73</sup> The junta-controlled English language newspaper, the *New Light of Myanmar*, portrayed the protest as a riot, stating:

*“... members of the group, which incited a gathering crowd through a protest violated the existing law, illegally formed a group with the intention of rising against the government, got involved in an act of lawlessness and walked in procession shouting along a busy road. ... [T]he attempt of the protesters, whose motive was only to win popularity among the people and seek self-interest, caused public annoyance and panic. ... [S]uch a deliberate attempt was totally against the law and action might be taken against the protesters”.*<sup>74</sup>

In the same month, U Than Zein, a retired seaman, who later declared that he had no interest in politics, was compelled to post some homemade satirical posters on his fence, after his daughter had told him four eggs were selling for 300 kyat. He was arrested that day and charged with causing a public disturbance, although the case was later closed and Than Zein was freed.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Source: “The hardship that sparked Burma’s unrest,” BBC, 2 October 2007.

<sup>74</sup> Source: “Political Prisoners News,” DVB, February 2007.

<sup>75</sup> Source: “Politics and the price of eggs,” AHRC, 4 May 2007.

Similarly, on 19 June 2007, Maung Kyaw Naing was arrested, in Taungup Township of Arakan State after staging a solo protest against high levels of inflation and unemployment. His mother and sister were also arrested in relation to the protest. All three were reported as having been later released.<sup>76</sup>

## Protesting the Fuel Price Rise

On 17 August 2007, two days after the price of fuel was raised by the SPDC, Htin Kyaw, of the Myanmar Development Committee (MDC), called for nationwide protests before disappearing into hiding.<sup>77</sup>

Political activists in Rangoon responded over the following days by organizing marches throughout the city, representing the largest protests held in Burma for over a decade. Each march was peaceful, and initially did not even include any overt demands; rather groups of people walked across the city in a symbolic act of the people's inability to afford the increased bus fares.<sup>78</sup>

On 19 August 2007, over 500 demonstrators marched through the streets of Rangoon. Those who participated, including various leaders of the 88 Generation Students' Group were photographed and videotaped by the authorities, presumably so that they could later be arrested. That same day, U Win Naing of the MDC was attacked in his car by members of the SPDC-controlled paramilitary group *Swan Arr Shin* ('the masters of physical force') while donating rice to poor communities on the outskirts of Rangoon.<sup>79</sup>

On 21 August 2007, following continued small-scale demonstrations on the previous day, hundreds of people marched from Rangoon's Tamwe Township to the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Bahan Township. They were followed by armed members of the Union Solidarity Development Organization (USDA), another SPDC-controlled paramilitary force known for its involvement in political violence. Members of the *Swan Arr Shin* (SAS), also armed with slingshots and sticks, followed to shout abuse and threats at the protestors. Others trying to join the protests were threatened by these groups with violence.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Source: "Mother and sister of solo protester also arrested," *Mizzima News*, 20 June 2007.

<sup>77</sup> Sources: "Summary of Events in Burma, August 19-25," Asia Pacific Peoples Partnership on Burma, 2007; "Contrary to Claims of Burma's Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days," AAPPB, 27 August 2007; "Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices," AHRC, August 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Source: Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices, AHRC, August 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Sources: Summary of Events in Burma, August 19-25," Asia Pacific Peoples Partnership on Burma, 2007; "Contrary to Claims of Burma's Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days," AAPPB, 27 August 2007; "Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices," AHRC, August 2007.

<sup>80</sup> Sources: *Ibid.*

*“On 21 August we started our march from Tamwe [Township]. After a while, there was a small crowd who tried to harass us when we were near to Tamwe Plaza. One of them who was maybe 45-years-old or so, shouted to us that we were not allowed to walk, and said if we continued walking, that they would beat us. The man angrily said that we could be killed if they wished. Another one of them angrily accused us of being beggars and that was why we couldn’t take the bus. Our leaders argued that the roads are public property that can be used by any citizen, and that as citizens; we had the right to walk on them. There they tried to block us by force to stop us from marching on. They were 100 strong and they began to arrest and put us into cars”<sup>81</sup>.*

That night, the SPDC arrested 14 prominent leaders of the 88 Generation Students’ Group. State-controlled media announced that they were accused of attempting acts to disturb national security and stability and the implementation of the National Convention and the Roadmap process, and would be dealt with under Order #5/96, which provides for up to twenty years imprisonment.<sup>82</sup> At the time of publication, those who were arrested continued to be detained and all will likely face trial. They include:

1. Min Ko Naing;
2. Ko Ko Gyi;
3. Htay Win Aung (a.k.a Pyone Cho);
4. Min Zeya;
5. Mya Aye;
6. Kyaw Min Yu (a.k.a Jimmy);
7. Zeya;
8. Kyaw Kyaw Htwe (a.k.a Marki);
9. Arnt Bwe Kyaw;
10. Panneik Tun;
11. Zaw Zaw Min;
12. Thet Zaw;
13. Nyan Lin Tun; and
14. Yin Tun.

On 22 August 2007, another major demonstration was held, beginning in various sections of Rangoon and converging in Hlaedan Junction. Different reports have estimated that anywhere from 200 up to and over 1,000 protestors took part in the demonstration. However, security forces, including armed police, USDA and SAS members, blocked the marchers and the crowd dispersed. At least seven people were reported detained but later released. On the same day, U Win Naing and 400 protestors marched toward Sule Pagoda in Rangoon. USDA and SAS members beat demonstrators, snatched cameras,

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<sup>81</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Aye Maung*”, 22-year-old male NLD Youth member, 24 October 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Sources: *Ibid.*

and abducted many individuals from the group. Eyewitnesses interviewed by HRDU have reported that several people were injured, including a number of children and monks.<sup>83</sup>

*“When we got to the Hlaedan Junction from [Myay Ni Gone], we joined with the demonstrators led by Ma Nilar Thein, and then we proceeded to [Tha Mine] Junction. At that time, we heard the report that a group of thugs was now gathering near the ‘Eight-Mile’ Junction. Hearing this, we went to see for ourselves. I estimate that there was over 2,000 people there armed with sticks. Having seen that, we told the protesters to turn around and not to march forward. However, before the protesters could turn around, a group of thugs violently attacked and detained them. This happened around midday. Some men and women were taken away. Other protesters and people were wounded but managed to flee.”<sup>84</sup>*

*“They [USDA and SAS] followed us and beat the people from behind. Some people ran away. They caught some of the protesters from the group so we rescued them and brought them back to our side. When they managed to grab somebody from the crowd, four people dragged them onto their truck. They continued to beat those people on the back. Their sticks were wrapped with plastic sheets.”<sup>85</sup>*

On 23 August 2007, the SAS physically attacked a group of approximately 200 protestors near the Shwegondine Junction in Rangoon who responded by forming a human chain so that no one could be dragged away. Despite this, about 30 protestors were beaten and dragged away. Onlookers were ordered out of the area and members of the media were also reported to have been assaulted.<sup>86</sup> The following day, plain clothes SPDC agents, believed to be members of the USDA and SAS again attacked demonstrators outside city hall in downtown Rangoon, reportedly abducting a further 20 individuals from the group.<sup>87</sup>

*“When the protests reached Shwegondine Junction, three trucks full of USDA forces blocked the road. Numbering about a hundred, these forces were led by U Aung Maw Latt, Bahan Township Chairman and Ye Kyaw Thu, USDA Township Secretary. U Aung Maw Latt and his forces climbed down from the trucks and blocked the road. ‘The marching is not allowed. Everyone knows about the hike of gas*

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<sup>83</sup> Sources: *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Source: *Report on Human Rights Violations in Burma*, Human Rights for All, December 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Khin Oo”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>86</sup> Source: “Burma activists protest over fuel,” BBC, 23 August 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Sources: “Arrests Thwart New Myanmar Protests,” AP, 24 August 2007; “Myanmar Arrests 20 More Protesters,” AFP, 24 August 2007; “USDA Members Bash, Arrest 30 activists,” DVB, 24 August 2007.

prices. You don't need to shout about it on the street. Disperse the crowd or you'll face problems,' threatened U Win Maw Latt and his forces. The protesters replied that they were marching peacefully on the pavements, that they were not creating disturbances, that they had a right to express their own wishes and that they would continue to march onward. Soon afterwards, the USDA members and other government-hired thugs started to attack the demonstrators. Unable to march forward, the protesters decided to initiate sit-ins. Then, the thugs brutally clamped down on the protestors and took them to the trucks nearby. Some girls were stripped of their longyis [sarongs] and their clothes were torn apart too. Some men were not only physically attacked, but their clothes were forcibly taken off to humiliate them. I was taken into a car by six people, and stripped [of] my clothes. Along with thirteen [others] I was taken to the [Kyaikkasan] interrogation centre".<sup>88</sup>

"When we confronted by the authorities on 23 August, we began to debate with their leaders about our protest. At this time, agents of the authorities began beating, punching and seizing us. Before doing this, the authorities made one or two buses stop. The cars had to stop, and because of the stoppage, people [onlookers] and the media who were on the opposite side of the road could no longer see us. It was at that moment that they cracked down on us. When they began pulling some of us by our shirt collars we joined hands to prevent them from being able to take us away. Over 20 people were arrested. Young students who saw and argued with them [about the treatment of the protestors] were also beaten and arrested by the USDA".<sup>89</sup>

"I joined a protest group marching to Shwegondine from Tamwe [Township] on 23 August. It was all peaceful until Swan Arr Shin members started beating up the protesters in Shwegondine. Traffic police deliberately let a lot of big buses go onto the street where the protest was being staged to block the scene from public view. Then the Swan Arr Shin members came in beating up the protesters. They pulled off the longyis of both male and female protesters, shaming them and leaving them in only their underwear while they arrested them".<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Source: *Report on Human Rights Violations in Burma*, Human Rights for All, December 2007.

<sup>89</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Aye Maung", 22-year-old male NLD Youth member, 24 October 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Naing Than", 27-year-old male civil servant, 19 October 2007.

Meanwhile, on 23 August, 58-year-old Ohn Than was arrested while staging a solo protest outside the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon calling for UN intervention to initiate the convening of a parliament in Burma.<sup>91</sup>

On 25 August, Ko Htin Kyaw, the leader of the MDC, was arrested with MDC member Ko Zaw Nyunt minutes into a demonstration at the Theingyi Market in downtown Rangoon.<sup>92</sup>

On 28 August 2007, an estimated 50 protestors demonstrated at Hlaedan Junction in Rangoon. Security forces alongside plain clothes militia set upon the group, assaulting and arresting around 20 of them, the majority of whom were NLD members. Prominent activist, Su Su Nway, who had led the group, managed to evade arrest at the time, and went into hiding.<sup>93</sup>

By the beginning of September, over 150 activists had been arrested. Almost the entire leadership of the 88 Generation Students' Group were included in this number. The remaining leaders were forced underground into hiding, as the authorities' search for key persons still at large intensified with severe pressure applied to the activists' families, and midnight searches conducted on many homes. Buses were stopped and searched on roads leading to Thailand, and photographs of well known activists were distributed to hotels and guesthouses. Arrests and searches were carried out by members of the police, USDA and SAS.<sup>94</sup>

This campaign of arrests and intimidation largely quelled protests in the former capital. Nevertheless, the protest movement had spread and continued to propagate in many other parts of the country, including Magwe, Mandalay, Sittwe, and Irrawaddy Divisions. In Taungup, Arakan State, 250 miles northwest of Rangoon, around 1,000 people marched in protest of the earlier arrest of two men for demonstrating against fuel price rises.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Source: "Despite over 100 arrests, protests continue; still no action by UN," AHRC, 29 August 2007.

<sup>92</sup> Source: "At least 65 persons reported arrested over protests against fuel prices," AHRC, 26 August 2007.

<sup>93</sup> Sources: "Dozens detained over new protest in Myanmar," AFP, 28 August 2007; "Burmese Authorities Arrest Two Prominent Dissidents: Roundup Continues in Wake of Protests," *Washington Post*, 14 November 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Sources: "Myanmar Opposition Calls for Dialogue as Charter Talks Near End," AFP, 1 September 2007; "Burma: Constitutional Convention Reinforces Military Rule," HRW, 5 September 2007; "Summary of Events in Burma, August 19-25," APPPB, 2007; "Contrary to Claims of Burma's Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days," AAPPB, 27 August 2007; "Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices," AHRC, August 2007; "Location of arrested activists remains unknown," *Irrawaddy*, 4 September 2007; "Myanmar protest march attracts 1,000 people," Reuters, 4 September 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Sources: "Summary of Events in Burma, August 19-25," APPPB, 2007; "Contrary to Claims of Burma's Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days,"

## IV. The Saffron Revolution

On 28 August 2007, members of Burma's monastic community joined the protests for the first time, when around 200 monks took to the streets in Sittwe, Arakan State. Though the monks were not prevented from conducting their protest, five monks were arrested as a result.<sup>96</sup>

The introduction of the monks into the protest movement was significant, given the high regard in which they are held in predominately-Buddhist Burma. Their introduction served to legitimize and reinvigorate the protest movement, at a time when much of the leadership of the initial protests had been either arrested or forced into hiding.

### The SPDC and the Sangha

The SPDC has itself routinely manipulated the pervasive and popular nature of Buddhism to further its political agenda and garner legitimacy in the eyes of not only the resident population, but also of the international community. State-run media not only frequently promotes Buddhist teaching and scripture, but habitually reports on SPDC officials paying homage to members of the Sangha (Buddhist monastic community), making donations at pagodas, and organising alleged voluntary donations and labour for the construction and maintenance of Buddhist sites.<sup>97</sup>

In promoting and legitimizing itself through the sponsorship of an already widely respected institution, the Burmese junta has always been acutely aware that it is offering its support to a religion which represents one of the largest potential threats to its own grasp on power.

The recent events of September 2007 do not represent the first time that Burma's monastic community has stood against the regime. In 1990, monks in Mandalay organised a boycott of alms donated by the military. The boycott was introduced following an attack on a group of monks who had been commemorating the 1988 popular uprising. According to Buddhist practice, the refusal of alms is considered the most extreme sanction that the religious community can impose upon laypersons. In response, the military raided over a hundred monasteries and thousands of monks were detained. The junta justified its actions by asserting that those who were arrested were not 'genuine monks'.

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AAPPB, 27 August 2007; "Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices," AHRC, August 2007.; "Myanmar protest march attracts 1,000 people," Reuters, 4 September 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Sources: "Monks and students demonstrate in Arakan State," *Kaladan News*, 29 August 2007; "Myanmar monks locked up," Reuters, 17 September 2007.

<sup>97</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2006: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 15 September 2006.

The regime also introduced the 1990 Sangha Organisation Law which criminalised all independent monastic orders. The nine remaining legal orders were placed under the central control of the SPDC-sponsored *Sangha Maha Nayaka* Committee (SMNC).

A second diktat, Order #7/90, prohibited monks from participating in non-religious activities. Following the imposition of this order, monks have been banned from preaching political sermons or criticising SPDC policies. In addition, monks are not permitted to join political parties, and since 1995 the junta has prohibited any opposition political party member from being ordained as a monk or religious leader.

In this way, the SPDC has attempted to guarantee that the Sangha serves to legitimize rather than challenge its own grip on power.

## Interdependence of the Monastic and Lay Communities

Despite tight control on their activities, the very nature of Buddhist practice ensures interdependence between the layperson and the monk, and it was this reciprocal relationship which proved to be beyond the SPDC's control in catalysing the Sangha into joining the protests.

The act of the giving of alms to members of the monastic community is central to this interdependence. It is common Buddhist practice for the general population to provide alms to monks in order to nurture virtue and gain merit through their charity. It serves to connect the layperson to the monk and what he represents. Various Buddhist texts speak of the custom of alms giving. The following excerpt is one such text from *The Group of Fours (Itivuttaka 4.8)*:

*“Householders and the homeless [monastic community]  
in mutual dependence  
both reach the true Dhamma:  
the unsurpassed safety from bondage.  
From householders, the homeless  
receive requisites: robes, lodgings,  
protection from inclemencies”<sup>98</sup>.*

In practice, this means that the Sangha within Burma is reliant upon the general population to sustain their way of life. Though, in recent years, economic hardship and increases in the cost of living has meant that the lay community has found it increasingly difficult to maintain this level of contribution.

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<sup>98</sup> Source: *The Group of Fours* (Itivuttaka 4), Thanissaro Bhikkhu (trans.), 2001, accessed at: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/iti/iti.4.100-112.than.html>.

*“Over the past year, we monks have been facing increasing difficulties when we went out to collect food. Only three families out of every thirty can afford to donate food because the civilians are also facing great difficulties for their livelihoods”.<sup>99</sup>*

*“As monks, we see everything. When we beg for our food we see how the rich live and the poor. ... We see how everything is getting worse and worse. More and more people struggle to give us rice. They want to, but they have to spare it for their own mouths”.<sup>100</sup>*



Members of Rangoon’s lay community showed their support and shielded the monks from attack by forming human chains around processions of thousands of monks as they marched through the streets of Rangoon on 24 September 2007. [© Reuters].

The situation deteriorated further following the August 2007 hike in fuel prices. Nearly 400 monks from the Mahabawdi Monastery in Irrawaddy Division’s Maubin Township reported that they had been forced to skip meals because the local population were no longer able to adequately support them.

<sup>99</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Shwe Min”, 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007.

<sup>100</sup> Source: An unnamed monk from Mandalay, cited in: “Burma monks not ready to forgive,” BBC, 14 November 2007.

*“We are skipping breakfast now since we don’t have enough money for rice for all of us. The people here are also struggling and they can’t donate much to us, we are no longer able to cook for ourselves as we don’t have enough food supplies.”<sup>101</sup>*

The relationship between the monastic and lay communities, however, is not all one-sided. The monks do not only rely on the lay population for their survival, but they also have a role in ensuring the well being of the population.

*“After the fuel prices were raised, the people struggled in their lives even more than before. Some people didn’t have enough food because a large portion of their income was used for transportation costs. They couldn’t support their families as well as making donations to the monks. Basically, the livelihoods of the monks rely on the people of Burma. When most of the people of Burma are extremely poor, it is also very difficult for us monks to do our work. Just as importantly, we don’t want to ignore their poverty. So we made our demonstration peacefully by marching and praying.”<sup>102</sup>*

*“We can’t sit back and watch the people who sponsor us sink into poverty. Their poverty is our poverty as well.”<sup>103</sup>*

## **Pakokku and the Call for Excommunication**

On 5 September 2007, SPDC army troops, in action for the first time in suppressing demonstrations, fired warning shots over the heads of an estimated 500 monks demonstrating peacefully in Pakokku, Magwe Division. Soldiers, alongside USDA and SAS members then assaulted a number of monks in the process of breaking up the demonstration. At least one monk was reported as having been tied to a lamppost and severely beaten by the soldiers with the butts of their rifles. Unconfirmed reports claim one monk was killed during the crackdown. Three of the monks arrested at this time continued to be detained at the time of publication.<sup>104</sup> In retaliation to the mistreatment of their monastic brothers, the following day, monks from Maha Visutarama Monastery, the

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<sup>101</sup> Source: U Paneida, abbot of Mahawdi Monastery, cited in “Ma-ubin monks go hungry as commodity crisis continues,” DVB, 12 September 2007.

<sup>102</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Hlaing Soe”, 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Source: An unnamed monk from Pakokku, cited in *Summary of Demonstrations and Related Events in Burma, September 2-8 2007*, APPPB, September 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

largest monastery in Pakokku took between 10 and 20 SPDC officials hostage and set fire to their vehicles. They were released six hours later.<sup>105</sup>

On 7 September 2007, two days after the events at Pakokku, the SPDC predictably attempted to lay the blame for the situation on unnamed opposition groups operating in exile, accusing them of *“giving directives and providing various sorts of assistance to internal anti-government groups to stir up mass demonstrations and instability”*.<sup>106</sup>

On 9 September 2007, an underground organization of monks calling themselves the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), who had formed despite the ban against it, issued four demands upon the SPDC:

1. To issue a public apology for the brutal crackdown on the peaceful demonstration of monks in Pakokku;
2. To immediately reduce all basic commodity prices, fuel prices, and rice and cooking oil prices;
3. To release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all detainees arrested in the ongoing demonstrations over the fuel price hike; and
4. To immediately enter into dialogue with democratic opposition groups to seek national reconciliation and to resolve the crises and difficulties suffered by the populace.

The ABMA issued the deadline of 17 September 2007 for their four demands to be met, at which point it would call upon all monks across the country to boycott any religious activities, including the acceptance of alms, involving the regime and its associates.

*“The military regime thought they could do whatever they wanted all over the country and to all of the people. They thought that they could control the people very well because they have many, many weapons; that they can resort to lawless treatment. So [in view of this] the government ignored [the monk’s demands]”*.<sup>107</sup>

The junta responded by reasserting its established influence over all monastic authorities. The SPDC held discussions with senior monks to control the movement of monks in monasteries throughout the country. In some parts of the country, monks were even prohibited from going out on their morning alms rounds. In other areas, restrictions were placed on the times at which alms

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<sup>105</sup> Sources: *Summary of Demonstrations and Related Events in Burma, September 2-8 2007*, A PPPB, September 2007; “Myanmar monks seize govt officials, burn cars,” Reuters, 6 September 2007; “Protesting Myanmar monks free hostages,” AP, 6 September 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Source: “Myanmar junta blames exiles for unrest,” Reuters, 7 September 2007.

<sup>107</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Thu Nyunt*”, 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

could be collected. In addition, security forces were stationed outside numerous monasteries in key religious centres such as Rangoon, Mandalay and Pakokku.<sup>108</sup>

Military officials across the country also increased their donations to monasteries, which some refused to accept. Fifteen senior monks from four monasteries in Pakokku were called to a meeting with senior-level SPDC officials where they were offered 30,000 kyat as compensation for the SPDC's brutality. However, the monks in attendance at that meeting expressed their dissatisfaction at being offered money in the place of an apology.<sup>109</sup>



A Buddhist monk holds his alms bowl aloft in the symbolic *Patam nikkujjana kamma* or the “overturning of the alms bowl”. This gesture represents a boycott on all religious activities, including the acceptance of alms from the military junta and its associates. The boycott was enacted following a failure by the SPDC to respond to the monks’ demands for reform. [© Reuters].

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<sup>108</sup> Source: *Summary of Events in Burma, September 9-15, 2007*, A PPPB, September 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

## Nationwide Protests Declared

On 14 September 2007, the ABMA issued a second statement declaring that “*the SPDC leaders failed to reply*” to their demands and as a result they would initiate their boycott effective 17 September.<sup>110</sup> The statement also called for the resumption of peaceful protests. On the same day, the front page of every SPDC-controlled newspaper carried stories of the generals giving offerings to monasteries.<sup>111</sup>

On 17 September, thousands of monks took to the streets in protest in cities across the country, including, but not limited to, Rangoon, Mandalay, Pegu, Sittwe, Kale, Pakokku, Kyauk Padaung, Tharrawaddy, Aunglan and Chauk. During the demonstrations, the following excommunicative boycott decree was recited:

*“Reverend clergy, may you listen to my words. The violent, mean, cruel, ruthless, pitiless kings [military leaders] - the great thieves who live by stealing from the national treasury - have killed a monk at Pakkoku, and also arrested reverend clergymen by trussing them up with rope. They beat and tortured, verbally abused and threatened them. The clergy who are replete with the Four Attributes [worthy of offerings, hospitality, gifts and salutation] must boycott the violent, mean, cruel, ruthless, pitiless soldier kings, the great thieves who live by stealing from the national treasury. The clergy also must refuse donations (of four types) and preaching. This is to inform, advise and propose.*

*“Reverend clergy, may you listen to my words. The violent, mean, cruel, ruthless, pitiless soldier kings - the great thieves who live by stealing from the national treasury - have killed a monk at Pakkoku, and also arrested reverend clergymen by trussing them up with rope. They beat and tortured, verbally abused and threatened them. Clergy replete with the Four Attributes - boycott the violent, mean, cruel, ruthless, pitiless kings, the great thieves who live by stealing from the national treasury. Clergy - also refuse donations and preaching. If the reverends consent and are pleased at the boycott and refusal of donations and preaching, please stay silent; if not in consent and displeased, please voice objections.”*

*[Silence]*

*“The clergy boycotts the violent, mean, cruel, ruthless, pitiless kings, the great thieves who live by stealing from the national treasury. The clergy hereby also refuses donations and preaching.”<sup>112</sup>*

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<sup>110</sup> Source: “Appeal to All Allied Forces, Monks and Abbots,” ABMA, 14 September 2007.

<sup>111</sup> Source: “During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists,” RSF, 20 September 2007.

<sup>112</sup> Source: “AHRC appeals for global Buddhist boycott of Burma regime,” AHRC, 20 September 2007.

The widespread popularity and respect for the monastic community in Burma placed the SPDC in a difficult situation. Further brutality would only risk exacerbating the situation. However, a failure to react would mean allowing protests to go unchecked and potentially emboldening the population to come out in support of the monks.

In the isolated northern western city of Sittwe in Arakan State, far from the eyes of not only the international community but also the rest of the Burmese population, protests were broken up by authorities with the first display of the use of force on 18 September. Security forces fired rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowds, and monks and civilians alike were beaten.

*“On 18 September 2007, the authorities called Lon Htein [riot police] tried to stop the monks leading the protests by shooting them with rubber bullets. I witnessed them beating the monks and people and using tear gas to split the protests group up. Many monks and people were injured. Four monks were arrested after they had been injured. The monks were released in the evening at 4:00 pm after they signed a vow not to protest again. On 19 September, the authorities continued to beat the monks and people, using tear gas to disperse the protests. Mostly it was the monks and people who led the protests who were among the worst wounded”*<sup>113</sup>.

By and large, however, the junta refrained from using direct violence against the protestors. Utilizing similar methods to those employed during the 1990 protests, they instead opted to publicly discredit those monks taking part in nationwide protests. The SPDC asserted that those monks taking part in the protests represented only a tiny proportion of the monk population in Burma and as such were not representative of the whole. They also alleged that these monks were failing to act in accordance with Buddhist principles, and went so far as to accuse that some were not genuine monks by labelling them as “bogus” monks. By way of example, on 19 September 2007, the junta-controlled *New Light of Myanmar* reported that “[d]ue to exaggerations, tricks and instigation and the perpetration to organize the members of the Sangha by planting bogus monks, there broke out violent demonstrations in Pakkoku on 5 and 6 September in which cars were burnt down”.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Naing Thaung*”, 27-year-old male student, 5 October 2007.

<sup>114</sup> Source: “Destructive elements inciting instigation to grab power through short cut Foreign radio stations airing exaggerated news, trying to instigate public, launching propaganda campaigns Due to exaggerations, tricks and instigation by bogus monks, violent demonstrations break out in Pakokku, some monks stage protest walk in Sittway Some Buddhist monks also march in procession in Yangon People oppose any attempt to destroy peace and stability, wish Sayadaws to guide monks to follow Vinaya rules in interest of people”, *New Light of Myanmar*, 18 September 2007.

Attempts to discredit the protest movement proved ineffectual, as the interdependence of the Buddhist lay community and the monastic community was further illustrated by the way in which the demonstrations continued to grow in size. While the monks initially urged civilians not to join their protests out of concern for their safety, civilians demonstrated their support by turning out in increasing numbers, clapping, cheering, giving offerings and forming human chains around processions of monks. The reasons given by people for joining the protests stemmed not only out of a concern for their own situation, but also out of a high regard for the moral authority of the monks, an ingrained sense of duty towards the monks, and a felt obligation to support those who were supporting them.

*"I joined the protests on 25 September mainly because of the commodity price hikes, but also because monks who eat only one meal a day were protesting for us. It made me think that we laypersons, who eat twice a day, should at least join in and support their movement".<sup>115</sup>*

*"At first, the monks were not willing to let the public participate in their movement because they didn't want the public to be hurt by the SPDC. However, the people were also worried about the monks and became increasingly involved in the protests".<sup>116</sup>*

*"I was became very sad when I saw the monks marching every day. I realised then that it [the protests] was the duty of all civilians and not just of monks".<sup>117</sup>*

*"I remembered that an old lady who was over 70 years of age joined with us as we marched through Botataung Township. When people appealed to her not to take part in the demonstration because of her old age, she ignored them and walked with us. The monks gave her sweets and soft drinks. Even though she was very tired, she told everyone that she was OK. I could see in her eyes that she wanted to sacrifice to make the people free from the one-sided rule of the military junta".<sup>118</sup>*

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<sup>115</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Zin Aung", 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Shwe Naing", 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>117</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Maung Maung", 24-year-old male civilian, 9 November 2007.

<sup>118</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Shwe Naing", 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

In contrast to the testimony of the eyewitnesses, on 3 October 2007, the *New Light of Myanmar* proffered its own assessment of the situation:

*“Later, the walks were joined by artless people demanding release of Daw Suu Kyi and political prisoners, and dialogue. Making a human chain around the group of protesters was intended to prevent the protesters from getting out of the group, like the stage in the 8-8-1988 unrest. Besides, they asked onlookers to clap the protesters for forced support for the protest. These patterns are the same as the ones designed by CIA and BCP in the 8-8-1988 unrest”*.<sup>119</sup>

While the SPDC made its accusations of “*bogus*” monks inciting the protests, several independent sources have reported that it was in fact SPDC agents including members of the USDA who were impersonating monks to infiltrate the protests.<sup>120</sup> Rather than intending to prevent protestors “*getting out*”, it was largely as a result of these reports that civilians formed a human chain around the columns of monks; in order to protect them and to stop infiltrators getting in.

*“On 19 September, some monks marched into the square of the Shwedagon Pagoda. We protected them hand in hand from the SPDC-backed thugs who would have disturbed the protests”*.<sup>121</sup>

On 22 September, a procession of monks marching through Rangoon was mysteriously permitted to pass through security barriers to continue their march past the home of detained Nobel Peace Prize laureate and NLD leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She was able to greet the monks from behind the gate of her residence. The monks responded by reciting prayers for Suu Kyi, who reportedly wept at the sight of them. The moment was seen as symbolic and acted to provide momentum to the already burgeoning protests. It remains unclear why the SPDC permitted this meeting to take place, knowing that such a meeting would serve as a spark to ignite full scale protests.

*“I saw Daw Aung San Su Kyi come out from her house, with eyes full of tears. She prayed for monks at the gate of her house. We stopped there for about ten minutes. Even one of the army officer’s eye’s filled with tears. The world saw her again due to our protest and it gave moral support to the Burmese people”*.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Source: “Foreigners want to see unrest the Myanmar people dislike,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 3 October 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Sources: “Summary of Events in Burma, September 9-15, 2007,” APPPB, September 2007; “Burma regime planning to infiltrate demonstrations to spark violence,” Burma Campaign UK, 24 September 2007.

<sup>121</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Ne Lin*”, 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007.

<sup>122</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zeya Aung*”, 47-year-old male civilian protest leader, 20 October 2007.

By 24 September, some monk leaders had openly called on sympathisers to join their marches for the first time which resulted in an estimated 100,000 protesters taking to the streets in Rangoon. That morning, popular public figures such as comedian Zagarnar and film star Kyaw Thu publicly offered alms to the monks in open support for the protests. At one point, thousands of members of Rangoon's Muslim community came out and marched side-by-side with the Buddhist monks. One Burmese Muslim later commented on the protests: "*For the first time in our life we felt a sense of solidarity with the Buddhist Burmese*".<sup>123</sup>

On this day, the demonstrations became more openly political, with MP-elects, NLD members, and students overtly participating for the first time in their role as politically motivated and affiliated persons (many had previously taken part but only as individual civilians). The fighting peacock flag, the traditional symbol of the Burmese democratic movement, was also displayed by protestors for the first time.

Similarly, in Sittwe, Arakan State, crowds of up to 100,000 were reported to have joined the protests. Demonstrations also took place in at least 25 other cities and towns across the country, including in Pegu, Mandalay, Sagaing and Magwe, and Tenasserim Divisions, as well as Mon, Arakan and Kachin States.<sup>124</sup>

In response, to the growing civil unrest, Directive #93 was issued by the SPDC-controlled *Sangha Maha Nayaka* Committee. The directive called for state, division, township, and ward *Sangha Nayaka* Committees to supervise the Buddhist monks and novices so that they were only practicing *Pariyatti* and *Patipatti* (the theory and practice of the Buddha's teachings) and were refraining from participation in secular affairs.<sup>125</sup>

On the evening of the 24 September, SPDC Minister for Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, was quoted on state television as promising action against any and all protesting monks in stating that, "*[t]he monks who are walking [in protest] now represent only two percent of the nationwide monk population. ... If they do not operate according to Buddhist rules then they will be faced with the law*".<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Source: "Deceptively Calm" *Irrawaddy*, 1 December 2007.

<sup>124</sup> Source: "Summary of Events in Burma, September 9-15, 2007," A PPPB, September 2007.

<sup>125</sup> Source: "State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee has duty to reinforce and observe basic principles and rules and regulations and implement religious matters; the directives state all the rules and regulations for the monks prohibiting them from participating in secular affairs," *New Light of Myanmar*, 25 September 2007.

<sup>126</sup> Source: Statement by Minister for Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, shown on state television, 24 September 2007.

That same evening, trucks mounted with loudspeakers toured Rangoon's streets, reminding everyone of the imposition of Order #2/88, banning gatherings of more than five people and issuing a warning that anyone who continued to participate in the demonstrations would be dealt with under Section #144 of the Burmese Penal Code, which states that:

*"Whoever, being armed with any deadly weapon, or with anything which used as a weapon of offence, is likely to cause death, [and] is a member of an unlawful assembly, shall be punished with imprisonment ... for a term which may extend to two years, or with a fine, or with both".<sup>127</sup>*

Nevertheless, the following day, 25 September 2007, tens of thousands of people, monks and laypersons alike, again took to the streets of Rangoon in defiance of these orders and of the SPDC itself. That evening, the loudspeaker-bearing trucks once again toured the streets, this time announcing the imposition of a curfew barring people from going out of their houses between the hours of 9:00 pm and 5:00 am. Announcements also reiterated the ban on gatherings of more than five people.<sup>128</sup> Security forces visited religious compounds throughout the city warning the monks that they would be arrested and punished if they continued to join the demonstrations, and had maintained that they had obtained approval for such actions from the Chairman of the *Sangha Maya Nayaka* Committee.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Source: Section #144, Chapter VIII, Myanmar Penal Code, accessed at: <http://www.blc-burma.org/html/Myanmar%20Penal%20Code/mpc.html>.

<sup>128</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Shwe Min", 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007.

<sup>129</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with "U Shwe Min", 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007; HRDU Interview with "U Ko Ko Win", 34-year-old Buddhist monk, 16 November 2007.

## V. Crackdown on the Streets

### Wednesday, 26 September 2007

On the morning of the 26 September, troops and riot police were stationed at key locations throughout Rangoon, and had sealed off numerous monasteries around the city, locking the monk population inside. In the face of such increased security, tens of thousands again turned out on the streets to continue their peaceful protests.

#### Shwedagon Pagoda

By 8:00 am, monks and some civilians had already begun to assemble at Shwedagon Pagoda for the day's protests. At this time, SPDC army soldiers and riot police could already be seen taking up positions around the monastery. Shortly afterwards, security forces began to block all gates leading into the pagoda. Three additional truckloads of police officers then arrived and rushed into the pagoda compound, forcing those inside towards the eastern stairway.

By 10:00 am, approximately one thousand monk and civilian protestors found themselves trapped on the road leading down from the east gate of Shwedagon, between Ar Zar Ni Street and Old Yae Tar Shae Road.<sup>130</sup>

The monks were then ordered into waiting military trucks to be taken back to their respective monasteries. The monks were informed that the *Sangha Maya Nayaka* Committee had already provided the Minister for Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung with consent to initiate a crackdown on those monks who persisted in their protests. In response to this, the monks agreed to disperse, but wary of the security forces, insisted on making their own arrangements for returning to their monasteries. This request, however, was flatly refused by the security forces on location.<sup>131</sup>

At 11:30 am, a senior monk, believed to be over 80 years of age, again approached the riot police to discuss the situation. This time, however, the response was violent.

*"An old monk who was over 80-years-old, came out to talk with the authorities but was pushed to the ground by a member of the riot police. When the old monk fell over, a soldier went to beat him with the butt of his gun so some younger monks ran over to assist the old*

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<sup>130</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with "Ko Khin Soe", 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007; HRDU Interview with "Ko Ne Lin", 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007; HRDU Interview with "Maung Nay Min", 29-year-old male civilian, 5 November 2007.

<sup>131</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with "Ko Ne Lin", 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007; HRDU Interview with "U Hlaing Soe", 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

*monk and confront the security personnel. One of these [younger] monks was beaten with a bamboo stick by a riot police officer, causing his head to bleed*".<sup>132</sup>

By this time, a large group of protestors had gathered behind the security barriers, outside the eastern gate, and were incensed by what they witnessed.

*"People were getting angry. They had never witnessed a monk being beaten by the police before. The people took some bricks in their hands but the monks stopped them from using them. We really wanted to attack the authorities but one of the monks implored us to remain peaceful*".<sup>133</sup>

The crowd trapped inside the security perimeter was likewise placated through the appeals of monks to remain calm and not to resort to violence. Many monks, leading by example sat down and began to recite the *'metta sutta'* (the Buddha's words of loving kindness). Despite this, within minutes of the elderly monk being assaulted, the security forces initiated their crackdown upon the trapped group. The riot police initially beat their shields with their batons in order to intimidate the protestors. This frightened a number of young novices who broke from the group and tried to escape by climbing the walls lining the street. However, the riot police took this as their cue to begin their assault, beating and arresting whoever they could. They were joined in their attack by members of SAS. Those persons arrested were loaded *en masse* into military trucks and driven away from the scene.<sup>134</sup>

*"One of the young monks stood up and ran to the wall beside the road. When he tried to climb over the high wall, some monks and civilians followed him even though we told them not to flee like that. The riot police chased and beat them. Some monks were beaten until they fell to the ground and many were beaten on their heads. I even saw them stomp on one of the monks while he was on the ground. They then loaded these people onto their trucks*".<sup>135</sup>

*"They beat any part of the body as much as they could. Some monks were beaten until they fell to the ground or became unconscious. I myself witnessed at least eight people, including monks, who were beaten and kicked. Before I fled, a 'Dyna' car [small flatbed truck] full*

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<sup>132</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Khin Soe", 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>133</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with "Ko Htet Kyaw Win", 29-year-old male civilian, 9 November 2007; HRDU Interview with "U Hlaing Soe", 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007; HRDU Interview with "Ma Khin Oo", 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>135</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Hlaing Soe", 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

*of Swan Arr Shin members arrived and began arresting monks and people and loading them onto their truck”<sup>136</sup>*

*“We never expected the security forces to act so harshly. The riot police beat up everyone including the monks and women, before dragging them onto their trucks. The scene was chaotic. We were trapped. Some people tried to escape the beating by running through the pagoda gates but they were locked and a lot of soldiers were stationed there. So we all started climbing over the walls of a monastery. I got hit once on the back of my head when I was climbing the wall, but managed to escape”<sup>137</sup>*

The large crowd gathered outside the security perimeter responded to the attacks on the monks, venting their anger by throwing projectiles gathered from the street at the security forces. Riot police responded to this by launching tear gas canisters into the crowd. Gunshots were reported to have followed. One monk who had fled the initial crackdown and managed to join the crowd outside described these events to HRDU:

*“Even though people knew that the demonstrators inside the blockade were being beaten, they were unable to get past the barriers to help. So, some were shouting violent words to the riot police. Others threw stones at them. They couldn’t control their anger. In response, the security forces fired tear gas shells into the crowd and fired their guns in the air. We wet our robes and used them to cover our faces from the tear gas. Although the crowd initially dispersed, they quickly re-gathered, and again threw stones at the riot police. The situation went on like this for at least an hour. We persuaded the demonstrators that if the situation continued like this the riot police would increase their use of violence. So we reorganized the protestors to go Sule Pagoda”<sup>138</sup>*

Another monk who witnessed demonstrators fleeing from the scene of the crackdown reported on the extent of their injuries.

*“The monks were beaten badly on their heads. It seemed that the riot police were deliberately targeting the monk’s heads. There was so much blood coming from some of them that it was hard to find where they were bleeding from”<sup>139</sup>*

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<sup>136</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Htet Kyaw Win”, 29-year-old male civilian, 9 November 2007.

<sup>137</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Maung Nay Min”, 29-year-old male civilian, 5 November 2007.

<sup>138</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Hlaing Soe”, 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

<sup>139</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Shwe Min”, 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007.



Clouds of smoke and tear gas rise over the site of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon on 26 September 2007. Clearly visible in the background are a series of police and military barricades set up across the road in preparation to suppress further protests and to prevent access to the holy site. [© Reuters].

Many eyewitnesses have testified to protestors lying motionless on the ground after being beaten by security forces, and then being dragged onto trucks and driven away by the authorities. During the height of the confrontation, at roughly 11:45 am, one solitary monk, carrying the Buddhist flag, approached the scene along Old Yae Tar Shae Road. He was separated from the main body of protestors by a security perimeter, who could only watch as he was set upon by three members of the riot police.

*"I saw a lone monk marching along the Bahan Road towards the military roadblock, carrying a Sasana [Buddhist] flag, to where the beating was going on in front of the Shwedagon Pagoda. He was the monk who was beaten to death during the event. Three riot policemen approached him and started beating him on his legs. He fell onto ground but attempted to stand back up by using the flag pole as a support but one of the riot police tried to snatch it from his hand. He didn't let the pole out of his hand and it broke during the struggle. The other two policemen bashed the monk on his head and he collapsed onto his back. He vomited blood and died after the policeman who tried to snatch the flag pole hit him hard on his neck with a baton. They dumped his body in a truck like a piece of trash".<sup>140</sup>*

Another monk was also reported to have been beaten to death in Kyethun Pagoda, at the junction of Old Yae Tar Shae Road and Kyar Taw Ya Street (the main scene of the crackdown). A crowd of monks and students had already gathered inside the pagoda earlier that morning, and though they were not trapped, they were separated from the rest of the protestors by a blockade that the riot police had set up in front of the pagoda. After an hour-long standoff between these monks and the riot police, at approximately 11:30 am, the security forces attacked. An eyewitness to the event has described to HRDU what he believed to be the killing of one of the monks:

*"On 26 September, I arrived at the east gate of Shwedagon [Pagoda] at roughly 10:30 am. I could see from where I was standing that a group of around 400 monks and students were inside the Kyethun Pagoda compound and wanted to exit through the east gate of Shwedagon Pagoda. The authorities were blocking this entrance and ordered the group to disperse. They were told that they had orders to shoot, if the group refused their order. The standoff continued for almost an hour. At this time, the riot police fired tear gas into the compound, and moved towards the crowd in formation. They heavily beat everyone that they caught. I saw many monks with bloody heads running away. One monk continued to sit in his spot. I think he was in his forties. He was facing Shwedagon [Pagoda] and praying, with the Buddhist flag held up in one hand. He was heavily beaten twice on his head. After that, he did not move, he just lay on the ground lifeless. About ten minutes later, they [security forces] removed his robes and redressed him in a t-shirt*

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<sup>140</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Maung Nay Min", 29-year-old male civilian, 5 November 2007.

*and longyi [sarong]. Two members of the riot police then picked up his body; one took the legs and the other the arms and they threw him onto their truck”<sup>141</sup>*

Though it was somewhat difficult for eyewitnesses to ascertain if persons were killed or merely rendered unconscious by the beatings that they received, the AFP news agency confirmed the deaths of three monks in the vicinity of Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September, after speaking with two senior SPDC officials. Two monks were reportedly beaten to death, and a third was shot while trying to wrestle a rifle away from a soldier.<sup>142</sup>

It is exceedingly difficult to estimate how many persons were arrested at this time, but according to the testimony of eyewitnesses at the scene, it is likely to have been in the hundreds. Many eyewitnesses interviewed by HRDU have testified as seeing several trucks loaded with protestors being driven from the scene of the crackdown: *“The riot police were beating and arresting everyone, including bystanders on my side of the roadblock. I saw around four or five military trucks loaded full of the people and monks who were arrested. However, these were only the people who were outside the siege [those not inside the pagoda]”<sup>143</sup>*.

Nevertheless, large numbers managed to escape the security forces, many of whom regrouped and reassembled to continue their protests in utter defiance of the violence that they had just managed to escape.

## **Downtown Rangoon**

Numerous separate columns of protestors marched through downtown Rangoon, on the afternoon of 26 September, many of whom had come together following the violent crackdown at Shwedagon Pagoda.

In the two hours between 1:00 and 3:00 pm, security forces around Sule Pagoda fired a series of warning shots and tear gas canisters in an attempt to disperse the large crowd which had gathered along Sule Pagoda Road. As more columns of protestors began to arrive in the downtown area, the security forces commenced a more proactive and systematic crackdown, firing their weapons while moving into the crowd, and beating and arresting each demonstrator they managed to apprehend.

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<sup>141</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zin Oo*”, 45-year-old male civilian, 26 November 2007.

<sup>142</sup> Source: “Four killed in Myanmar protest crackdown,” AFP, 26 September 2007.

<sup>143</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Naing Than*”, 27-year-old male civil servant, 19 October 2007.

*“When I arrived at Mahabandoola Road I heard the blast of a tear gas shell and the gunfire from the Anawrahta Road. The sound of gunfire lasted for about ten minutes, and then I saw the riot police marching along the road followed by trucks carrying more troops and members of the Swan Arr Shin. They fired at everything they saw. When local residents looked out of their houses to see what was going on, the soldiers would point their guns at them”.*<sup>144</sup>

*”As we approached 37<sup>th</sup> Street, we heard the gunfire and people became afraid. I heard six or seven shots fired. It was so crowded that we could not see anything except for the people in front of us. Many people ran into side streets and many ran into the buildings”.*<sup>145</sup>

Members of the *Swan Arr Shin* were centrally involved in this part of the crackdown, working alongside the riot police and the military, who together arrested and beat a large number of protestors as well as onlookers.

*“The members of the Swan Arr Shin followed behind the security forces carrying bamboo batons. I saw one of the members of Swan Arr Shin shooting his catapult [slingshot] at local residents in a nearby apartment”.*<sup>146</sup>

*“The security forces searched for the protestors one street after another. I witnessed about 20 troops moving from 35<sup>th</sup> Street to Maha Bandoola Road. The people ran into the nearby building to hide from these troops, but they found them and took out of the building one by one. I watched as those people were beaten by the security forces after they were ordered to kneel down on the road. I remember that there were four young women, a man, a couple and an older woman who was about 50-years-old. The security forces searched for other people in other nearby buildings and arrested about 20 people. They were also beaten with batons and kicked when they were ordered to kneel down on the road. They were loaded onto a truck and taken away”.*<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Shwe Naing*”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>145</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Min Win*”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>146</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Shwe Naing*”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>147</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

Another group of protestors which had visited Botataung Pagoda after fleeing the events at Shwedagon Pagoda, encountered security forces as they marched west along Maha Bandoola Road, at the junction of 50<sup>th</sup> Street at approximately 5:00 pm. At this point the authorities indiscriminately opened fire on the crowd without any warning, though it remains unclear whether live rounds or rubber bullets were used.

*“The soldiers immediately opened fired on us on sight while the riot police started beating us with their batons. The soldiers shot straight into the crowd; not into the air. Some people marching in the front row were hit and fell to the ground. I am not sure if they were dead or alive. I also saw some students getting arrested. We ran into small lanes in the direction of Yay Kyaw Ward [to the north]. Our protest ended for the day as we were not able to regroup.”<sup>148</sup>*

## Thakin Mya Park

One group of protestors, believed to number around 3,000 fled the attack at Shwedagon Pagoda and headed west to Ahlone Township. A second group comprised of approximately 400 monks followed this group, and were directed by bystanders as to which way the larger group had gone. The two groups came together on Ahlone Road, whereupon they continued their march.<sup>149</sup>

Upon reaching Thakin Mya Park at approximately 3:00 pm, the group was blocked by members of the military and SAS and ordered to disperse. Following a brief discussion among themselves, all of the women and children left the group out of a concern for their safety. The remaining men turned around to continue their march in the other direction, but were pursued by the military and *Swan Arr Shin*. Those that they were able to apprehend were beaten. Many local residents came out to defend the retreating protestors. One eyewitness told HRDU that it was at this point that the soldiers began firing indiscriminately into the crowd with live rounds: *“As we were retreating we saw the soldiers dragging three or four people, covered in blood, off the road. They were using real bullets.”<sup>150</sup>*

As the crowd attempted to flee the shooting, they encountered a second roadblock, trapping them between the two groups of soldiers, both of which fired upon them, killing at least one of the protestors.

*“We linked hands and made a human shield in front of the monks but we had no idea what to do next. We all just sat down on the ground. The troops advancing from the railway crossing approached us and*

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<sup>148</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ma Zin Aung*”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>149</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ma Khin Oo*”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>150</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Naing Than*”, 27-year-old male civil servant, 19 October 2007.

*fired four shots into the crowd. A 20-year-old man from our group took a hit on his back and he fell down covered in blood”.*<sup>151</sup>

Some of the protest leaders then approached the troops to plead with them, managing to secure the release of the monks. However, the authorities announced their intention to arrest all of the civilians, prompting many to attempt to flee:

*“The other protest leaders and I approached the troops at the roadblock and tried to negotiate with them for our way out. They finally agreed to let the monks go. However, the troops said they were going to arrest the laypeople. They pointed their guns at us and told us to stand still. We immediately stood up and ran away in all directions in fear. About 100, people including myself, managed to escape, though around 500 people were arrested by the soldiers. The boy who was shot was still lying on ground when I last looked at him”.*<sup>152</sup>



A tense standoff as protestors anxiously watch a nearby security barricade for movement or signs of an imminent attack. Clouds of tear gas hover in the air beyond the barricade as the protestor on the right is shown holding his shoes in preparation to flee. [© AFP/Getty Images].

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<sup>151</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

## Yankin Post Office

Another column of protestors, reported to number around 10,000, marching from Moe Kaung Road towards Sule Pagoda was confronted by security forces in front of the Yankin Post Office in Yankin Township, around midday. As the protestors neared the roadblock they were warned not to proceed. The protestors ignored the warning, and the military fired shots and tear gas into the air. Riot police and *Swan Arr Shin* members brandishing bamboo staves and rubber batons then set upon the group. Those injured during the assault were reportedly loaded onto trucks and driven away from the scene. Unconfirmed reports claim that shots were also fired into the crowd.<sup>153</sup>

## Thursday, 27 September 2007

Despite the heavy presence of security forces on the streets and the use of lethal force the previous day, the demonstrations continued in Rangoon. The number of monks participating in the protests, however, was much smaller than the previous day, largely due to the night time raids on a number of monasteries throughout Rangoon, and ongoing security presence at others. (For more information, please see Section VI: “The Monastery Raids”).

## South Okkalapa Township

The scale and number of protests held throughout Rangoon on 26 September showed the SPDC that the protestors would not so easily be cowed into suppression. In response, security officials stormed numerous monasteries across Rangoon, arresting hundreds in a vain attempt to quash the protest movement. (For more information, please see Section VI: “The Monastery Raids”). Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery was one of the monasteries raided in South Okkalapa Township. Following this violent night time raid, local residents in South Okkalapa Township began to gather in the streets on the morning of 27 September to remonstrate with security officials over what had happened the night before.

During the ensuing argument, an unknown individual in the crowd fired a catapult (slingshot) at the security forces before fleeing the scene. In search of the person, members of the *Swan Arr Shin* raided three homes along Kyaw Thu Street, physically assaulting the occupants in the process. The occupants were beaten, taken into custody and detained at an unknown location. The six occupants were identified as Daw Myin Myin Khaing, and her two sons: Maung Lwin Ko Oo, 18, and, Maung Aung Paing Oo, 14; Daw Myint Myint Aye, and her 15-year-old son, Maung Zaw Htet Kyaw and 50-year-old U Tin San. While the

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<sup>153</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “*U Win Aung*”, 48-year-old Buddhist monk, 20 October 2007; HRDU Interview with “*U Ne Aung Thein*”, 39-year-old Buddhist monk, 20 October 2007.

majority of this group were subsequently released on 15 October 2007, at the time of publication, HRDU was still unable to ascertain the condition or whereabouts of Maung Zaw Htet Kyaw.<sup>154</sup>

*“The people couldn’t control their anger when they saw the Burmese soldiers pointing their weapons at the citizens. So, many of the people, including me, threw stones at the soldiers. The women collected stones and gave them to us.”<sup>155</sup>*

As the day progressed, the crowds gathered in the area had begun to swell in size, now numbering many thousands, effectively surrounding the security forces stationed at the junction of Thit Sar and Waiza Yan Tar Roads and Kone Baung Street. Of the various groups assembled, the largest was that located on Thit Sar Road.

Just after midday, SPDC army soldiers assembled a two-row defensive formation approximately 200 metres from the crowd on Thit Sar Road. The first row of troops knelt in front of a second row of standing soldiers, all of them training their weapons on the crowd of protestors. An eyewitness from the crowd described to HRDU what happened next:

*“A Hilux truck stopped at the junction and, through its loudspeaker, ordered the crowd to disperse immediately or be fired upon. There were approximately 20,000 people on the street at this time. The crowd did not disperse. We carried lamp posts and tree trunks into the street to make a barricade at the corner of Innwa Street and Thit Sar Road. When the soldiers saw what we were doing, they fired three tear gas bombs into the crowd. As soon as the final tears gas bomb exploded, the soldiers crossed our barriers and attacked the crowd. ... I witnessed two people beaten to death near our barrier. They were both men, aged between 25 and 30. These men were beaten on their backs and their waists as they tried to escape the attack. When they fell to the ground, the soldiers beat them as a group. The soldiers dragged their bodies by the legs back to the junction where many people could see their dead bodies lying beside the military trucks.”<sup>156</sup>*

Despite the violence that they had just witnessed, the crowd quickly reassembled a short distance further along Thit Sar Road between Bonname and Baho Market Bus Stops, on Thit Sar Road. There they were joined by

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<sup>154</sup> Sources: “Complaints to DVB,” DVB, 1 October 2007, translation by HRDU; AAPPB List of Releases, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_released\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_released_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>155</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Htun Win”, 56-year-old male civilian, 10 November 2007.

<sup>156</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Htun Win”, 56-year-old male civilian, 10 November 2007.

students from State High School No. 2, which had been ordered to close early because of the protests. At 3:30 pm, the security forces again initiated an assault on this group of demonstrators. This time, however, the launching of tear gas canisters was immediately followed by the firing of live rounds directly into the assembled crowd.

*“A few seconds after the last tear gas bomb exploded, I heard gunshots and saw three protestors fall down on the spot. Two men had been shot in the head and one was hit in the hip. I then heard two more gunshots and again two more protestors fell down. One was shot in the forehead and the other in the chest. Most of the people who were shot in the protest were grown men, but the person who was hit in the chest was a student from the High School. He was around 14 years old. After the men were shot in the head I saw big holes in the back of their heads. The entry wounds were small but its exit wounds were large”.*<sup>157</sup>

Eyewitnesses have also testified to have witnessed numerous beatings, some of which would seem to have resulted in death:

*“There was an old lady who was about 60 years old, she did not seem to be afraid, and she was shouting that two of her children were in the army and that they should not treat the people like this. She was hit with a bamboo pole over the head, and then she was struck with a bamboo pole by another soldier, and fell to the ground. I could see that she was bleeding heavily. Two members of the Swan Arr Shin picked her up from the ground and hit her again before dragging her to their truck. ... I also saw a young girl who was no more than 15 years old. She was struck heavily three times by different soldiers, and was punched by Swan Arr Shin members. I saw her fall to the ground. She lay there completely still. Lots of blood was pouring from her head and body. I am sure she was dead. After that, two members of the Swan Arr Shin dragged her body by her hands to their truck”.*<sup>158</sup>

The evidence obtained through eyewitness testimonies strongly suggests that a large number of people were killed during events in South Okkalapa Township on 27 September. Evidence collected by Human Rights Watch (HRW) would seem to support such a theory. In their report, *Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma*, HRW was able to confirm the deaths of at least eight civilians from South Okkalapa Township alone (listed below), although it is highly likely that this list is far from complete:

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<sup>157</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Htun Win”, 56-year-old male civilian, 10 November 2007.

<sup>158</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zin Oo”, 45-year-old male civilian, 26 November 2007.

1. Myo Min Htun, 22, rickshaw driver, shot in the head;
2. Tun Tun Lwin, 31, rickshaw driver, beaten heavily. Four days later his family was informed he had died in custody;
3. Aung San Oo, 18, student, shot in the head;
4. Yan Lynn Aung, 17, student, shot in the head;
5. Ko Soe Than, 42, shot in the chest;
6. Zyar Naing, 16, student, shot in the chest. His body was taken to his parents' home by local residents but later removed by soldiers at 8:00 pm that same night;
7. Naing Myo Aung, 20, university student; and
8. Than Aung, 43, beaten to death while *en route* to collect his children from school.<sup>159</sup>



Hundreds of shoes abandoned by protestors in Rangoon as they fled attacking SPDC army soldiers. Scenes such as this were a common sight in Rangoon during the days of the crackdowns as the protestors kicked off their shoes in their haste to escape. [© AFP/Getty Images].

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<sup>159</sup> Source: *Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma*, HRW, December 2007.

## Sule Pagoda

Crowds began to gather at the junction of Anawratha and Sule Pagoda Roads in front of the Sule Pagoda from 11:00 am on the 27 September. By noon the number of demonstrators had grown significantly, and it has been estimated that the crowd numbered in the tens of thousands. There were no more than ten monks included within this number, and almost the entire crowd consisted of laypersons. A joint force of SPDC army soldiers and riot police had been stationed opposite Sule Pagoda since the early morning and now stood between the protestors and the pagoda. At 12:30 pm, a line of riot police then began to move towards the protestors, but stopped just short of where they were seated on the ground. Soon afterwards, three military trucks replete with soldiers as well as a smaller truck carrying *Swan Arr Shin* members approached the group from behind. Immediately and without warning the soldiers in these trucks opened fire into the protestors with live rounds.

*“All of the protesters were sitting on the road. Soon, about 10 riot police, armed with shields and rubber batons, came up Sule Pagoda Road. People shouted at the riot police, saying they were only staging a peaceful protest. Some protesters started to flee from the scene when they saw the policemen coming forward. The monks and students who were sitting in the front row told everyone to sit still and not to confront the police. They stopped advancing when they were only a short distance from the protesters. ... Around one or two minutes after the army truck came they started to shoot continuously, firing more than ten times. I heard shouting from the crowd: ‘the people are dying; they are killing the people, run away, run away’. Others were saying ‘don’t run, don’t run’, because when the people sit down they beat them and when they run they shoot. When I looked back I saw two boys and one girl lying still on the ground. I do not know if they were alive or dead”<sup>160</sup>.*

*“It was between 1:30 pm and 2:00 pm. When the second military truck arrived, I heard three gunshots. At that time, the protestors didn’t respond to the gunfire because they thought they were only warning shots. Then the soldiers shot their automatic guns continuously. At that time, the crowd fled and I heard crying that people had died”<sup>161</sup>.*

*“The soldiers just fired right into the crowd and I saw a woman in front me was hit by a bullet. There were another four or five people who were hit by bullets. I saw some monks and some of my*

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<sup>160</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ma Zin Aung*”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>161</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Min Zaw*”, 30-year-old male civilian, 27 October 2007.

*friends being beaten up by the riot police who dragged them onto trucks. Until now, I have not heard anything about those friends of mine. The riot police beat people with batons while the military was shooting. There were also Swan Arr Shin members who also beat [people]. They were the worst. They did the most of the arresting. Some people who defended themselves got beaten up so badly by them that they could not even walk”.*<sup>162</sup>

Security forces pursued the fleeing demonstrators into side streets and even the buildings they were taking shelter in, beating those who they were able to catch:

*“We ran down a side street and up the stairs into a building. Many other people were also hiding upstairs. The soldiers came onto the road, shouting ‘come down, come down, or I will shoot at you’. But we stayed. Many people from the apartments helped us; they gave us water and slippers [many protestors kicked their slippers off as they fled so they could run faster] and checked whether the soldiers were still there. They wanted to help us but they didn’t dare to demonstrate”.*<sup>163</sup>

As some protestors began to reassemble outside the Traders Hotel, additional troops arrived on the scene and the military announced a ten minute warning to disperse or face “extreme action”.

*“I arrived in front of the Traders Hotel after the first round of shooting. There were still many people crowded in that area. I did not see the first round of shooting but I heard from some people that many injured people and dead bodies were taken away in the military trucks. The soldiers then said that they would give us ten minutes to disperse”.*<sup>164</sup>

*“When I was hiding in an apartment, I kept hearing the gunshots for about another five minutes and some bullets even hit the doors of the apartment I was hiding in. The apartment owners left the back door open for us in case the soldiers came into the building and started shooting at us. Then I heard the military ordering the protesters with loudspeakers to disperse within ten minutes. They said they would start shooting again if the protesters do not heed their warning”.*<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>163</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Win”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>165</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

Once the ten minute ultimatum had elapsed, the soldiers charged the crowd firing their weapons.<sup>166</sup> Just as with the earlier crackdown in front of Sule Pagoda, the shooting was accompanied by the severe beating and arrest of demonstrators. The bodies of those who had been shot were also taken away by the security forces.

*"I managed to escape into the grounds of the Traders Hotel so I was not in the soldiers' sight. When I looked back, I saw people getting shot. I heard a lot of gunfire. When they shot, they fired in five or six round bursts, not continuously. Then they would stop shooting for a few seconds and start shooting again in the same way. This continued for around five minutes. ... The soldiers caught the people who had fallen on the ground and could not run away. They also caught everyone who had been shot. They dragged their bodies by their hands and feet. The soldiers were beating the arrested people on their heads and upper bodies using very green and strong bamboo sticks. As one soldier was beating an arrested protestor, another soldier would come and join in. Then another would come and kick him. I did not see any of the arrested people try to fight back".<sup>167</sup>*

*"The riot police seized whoever they could and loaded them onto their trucks. Meanwhile, I saw a young 25-year-old man who had been shot while running towards me. When I opened his shirt I saw he had been hit in his chest. There was a lot of blood flowing from his wound. I saw other soldiers dragging a wounded man away by his legs".<sup>168</sup>*

*"I saw a young girl hiding under the ladder of nearby house dragged out and beaten by the riot police. About seven or eight riot police beat her as the neighbours shouted at them to stop and that she was an innocent street vendor. We were a short distance away so we threw stones at them [police]. Finally they stopped beating her, searched through her bag and stole her money before taking her away. After that they started to breaking down the doors of the nearby homes to take the occupants away. They beat them in front of their homes and took them away. Many of the nearby shops which had not closed before the crackdown were damaged and ordered by the riot police to close immediately. They searched for the demonstrators street by street. Sometimes they shot at the*

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<sup>166</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with "Ma Zin Aung", 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007; HRDU Interview with "Ko Min Win", 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>167</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Min Win", 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>168</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Win Aung", 48-year-old Buddhist monk, 20 October 2007.

*windows of the houses with catapults [slingshots] and shouted vicious words”.*<sup>169</sup>

The severity of these beatings was so harsh, that at least one person is known to have died as a result. Ko Ko Win, a 22-year-old NLD member, died a month later as a result of his injuries. An NLD representative from the South Okkalapa branch office stated that Ko Ko Win “*was brutally beaten on his body and head by [SPDC] security forces at Sule [Pagoda] on 27 September. He was left unconscious on [a] sidewalk until someone who knew him woke him up and took him home*”.<sup>170</sup>

It remains unclear how many died as a result of being shot or beaten in the vicinity of Sule Pagoda on 27 September. Though, it was during this initial crackdown that the well-reported shooting of Japanese photojournalist Kenji Nagai took place. He was initially shot in the back at near-point blank range. After falling to the ground, he was shot once more by a soldier who stood directly over him and fired. He was carrying a camera at the time, and was easily identifiable as a member of the international media.<sup>171</sup>

*“Apart from the foreign journalist, I saw three more people fall to the ground during the shooting. They did not move afterwards. I believe that they were dead”.*<sup>172</sup>

## **Pansodan Road Bridge**

Immediately following the crackdown outside Sule Pagoda, a group of protestors congregated on the Pansodan Road Bridge, two blocks away from the well known Traders Hotel. One student carrying the fighting peacock flag led the group. At approximately 2:00 pm, he was shot in the head and killed instantly. More shots were fired into the crowd, although it has been difficult to confirm if any other protestors were killed. Various reports have suggested that the shots were fired from some distance away, some reporting that the shots came from the rooftops above. One of these reports, has named the victim as Ko Thet Naing from an undisclosed location in upper Burma, who had come to Rangoon to join the demonstrations:

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<sup>169</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zeya Aung*”, 47-year-old male civilian protest leader, 20 October 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Source: “NLD youth member dies from protest injuries,” DVB, 7 November 2007.

<sup>171</sup> Sources: “Japanese photographer killed, another foreign journalist injured”, RSF, 27 September 2007; “Japan inquiry into reporter death”, BBC News, 28 September 2007; “New footage of journalist shot in Burma shows soldier leaving scene with camera”, *Japan News Review*, 9 October 2007; “Video shows Japanese journalist 'being shot deliberately'”, *Times Online*, 28 September 2007.

<sup>172</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zaw Oo*”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

*“As soon as I heard the gunfire, I saw a man dressed in a white shirt and holding a flag get shot in the head. It was a sight I will never forget. He had a brown complexion and was wearing an NLD badge on his breast. His name was Thet Naing, a young NLD supporter who had come from upper Burma to join the monks’ demonstrations in Rangoon. He had been marching at the front of the demonstration and chanting at the top of his lungs when he was hit by a sniper from the rooftop opposite. The sound of gunfire kept coming from Pansodan Road. I didn’t want to imagine how many students had been killed. Crowds were running back and forth on the streets. I stopped a man and asked him where the body of the dead man [Thet Naing] was. He told me four soldiers had taken the body away”.*<sup>173</sup>

The soldiers continued to fire on the protestors. Another eyewitness at the scene has reported to HRDU that the victim’s body was trampled as the crowd desperately tried to flee to safety. It is unclear how many other persons were shot, but one 24-year-old monk from a monastery in Thaketa Township, is known to have been shot in the shoulder at this time.<sup>174</sup> Another eyewitness interviewed by HRDU saw a young woman shot on Pansodan Road Bridge during the crackdown. The woman reportedly fell to the ground after being shot and lay motionless. The eyewitness was unsure of whether she was unconscious or dead.<sup>175</sup>

## **Thakin Mya Park**

Another group of protestors had marched west from Sule Pagoda, beginning at around midday, and heading through Lanmadaw and Latha Townships. As had happened to a protest group the previous day, the passage of this crowd was blocked by the security forces outside Thakin Mya Park in Ahlone Township. Without warning or provocation, the military opened fire directly into the crowd, hitting some of the demonstrators. One protestor described the events at that time:

*“When we arrived at [Thakin Mya] Park we were blocked by military trucks. It was about 1:00 pm. Three military trucks and two riot police trucks stopped in front of us and started shooting. I saw three of the protesters fall to the ground where they were standing. Some military trucks blocked us at the back. The soldiers who blocked from behind were firing at the sky. We were running back and forth on the road. Some people who fell to the ground were beaten by riot police and the Swan Arr Shin. At last, I crossed the fences of the park and ran to Bogyoke Aung San Road”.*<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Source: “Eyewitness Account of Bloody September 27,” *Irrawaddy*, 2 November 2007.

<sup>174</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Na Thein”, Buddhist monk, 13 December 2007.

<sup>175</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Maung Maung”, 24-year-old male civilian, 9 November 2007.

<sup>176</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.



SPDC army soldiers firing tear gas canisters at protestors to break up demonstrations in Rangoon on 27 September 2007. The use of tear gas was employed on many occasions to break up the protests. This was often immediately followed with shots fired into the air over the heads of the protestors; however, in a number of cases, live rounds were fired directly into the crowds, wounding and killing many protestors. [© Reuters].

### **Tamwe Township State High School No.3**

Tamwe Township State High School No.3 was the site of two further crackdowns on two separate columns of protestors who approached the area from different directions within half an hour of one another.

At 2:00 pm the first of these groups of protestors marched south from Kyaikkasan Pagoda. About half an hour later they encountered a roadblock just outside Tamwe Township State High School No.3. The protestors, fearing confrontation with the authorities, turned around and began their retreat when they were set upon by the security forces. One of the protest leaders recounted to HRDU what happened next:

*"I took the lead because most of the demonstrators in our column were my students and friends. I held the flag and turned the column back. At this time they fired tear gas bombs at us. It was about 2:30 [pm]. Riot police then began to beat the protestors, and the soldiers opened fire. The monks who had been at the front of the group were closest to the riot police; unfortunately they were*

*severely beaten. I was very sorry to see that. As soon as I realised the monks were being left behind, I turned back again holding the flag, and I saw ten to fifteen monks lying helplessly on the ground after being beaten. People rushed to wrestle the injured monks away from the security forces, but they were beaten too”.*<sup>177</sup>

Two military trucks were loaded with the protestors who had been arrested, though meanwhile an estimated 500 demonstrators, including approximately 30 monks, reassembled some distance away, near the Thuwuna Bridge. At this point three trucks loaded with soldiers again approached the crowd, who, once again began to assault those in the group as soon as they arrived. While many persons were arrested, including parents who were in the area to collect their children from a local primary school, others managed to escape by fleeing into the surrounding buildings.<sup>178</sup>

No more than half an hour after this group of demonstrators were attacked just outside Tamwe Township State High School No.3, another group of protestors approached the same roadblock from the south. This column had been assembled by those who had fled the crackdowns at Sule Pagoda, and marched away from the scene through Pazundaung Township. The crowd grew significantly as they marched until several thousand had joined. According to eyewitnesses, the majority of this group was made up of young students and adolescents.<sup>179</sup> Many parents were also in the area to pick up their children from the school.

At the roadblock, some of the protestors sat down on the road as the crowd continued to chant slogans and sing the national anthem. Minutes later they were ambushed when SPDC army trucks approached from behind. One truck drove directly into the crowd, and eyewitnesses have testified to the fact that it drove into and killed at least two people.<sup>180</sup> The other trucks blocked the road from behind, and soldiers began firing into the crowd even before they had dismounted from their vehicles.

*“We were looking at the riot police wondering what they would do. They didn’t take any action right away. Those police were just making records or doing nothing. But then, three or four TE-11 trucks drove out. There was no warning from the army. No announcement at all. We were talking with the soldiers at the*

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<sup>177</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Soe Win”, 35-year-old male civilian, 19 October 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Lwin Soe”, 33-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007.

<sup>180</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “Ma Win Tha”, 33-year-old female civilian, 25 October 2007; HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

*barriers in front of us, saying things like, 'We are going ahead. Please remove your soldiers', but then the trucks came and shot at us from the rear. They must have had a plan to crackdown on us after they got information of where we were. That was why they suddenly came with the trucks to shoot at us. They didn't even come down from the trucks and they started shooting from the trucks. They shot from behind us as the people were looking to the front, so a lot of them got shot".*<sup>181</sup>

*"After 15 minutes, the soldiers and riot police stationed behind the barricade gradually came forward. When we looked back, we saw that four or five army trucks had blocked the road behind us. This was between 3:30 and 4:00 pm. There were a great number in our group, but we had no way to escape, except through a small lane. As soon as the army trucks arrived, they started shooting. They did not give us any warning. It was not only the soldiers from behind but also the soldiers in front. Soldiers shot at us from both sides: from the east and the west. I heard a lot of gunshots. I could not count the number of gunshots I heard".*<sup>182</sup>

A number of people were killed as a result of the indiscriminate firing into the crowd, and, according to eyewitness accounts, their bodies were removed from the scene by security forces.

*"A lot of people died on the spot. When we were hiding, the dead bodies and injured people were dragged by their legs and thrown onto the trucks and driven away".*<sup>183</sup>

*"Some of those who were shot fell into the large open drains at the side of the road. A lot of people died as a result of these shootings. A lot of people tried to climb the walls at the side of the road, but they were very high".*<sup>184</sup>

Those attempting to flee the scene were not spared either. Eyewitnesses have testified to a young male being shot from behind as he tried to climb the wall of the High School grounds.

*"Many people climbed over the wall to hide in the buildings [in the school]. Some people just hid behind the brick wall. The people were*

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<sup>181</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Zaw Aung", 32-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007.

<sup>181</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Shwe Naing", 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>182</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Min Win", 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>183</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Zaw Aung", 32-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007.

*so scared. People even hid inside the open drains. We climbed the brick wall into Tamwe [Township] High School No.3. People were climbing the wall to escape. I watched a young man get shot in the back. He did not move or make any sound after he fell. He was bleeding a lot”*<sup>185</sup>

Of those who have been confirmed to have been killed, Maung Tun Lynn Kyaw, a student from the high school was shot in the head in front of his mother. Another student from the school, 16-year-old Maung Thet Paing Soe, who at the time was wearing a t-shirt with the words “Free Aung San Suu Kyi” written on it, was also shot dead from close range. After being permitted to see the body of their dead son, his parents had later told the media that, “[t]here was a big hole on the back of his head and the brain was gone”.<sup>186</sup>

As soon as the shooting stopped, the riot police ran into the crowd and began arresting and beating the protestors. Those persons who managed to escape into nearby buildings were hunted down. Eyewitnesses have reported security forces shooting civilians in cold blood as they were trying to hide from the troops. They even shot those who had surrendered to them.

*“Some ran into the buildings. They [the soldiers] ordered the people to come down or they would shoot. Those who came down were arrested and beaten. Local residents in the buildings were ordered not to watch or they would be shot”*<sup>187</sup>

*“The crackdown went on for a long time. From where I was hiding I saw a soldier shoot a person hiding in the drain. The soldier just stood above the drain, and fired down into it. The soldiers then entered the building complex where I was hiding. They shouted ‘Mother fuckers, come down from the building or else we will shoot to kill you all’. One man was hiding inside a small round water tank. The soldiers could find him easily, because he was shivering so much that the tank made a rhythmic noise. They told him to climb out, and told him that if he didn’t they would shoot. He didn’t dare to go out. ‘Bang!’ The soldier shot him and the bullet went through the tank. No sound came out of the tank after that”*<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>186</sup> Sources: “Dead boy’s family not allowed to conduct funeral rituals,” *Mizzima News*, 1 October 2007; “Family members speak about teen protestor’s death,” DVB, 19 October 2007.

<sup>187</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>188</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

Eventually all those who were captured were rounded up and forced to lie face down on the ground.

*“The people who could not run away lay down on the ground. I ran into a small space between two buildings. Soldiers tried to shoot and catch the people who ran into the buildings. I was caught by the soldiers. They ordered me to not look around but go over to the other people who had already arrested. They said they would beat me if I looked around. Some people looked around so the soldiers beat and kicked them. They beat the heads of some of the people who moved. I could not count the number but there were a lot of people lying on the ground. The soldiers were walking among the people who were lying on the ground. They had a list of names of university students. There were about 12 [on the list]. They called them out from the others and took them away in a truck. Anyone who was wearing a headband was also taken away”*<sup>189</sup>.

*“When we were rounded up, they ordered us to put our hands on our heads and beat with sticks. They ordered people to come down [from the surrounding buildings] quickly. Some were afraid to go down and they were beaten. They told us to lie down on our stomachs on the ground. ‘Nobody raise their heads!’, they shouted as they were beating us. No one dared to put their head up because they would have been beaten. There were about 500 people on the ground. A girl was ordered to sit down and her head was bashed with a stick because she was slow in doing so. She was only in her twenties. She was a good-looking girl. She was bleeding. As we were lying on the ground, I think they took the injured people and dead bodies away in the trucks. I could not see any dead bodies or wounded protesters when we were allowed to get up again”*<sup>190</sup>.

Though a number of dead bodies were promptly removed from the scene, others who did not die on the spot would later die as a result of their injuries:

*“I saw five or six people die. One of my friends named ‘Tayok Kyi’ [Big Chinese] - I don’t know his real name - died after he was taken home. He was shot, so his friends carried him back home. Though, he died soon after he arrived home. He didn’t die on the*

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<sup>189</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Win”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>190</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

*spot from the gunshot, but he died at home. There were a number of people like this”.*<sup>191</sup>

*“As we left, I saw several people with serious injuries. One man had been shot in the stomach and was bleeding a lot. I have never seen bleeding like it. His sarong was wet with blood. I did not dare to touch him but I told him to cover the wound with his hand. He could barely even talk. He and his friend were put in a car to go a hospital or clinic. Another man had been shot in the thigh. Another was injured on his head after he was hit with the butt of a gun”.*<sup>192</sup>

## Friday, 28 September 2007

By 28 September 2007, the violence of the previous two days, the large number of arrests both on the streets and during night time raids, particularly on monasteries (for more information, please Section VI: “The Monastery Raids”), coupled with a more established security presence in strategic areas throughout Rangoon, assured that protestors were not taking to the streets in the same numbers as they had in the days prior.

Throughout the day, those who persisted in the protests were generally only able to organize and coordinate their activities for a few moments before being immediately set upon by security forces. For each separate protest, the authorities would catch and arrest a number of the protestors, assaulting those that they were able to apprehend.

*“We had just a few minutes in which to organize our group. Then the group would scatter at the sound of gunfire. When we reached the 15-Foot Hill in front of Taung Lone Pyan, riot police opened fired on us, so the group quickly dispersed. Our plan was to go to Tamwe Township, but they blocked the road and shot at us, so the people ran into the small lanes [to escape]. We couldn’t organize to gather the people again because the group had been separated”.*<sup>193</sup>

*“Around 12:30 pm on 28 [September], we demonstrated in downtown Rangoon near the Sule Pagoda for a moment. We wanted to carry on the movement but we didn’t get enough time. We had no more than ten minutes. We could not demonstrate for long because the police would inform the soldiers through their*

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<sup>191</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Zaw Aung”, 32-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007.

<sup>192</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Win”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>193</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

walkie-talkies and the soldiers would arrive very quickly. There were maybe 500 of us. We demonstrated for only ten minutes before the soldiers' trucks blocked the road. They climbed out of their trucks and started to attack the crowd. I ran to the nearest apartment, and asked them to help and they let me in. I was beaten many many times in the prison in the past so I was careful not to let them arrest me again".<sup>194</sup>

"There were not a lot of protests on 28 [September] as Rangoon was under heavy security with military troops on every street corner. A very small number of students and civilians staged small-scale protests in the vicinity of Sule Pagoda. They would appear here and there randomly, shout some slogans and then disappear when the security forces showed up. The riot police would come charging down with their batons wherever they saw people gathering in that area on that day. There were about five small-scale protests on Anawratha and Maha Bandoola Roads. There was a game of chase-and-run between the protesters and the riot police all through the day in which several people were beaten up and arrested".<sup>195</sup>

Bystanders on the streets, and even those persons remaining inside, in downtown Rangoon also risked being arrested on this day as the security forces asserted their control.

"Some military trucks came to the area where we were protesting [at Block 28 in downtown Rangoon]. Someone shot one of the trucks with a catapult [slingshot] and broke the windscreen. An SPDC army officer climbed down from the truck and told the soldiers and riot police to find the person responsible. Four bystanders who were standing at the [nearby] Maung Htoo Restaurant fled. I don't think they were responsible but they were afraid of soldiers. The soldiers went into the restaurant to search for them. The owner of the restaurant tried to explain that those people [who fired at the soldiers] were part of the protest, and that they were not in his restaurant. Then they tried to arrest the restaurant owner. When he tried to get away, they beat him heavily. They hit him with their batons at least ten times, until finally, his head fell forward as though his neck was broken. They held his body up, and dragged him to their truck; otherwise he would have fallen to the ground. The security forces also searched a nearby building where a computer network game shop was on the fourth or fifth floor. They arrested about fourteen youths from

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<sup>194</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thu Nyunt", 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

<sup>195</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Zin Aung", 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

*the shop, all of whom were aged between 15 and 25 years. They were only there to play computer games”.*<sup>196</sup>

*“A young woman working in her mother’s shop on 35<sup>th</sup> Street was asked to go and buy some baking powder. She went to 38<sup>th</sup> Street but was arrested by security forces on her way back to her mother’s shop. She cried out to her mother as the truck took her past the shop”.*<sup>197</sup>

## **Pansodan Road**

Despite the inability of protestors to organize on any sort of scale, three more fatal shootings were reported to have taken place on the corner of Anawratha and Pansodan Roads at 2:00 pm on 28 September 2007.<sup>198</sup> According to one eyewitness who was hiding under a car when the shooting began; the demonstrators had been blocked in on Pansodan Road between Anawratha and Maha Bandoola Roads. After shots were fired, dozens of protestors were arrested and beaten.<sup>199</sup>

## **Pazundaung Township**

At 12:30 pm, a column of protestors, reported to number in their thousands, were fired upon by SPDC army soldiers as they crossed a road bridge over the railway line in Pazundaung Township. According to one eyewitness interviewed by HRDU, SPDC army trucks approached the group from either side of the bridge, effectively cutting off all means of escape before opening fire into the crowd.

*“They came as us from the right [Thaketa Road] and from the left [Mingala Market]. The military coming from Mingala Market started shooting at us while they were still in their trucks. The military also came from the ABC bus stop [on the Pazundaung Highway; in the opposite direction]. The military fired both rubber bullets and live rounds. Some people tried to climb up on the overpass; some ran towards the train station, and some to a [nearby] monastery. I hid in the monastery. The shooting continued intermittently for around*

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<sup>196</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Nay Lin Naing”, 43-year-old female civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>197</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>198</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “U Shwe Min”, 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007; *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda Item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>199</sup> Source: “Two Shot in Clash with Troops; People with Cameras Singled Out,” *Irrawaddy*, 28 September 2007.

*20 minutes. I think there were around ten gunshots during this time. Three students fell to the ground during the shooting. After hiding for an hour, I returned to the bridge. I could see a lot of blood. Some of it had formed into small pools and streams; some was smeared across the ground as if coming from a body that had been dragged along the road surface. There were military footprints in some patches of blood and it looked as though they had tried to rub away the traces of blood with their boots”<sup>200</sup>*

## Latha Township

Yet another group of protestors, also reported to number in the thousands, managed to congregate near the Sanpya Cinema in Latha Township at around 4:00 pm. When the crowd attempted to initiate a march along Strand Road, they were promptly set upon by a combined force of SPDC army soldiers, USDA and SAS members. Advancing directly into the crowd beating protestors as they went, the security forces managed to divide the group into two. Ongoing assaults upon members of the group by the security forces led to many arrests, and the crowd had largely dispersed by 5:00 pm. Two individuals interviewed by HRDU have reported hearing news of a shooting at the Sanpya Cinema at 6:00 pm, as a small group of protestors refused to disperse for the evening, however, at the time of publication HRDU remained unable to confirm these reports.<sup>201</sup>

## Saturday, 29 September 2007, onwards

By the end of September, the prospect of organizing demonstrations had become even more untenable. Security forces patrolled the streets accompanied by truckloads of *Swan Arr Shin* members, whose members also kept a close watch on events from the street. These SAS members worked with the military to identify persons who took part demonstrations and who should be arrested. Nevertheless, many people, particularly high school students, persisted in their attempts to organize protests.

*“The security forces in the trucks used members of the Swan Arr Shin to identify who was involved in the protests on previous days. When the members of the Swan Arr Shin pointed out and accused a person of being a protestor, the riot police chased and arrested him. If they couldn’t do that, the soldiers shot at him. When the*

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<sup>200</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zaw Oo*”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>201</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Lwin Soe*”, 33-year-old male student activist, 18 October 2007; HRDU Interview with “*Ma Khin Oo*”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

*military trucks moved into an area, all the young and middle-aged people fled because their fate depended on the members of the Swan Arr Shin. I witnessed many people walking on the street being arrested, put on the trucks and taken away on that day [1 October]. On that day, I witnessed at least three or four military trucks full of the arrested people being driven away from downtown Rangoon. Every military truck was followed by the Swan Arr Shin car”.*<sup>202</sup>

*“I came out to check the situation on 29 September but we couldn’t do this anymore. The soldiers were deployed everywhere. All around Sule Pagoda were soldiers with batons and guns. Most of them were under the trees sitting on platforms. The cars and trucks were standing by on the street corners. The Swan Arr Shin were there also”.*<sup>203</sup>

*“From 30 September, the authorities patrolled the city in their trucks, especially in the downtown area. They pursued any protestors that they saw. When we met with soldiers, they would open fire and chase us. When they caught a protestor, they beat them a lot and arrested them. When people from our group were hiding, SAS and USDA members would point people out to the military. They would say, ‘That man over there!’ Then the soldiers and police would climb down from their trucks and chase that person. For example, on 1 October, between Latha and [Kyauktada] Townships, we spotted the authorities coming towards us, so our group, just five men, tried to hide. Three men from our group, all around 20-years-old, hid in a shop down a side street, but the SAS told the soldiers where they were. The soldiers jumped off their truck, chased them and caught them. They would shoot their guns among the public as they chased them”.*<sup>204</sup>

At this time, it became dangerous to even be seen out on the streets. Many civilians clearly not involved in the demonstrations were arrested by security forces.

*“At 11:00 am on 1 October, I went to downtown Rangoon to see what was happening there. As soon as I arrived at Sule Pagoda, I saw a military truck full of arrested men and soldiers leaving the area. Then I saw a Dyna [small flatbed] truck full of Swan Arr Shin members holding bamboo sticks following the military truck. I*

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<sup>202</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Maung Kyaw”, 21-year-old civilian, 5 November 2007.

<sup>203</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Khin Oo”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>204</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Win”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

*didn't see any protest on that day, but I did see people who were working in the streets being arrested".*<sup>205</sup>

*"Everyone who was walking in the street could be arrested, regardless of whether they were involved in the protests or not. Many times I witnessed local people begging for the release their family members, explaining that they were not involved in the protests. Their requests were mostly ignored. The riot police primarily arrested men, so the men did not dare to approach them. Though women were typically not arrested by the riot police, they were beaten when requesting the release of their relatives. When I arrived at the 45<sup>th</sup> Street on 1 October, I witnessed that parents and neighbours were begging the riot police for the release of their innocent sons. In response, they were beaten with batons and bamboo sticks".*<sup>206</sup>



A protestor being carried away to waiting trucks by members of the *Saw Arr Shin* and USDA following the violent crackdown on a demonstration in Rangoon on 28 September 2007. [© DVB/Reuters].

<sup>205</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Maung Kyaw*”, 21-year-old civilian, 5 November 2007.

<sup>206</sup> Source: *Ibid.*



## VI. The Monastery Raids

Concurrent to the violent crackdown on the streets of Rangoon, the SPDC initiated efforts to remove the monks, and the numbers, fortitude and legitimacy they provided to the protests, during a series of night time raids.

Some sources have reported that Senior General Than Shwe gave orders to Brigadier General Hla Htay Win, commanding officer of Rangoon Regional Command to ensure that the monastic community received no further food or support from the lay community.<sup>207</sup> Such an order is akin to the 'Four Cuts Policy' which has been employed by successive Burmese regimes under the rubric of counter insurgency against ethnic minority groups.

The way in which the SPDC set about removing the monks from the protests bore many resemblances to the way in which it has dealt with ethnic minority villagers in areas of armed conflict for decades.

Initially, the presence of security personnel guarding monasteries and the barring of monks from leaving was increased significantly with 'no go' zones declared around five major monasteries.<sup>208</sup> Then, utilising the cover provided by the curfew imposed the day before, SPDC army units raided a number of prominent monasteries around Rangoon on the night of 26 September 2007, assaulting and arresting a large number of monks in the process. Many of these raids were particularly violent. Monks were severely beaten, shots were fired, and property was either looted or destroyed. The demonstrations on 27 September were thus marked by the conspicuous absence of the monastic community.

By the evening of 27 September, word had spread through Rangoon over the midnight raids being conducted on monasteries throughout the city. Local residents responded by organising night watchmen, who were instructed to alert the residents upon sighting security forces. While this strategy succeeded in repelling some raids, security forces continued to violently attack monasteries nationwide, and there were reported cases of civilians being fired upon and killed as they tried to protect the monasteries in their communities.<sup>209</sup>

By 4 October 2007, Shari Villarosa, the U.S. *Charge d'Affaires* in Burma, reported that her staff had visited 15 monasteries throughout Rangoon, all of which by that stage were empty.<sup>210</sup> While thousands of monks had been

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<sup>207</sup> Source: "UPDATE (Burma): Thousands of monks and protestors in Rangoon defy threats from regime," AHRC, 25 September 2007.

<sup>208</sup> Source: "Myanmar junta declares no-go zones at Buddhist monasteries seen as flashpoints of protests," AP, 28 September 2007.

<sup>209</sup> See Section on Thaketa Township raids for more information.

<sup>210</sup> Sources: Monks Flee Crackdown as Reports of Brutality Emerge," *The Guardian*, 4 October 2007.

arrested, others were ordered to return to their hometowns.<sup>211</sup> Those who remained in Rangoon were prevented from venturing out on their morning alms rounds.<sup>212</sup> All Rangoon monasteries were ordered not to accept guests, including other monks and persons travelling to Rangoon to receive medical treatment.<sup>213</sup>

*“On 3 October, an Arakanese monk who usually visited my house arrived and appealed to my wife to donate some money. That monk told my wife that the monastery he in lived [in Rangoon] had been raided by security forces and he had escaped only by jumping out of a window. He went around the city without any money to return to his hometown, so my wife gave him 5,000 kyat. He was very grateful. He said that most other people were now afraid to donate or even be seen with monks”.*<sup>214</sup>

*“Monks are now a very rare sight to see in the downtown area of Rangoon. Thousands of monks were detained and forced to change their robes to civilian clothing. Some monks fled and they changed their lifestyle to that of common people so that they could escape from the authorities. I don’t dare to think what Buddhism in Burma would be like if there were no monks in the country”.*<sup>215</sup>

*“We received information that all monasteries had been barred from allowing any visiting monks to stay, and that any guests who visited those monasteries were to be carefully checked. So, we bought bus tickets to travel to the [Thai-Burma] border area. We could not afford the bus fare, but they gave us out tickets for free when we told them we were being hunted by the authorities. There were nearly 300 monks in the bus terminal”.*<sup>216</sup>

Similar raids and restrictions on monasteries were conducted throughout the country. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB), 52 monasteries across the country were raided by the authorities between 25 September and 6 October 2007. A steady stream of further raids was also reported right through October and November. A number of these raids are addressed in greater detail below.

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<sup>211</sup> Source: “Soldiers Hunt Dissidents in Myanmar,” AP, 4 October 2007.

<sup>212</sup> Source: “Overnight Arrests of Monks Continue in Rangoon,” *Irrawaddy*, 4 October 2007.

<sup>213</sup> Source: “Monasteries in Rangoon ordered not to accommodate guests,” IMNA, 5 October 2007.

<sup>214</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>215</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Hlaing Soe”, 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

<sup>216</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Win Aung”, 48-year-old Buddhist monk, 20 October 2007.

## Invitations to 'Breakfast'

At approximately 3:00 am on the night of 26 September, the Pinnya Ramika Monastery, on Thein Phyu Road, Botataung Township was also raided by a military force. Troops reportedly surrounded the monastery, woke up the abbot and ordered him to beat the brass gong to assemble the monks in the mess hall. Here they were invited to breakfast at the Kaba Aye Pagoda. In all, nearly 400 monks were reportedly loaded onto the trucks. However, the trucks drove straight past Kaba Aye Pagoda and continued to Mingladon military prison on the outskirts of Rangoon, where they were locked in crowded cells. According to one of those who was detained, *"There were ... over 1,000 detainees, including 600 monks"*.<sup>217</sup>

That same night, SPDC army soldiers raided the Mingala Rama Pali University Monastery, also located on Thein Phyu Road. Close to 100 monks were reportedly taken away, also under the guise of being invited to breakfast. This group, however, was taken to the temporary detention centre set up at the Rangoon Government Technical Institute (GTI) located in Insein Township. One monk who managed to evade capture reported that the monks were beaten before being taken away. The following morning, specks of blood could be seen and the monastery had been ransacked.<sup>218</sup>

*"The soldiers invited us to come and have breakfast with them. We knew it was not breakfast, but we did not fight them like they did at Ngwe Kyar Yan [Monastery]"*.<sup>219</sup>

## Maggin Monastery

Maggin Monastery in Thingangyun Township of Rangoon is noted for the care and board it provides to those suffering with HIV/AIDS. In the absence of sufficient government provisions, the SPDC has long viewed the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients with suspicion, especially as much work is done in this field by the NLD. It is apparent that the regime is wary of political capital being built upon such welfare activities.

Maggin Monastery was raided by a military force on the night of 26 September 2007. One HIV patient staying at the monastery reported waking up at midnight to the sound of whistling. He then witnessed soldiers armed with rifles and batons kicking the novice monks awake: *"None of us dared to speak out; they looked as if they would kill anyone who spoke out. I was afraid and didn't dare to move. They looked evil and ready to kill"*.<sup>220</sup> The patients also were initially manhandled by the

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<sup>217</sup> Source: "Hundreds of Shan monks pinched in crackdown," SHAN, 10 October 2007.

<sup>218</sup> Source: *Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma*, HRW, December 2007.

<sup>219</sup> Source: "Untold story: How Burma brutalised its monks," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 2007.

<sup>220</sup> Source: "They Came in the Night, Ready to Kill," *Irrawaddy*, 27 September 2007.

soldiers but were released after presenting documents confirming they were at the monastery to receive treatment.<sup>221</sup>

The abbot of the monastery was arrested along with four senior monks, (two of whom were over 80) and four other persons found at the monastery.<sup>222</sup> The monastery's abbot, U Eindaka (a.k.a U Panama), a former political prisoner, continued to be detained in Insein Prison at the time of publication, and is likely to face trial and sentencing.<sup>223</sup>

Maggin Monastery was raided for a second time on 3 October, at which point the entire monastery was emptied and locked by the security forces. At the time of the second raid, only nine novices and a few HIV/AIDS patients remained in the compound. The novices were sent to another nearby monastery.<sup>224</sup> Photos were taken of patients, who were questioned about speaking to a foreign radio station, before being transferred to SPDC-administered hospitals.<sup>225</sup> When the monastery was later reopened, only two monks were permitted to return to act as caretakers.<sup>226</sup>

The monastery was raided yet again on 29 November, and those monks and laypersons who had returned were summarily evicted from the compound. They were given no warning concerning the eviction and no responsibility was taken for their resettlement. Furthermore, local residents were actively restricted from assisting the monks in moving their belongings, and were threatened with arrest if they did so.<sup>227</sup>

Following the raid, the abbot's 80-year-old father, U Nandiya was placed under guard at Myayadana Monastery, Hlaingthaya Township of Rangoon Division.<sup>228</sup> The authorities had planned to force him to return home, but cancelled these plans after discovering people were planning to greet him upon his arrival. At the time of publication, U Nandiya still remained under guard at the monastery.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>224</sup> Source: "Monasteries again targeted in raids," DVB, 5 October 2007.

<sup>225</sup> Source: "Overnight Arrests of Monks Continue in Rangoon," *Irrawaddy*, 4 October 2007.

<sup>226</sup> Source: Source: *Article 2, Vol. 6 No. 5-6*, AHRC, December 2007.

<sup>227</sup> Source: "Maggin abbot pressured to leave Rangoon," DVB, 3 December 2007.

<sup>228</sup> Source: "Burmese Buddhist Monks Outcasts in their Own Country," *Irrawaddy*, 3 December 2007.

<sup>229</sup> Sources: "Maggin abbot pressured to leave Rangoon," DVB, 3 December 2007; *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

## Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery

On the night of 26 September 2007, the Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon was raided by armed SPDC army soldiers. The previous night, the monastery had been placed under guard by riot police who had blockaded all entrances, prohibiting all access or egress to or from the compound. The roadblocks were later removed upon request of the abbot, although riot police continued to be stationed outside the monastery.<sup>230</sup>

Shortly after midnight, military forces drove a truck right through the gate of the monastery. A local resident interviewed by HRDU reported hearing the monastery bell ringing at 12:30 am. Throughout the duration of the raid he estimates that 50-70 gunshots were fired inside the monastery, and also reported hearing cries of “*Help Sayadaw [abbot], help Sayadaw!*” immediately preceding a volley of gunfire. It would seem that the soldiers were firing rubber bullets. The following morning eyewitnesses reported finding 35-40 blue-green hard plastic bullets scattered on the ground throughout the monastery compound.<sup>231</sup>

The monks inside the compound were heavily assaulted. Eyewitnesses have reported that monks were beaten across the legs with bamboo sticks, ordered to sit down and then kicked in the head by the soldiers. Women and children were also reported to have been beaten, as were soldiers who refused to participate.<sup>232</sup>

A local resident, who hid with the abbot and some novices amongst Buddha images on the third storey, was able to view the events of the night as they unfolded.

*“First the military used tear gas, and then they started shooting with their guns. Monks and laypersons reacted by throwing stones at the soldiers, so then the military started to beat them with bamboo sticks. Both the monks and laypersons were told to crawl on all fours like dogs, but the monks refused and only went on their knees with arms out on both sides. They were kicked and beaten on their backs and heads. One very fat monk was beaten the most severely and told by the military that he looked like a dog. Around 60-70 people, including monks, were beaten and taken away [by the soldiers]. Before leaving, the military told them that ‘your faces are not the same as they were last night’ [meaning that the military now viewed them differently].”<sup>233</sup>*

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<sup>230</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Maung Myo*”, 42-year-old male civilian, 29 November 2007.

<sup>231</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> Sources: “Burmese soldiers raid monastery and beat monks,” *The Nation*, 27 September 2007; “Burma Protests,” *Irrawaddy*, 27 September 2007.

<sup>233</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Maung Myo*”, 42-year-old male civilian, 29 November 2007.

Ma Ohnmar, an NLD member who had been arrested during the raid later reported the story of an elderly woman named Daw Khin Pyone Yi who had been detained alongside her.

*“She was there when the monastery was raided, and the Buddhist flag fell as the pole broke. So she held it up to prevent it from touching the ground. Immediately, she was surrounded by riot police and [members of the] Swan Arr Shin who tied her hands behind her back, and beat her up non-stop as they dragged her away. ... We saw her back; it was criss-crossed with black bruises. Her back had not even healed on the day she was released.”<sup>234</sup>*



The aftermath of the raid on the Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon. On the night of 26 September 2007, SPDC army soldiers stormed the monastery compound, assaulting the resident monks, destroying and looting monastery property and arresting an estimated 100 persons, the majority of whom were monks. The following morning (when this photo was taken), windows were found smashed, monks' quarters ransacked, and dozens of rubber bullets and large patches of blood littered the ground, [© AFP].

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<sup>234</sup> Source: “Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution,” DVB, 27 October 2007.

Around 100 persons are believed to have been arrested during the raid, the majority of whom were monks, including Sayadaw U Uttama, the second most senior monk in the monastery, as well U Dhammadainna, another senior monk,<sup>235</sup>

Unconfirmed reports have claimed that one of the monks named U Sandima died early the next morning from injuries sustained during the raid.<sup>236</sup> In addition, the Asian Human Rights Commission reported that Maung Kyaw Kyaw, a 33-year-old civilian from South Okkalapa Township was also killed during the raid.<sup>237</sup>

The following morning, large patches of blood were visible in the ransacked monastery and smashed glass and torn monks robes littered the floor.

*“At the entrance of the monastery, I saw sticks on the ground that were covered in blood. I saw that some of the windows and bookshelves were broken in the monastery. There were a lot of pieces of glass on the floor.”*<sup>238</sup>

*“The furniture in the monks’ quarters had been destroyed and Buddha images were scattered on the ground. It was a sight incompatible with the tranquillity and reverence of a Buddhist temple. I couldn’t help but think that the spray of blood on the wall in front of me came from the head of a monk. I kept imagining a rifle butt crashing down on a monk’s skull. I couldn’t get the image out of my mind.”*<sup>239</sup>

Resident monks, who had escaped arrest, complained that money, electrical equipment and Buddha statues had been looted from the compound. A photograph taken after the raid shows a Buddha statue with its head missing. The head had been embedded with gemstones, and it is assumed that the soldiers cut it off and stole it during the raid.<sup>240</sup> One local resident recognised the ripped t-shirt of U Kalama, a monk he had known well.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Sources: “Burmese soldiers raid monastery and beat monks,” *The Nation*, 27 September 2007; “Burma Protests,” *Irrawaddy*, 27 September 2007.

<sup>236</sup> Sources: “Burmese soldiers raid monastery and beat monks,” *The Nation*, 27 September 2007; “Burma Protests,” *Irrawaddy*, 27 September 2007.

<sup>237</sup> Source: *Article 2, Vol. 6 No. 5-6*, AHRC, December 2007.

<sup>238</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Htun Win”, 56-year-old male civilian, 10 November 2007.

<sup>239</sup> Source: “Eyewitness Account of Bloody September 27,” *Irrawaddy*, 2 November 2007.

<sup>240</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots,” AHRC, 30 September 2007.

<sup>241</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Maung Myo”, 42-year-old male civilian, 29 November 2007.

At 8:00 am the following morning, U Ant Maung, the former Minister for Religious Affairs, now an SPDC consultant for religious matters arrived at the monastery along with a workman who took measurements of broken windows and fittings.<sup>242</sup> By 29 September 2007, the day on which UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari arrived in the country, the monastery compound was fully repaired and refitted to hide the evidence of what had taken place there.<sup>243</sup>

On the evening of 28 September, the head abbot of the monastery, U Yevada, along with five other monks and one local layperson were arrested during further night time raids and transferred to Kaba Aye detention centre.<sup>244</sup>

## Additional Raids in Okkalapa

On the night of 3 October 2007, five further monasteries were raided in North and South Okkalapa Townships. Specifically, these monasteries were Shwetaungpaw, Dhammazaya and Sandilayama Monasteries in South Okkalapa Township and Zayawaddy and Pannitayama Monasteries in North Okkalapa Township. The soldiers used photographs taken during the protests to search for monks on their targeted list.. If one monk on their list was found in the monastery, all the resident monks were arrested. Monks were reported to have been beaten despite requesting that the soldiers refrain from violence in carrying out their task. One resident who witnessed events at Shwetaungpaw Monastery reported;

*"[The soldiers] looked as if they were raiding a terrorist camp, they approached the monastery from Nga Moe Yeik creek in darkness, like a covert operation. And they carried out the raid on the monastery so discreetly that people didn't even realise. All the monks were arrested during the raid and the monastery has been left empty. They also arrested all the laypeople who were staying at the monastery, including women with toddlers".*<sup>245</sup>

Thirty monks were reportedly arrested from this monastery alone. Computers and other property was also reportedly seized from the monastery by the soldiers.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Maung Myo", 42-year-old male civilian, 29 November 2007.

<sup>243</sup> Source: "UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots," AHRC, 30 September 2007.

<sup>244</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Maung Myo", 42-year-old male civilian, 29 November 2007.

<sup>245</sup> Source: "Monasteries again targeted in raids," DVB, 5 October 2007.

<sup>246</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

Following the raids, U Zantila, the abbot of Zantila Yama Monastery, wrote to Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, the Minister of Religious Affairs, to file a formal complaint about the theft of money and property from the monastery. He was subsequently arrested, charged with defamation and sentenced to two years imprisonment.<sup>247</sup>



A Buddhist monk receiving treatment for injuries sustained during protests near the Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September 2007. [© AFP].

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<sup>247</sup> Source: “Abbot jailed for government defamation,” DVB, 17 December 2007

## Thaketa Township

On the night of 29 September 2007, SPDC army troops coordinated raids on at least five different monasteries in Thaketa Township. A number of these monasteries were raided by land assault as well as by naval boats from Pazundaung Creek which some of the monastery compound backed onto. Local residents actively attempted to prevent these raids, and it would appear that this two-fronted assault was designed to circumvent local resistance.

At least 100 monks were reported arrested and taken away during these raids and numerous reports have attested to at least one civilian being killed by gunfire while trying to protect the Zaetawon Monastery.<sup>248</sup> Eyewitnesses have further claimed that at least three monks were killed during the night of raids in Thaketa Township.<sup>249</sup>

*“They were not only approaching the monastery by land but also via the creek running behind the monastery. A man who was on guard duty alerted the neighbourhood and the soldiers shot and killed him on spot for doing so. They also beat his wife who was weeping over her husband’s dead body before they left. I heard the authorities ordered the body buried that same night”*<sup>250</sup>

*“On 29 October, the military came in two trucks to raid our monastery. The windscreens on the trucks were broken where local residents had fired catapults [slingshots] at them. The soldiers responded by shooting at them. I heard around nine shots fired. One middle-aged man was shot, and they took his body away. His wife ran out to try and stop them. They tried to arrest her as well but she managed to get away”*<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Source: “Rangoon Quiet but Raids on Monasteries Continue,” *Irrawaddy*, 1 October 2007.

<sup>249</sup> Source: “How Many Monks were killed in the Pro-democracy Uprising?” *Irrawaddy*, 19 November 2007.

<sup>250</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>251</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Na Thein”, Buddhist monk, 13 December 2007.

## Raids in Other Locations around the Country

### Arakan State

In Sittwe (Akyab), the capital of Arakan State, local authorities issued official letters to the monks to return home. Some of these monks were then reportedly arrested on their journey. On 6 October 2007, a monk was seen being arrested outside a pagoda after security forces informed him that he was not supposed to be there.<sup>252</sup>

By 7 October, residents of Sittwe reported that most of city's monasteries were empty, and only a limited number of monks could be seen on their morning alms rounds: "*There used to be 28 monks who would come to my house for alms. Now there are only [three]*". On the night of 10 October, SPDC troops raided Hla Rwa Win Monastery and evicted all monks who remained in the compound.<sup>253</sup>

### Mandalay Division

Numerous monasteries were sealed off in Mandalay, with security forces placing coils of barbed wire around many monastic compounds. Similar to the tactics employed in Myitkyina described above, monks were prohibited from receiving alms from the local lay community, and given their boycott of alms from the military, this left many with a shortage of food.<sup>254</sup> Security forces threatened that monks would be arrested if they remained in their monasteries so their abbots permitted them to travel, despite the prohibition on travel during the period of Buddhist lent. It was reported that in one of the largest monasteries in Mandalay, by November, only 200 monks remained of the original 2,800.<sup>255</sup>

At 7:00 pm on 27 September, SPDC army troops raided Pauk Myaing Monastery in Chan Mya Tharsi (Northwest Mandalay) Township. Fifty monks were praying at the time when they were kicked and beaten with batons. Many monks were reported to have been bleeding when they were taken away by security forces.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Source: "Monasteries in Sittwe Empty," DVB, 7 October 2007.

<sup>253</sup> Source: "Restrictions on worship imposed in monastery in Sittwe," *Kaladan News*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>254</sup> Source: "Rangoon Quiet but Raids on Monasteries Continue," *Irrawaddy*, 1 October 2007.

<sup>255</sup> Source: "Burma monks not ready to forgive," BBC News, 14 November 2007.

<sup>256</sup> Source: "Local residents thwart monastery raids," DVB, 28 September 2007; "Irrawaddy Updates," *Irrawaddy*, 29 September 2007.

The USDA visited monasteries in Meikhtila on 3 October and instructed the abbots to send student and novice monks home. The two largest monasteries in Meikhtila, alone, housed a combined total of 800 student monks. Many faced real difficulties travelling home with no money with which to pay the costs of transport. Nevertheless, the USDA threatened that those who stayed would be arrested.<sup>257</sup>

## Kachin State

Prior to the protests reaching their height, by 18 September 2007, authorities in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, had locked down a number of monasteries, barring the monks from leaving their rooms or receiving alms from the local community.<sup>258</sup>

On the night of the 25 September, a combined security force comprised of riot police, SPDC army soldiers, USDA and members of the auxiliary fire brigade (all of whom must also be join the USDA) raided several monasteries in Myitkyina. According to a report by the Kachin News Group (KNG), these raids were carried out under the command of Major General Ohn Myint, commanding officer of the SPDC Northern Regional Command.<sup>259</sup>

According to the KNG, those monasteries that were raided were Tatkone Monastery in Tatkone Quarter, Du Kahtawng Monastery in Du Mare Quarter, Yuzana Kyaungthai Monastery in Yuzana Quarter, Myo Oo Monastery in Yangyi Aung Quarter and Khemartiwun Monastery in Khemartiri Quarter.<sup>260</sup>

Monks' hands were reportedly bound with rope, and many were heavily assaulted by the security forces. Over 200 monks were detained at Myitkyina's No.1 and No.2 police stations, as well as at Thitant Prison. A number of other monks were also reportedly sent to a prison in the nearby town of Waingmaw. The senior monks of these monasteries were sent to Northern Regional Command Headquarters in Myitkyina where they underwent interrogation by the military.<sup>261</sup> One monk from Yuzana Kyaungthai Monastery recounted the night's events:

*"The authorities cut the phone lines at about five in the afternoon. At ten past nine that night, they crashed open the main gate of the monastery with their military trucks, they started beating the monks*

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<sup>257</sup> Source: "Monks in Meikhtila sent home to prevent protests," *Mizzima News*, 5 October 2007.

<sup>258</sup> Source: "Monks in Myitkyina under virtual house arrest in monasteries," KNG, 18 September 2007.

<sup>259</sup> Source: "Four monks killed in Tuesday night's raid in Myitkyina," KNG, 27 September 2007.

<sup>260</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

*as soon as they came in. They kicked open the main door of the monastery after they crashed open the gate. They beat us indiscriminately as soon as they got inside the building. It was a preventive strike so that the monks could not resist the attack. They ordered us to stand against the wall and hit the monks who did not obey their orders with sticks. ... We only dared go back into the monastery in the morning. The whole building looked fairly messed up with doors that had been kicked open. We saw red stains on the floor ... and solid red blobs that appeared to be blood”<sup>262</sup>*

At least three monks are reported to have been killed during these raids.<sup>263</sup> During the raid on the Yuzana Kyaunghtai Monastery, the deputy abbot was beaten severely about the head. He was again assaulted while in detention, and died the following day as a result of his injuries. The pathologist was forced to declare his cause of death as a pre-existing heart condition.<sup>264</sup>

Despite the subsequent release of the majority of those monks arrested during these raids, local residents reported that the monasteries remained empty and that no monks could be seen conducting their alms rounds throughout the city.<sup>265</sup> By 31 October, only eleven out of a previous 142 monks remained in the Yuzana Kyaunghtai Monastery.<sup>266</sup>

Monasteries were also raided in Bhamo, Kachin State’s second largest city, on 25 September. In other parts of Kachin State, monasteries were completely locked down. On 18 October, one monk from Lweje, near the border with China, reported that if the military continued to surround the monasteries, the monks would face a serious shortage of food.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Source: “The Monk’s Tale: Death in detention,” AI, 9 November 2007.

<sup>263</sup> Source: “Four monks killed in Tuesday night’s raid in Myitkyina,” KNG, 27 September 2007; HRDU Interview with “Ma Win Ko Khin”, 22-year-old female civilian, 20 November 2007.

<sup>264</sup> Source: “The Monk’s Tale: Death in detention,” AI, 9 November 2007.

<sup>265</sup> Source: “Burma Update 241,” PDC, 18 October 2007.

<sup>266</sup> Source: “The Monk’s Tale: Death in detention,” AI, 9 November 2007.

<sup>267</sup> Source: “Burma Update 241,” PDC, 18 October 2007.

## Continued Raids

At the time of publication, numerous monasteries in Rangoon remained empty, under surveillance or occupied by security forces.<sup>268</sup>

Raids on monasteries nationwide were also ongoing, often in an attempt to hunt down those whom the SPDC had identified as the leaders of the monk-led protests. On 15 November, authorities raided Tayzar Rama Kaman Htan Monastery on the outskirts of Sittwe, and arrested U Than Rama, wanted for his involvement in the protests. He was reportedly beaten during the raid and his whereabouts after his arrest remain unknown.<sup>269</sup>

Also on 15 November, an estimated 150 USDA members, Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) officials, and police officers, raided Aung Dhamma Pala Monastery in Dagon Myothit East Township, Rangoon. According to a report by the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), the monastery was ransacked and looted. One monk, U Sanda Wara, was assaulted before being taken away by his assailants. The monastery has reportedly been embroiled in a land dispute with the USDA, and the SPDC has now decreed that the monastery, along with numerous others in the area, must vacate the premises, presumably to make way for the USDA.<sup>270</sup>

On the night of 25 November, security forces raided the Weikzawtaryone Monastery in Mayangone Township in Rangoon. They checked the monks at the monastery against photos taken during the days of the protests and identified five monks who they sought for arrest. The soldiers left the monastery without having detained the monks following the strong objections of the abbot and a growing crowd of angered local residents outside the monastery. This gave those five monks a chance to flee Rangoon and escape arrest.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Source: *Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma*, HRW, December 2007; *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007

<sup>269</sup> Source: "Monk Arrested in Police Raid," *Narinjara News*, 26 November 2007; *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>270</sup> Source: "Monk held after monastery raid," DVB, 16 November 2007.

<sup>271</sup> Source: Confidential HRDU source. HRDU was provided with information from a number of different confidential sources who have requested anonymity out of fear for their safety.

## VII. A Witch Hunt<sup>272</sup>

After the military quashed the demonstrations in the streets, the authorities stepped up their search for those suspected of participating in or supporting the peaceful protests. By the first week of October it was widely estimated that up to 6,000 people, including at least 1,400 monks, had been arrested since the protests had begun.<sup>273</sup>

The campaign of arrests conducted by the SPDC both during and in the aftermath of the protests was systematic, to the point that numerous persons were arrested for merely applauding or offering water to monks. It has been reported that the names of these persons had been recorded by the USDA, the SAS, and other plainclothes officials during the demonstrations.<sup>274</sup>

*“On 30 September I heard an announcement that everyone who was photographed in the protests would be approached by the government. Moreover, people who donated food and drinking water to the monks would also have action taken against them. So I didn’t dare to sleep at my house”.*<sup>275</sup>

*“Now the soldiers only come at night. They take anyone they can identify from their videos; people who clapped, who offered water to the monks, who knelt and prayed as they passed, people who happened to turn and watch as they passed by and their faces were caught on film”.*<sup>276</sup>

*“When the monks were blocked at the upper east gate of Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September, we all donated food and drinking water to the monks, as well as treating the injured monks. When we donated food and water to the monks, the authorities photographed us secretly. I escaped arrest but [my friend] was accused of taking part in political activities and detained in Insein Prison”.*<sup>277</sup>

<sup>272</sup> The title of this section of the report has been taken from a quote made by the former UN Resident Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator, Charles Petrie, who referred to the systematic campaign of arrests as a “witch hunt”, CCSDPT Open Session, Bangkok, 10 October 2007.

<sup>273</sup> Source: *Saffron Revolution: Update*, Altsean Burma, 15 October 2007.

<sup>274</sup> Source: “Burma Update 263,” PDC, 10 November 2007.

<sup>275</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>276</sup> Source: “Only now, the full horror of Burmese junta’s repression of monks emerges,” *The Independent*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>277</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Ne Lin”, 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007.

*“My friend was taken away for clapping during the demonstrations. She had not marched. She came out of her house as the marchers went by and, for perhaps 30 seconds, smiled and clapped as the monks chanted. Her face was recorded on a military intelligence camera. She was taken and beaten. Now she is so scared she won't even leave her room to come and talk to me, [or] to anyone.”<sup>278</sup>*

While the majority of those persons arrested for such acts have since been released, in other instances charges have been brought against them. For instance, a group of nine Muslims from Rangoon, arrested after offering water to protesting monks, have subsequently been charged with inciting public unrest. These persons have been identified as:

1. Myot Thant;
2. Nyi Nyi Zaw;
3. Myo Win;
4. Naing Min;
5. Htun Htun Naing;
6. Kyaw Kyaw Satt;
7. Htun Myint Aung;
8. Han Zaw Min Aung; and
9. Thaug Htut.<sup>279</sup>

It has also been reported that an arrest warrant was issued for an SPDC army officer who donated water to monks during the protests in Mandalay. Lieutenant Win Tun Aung of Infantry Battalion (IB) #3 reportedly went into hiding after the order was issued for his arrest.<sup>280</sup>

Two persons were also reported to have been arrested for the possession of old banknotes which bear the picture of independence hero, General Aung San.<sup>281</sup> Though the notes are old they remain legal tender and have not been taken out of circulation.

Though most of those persons arrested have since been released, the systematic and indiscriminating nature of their initial arrests provided the SPDC with a means to reassert its control over the populace, providing a clear deterrent against any form of support for potential demonstrations in the future.

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<sup>278</sup> Source: “Only now, the full horror of Burmese junta's repression of monks emerges,” *The Independent*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>279</sup> Source: “Muslims detained for giving water to monks,” DVB, 7 November 2007.

<sup>280</sup> Sources: “Burma Update 263,” PDC, 10 November 2007; “Army officer flees under threat of arrest,” DVB, 8 November 2007.

<sup>281</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Shwe Naing*”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007; “Yangon: Man Detained for Possessing Currency with General Aung San's Picture,” DVB, 1 October 2007.

## Night Time Abductions

Many of those arrested in relation to the protests were abducted during raids on their homes, most of which were conducted late at night. These raids became evermore systematic following the imposition of the curfew on 25 September, coming to their height in the weeks following the suppression of the demonstrations. The introduction of the curfew was an important factor in facilitating these raids by restricting the movement of targets and enabling arrests to be conducted covertly under cover of darkness. Whole neighbourhoods were swept for suspects, with Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) officials, the USDA and the *Swan Arr Shin* (SAS), working alongside the police and military intelligence, checking photos and names gathered during the demonstrations against house registration documents.

*“That night I slept with my friends at the hostel where we receive private tuition. The next day, I went back home and my mother told me that the local TPDC chairman, two people in plainclothes and two police officers came to our home and asked about me. According to my mother, they asked how she was related to me, and where I had gone. My mother had replied that I was her son and wasn’t at home the previous night. They told my mother that I had to come to the local TPDC office when I arrived back home as they wanted to ask me some questions”*<sup>282</sup>

*“On the evening of 28 September, a local Swan Arr Shin member and USDA member showed up at my house searching for me. They knew that I had been involved in the protests. My family told them that I was not at home. I had gone to sleep at my relatives’ house that night. But they were scared to let me stay with them for long as they knew it would get them into trouble too. I could not go back and sleep at my house either. Eventually, I had to leave the country”*<sup>283</sup>

*“At night, around 1:00 am, local police and SPDC quarter headmen [TPDC] raided our hostel. We already knew one day they would come and arrest us. My two friends and I ran out of the backdoor. We went through the compound of the house at the back of the hostel. We hid in my friend’s house in this quarter. He also participated in the demonstrations. The next day, we did not go back the hostel. The authorities told the owner of the hostel to inform them when I returned. Later, when I phoned my friend’s house near the hostel to enquire about the situation, he told me not*

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<sup>282</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ko Maung Tint*”, 21-year-old male civilian, 15 November 2007.

<sup>283</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ma Zin Aung*”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

*to come back because the authorities were still looking for us. We decided not to go back and left for Moulmein*".<sup>284</sup>

*"After the curfew was introduced, the authorities would begin their arrests at 12:00 am. That way the people couldn't see what was happening, or help each other. The authorities prefer to arrest people at night because it is difficult for people to document these events. People couldn't defend the monasteries in Rangoon because of the curfew so the authorities could do what they wanted. Even though they announced that they were reducing the curfew, they would still have enough time. I think they will lift the curfew soon because they have already done what they wanted to do [The curfew was lifted on 20 October; the day after this interview was conducted]".<sup>285</sup>*

*"That night I slept at my friend's house because the local authorities had arrived at our house looking for me. [His friend's mother] told me not to go back home, and sleep at their house that night instead. The next day [after they had left,] we called my friend's mother and she told us not to come back. The elder sister of my friend came to us with money and some clothes. She advised us to go Moulmein Township for our safety. According to her, the local authorities and police were searching for the protestors house by house. Two local authorities' [TPDC] men and three police had come to enquire about us and asked where we had gone".<sup>286</sup>*

The SPDC was facilitated in their manhunt by the fact that households are forced to maintain an up-to-date register of all persons residing in their house. A copy of the register is submitted with to the local TPDC office. In some areas, households must even hang photographs of family members outside their homes so that the authorities can more easily keep watch on the activities of the population. These lists and photographs were checked against those which had been gathered by the security forces during the demonstrations. SPDC army trucks mounted with loudspeakers reportedly drove through the streets of Rangoon announcing *"You must stay inside. Don't come out. We have photographs of the people we're looking for. We will arrest them"*.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Min Win", 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

<sup>285</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thu Nyunt", 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

<sup>286</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Khin Maung", 17-year-old male student, 15 November 2007.

<sup>287</sup> Source: "Monks flee crackdown as reports of brutality emerge," *The Guardian*, 4 October 2007

*“If they want to check a house, they enter and ask for the family registration list. If anyone on the list is missing, they ask about the missing person. They ask about where this person is and where he or she had gone”.*<sup>288</sup>

*“The wife of my friend called me and told me that her husband was arrested at midnight from their home. When they came to arrest him, they showed them some photos and asked if they recognised anyone from the photos. She saw me in the photos and warned me that they were going to arrest me too. After that, I returned home, took some money and went to hide at one friend’s home after another”.*<sup>289</sup>

The authorities rarely provided any legitimate explanation for the arrests, any legal documentation, or any information regarding where the person was to be taken or imprisoned, either to the individuals involved, or to their family members.

*“I was sleeping in the front room when I woke up at the sound of someone shouting ‘Him! Him!’ One soldier poked his gun under the mosquito net and pointed it at me. I was handcuffed while I was still under the net and then told to stand up. I was taken outside in front of the house, where I saw around 70 soldiers on the street. When I asked why I had been arrested, they replied: ‘You know why. You know who you are’”.*<sup>290</sup>

*“My aunt said about twenty officials and government supporters raided our house at midnight around ten days ago and captured [my brother]. Our grandmother was with him at the time and she was threatened by an official who told her to keep her mouth shut if she did not want to get arrested too. My brother had been politically active since well before the recent protests. He has very close ties with the monks as well. I have no information on his whereabouts now. I am very worried for him as he is only a tenth standard high school student”.*<sup>291</sup>

*“They asked me where my wife was. I replied that she had left home after we had had a quarrel with one other. Then they told me they wanted her passport. I asked them who they were, but the*

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<sup>288</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>289</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Shwe Htet”, 52-year-old male civilian, 2 November 2007.

<sup>290</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>291</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

*three strangers replied that they didn't have permission to talk about which group they were from. They came here according to the order of one of their superiors. I told them I would give it [the passport] to them tomorrow but they didn't accept that. They said that if I didn't give it to them that night they would use force to search for it".*<sup>292</sup>

This lack of accountability was further reinforced by the fact that those carrying out the raids often refused to identify themselves or the organization that they represented. The experience of Par Par Lay, a popular comedian from Mandalay who is no stranger to harassment and detention, was also typical: "My wife asked them, 'Which organisation are you from? Tell me, why are you taking him? What are your names?' 'You don't need to know,' they said".<sup>293</sup>

Such conditions of arrest are clearly contrary to the standards of international law, and would be more accurately described as abductions or enforced disappearances rather than arrest. According to the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1992, enforced disappearances occur when:

*"Persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials of different branches or levels of Government, ... followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law".*<sup>294</sup>

By 2 October 2007, the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) had estimated that at least 700 monks and 500 civilians had been detained at unknown locations around the country.<sup>295</sup> In the majority of these cases, it was at least known that they had been taken by security forces, and exile organizations, such as the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB), have since been able to establish the whereabouts of many of those who continue to be detained.

The AAPPB has also confirmed the names of 84 persons who remained missing at the time of publication.<sup>296</sup> In these cases, the SPDC has not only refused to account for the whereabouts of these individuals, but has not even

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<sup>292</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Min Zaw", 30-year-old male civilian, 27 October 2007.

<sup>293</sup> Source: *Article 2, Vol. 6 No. 5-6*, AHRC, December 2007.

<sup>294</sup> Source: *Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, G.A. res. 47/133, 47 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 207, U.N. Doc. A/47/49 (1992).

<sup>295</sup> Source: "BURMA: U.N. Human Rights Council's credibility is at stake in Burma," AHRC, 3 October 2007.

<sup>296</sup> Source: *AAPPB List of the Disappeared*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/disap\\_sept\\_07.htm](http://www.aappb.org/disap_sept_07.htm) on 6 January 2008.

acknowledged that they have been arrested. As a result, a great deal of concern remains for the condition of those persons, particularly given that many went missing on the days of the crackdown and the SPDC's reticence in providing a true account of the number of dead.

## Arrested for Harboring

In Burma, not only must households register all inhabitants with their local authority, but they must also obtain the permission of the TPDC for any overnight guests, enabling the SPDC to both monitor and restrict the movement of all persons within the country. In the weeks following the protests, with many protestors fearful to stay in their own homes, the SPDC reaffirmed and enforced this order, to deter others from providing them with sanctuary during the night.

*“Many people were arrested at night. In the morning I would hear who was arrested and which monasteries were raided. I called my hometown, and I was told that the soldiers were looking for me, so I shouldn't come home. I stayed in Rangoon for nine days and had to move around to stay in many different places. I was worried for the families I was staying with. I did not want them to get in to trouble. On 6 October I decided to leave Rangoon and go to the [Thai-Burma] border.”<sup>297</sup>*

Security forces were heard patrolling the streets of Rangoon, declaring that any occupant who permitted somebody not on their registration list to stay in their home would themselves be liable for arrest. Some announcements had even warned that the entire family residing in a house found to be sheltering a fugitive would be arrested.

*“On the night of the 26 September, security forces announced with loudspeakers that everyone had to stay in their own homes and that no guests were allowed at night. If they found a guest who was not on the house registration, they would take action towards the guest as well as the family living in the household. They also announced that they would check the family member lists day and night.”<sup>298</sup>*

*“The authorities came with loudspeakers and made an announcement in the quarter where I was hiding. They said that people should not shelter those who were involved in the protest, and that any house owner who sheltered protesters would be arrested. I stayed in three different places during this time. The*

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<sup>297</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thu Nyunt”, 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

<sup>298</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

*first house owner could not sleep at night, as he worried someone would knock on the front door. He was like this for three or four days so I could not stay there anymore and moved to another place. At the other place they helped me because they shared the same [political] ideals as me. However, when they heard the sounds of cars in the night time, they came to wake me up but did not know where to send me as there was a curfew. I moved again to a third place, but I could not stay there for long either. I don't blame them though".<sup>299</sup>*

*"It became more and more difficult for me to hide. They [the authorities] could easily track me. In every ward, there were Swan Arr Shin and USDA and they always watched every house and its guests. When a guest visits a house, they would come and ask who the visitor was and where he came from. So I could hide at a house only for a day or two".<sup>300</sup>*

*"All of my comrades have gone into hiding at night. At night the soldiers and security forces made announcements through loudspeakers, warning people not to accept strangers or persons not in their own family into their homes. They said that if they found strangers in their houses they would arrest the whole family".<sup>301</sup>*

Several reports have emerged of the authorities stringently enforcing this diktat. For instance, on 9 October 2007, after security forces discovered three leaders of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) during a raid on a house in South Okkalapa Township, the house owner was taken into custody along with the suspects.<sup>302</sup> Similarly, in the early hours of 13 October, a house owner sheltering six activists, including 88 Generation Students' Group leader Ko Htay Kywe, was arrested together with the activists he was sheltering.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Khin Oo", 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>300</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Soe Win", 35-year-old male civilian, 19 October 2007.

<sup>301</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thu Nyunt", 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

<sup>302</sup> Source: "Authorities Root Out Fugitive Student Leaders," *Irrawaddy*, 10 October 2007.

<sup>303</sup> Source: "88 Student Leader Ko Htay Kywe arrested," AAPPB, 13 October 2007

## Arrests in Lieu Of Others

On several occasions, when the SPDC was unable to apprehend its intended targets, its security forces resorted to arresting family members in lieu of them. By arresting the family members of those in hiding, the authorities were not only applying a form of collective punishment, but were utilising these persons as leverage in their hunt for suspects. In some cases, the authorities made explicit this intent, by stating that the 'hostage' would be released only when their target is apprehended. Moreover, such assertions were at times reneged upon once their initial target had been arrested. It is important to note that this is not unusual practice for the SPDC, commonly utilised in both political and criminal cases.

*"The junta has not only continued to conduct thorough searches for suspects involved in the protests and detain them, it has also taken family members of the suspects if they cannot find who they are looking for. They are doing it without any regard for age or conditions of the family members they are taking. The remaining family members are told that the detainees will be released only when the political suspects they are looking for or on the run turn themselves in. The government itself is behaving itself as if they are a kidnapping gang. It is clearly evident that these abuses show no regard at all for human dignity or sympathy".<sup>304</sup>*

*"The leaders of the demonstrations cannot stay in their homes so they had to hide in the homes of friends and relatives. The homes of those suspected of sheltering these people get raided at night by police and soldiers. If the security forces couldn't find the person they are looking for then they take away somebody else from the house".<sup>305</sup>*

*"On the evening of 29 September [2007], my two sisters were taken from our house in the evening. But since they were both females and were government employees, they were sent back home the next morning. The authorities took them from our house after failing to arrest me there. They [his sisters] told me on phone they were asked about my whereabouts, and scolded me for getting them arrested".<sup>306</sup>*

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<sup>304</sup> Source: "Audio testimony of 'witch hunt' and brutal repression in Myanmar," AI, October 2007

<sup>305</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Soe Win", 35-year-old male civilian, 19 October 2007.

<sup>306</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Soe Win", 35-year-old male civilian, 19 October 2007.

In the case of Thet Thet Aung, who had gone into hiding on 8 October 2007, after narrowly avoiding arrest, both her mother and mother-in-law were arrested in her stead.

*“My husband and I were in a hair saloon on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A few men came in and locked the door, saying they wanted to ask us questions. I told them they could ask me at home, and I forced my way through. My husband followed me out, but they stopped him and took him away. The next day, they searched my home and my aunt’s home, and confiscated my documents. When they couldn’t find me, they told my family that I was wanted for questioning. The day after, on the 10<sup>th</sup>, they arrested my mother (54 years old) and my mother-in-law (70 years old). I heard that they’ll only be released when I turn myself in.”<sup>307</sup>*

The families of monks who had participated in the demonstrations were also targeted. One monk, who has since fled the country told HRDU how his stepmother came to be arrested:

*“We didn’t dare to go outside for a few days. At that time, the security forces were searching for us with photos taken during the demonstrations. On 12 October, my stepmother’s sister arrived at our hiding place and told me that my stepmother’s house had been raided at 3:00 am the previous night and she was taken away by the authorities. She told us to leave the hiding place and flee. According to her sister, the securities forces had threatened my stepmother that they would detain her if she didn’t tell them where we were hiding. Her car and the driver were also taken away by the authorities. Nobody knew where they had been taken. Even though her relatives asked about her at the police station, they didn’t get any information about her. She disappeared after she was arrested. She has some health problems, and left three children: a 5-year-old boy, a 7-year-old girl and a 9-year-old girl.”<sup>308</sup>*

In October almost the entire immediate family of U Gambira, a leader of the All Burmese Monks Alliance (ABMA) and one of the organizers of the September protests, were arrested. Unable to arrest U Gambira himself, authorities detained and interrogated his mother, sister and two brothers. The authorities openly declared that one of his brothers, Aung Kyaw Kyaw, would be held until the time that U Gambira was taken into custody. U Gambira was eventually apprehended on 4 November. His brother Aung Kyaw Kyaw nevertheless continues to be detained. Moreover, U Gambira’s 70-year-old father, U Min Lwin, was also arrested at the time and detained for almost a month before

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<sup>307</sup> Sources: “Junta arrests mother and In-Law of Protestor,” DVB, 11 October 2007; “Arrests Continue in Burma,” *Irrawaddy*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>308</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Hlaing Soe*”, 24-year-old Buddhist monk, 22 October 2007.

being released on 3 December. U Gambira has since been charged with high treason, carrying a term of life imprisonment or death.<sup>309</sup>

In addition, on 2 October 2007, the abbot of Thitsar Mandai Monastery in Mingaladon Township of Rangoon was arrested when the monastery was raided by SPDC army troops. Villagers, who enquired about the abbot at the military headquarters, were informed that he would not be released until they had detained his younger brother, also a monk, who was wanted for involvement in the protests.<sup>310</sup>

## Collective Punishment of Entire Neighbourhoods

During the months following the protests, the residents in the vicinity of the east gate of the Shwedagon Pagoda were confronted with a particularly systematic campaign of recrimination. As many monks were being heavily beaten in this area on 26 September 2007, many local residents responded by hurling abuse, throwing stones and firing catapults (slingshots) at the security forces responsible. In the following weeks, the SPDC not only took the inhabitants of entire streets into custody, leaving only small children and the elderly behind, but phone lines were cut off, restrictions were placed on the movement of residents and shops were ordered to close throughout October.

*“On the night of 1 October, many households in Bahan Township were raided. I was arrested at 3:00 am that night. Every household along Sabaechan Street was raided. The local authorities [TPDC] and soldiers carried out the raids. They knocked on the door and asked how many people were living in the house. After I answered their question, they ordered me to go with them for more questions. I was put on a truck together with 17 other men and women and taken to Insein GTI [Government Technological Institute] which was temporarily used as detention centre. ... I saw that they arrested three or four people from each house. Only old people and children were left in the houses. When we were at the detention centre, I heard a soldier inform the officer that the list of the arrested in Bahan Township that night was 105 males and 98 females. There was a rumour that one of the police officers was seriously injured when civilians threw stones at riot police on 26 September, so they were particularly violent in that area. They targeted people who live on Oak Street, and in each household three or more people were arrested. In custody, a woman*

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<sup>309</sup> Source: “More details of deaths during protests emerge, AHRC, 24 October 200; “Leading Monk Charged with Treason,” *Irrawaddy*, 15 November 2007; *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>310</sup> Source: “Head monk held in exchange for brother,” DVB, 18 October 2007.

*told me that she was arrested even though she was a USDA organizer*”.<sup>311</sup>

*“They came at about 2:00 am and woke everyone up. Only the old people were allowed to stay. They told each of them to bring 3 sets of clothes. We don’t know where they have been taken to. They were made to lower their heads and put their hands on their heads. Then they took them away”*”.<sup>312</sup>

There have been several unconfirmed reports that the SPDC intends to forcibly relocate entire wards in this area, in response to their involvement in the protests:

*“On 27 September, the authorities switched off the electricity for the quarter in the area near the eastern gate of Shwedagon Pagoda. Around 4:00 am, approximately 200 people in Shwe Nanthar Street were arrested, accused of fighting the attackers [security forces] by using stones and catapults [slingshots] and damaging Buddha images. They raided 50 homes, and most of my friends were arrested. Later that morning at about 10:00 am, soldiers and police came back to this area, and arrested people off the streets. Some of the people had not been involved in the protests and some were only visiting. Later, the authorities took photos of this area. I thought the houses in the area may be moved to another place. The authorities also ordered the residents in the area to close their shops for an indefinite period of time. If the residents did not obey the order, they were to be sentenced to six months imprisonment”*”.<sup>313</sup>

*“My wife told me that throughout October all the shops along Oak Street were ordered to close and the houses along the road were surveyed by municipal men. The people who lived along Oak Street were worried that they would be forced to move at any time. One rumour maintained that the block along Oak Street would be requisitioned and replaced with a park because the security forces were attacked on that street during the protests. Even though the Mayor of Rangoon announced on Myanmar Television that they have no plans to confiscate that block, the people who live there don’t believe him. Everything that happened in that area was watched by the security forces. Even on the full moon day of Thadingyut [26 October 2007], the shops along Oak Street were*

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<sup>311</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>312</sup> Source: “Estates Near Shwedagon Being Investigated and Relocated,” RFA, 6 October 2007

<sup>313</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Ne Lin”, 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007.

not allowed to open. The street itself was only partly open in order to control the situation if the protests took place again on the full moon day”.<sup>314</sup>



Residents watch and cheer from their balconies and windows as protestors file past their homes on 24 September 2007. During the crackdowns, many protestors sought shelter in the surrounding buildings. Such neighbourhoods were later punished collectively for their kindness, with unconfirmed reports stating that entire neighbourhoods would be forcibly relocated. [© DVB/EPA].

<sup>314</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

On 3 December, a monk, speaking to the Mizzima News Agency, also asserted that the residents in this area would be relocated after aiding the monk-led protests on 26 September.<sup>315</sup> Though the article presents this information as fact, it is unclear how the monk came by this news; if he was repeating rumour, or merely proffering an opinion. Nevertheless, the concern of families in the vicinity of Shwedagon's east gate is real, and warrants continued attention. When the SPDC has relocated communities in the past, it has rarely provided any form of compensation, and frequently failed to offer the relocated communities any viable alternatives.

## Release of Detainees

By 7 November, the SPDC claimed that only 91 persons arrested in connection with the demonstrations remained in detention.<sup>316</sup> The AAPPB, however, has meanwhile been able to confirm the continued detention of over 700 persons.<sup>317</sup> This figure is itself likely to be a conservative estimate of the true number of persons detained given that AAPPB have only included those cases it has been able to verify. Nevertheless, the significant divergence in these two figures highlight the SPDC's intent to misrepresent the true number of those detained.

Despite such a distortion of reality, the majority of those persons initially detained have since been released. This is particularly true of those who had no history of political activism or affiliation to any opposition and dissident groups.

When persons have been released from custody it has been upon condition that they sign a statement of assurance declaring that they will not be involved in any future political activities. For instance, Khin Mar Lar, arrested following a peaceful protest in Mandalay on 25 September 2007 was subsequently released a month later. At the time, she was forced to sign a statement declaring that if she was involved in any further demonstrations she would be imprisoned, fined 500,000 kyat (US\$377), and have all her household possessions confiscated.<sup>318</sup>

*"I arrived at the Bahan Township office at 5:45 p.m. The chairman of the Bahan Township Peace and Development Council, U Aung Maw Latt, said that he would release me, but I had to sign a bond.*

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<sup>315</sup> Source: "Junta to confiscate houses at eastern gate of Shwedagon," *Mizzima News*, 3 December.

<sup>316</sup> Source: "Clarification on Myanmar's situation to UNSG Special Envoy Mt [sic] Ibrahim Agboola Gambari," *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007.

<sup>317</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>318</sup> Source: "Women Recall Life in Prisons, Interrogation Centers," *Irrawaddy*, 25 October 2007.

*He also told me that I was not the only person to sign such a bond. Everyone who was released before me had to sign a bond. I asked what kind of that bond was and he told me that I had jeopardized the peace and stability of the state, and so I was guilty. If I were ever involved in any similar destructive activities in the future, stern actions would be taken against me. Now, out of sympathy by the head of state, I would be released, but I had to report to them whenever necessary”.*<sup>319</sup>

*“First we were sent to the KaWaTa office [Mandalay District Peace and Development Council]. There, U Khin Maung Than, the secretary, warned us not to cause any political unrest. We had to sign an indenture with two witnesses. If we are ever summoned by the court, we must go, yet if we fail to do so, we will be fined 500,000 kyat”.*<sup>320</sup>

In many cases, relatives, and even teachers, have been called upon to sign statements as guarantors and thus taking responsibility for the future actions of that person. A number of schoolteachers in Sittwe were forced to sign such guarantees ensuring that their students would not take part in any future demonstrations.<sup>321</sup> It is to be assumed that should the students become involved in politics again in the future, the teachers will be the ones held accountable.

*“Before I was released, I had to sign a pledge saying that I wouldn’t take part in demonstrations in the future and that I wouldn’t hesitate to follow them [the SPDC and its policies] whenever I was ordered to. At about 3:00 am I was taken to the TPDC office in Bahan Township along with five other people who also lived in Bahan Township. They took a group photo of the five of us, and we had to sign again there. After that the USDA members of Bahan Township took us back to our homes”.*<sup>322</sup>

*“To secure my release I had to sign a letter saying that I understand that I can be subjected to questioning at any time in the future. But what really bothers me is that in that document, there was a statement that said that I understood that I have been released only due to the compassion of the nation. This is*

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<sup>319</sup> Source: Testimony of “U T---”, provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>320</sup> Source: “Interview with Ko Myo Naing,” DVB, 31 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>321</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Naing Thauang”, 27-year-old male student, 5 October 2007.

<sup>322</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

*something I absolutely cannot accept. If they were so compassionate, why did they detain us in the first place?”*<sup>323</sup>

Similarly, many monks have also been obliged to return to their home villages rather than back to their monasteries as a precondition of their release.<sup>324</sup>



One of thousands of protestors arrested during the crackdown on the peaceful protests by members of the *Swan Arr Shin*. Though the vast majority have since been released, 84 individuals still remained missing at the time of publication. [© Reuters].

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<sup>323</sup> Source: “Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution,” DVB, 27 October 2007.

<sup>324</sup> Source: “Burmese monk speaks of interrogation horror,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 2007.

## Continuing Arrest and Detention of Political Activists

Despite the fact that the majority of those persons arrested in relation to the demonstrations have subsequently been released, a significant number of persons, particularly political activists, protest leaders, and those who played key roles in the demonstrations, remain in custody.

Over 280 NLD members were arrested in relation to the protests, including 13 elected MPs, Executive Committee members and several chairpersons.<sup>325</sup> At least 239 remained in detention at the time of publication, including five elected MPs. Similarly, 28 members of the 88 Generation Students' Group also continued to be detained in relation to the protests, as did 16 members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) network, and five members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU).<sup>326</sup>

From these figures, quite a few commentators have inferred the SPDC to be manipulating the protests as a means to target its political enemies. Justification is provided under accusation of terrorist acts while cover is provided in the heralding of a large number of releases and an under-representation of the numbers who continue to be detained.

*"It wasn't only NLD members who protested. In fact, there were even some of us who did not join the protests but were arrested later anyway. I think this is the [regime's] attempt to prevent the NLD from carrying out their activities".<sup>327</sup>*

*"We did not break any law to get arrested. This is the government's plan to crackdown [on] the NLD. We joined the protests as normal civilians, not as NLD members. We did not incite any riot during the protests".<sup>328</sup>*

*"They [SPDC] came on 10 October. They asked about my daughter and arrested her. They then asked other family members to inform them when I arrived back home. They told my family to prepare two sets of her clothing. That's all. They never tell the truth. My eldest sister asked how long they were taking her away for, but they didn't give an exact reply. As far as I know, NLD members or students who study at the American Center [in the US Embassy in Rangoon] are their targets. I think she was detained because she was studying at the [American] Center, and also*

<sup>325</sup> Source: "Families concerned about detained opposition leaders," DVB, 11 October 2007.

<sup>326</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>327</sup> Source: "NLD Members face two years' imprisonment," DVB, 3 October 2007.

<sup>328</sup> Source: "Arakan NLD members sentenced but released," DVB, 26 October, 2007

*because she is a member of the NLD. They may release her or they may put her in prison. If she was an ordinary person she might have been released but since she is a member of those targeted groups it will be difficult. Only if she is lucky, will she be released”.*<sup>329</sup>

Moreover and despite SPDC assurances to the contrary, the arrest of activists continued right through November and December.

On 16 December, three members of the 88 Generation Students' Group, Min Min Soe, Htun Htun Win and Myo Yan Naung Thein were arrested in their homes in Rangoon.<sup>330</sup> Two days later, three more members of the 88 Generation Students' Group, Khin Moe Aye, Kyaw Soe and Zaw Min (a.k.a Bound Bound), were also arrested.<sup>331</sup> Also on 18 December, Aung Gyi, a member of HRDP was arrested from his home in North Okkalapa Township, Rangoon.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Khin Oo”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>330</sup> Source: “Situation in Burma, Update: Four More Activists Arrested,” US Campaign for Burma, 20 December 2007

<sup>331</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

## VIII. Judicial Procedure and Conditions of Detention

Given that an estimated 6,000 persons were detained in relation to the peaceful protests, existing detention facilities, particularly those in Rangoon, such as Insein Prison, the Mingaladon military detention facility, Police Battalion #8 in Mingaladon Township, Aung Tha Paye in Mayangone Township, Riot Police Battalion #5 in Hmawbe Township, and Police Battalion #7 in Kyauktan Township, all quickly became overcrowded. As a result, over 1,000 detainees were reportedly interned in crowded conditions at the Mingaladon military prison outside Rangoon,<sup>333</sup> with another 900 detainees held in the Riot Police Battalion in Hmawbe Township.<sup>334</sup>

Consequently, the authorities resorted to using of a number of large public buildings as temporary detention centres. The Government Technical Institute (GTI), the Sasana University in Kaba Aye and the Kyaikkasan Racecourse were three such facilities employed for this purpose. The GTI, a disused college in Insein Township was the largest of these *ad hoc* facilities. By the first week of October, approximately 2,000 persons were being held within the GTI compound, including students, civilians, nuns and monks.<sup>335</sup> During the days of the crackdown, the City Hall building in downtown Rangoon was also used as an interim detention facility, temporarily holding those arrested until they could be transferred to another facility.

Monks, nuns, novices, women, some of whom were pregnant, students and young children were interned at these facilities alongside the men. The majority were held incommunicado for periods ranging from a few days up to two months without charge. Conditions of detention were substandard to the point of qualifying as being cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Torture was prevalent particularly during interrogation, ranging from sleep deprivation to beatings and various forms of torture, including, but not limited to water torture. Such conditions and treatment, coupled with the injuries sustained during the crackdown and a lack of adequate healthcare have been reported to have resulted in upwards of 20 deaths in detention (For more information, please see the subsequent section on “Deaths in Custody”).

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<sup>333</sup> Source: “Hundreds of Shan monks pinched in crackdown,” SHAN, 10 October 2007.

<sup>334</sup> Source: “Myanmar captives ‘kept in squalor’,” CNN, 13 October 2007.

<sup>335</sup> Source: “Myanmar holding 1,000 people at Yangon campus – officials,” AFP, 2 October 2007; “Burma - Fear Over the Country,” IPS, 4 October 2007; “Detained monks could be sent to hard labour camps,” DVB, 2 October 2007; “No 3 Basic Education High School, Tamwe Township, Crack Down,” DVB, 5 October 2007, translation by HRDU; “UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots,” AHRC, 30 September 2007.

As of 30 January 2008, and according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB), 706 persons were known to remain in detention in relation to the protests. However, this figure is likely to be quite conservative, as the list only contains those persons whom the AAPPB have been able to name and confirm as remaining in incarceration.<sup>336</sup>

The SPDC has already brought charges against at least 28 of these persons and declared its intent to do so for many of the remainder.<sup>337</sup> Trials have been perfunctory, held in closed session, with the right to legal representation denied and witnesses pressured to testify against the accused.

## Prolonged Detention without Charge

Many of those arrested in relation to the protests were detained for days, weeks or even months without being charged. Such extended periods of detention without charge not only run contrary to international law, but also Burma's own Criminal Procedure Code which dictates that it is mandatory to obtain a court order in order to prolong detention beyond a period of 24 hours.

*"I was arrested without being given any explanation. Then I was detained for 25 days without being charged. I was released from Insein Prison together with a group of 80 others, but we were not even given any reason as to why we were released".<sup>338</sup>*

On 12 December, the mother of 17-year-old student Maung Ye Myat Hein reported that her son had been detained for over two months in Insein Prison, in the absence of any formal charges being brought against him:

*"My son was taken from home by government officials on October 10. They said they needed to ask him some questions and that it would only take two or three days. But now it has been two months that he's been in detention in Insein [Prison]. They still haven't charged my son with anything. He is only 17 years old so he is still a minor. It's illegal to do that to a minor."<sup>339</sup>*

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<sup>336</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>337</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>338</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Zaw Oo", 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>339</sup> Source: "Detained student beaten in custody," DVB, 12 December 2007.

For the most part, the families of those who were detained have not received any information on their whereabouts or state of health, despite some of them visiting the prisons to try and discover what had happened to them.<sup>340</sup>

*"I have no idea where my daughter is being held. I haven't heard anything yet. They never tell us".<sup>341</sup>*

*"Two of my friends, Kyaw San Win and Ko Phyoe, were beaten up and dragged onto a truck during the crackdown on 27 [September]. Their families did not know where they were being held. They looked for them at hospitals, fearing that they had died, but they could not find them anywhere. They did not get any information from the police stations about their detention".<sup>342</sup>*

NLD spokesperson, U Myint Thein, was known to have been arrested by Special Branch police force. However, when his wife, Daw Swe Swe Thein, went to the police Special Branch office at 8 Mile Junction with some medicine for her husband, officials told her they knew nothing about his detention.

*"I went to the Special Branch office to take some medicine and enquire about my husband's situation as they are the people who arrested my husband. But officials there asked me to provide them with detailed information on which department [of the Special Branch] made the arrest and who my husband was. ... I told them that I was the wife of NLD spokesperson U Myint Thein and that news of his arrest had been broadcast by government media. ... But they said they couldn't tell me anything".<sup>343</sup>*

Similarly, Pu Chin Sian Thang, an ethnic leader of Zomi National Congress and elected member of the parliament, was arrested on 26 September and was believed to be held at Aung Tha Paye interrogation centre. However, when his son, Tant Inn Byaik Thang, went to visit his father at the interrogation centre to provide him with essential medicines, he was told that his father was not there.

*"They didn't even let me past the gates. The guards there only told me my father was not there. ... He needs to take medication regularly for his asthma and he will probably be out of medicine by now".<sup>344</sup>*

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<sup>340</sup> Source: "Public Statement by AAPP One Month after the Commencement of Peaceful Demonstrations across Burma," AAPPB, 18 September 2007.

<sup>341</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Khin Oo", 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>342</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Zin Aung", 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>343</sup> Source: "Families concerned about detained opposition leaders," DVB, 11 October 2007.

<sup>344</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

This situation has been complicated by the frequent transfer of prisoners between different detention facilities. Many individuals have been transferred between as many as three different facilities, and often interrogated at each one.<sup>345</sup> One released detainee has testified about his experience during transfer from Police Battalion #8 to Insein Prison on 9 October 2007:

*“At 3:00 pm on 9 October [2007], a police captain and 15 policemen came to us with two trucks and told us that we were going to be transferred to Insein Prison. They tied our hands behind our backs. We had to squat in pairs on the trucks. The policemen stepped on our shoulders and heads. The Captain told us to bow our heads and not to turn our heads. He also told us that he had been given permission to shoot and kill anyone who tried to flee. We arrived at the annex of Insein Prison at about 6:00 pm. The number of prisoners transferred was 27 and it was difficult to breathe on the trucks. U Kyi Shein, Chairman of the Dawbon Township NLD, appeared to be dead on the truck but the police did not pay any attention to him. They threatened to kill us all. We had to stay on the trucks for about one hour at the gate of the attached prison. We were all having difficulty breathing and our hands were painful and could not move.”<sup>346</sup>*

More disturbingly, several reports have emerged of groups of detainees being covertly transferred to unknown locations. According to a *Swan Arr Shin* member working inside the GTI compound, the SPDC had plans to send monks detained at the GTI to a hard labour prison camp in Sagaing Township in Sagaing Division.<sup>347</sup> One eyewitness has reported witnessing detainees being taken from the GTI compound aboard eight military trucks on the night of 3 October. Another eyewitness reported seeing four army trucks loaded with monks leaving the GTI compound on the evening of 5 October.<sup>348</sup> Sources in the Rangoon prison administration system have reported that the number of detainees held in interrogation centres had exceeded capacity, and that the transfers were conducted in response to this.<sup>349</sup>

Even those families who were aware of the location where their relatives were being detained, it has proven difficult to secure visitation rights. The authorities have frequently denied permission without any form of explanation or justification. Those affiliated with political organizations or who took an active role in the protests have faced particularly strong restrictions. On 14 December,

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<sup>345</sup> Sources: HRDU Interview with “*U Zaw Oo*”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007; “Songwriter Ko Ye Lwin released,” DVB, 23 October 2007.

<sup>346</sup> Source: Testimony of “*U A---*”, provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>347</sup> Source: “Detained monks could be sent to hard labour camps,” DVB, 2 October 2007.

<sup>348</sup> Source: “Detainees transferred to unknown locations,” DVB, 8 October 2007.

<sup>349</sup> Source: “Detainees transferred due to prison overcrowding,” DVB, 11 October 2007.

the mother of Min Aung, an organizer of the Taungup Township branch of the NLD, reported that she had been unable to meet with her son for two months.

*“It is more than two months now, and I have not been able to meet [my son]. He is said to be kept at Thandwe Jail [in Arakan State]. And with winter approaching it is becoming cold, so I want to give him some clothes and [food]. He is in poor health and it is really worrying me”.*<sup>350</sup>

Similarly, those members of the NLD detained in Ohnbo Prison in Mandalay Division, have been refused permission to meet with their families. The elder sister of Daw Win Mya Mya, who was arrested at the end of September, expressed concern over the health of her younger sister:

*“We are worried about her health because come winter, her old wounds that she sustained during the Depayin attack, [will] give her problems. All we want to know is whether she will be released or would be tried in court and be sentenced”.*<sup>351</sup>

In order to be granted permission for a prison visit, family members of political prisoners must produce their household registration forms as well as their national identity cards to the authorities. This system, however, discriminates against members of the monastic community who continue to be detained, as monks reside in monasteries and are thus not listed on their families' household registration forms. As a result, it could potentially take as long as six months to gain permission for a prison visit once the application has passed from local authorities right through to the SPDC Director General of Department of Prisons.

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<sup>350</sup> Source: “Detained opposition members barred from meeting families,” *Mizzima News*, 14 December 2007.

<sup>351</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

## Judicial Procedure

Meanwhile, the SPDC has announced its intent to bring charges against certain detainees for their involvement in the peaceful protests. At the beginning of October, the SPDC-controlled *New Light of Myanmar* reported that nearly 1,000 people being held over the protests could face jail sentences, stating that “[a]nyone who is detained for his violation of the law must be charged and serve prison terms if he is found guilty”.<sup>352</sup> By November, the authorities announced that 91 people arrested in connection with the demonstrations would be charged with being involved in “violent and terrorist acts”.<sup>353</sup>

According to the AAPPB, by early December, at least 28 individuals arrested in relation to the popular protests since August had already been sentenced to prison terms of up to 20 years.<sup>354</sup> Many of these individuals are known to have been tried in grossly flawed and closed proceedings. It is common practice in Burma that persons charged are denied access to legal counsel, tried summarily and often sentenced to maximum prison terms. This continued to be the case for persons charged for their involvement in the September protests.

The often archaic laws enacted by the SPDC in charging and convicting protestors are defined broadly enough, that in the absence of any rule of law or an independent judiciary, they can be manipulated to include conduct such as peaceful political resistance.

In the wake of the protests, several detainees have been charged under Section 505 (b) of the Burmese Criminal Code, a law which has been increasingly used by the SPDC to condemn those who act against its own interests.<sup>355</sup> This law allows for the imprisonment of up to two years under the charge of making statements conducive to public mischief with intent to either cause public alarm or disturb public tranquillity. Other laws enacted include Section 143 of the Penal Code allowing for six months imprisonment under charges of unlawful assembly, as well as charges of sedition and treason which can carry sentences of up to life imprisonment.

The elasticity of these laws was demonstrated on 8 October, when Ko Thiha, a street vendor in the Bassein Market, was sentenced to two years imprisonment by Bassein Township Court under Section 505 (b) for informing monks of rumours he had heard of their impending arrest.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Source: “Myanmar opposition cautiously welcomes Suu Kyi dialogue move,” AFP, 9 October 2007

<sup>353</sup> Source: “Myanmar to ‘take action’ against 91 protesters,” AFP, 7 November 2007

<sup>354</sup> Source: *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>355</sup> For more details see “BURMA: Two men jailed for allegedly possessing video of army wedding,” AHRC, 7 May 2007.

<sup>356</sup> Source: “Burma Update 227,” PDC,” 11 October 2007.

During those trials which have been conducted in relation to the protests, scant regard has been paid to any form of correct judicial procedure. Many of these trials have been conducted behind closed doors, without access to legal counsel, and while denying family members of those on trial to attend. Reports have also testified to the prosecution's use of unknown or partisan witnesses, as well as forcing persons to testify against the accused.

Ko Kyauk Khe, an NLD member from Aunglan Township, Magwe Division, was sentenced to two years imprisonment under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code after shouting "*Long live the Buddhist religion*", in a local video store, while watching footage of the crackdown on foreign media. During his trial the prosecution alleged that he had also shouted "*Down with Than Shwe*" and other anti-SPDC slogans, accusing him of supporting the monk-led protests in the township. Ko Kyauk Khe said in his defence that he had shouted in support of Buddhism because he felt that the SPDC's actions were undermining the religion. He was refused the right to legal counsel after local attorneys were warned by military officials not to represent him.<sup>357</sup>

On 11 September, HRDP member Ko Soe Win, of Sar Pyin village outside Taunggok, Arakan State, was charged with insulting the Buddhist religion and creating a public disturbance and sentenced to four years in prison. He was sentenced on the same day of his arrest after staging a solo protest carrying a placard calling for the release of political activists and the excommunication of Senior General Than Shwe from the Buddhist faith. He was denied the right to meet with either his relatives or a lawyer. It would seem that such an appeal is deemed as an insult to Buddhism.<sup>358</sup>

Ko Thet Oo and Ko Zaw Htun, both of Prome (Pyay) Township, Pegu Division, were arrested on 15 September, and subsequently charged with distributing illegal materials under Section 5 (j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. During their trial, local police detained witnesses and threatened that they would be included on prosecution lists unless they testified against the accused.<sup>359</sup>

On 12 October, Naw Ohn Hla was placed under a "*restriction order*" in accordance with the 1961 Restriction and Bond Act, for her involvement in the August demonstrations. Under the terms of the order, she cannot leave the township for the next year without seeking a permit, or reside in another part of the country, and must report to the local police station once every seven days. At the trial in Hmawbe, Rangoon Division, she was denied her right to legal

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<sup>357</sup> Source: "Man arrested for shouting religious slogan," DVB, 3 October 2007; "Man given two-year sentence for shouting religious slogan," DVB, 11 October 2007; "UPDATE (Burma): Two years' jail for praising Buddhism; four years for solo protest," AHRC, 12 October 2007.

<sup>358</sup> Source: *Irrawaddy*, 12 September 2007; "UPDATE (Burma): Two years' jail for praising Buddhism; four years for solo protest," AHRC, 12 October 2007.

<sup>359</sup> Source: "BURMA: 19 members of a single human rights group detained, imprisoned or missing," AHRC, 11 October 2007.

council and the only witnesses called were the township police chief, her village tract council chairman and one of his assistants.<sup>360</sup>

On 9 November, Kachin State NLD member Nay Win, and Bhamo Township NLD member Ba Myint, were both jailed for two years after being tried in closed prison courts in Myitkyina and Bhamo prisons respectively. They were sentenced under section 505 (b) of the Penal Code. Neither of their families were informed that they were due to be tried, and the two men were not permitted to hire lawyers to defend them.<sup>361</sup>

There have also been several unconfirmed reports of monks arrested in Rangoon being tried and sentenced in closed tribunals. On 29 September, a senior monk, who visited Insein Prison at the request of the authorities, reported that some monks had already been sentenced to six years imprisonment by a specially convened court.<sup>362</sup> Similarly, on 11 October 2007, 16 monks were reportedly brought before a specially convened tribunal inside Thayet Prison, although HRDU has been unable to ascertain whether or not the monks detained there have been sentenced or what charges they faced.<sup>363</sup>

In other cases, the sentencing of monks has been corroborated. For instance, Eik Darea, a 26-year-old monk, was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment in a Sittwe Court under charges of inciting public unrest and illegal association. He had been disrobed and was tried in a closed court.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Source: "BURMA: A country not in accordance with law--the case of Naw Ohn Hla," AHRC, 14 November 2007

<sup>361</sup> Source: "NLD charges continue despite moves towards dialogue," DVB, 13 November 2007

<sup>362</sup> Source: "Monks sentenced to six years imprisonment," *Irrawaddy*, 29 September 2007.

<sup>363</sup> Source: "Special tribunal for protestors convened in Thayet Prison," DVB, 12 October 2007.

<sup>364</sup> Source: "Myanmar protest monk jailed for seven years," Reuters, 17 October 2007.

## Conditions of Detention

Detention facilities suffered from problems of overcrowding, a lack of clean water, food, basic supplies such as blankets, and appalling standards of sanitation. Such conditions fall far below international standards and patently qualify as being defined as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Moreover, the deliberate aggravation of, and suffering caused by, such conditions amount to a form of torture in themselves.

Released detainees have reported that large groups of people were kept in small cells; with space so limited that many were unable to even lie down. Furthermore, some of the detention centres lacked proper toilet and sanitation facilities, forcing detainees to urinate and defecate on the floor in their overcrowded cells. Such conditions are conducive to the spread of disease, and as a result, many detainees became ill.

The well-known Burmese musician, U Ye Lwin, who was detained at the GTI compound for 12 days, reported sleeping in a room with as many as 600 other detainees. According to his testimony, there was not enough space to lie down on the concrete floor, and so had to sleep sitting up. The detainees were provided with little water and were only allowed out to go to the toilet once a day. He was not allowed to bathe once during the 12 days that he was detained there. The detainees were also not provided with water with which to wash their hands prior to meals, and were thus forced to wipe their hands on their own clothes.<sup>365</sup> This is a particularly unsanitary situation. In Burma, food is customarily eaten with the hands, typically the right hand, while the left hand is used to wash oneself after using the bathroom. In the absence of water with which to wash their hands, the potential for the spread of life-threatening diseases such as dysentery increases dramatically.

Ma Hla Hla Mon, another released detainee, described a similar situation to DVB for women who were detained at the GTI detention centre

*“We were kept in [the] GTI for [four] days. There were 156 persons in one room. All were women, including the elderly and children. That room was not good for health. There was a room [adjacent to] the room where we were. We used it as the toilet. They didn't allow us to wash our faces. When we told to them about the foul smell in the room, they moved us to another room. They called the Municipal Servicemen to clean that room. They made a toilet for us, but the toilet was only a ditch. There was no water. They didn't allow the girls to have a bath. Our bodies had a foul smell”.*<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Source: “Songwriter Ko Ye Lwin released,” DVB, 23 October 2007.

<sup>366</sup> Source: Source: “Interview with Hla Hla Mon,” *New Era Journal*, 3 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

Another female detainee, who was also detained at the GTI detention facility similarly recalled:

*“At [the] GTI we were not allowed to shower. We had to sleep on the cement floor. The rooms were awkward and smelly as we didn’t have access to toilets and were [told] to urinate in the rooms. Some women were over seventy years old and there were some children as young as five or six as well. The children [were] getting sick at night. We embarrassingly [asked] the guard to move us to another ward then ‘No more ward here. All filled with people. Stay where you are with the discipline!’, he replied. Due to the overcrowding it was difficult to stay there. Therefore, they moved us to another ward on the next night. At that ward also we don’t have enough space even on the cement therefore we were in sitting posture while they [cleaned] the old ward then [moved] us back”.*<sup>367</sup>

The appalling lack of sanitary facilities was particularly difficult for female detainees. Some of whom were unable to wash themselves even when menstruating.

*“We were given no right to bathe for all those days [that they were detained]. As for the women, they couldn’t clean their body when their period came. We were not provided with pillows or blankets. We slept on the wooden shields [used by the riot police during the crackdowns] which covered the concrete floor. They closed all of the windows and banned us from washing, so our room was quite hot and smelled very bad”.*<sup>368</sup>

The situation was no better for the monks or young novices, who were also kept in cramped and unsanitary conditions. A 24-year-old monk, who was incarcerated at the GTI detention centre for ten days, reported:

*“There were about 400 of us in one room. No toilets, no buckets, no water for washing. No beds, no blankets, no soap, Nothing. The room was too small for everyone to lie down at once. We took it in turns to sleep. Every night at 8:00 o’clock we were given a small bowl of rice and a cup of water. But after a few days many of us just couldn’t eat. The smell was so bad. Some of the novice monks were under ten years old, the youngest was just seven. They were stripped of their robes and given prison sarongs. Some were beaten, leaving open, untreated wounds, but no doctors came”.*<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>368</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>369</sup> Source: “Only now, the full horror of Burmese junta’s repression of monks emerges,” *The Independent*, 11 October 2007.

Another young monk has also testified to the substandard conditions of detention. He had seen numerous detainees pass out as they sat in their holding cell.

*"We weren't allowed to move it all, not even to go to the lavatory – we had to just do it where we were sitting. Once in the morning, and once in the afternoon, the guards would come and give us water, but it would be only one or two bottles for 50 people or more".<sup>370</sup>*

Numerous reports have also testified to an insufficient supply of food and drinking water in the detention centres, which in many cases, has led to a deterioration of the health of the detainees. Khin Mar Lar, who was detained at Ohnbo Prison in Mandalay, described how what little food she was given consisted of nothing more than a thin foul smelling rice soup, strewn with gravel and dirt, and as something that *"even dogs wouldn't eat".<sup>371</sup>* Another released detainee has recalled the food he was given in Insein Prison, stating how he was *"given food only after 9:00 pm, but the food was not fresh. It had a bad smell".<sup>372</sup>* It is highly likely that the *"bad smell"* that many detainees have reported derived from being fed rotten food.

After her release, Ma Ohn Mar expressed her concern about one pregnant detainee who was not receiving a sufficiently nutritious diet in detention, stating that, *"May Mee Oo is four months pregnant. She has been detained for a month. For the sake of her unborn baby, she is trying to get a nutritious diet, but it is really difficult in prison".<sup>373</sup>*

Many other detainees have reported the lack of any clean water at various detention facilities:

*"The drinking water we were given was not suitable for drinking. The colour of the water was yellowish. We were given four gallons of water for washing dishes, taking a bath, for toilet, and washing clothes. The water had a bad smell, so we only had a shower once every three days. Since the drinking water was not hygienic, our health deteriorated. Some were swollen all over their bodies. Some had cardiac problems. Most of us developed skin diseases. Although we asked the authorities for proper medical treatment, we did not receive any".<sup>374</sup>*

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<sup>370</sup> Source: "Burmese monk speaks of interrogation horror," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 2007.

<sup>371</sup> Source: "UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge," AHRC, 24 October 2007.

<sup>372</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Zaw Oo", 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>373</sup> Source: "Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution," DVB, 27 October 2007.

<sup>374</sup> Source: Testimony of "U T--", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

*“When I got there I realized they had not even finished building toilets for the detainees. They only provided us with muddy water to drink there. My body and stomach became bloated after a few days of detention in the Police Brigade #3. I got very sick and I could not have any food for about eight days. I became malnourished”*<sup>375</sup>

At Insein Prison, a number of detainees were interned in a special punishment area that has been commonly referred to as the “dog cells”. This area is a compound of nine tiny isolation cells which each measure only two metres square and are under the constant guard of a pack of 30 dogs. The cells lack adequate ventilation and detainees have to sleep on a thin mat on the concrete floor. There are no toilets and prisoners are only allowed to bathe with cold water once every three days for no longer than five minutes.<sup>376</sup>

Clean water was also reportedly unavailable at Police Battalion #7 in Kyauktan Township, leading to a significant deterioration in the health of those detainees interned there.

*“At that time, the water we drunk was not clean and [had a] reddish colour. It was not good enough to be used as drinking water. When we had a bath, the water had a very bad smell. ... It was for 25 persons. As a result we were infected with scabies. Our faces became puffy. Saw Wai Moe from Insein is now preparing to go to the hospital. San Win and Nwe Aung, who still remain there, also have puffy faces. I think the main cause of their condition is the unclean water. They gave us some treatment but it was not enough. The authorities there need permission from [their superiors] to give treatment”*<sup>377</sup>

Furthermore, some reports have maintained that no mosquito nets were provided to detainees at Police Battalion #7, despite there being many mosquitoes and endemic levels of malaria in the area.<sup>378</sup>

Reports have also emerged of the floors of cells, where detainees had to sleep, being deliberately soaked with water by security officials. One monk reported that the security officials at the GTI detention centre poured wet sand onto the floors of rooms where detainees had to sleep, leading to persons rapidly becoming ill.<sup>379</sup> A 30-year-old man who was released from the Kyaikkasan detention centre reported a similar experience.

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<sup>375</sup> Source: “Women’s group chair ill-treated in detention,” DVB, 14 December 2007.

<sup>376</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda Item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>377</sup> Source: “30 persons released from Police Battalion from Kyauktan, but 15 persons still remained,” DVB, 2 November 2007.

<sup>378</sup> Source: “Conditions of Detention in Police Battalion #7, Rangoon,” AAPPB, 21 September 2007.

<sup>379</sup> Source: “Monks in hell,” *Irrawaddy*, 11 October 2007.

*“At midnight on 28 September, the authorities cut off the electricity in the 20 ft by 40 ft room, where about 200 people, including me, were detained. Suddenly, they started pumping water into the room while we were sleeping. We panicked. Then the police came running into the room and started beating us. Wearing wet clothes, we are all taken from the room one by one and interrogated three times - by the police, the Special Branch and the Military Intelligence”.*<sup>380</sup>

Objections made to such treatment were typically met with harsh punishment and further beatings. On 24 December it was reported that three detainees held in Insein Prison: Htin Kyaw, Myo Thant and Zin Lin Aung were placed in solitary confinement after commencing a hunger strike over the conditions that they were being subjected to. In another instance, NLD member, Ko Pauk, was placed in solitary confinement after protesting detainees being forced to do manual labour at Insein Prison. He had made the complaint after the warden had informed the detainees they were free to claim their rights.<sup>381</sup>

## Interrogation and Torture of Detainees

Many of those persons who have since been released from detention have reported intense levels of interrogation, conducted in turn by several different branches of security personnel. For instance, one person reported being interrogated for 18 straight days, at three different detention facilities, during which time he was questioned by four different groups: Special Branch (SB), the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Bureau of Special Investigation (BSI), and military intelligence (SaYaPa).<sup>382</sup> These interrogation sessions typically started late in the evening, and lasted for several hours, often continuing right through the night.

*“Nobody could sleep well at night because they took the detainees out group by group for interrogations. Each group consisted of four or five people. They were taken to a room and interrogated one by one”.*<sup>383</sup>

*“On 27 September, [my friends] and I were taken to Police Battalion #8. We were interrogated for the whole two days by the Special Branch, Bureau of Special Investigation and District Police Force. We were continuously interrogated from the night we had*

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<sup>380</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> Sources: Testimonies of “U A---” and “U H---”, provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>382</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>383</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Thein Soe”, 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

*arrived to Insein Prison and until yesterday [30 October 2007]. It could be defined as psychological torture, [b]ecause they called us to be interrogated at 1:00 am or 2:00 am. [W]e couldn't sleep very well. They sent us back and called again for the next time. We were unable to sleep because they called us in turns. Some monks were interrogated for the whole day".<sup>384</sup>*

*"After 8:00 pm, I was interrogated by one group after another. I could not sleep for a week".<sup>385</sup>*

*"My friends who lived in Wingabar were interrogated in the GTI by five groups such as the military security branch [SaYaPa] and Special Branch. They had to answer the same questions to the five interrogators one by one. Many of them were punched and beaten during these interrogations at the GTI".<sup>386</sup>*

*"I was interrogated 15 times. If the interrogation team gets information from us, they send that data to the Ministry of Home Affairs. If the Home Affairs thinks the data is not complete, they send back the points they need. So we had to go through many interrogation sessions. Some monks were interrogated 30 times. The 88 Generation Students' Group leaders were also interrogated 20 or 30 times".<sup>387</sup>*

During these interrogation sessions, the lines of questioning were repetitive. Not only were detainees pressured to admit their own guilt, but they were presented with photographs taken during the demonstrations and pressed to identify the people in the photographs. Questioning was also geared towards extracting 'confessions' testifying that the protests had been organised by the NLD and "external influences". Answers from interrogation sessions were cross checked with those from other sessions as well as information gathered by local intelligence officials in their neighbourhoods. If their claims corroborated, they would be freed, however, if they did not, the detainees would be held for further questioning.<sup>388</sup>

*"They interrogated us one by one. First they asked me if I had been involved in the protests and if I knew who had led the protests. I answered that I hadn't been involved, and that I had been helping my wife at her shop when the protests started.*

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<sup>384</sup> Source: "Interview with U Htaung Ko Htan," DVB, October 31, 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>385</sup> Source: Testimony of "U H--", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>386</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Ne Lin", 30-year-old male civilian, 3 November 2007.

<sup>387</sup> Source: Testimony of "H--", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>388</sup> Source: "Burmese monk speaks of interrogation horror," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 2007.

*Sometimes they showed me photos and asked me if I knew anyone in the photos. I replied that I didn't know anyone even if I knew someone in the photo. During the protests two motorbikes were burned at Yae Tar Shae Road, near my block. So they asked me if I knew about the burning of the motorbikes. I told them that I didn't see it happen. They also asked whether I knew any of the people who had thrown stones at the riot police. I answered that I didn't know anything about that either".<sup>389</sup>*

*"[On 23 August 2007, I was one of] 13 arrested people were taken to the Kyaikkasan interrogation centre. Two hours after arriving at the interrogation centre, I was interrogated by people who I presumed were Special Branch police. During the interrogation, I was questioned about who led the protests, what the goal was, what we did during the march, and if we are members of the NLD or not. I answered that I took part in the protests due to the fuel price hike, that no one led these protests, that no one instructed me to participate in the protests, that I took part on my own conscience, that I had a right to free expression that would not infringe upon my political ideals, and that the freedom of expression was lawful according to the UN Declaration of Human Rights".<sup>390</sup>*

*"They would wake us up in the middle of the night. As I'm a volunteer with the HIV patients, they asked me about the funds, how we use it, if I got any of the money for personal use. They also asked me if I knew any of the 88 Generation Students' [Group] leaders. As I was also involved in the march past Daw Aung San Su Kyi's house on 22 September, they asked me who planned this route, if it was the NLD leaders".<sup>391</sup>*

*"They asked me who ordered us to participate. And who ordered us to do the praying for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the pagoda. I answered that no one had ordered us to take part in those events; we did it out of our own will. They didn't accept that explanation. They wanted me to answer that someone had ordered us to participate".<sup>392</sup>*

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<sup>389</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thein Soe", 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>390</sup> Source: Testimony of "U T---", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>391</sup> Source: "Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution," DVB, 27 October 2007

<sup>392</sup> Source: "Interview with Daw Kyi Kyi Nyunt, member of NLD, who was seriously tortured during detention," DVB, 28 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

If the interrogators did not get the answers they wanted they would respond by beating the detainees. Through such continual and brutal interrogation, the authorities were eventually able to extract their desired answers from many individuals, regardless of whether they reflected the truth or not.

*"They asked many questions, for example, 'Who do you know? Which monks were involved in the protests? Who supports your ideas? Did your NLD leader encourage you to join the protests? Do you have connections abroad? Do you receive funding from abroad?' They also asked questions about the photos taken during the protests. The same questions were repeated in each interrogation session. If I did not answer the questions satisfactorily I was beaten. For example I was beaten when I said I didn't know a person in the protest photos".<sup>393</sup>*

*"They asked me if I had participated in the recent demonstrations, and I said no. But they asked me that same question again and again and forced me to say 'yes'. When I asserted that I really did not participate in the demonstration, one of the members of the Special Branch punched me in the stomach. Then, they beat my back, chest and head with their palms and said that they arrested me because of my participation".<sup>394</sup>*

*"There were 85 others in my police cell [at Police Battalion #14], mostly young people. Some were only 15 or 16 years old. One boy told me he was arrested for wearing an American flag on his head. Some of the students had broken bones and head wounds. At the end of three days I still hadn't confessed so they gave up and put me back in the cell and left me alone. Some of the others confessed under the pressure but they weren't real confessions. I don't blame them. There were people in my cell who were interrogated non-stop for 15 days".<sup>395</sup>*

*"I was sitting on the floor of the interrogation room. There were five of them asking questions. The first day I was beaten very hard and they asked: 'Who organised the monks?' I told them we were following the monks, respecting the Buddha, they weren't following us. I was interrogated all night for three nights. They kicked and punched me on the side of my head with their fists. They asked me the same question over and over. I told them: 'You can ask*

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<sup>393</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Zaw Oo", 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>394</sup> Source: Testimony of "U H--", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>395</sup> Source: "Spies, suspicion and empty monasteries - Burma today," *The Guardian*, 15 December 2007.

*anything, my answer will always be the same. I don't know who organised the monks'. They didn't like that answer".<sup>396</sup>*

No one was spared from the beatings. The authorities beat everyone they interrogated whenever the answers they received were not the ones that they sought. Children, expectant mothers and the mentally ill also suffered harsh treatment and torture during detention. Some of the beatings continued to the point where the detainees had to be carried out of the interrogation room by medical personnel. One female detainee described some of what she witnessed during her five days interned at the GTI detention facility:

*"They beat everyone, including women and girls. I was beaten myself. Monks were targeted and they were not only beaten but also verbally abused by security officers. I heard people shouting and crying from the interrogation room and then, I saw an army medical surgeon carrying people away".<sup>397</sup>*

One man who was detained at temporary detention facility set up at Kyaikkasan Racecourse, testified to witnessing the beating of a six-year-old child.

*"There was a family who stayed near the Pagoda. The whole family was arrested, including a little boy, about 6 years old. In the detention centre, when they started beating the small boy up, people tried to stop them, and shield him from the blows. So they kept on beating these people the whole night. The little boy is still there. He's bound to be traumatised by the experience. He's so young, only in kindergarten".<sup>398</sup>*

Nyut Nyut Tin, an NLD member from Pegu, was released on 20 October 2007 after being detained in Police Interrogation Centre #2 in Toungoo for three days. During her interrogation, security officials pulled her hair, and beat and kicked her. She was forced to crouch in a one foot square space for 36 hours and received food only twice during the entire three days that she was detained. On 25 October, when she was interviewed, she still suffered back pain after being kicked many times and found it difficult to work.<sup>399</sup>

Another woman who had been released from Insein Prison reported how a woman who was seven month's pregnant was punched in the stomach during interrogation, and only released when it appeared that the unborn baby had died:

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<sup>396</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> Source: "Group accuses Myanmar of beating, killing detainees," AP, 10 October 2007.

<sup>398</sup> Source: "Rangoon Residents: We'll Never Forget," DVB, 14 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>399</sup> Source: "Women Recall Life in Prisons, Interrogation Centers," *Irrawaddy*, 25 October 2007.

*"The pregnant woman Ma Thandar Nwe Oo was released on 18 October because the foetus did not move on 17 October due to the hitting to the belly by the interrogators as well as malnutrition and no medical treatment in prison".<sup>400</sup>*

Another released detainee described to HRDU how a mentally handicapped individual was severely beaten in detention after answering unsatisfactorily during interrogation.

*"Even the mentally ill and alcoholics were arrested in their operation. When we were interrogated, we knew to give them the answers that they wanted. When they asked who burnt the motorcycles we would say that we didn't see it. When one of the mentally ill men was interrogated about the burning of motorcycles, he answered that the destroyers were the police. They [security officials] punched his face from both sides at the same time".<sup>401</sup>*

Indians and Muslims arrested during the demonstrations suffered particularly harsh treatment. Habitually discriminated against by the security forces, they were accused of being involved in something that was not their business to be involved in, and beaten severely as a result.

*"We were interrogated at No. 1 Special Hostel. During the interrogation, Soe Myint from [Pazundaung] Township was beaten and kicked. ... He suffered severe pains in his ribs and had difficulty breathing. They told him 'You are an Indian. Why did you participate in the demonstration? It is not your job.' And saying these words, they beat and kicked him".<sup>402</sup>*

*"I heard that they were severely tortured just because they are foreigners. They would also swear vulgarities at them. They said these Muslims should mind their own business instead of getting involved in the protests. One of the youths was made to kneel down on rocks. After an hour, when he told them he couldn't bear it any longer, they slapped him till his cheeks were swollen, and they forced him to 'ride the motorbike' [a form of torture where one is forced to assume a squat position for long periods of time as though they were riding a motorcycle] for [two] hours. I was in the same bus with him after our release, and he told me about it".<sup>403</sup>*

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<sup>400</sup> Source: Testimony of "U N---", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>401</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Thein Soe", 45-year-old male civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>402</sup> Source: "Over 70 people released," DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>403</sup> Source: "Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution," DVB, 27 October 2007.

*“They sent him to another place [detention centre]. When he came back, his head was numb and he looked pale like he was very ill. He had a medical check up at the hospital and when I went to see him he had an [intravenous] drip with a bottle of medicine hanging up above him. When I was there, no results had come out yet. They were worried that his brain was affected by the beating. His parents told me that they would only know about his fate when the results came out. He remembered everything but he was too weak and couldn’t speak well. They were all beaten up by the soldiers. He couldn’t stand; he could only lie on his back. He said he was dizzy all the time. When he tried to stand up, he toppled over”<sup>404</sup>*

Similarly, nine Burmese Muslims who remain in custody at Pabedan Police Station have been beaten continuously. A family member who was able to visit them reported their situation to DVB.

*“They have bruises all over their bodies and said they were beaten up nearly every day during interrogation. They could not even eat properly. The Pabedan Police Chief told us they were beaten up, not by police officers from the station, but by the military security department officers who are conducting their daily interrogations”<sup>405</sup>*

Other forms of torture endured by detainees included water torture, solitary confinement, the denial of food, and sleep deprivation. U Than Pe, the vice chairperson of the Taunggyi branch of the NLD was subjected to a form of water torture during his interrogation at the Ann detention centre in Arakan State. This particular form of torture is quite common throughout Burma. The victims head is covered with a soaked cloth. The water clogs the pores in the fabric and the victim is unable to breathe until the cloth dries up sufficiently or is removed. One of his family members reported what he had been subjected to:

*“While they were being interrogated in Ann, they were tortured by having their faces covered with wet cloths. A health worker stood nearby measuring their blood pressure. When the reading dropped to 90 over 60, the worker said the detainees could still take more torture and were not about to die yet”<sup>406</sup>*

After being released, U Than Pe reported that he was deprived of sleep for eight of the thirteen days he was detained, and given little food.<sup>407</sup> Similarly, upon her release from Insein Prison, Ma Ohn Mar, also reported that she had been withheld food as punishment after interrogation.

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<sup>404</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Nay Lin Naing”, 43-year-old female civilian, 7 November 2007.

<sup>405</sup> Source: “Muslims detained for giving water to monks,” DVB, 7 November 2007.

<sup>406</sup> Source: “NLD members allege torture during interrogation,” DVB, 22 October 2007.

<sup>407</sup> Source: “Arakan NLD members sentenced but released,” DVB, 26 October 2007.

*“They did not physically assault me, but they withheld food and water. I was in ill health, but they denied me any treatment saying there was no medication or doctors to attend to me. Finally, late at night, they gave me some water, but the water was very dirty. There were hairs, leaves, and even dead ants in it.”*<sup>408</sup>

On numerous other occasions, detainees were forced to remain in stress positions for long periods of time. The ‘motorbike’ is one such stress position frequently used during interrogations in Burma, whereby the detainee is forced to assume a position resembling riding a motorcycle for hours at a time.

*“I was beaten altogether eight times during the seven days of that I was interrogated for. I was beaten on the back of the head, mostly with the fist or the [open] hand, and one night with a hard fibre ruler. ... Other detainees told me they suffered other types of punishment during interrogation. They had to sit or stand in awkward positions; like standing on their toes with bent knees and their arms held up in the air, or kneeling with their arms up in the air.”*<sup>409</sup>

*“Khin Maung Aye from Latha Township [in Rangoon] was kicked on his legs with heels. They said: ‘Tell us who you are’. They ordered him to ‘drive the motorbike’. He was also ordered to stand on the tip-toes and to stretch his hands out to the front.”*<sup>410</sup>

*“As my eyes are not good I use glasses. They removed my glasses. They told to me that there was no need for eyes, but only ears. Then they beat me again. They said that we had no hearts, no compassion. Sitting on the small chair, my legs were stretched out and my hands were put on my knees, in [the] ‘ponzan’ position [various stress positions that detainees are forced to assume for long periods of time]. If I didn’t sit with my back straight, they kicked me from the back. I was interrogated the whole night; from 7:00 pm on October 17 until 8:00 am the next day. I sat on the small chair the whole time. My health was not good. My whole body, such as my back, and arms had got the blue and black bruises. My whole back is also inflamed and in pain. I could not walk normally because of sitting in that position for two nights and being kicked by their boots. They didn’t beat on my face, but I was beaten on the head and they pulled my hair. They also swore at me. From 8:00 pm of October 18 to 3:00 am of October 19, they interrogated me again. It finished at 3:00 am.”*<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Source: “Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution,” DVB, 27 October 2007.

<sup>409</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>410</sup> Source: “Over 70 people released,” DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>411</sup> Source: “Interview with Daw Kyi Kyi Nyunt, member of NLD, who was seriously tortured during detention,” DVB, 28 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

## Denial of Medical Care

Many detainees suffered from injuries sustained both during their arrests and as a result of being assaulted during interrogation. Poor sanitary conditions coupled with a lack of adequate food and clean drinking water also led to serious health complications for many detainees. Nevertheless, the right to proper medical treatment was either denied or grossly insufficient. The inability of families to visit their detained relatives was also significant in this regard, as they were unable to deliver much-needed medicines that were not available from the authorities.

*"I was sent to the Police Battalion #8. ... We were tortured both physically and mentally. During the interrogation, I fell off the stool and had a severe back pain. I still have that back pain and have to receive medical treatment. I did not get medical treatment at the interrogation centre".<sup>412</sup>*

*"The persons who had been shot and those with severe injuries were provided with treatment in Insein Prison, but the persons who have gastric ulcer, headache other small illnesses didn't get any treatment".<sup>413</sup>*

Daw San San Myint, the chairperson of the Burmese Housewives' Association, was beaten and arrested during protests on 24 August in Rangoon, before being taken to the Kyaikkasan interrogation centre. Despite suffering from the effects of the beatings, she was not provided any medical treatment. After being released, she told DVB that, "[o]n the third day of my detention, my body and limbs started to get swollen but I was given no treatment".<sup>414</sup>

According to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma, only five doctors and 15 nurses were made available to care for a reported 488 sick detainees held at the GTI detention facility.<sup>415</sup> One novice monk released from the GTI facility reported on 7 October that some of the prisoners had sustained severe wounds during their arrest, some of whom had cuts and gashes on their arms and legs that had gone right through to the bone. Despite such serious injuries, however, they had not been given any medical treatment. Furthermore, he claimed three persons had died from complications arising from their untreated injuries.<sup>416</sup>

Several released detainees have expressed their concern about the health of Mya Than Htike, an NLD Youth member, who was shot in the thigh during the protests. He was subsequently arrested from hospital and taken to the GTI compound,

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<sup>412</sup> Source: Testimony of "U A---", provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>413</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>414</sup> Source: "Women's group chair ill-treated in detention," DVB, 14 December 2007.

<sup>415</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda Item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>416</sup> Source: "Burmese monk speaks of interrogation horror," *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 2007.

where he reportedly has not received any medical care.<sup>417</sup> He was later transferred to Insein Prison where he received limited but ultimately insufficient treatment.

*“Mya Than Htike has a gunshot wound in his hip. He was only given Burmeton and Kimose [painkillers] for the inflammation. They didn't give any other medicines. They only used to clean the wound with spirit [but did not suture or treat the wound otherwise], so the treatment was not sufficient. His wound was still open. And his hip was [inflamed] and brownish. When he showed the wound to the authorities for treatment, they gave him nothing. Now, he is still at the upstairs of No. 1 special hostel [Insein Prison]. He was in so much pain that he couldn't eat any food”.*<sup>418</sup>

Not only was medical treatment characteristically withheld, but on those occasions when it was provided, that which was given was grossly insufficient. On some occasions, the medical care that was provided was so negligent that it actually endangered the detainees' health even further. Released prisoner Zaw Myint reported that a physician in Insein Prison used the same hypodermic needle to treat multiple detainees, exposing all of them to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.<sup>419</sup> Paracetamol was the principal medication administered, seemingly being relied upon as a panacea to cure all ills and injuries.

*“We were taken to the detention centre under control of the [Police Battalion] #8. I received no pillow, no blanket. We were only fed twice a day [with] cabbage and fish-paste. We were told this was 70 [kyat] worth of food per day. No medicine was provided for those who were ill, only one Paracetamol [tablet] each or 'smelling powder' to clear [the] sinuses”.*<sup>420</sup>

*“When we got sick, we asked for a medical check up. They gave us only Burmeton and Paracetamol [painkillers] tablets. U Han Zaw, a member of parliament, had had open heart surgery. He urgently needed medicines. When he asked for the medicines, they didn't accept his request. Now, he is in the jail without medicines, so we are very worried about his condition”.*<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Source: “NLD Youth Member lack of Medical Treatment,” Yoma 3, 11 October 2007.

<sup>418</sup> Source: “Over 70 people released,” DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>419</sup> Sources: “Monks in hell,” *Irrawaddy*, 11 October 2007; “Myanmar opposition endorses UN push for talks with govt,” AP, 12 October 2007; “Myanmar Rejects UN Call for Negotiations,” AP, 12 October 2007.

<sup>420</sup> Sources: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source; HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>421</sup> Source: “Over 70 people released,” DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

Furthermore, there have been reported instances of security forces preventing persons who have been released from receiving treatment. When Daw San San Myint was released from Police Battalion #3 at Hmawbe on 3 October 2007, she attempted to seek treatment for her illness, but was stopped by the authorities.

*“The local special police officer who has been watching me closely pressured the physician to stop giving me treatment. He got scared and is not coming to see me now. This is a serious violation of human rights and it is happening everywhere – both inside and outside of prison.”<sup>422</sup>*

## Deaths in Custody

*“A young warder said that when a political prisoner died, they needed to make a report only four or five sentences long, but when an animal raised inside the prison died, they had to make a report three pages long. The pain we felt was worse than death when heard that a caring politician was not valued as much as an animal inside the prison.”<sup>423</sup>*

As a result of the grossly substandard conditions, the torture visited upon detainees during interrogation, and a severe lack of medical treatment, many reports have emerged of detainees dying while in detention.

Two separate reports from persons released from detention on 5 October 2007 have detailed the deaths of several persons at the GTI detention facility as a direct result of the dismal conditions and a lack of medical care. One civilian has claimed that more than a dozen people including monks had died during their detention at the compound: *“I could do nothing for a young novice who was dying beside me. We asked for help from the security guards, but they didn't do anything until they came to take away his dead body.”<sup>424</sup>*

Similarly, a monk released on the same day reported that around 14 individuals had died during his time at the GTI facility. Included in this number were eight monks, as well as a young boy who had died on 27 September. He attributed the deaths to the dire conditions of detention rather than injuries sustained during the crackdown.<sup>425</sup> Another detainee from the GTI detention centre reported three deaths brought about by the aggravation of detainees' health through the harsh conditions:

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<sup>422</sup> Source: “Women’s group chair ill-treated in detention,” DVB, 14 December 2007.

<sup>423</sup> Source: Testimony of “U A---”, provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>424</sup> Source: “Monks in hell,” *Irrawaddy*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>425</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda Item 4, 7 December 2007.

*“There were three people who died at the GTI interrogation centre because all of the prisoners were forced to sleep on the concrete floor. After the day of these deaths the authorities gave us plywood to sleep on”.*<sup>426</sup>

The identity of at least one person who died at the GTI compound has been confirmed. U Than Aung, 48, was severely injured during the protests on 27 September but denied medical treatment in detention. He subsequently succumbed to his injuries, as a result of being refused medical care.<sup>427</sup>

Two further reports have testified to the killings of four young men following their arrests in two separate incidents at Rangoon City Hall. Two of the young men were taken there on 27 September and beaten to death by a civil official working in city hall:

*“On 27 September at around 4:00 pm, two arrested young men at the age of students were taken to City Hall. Their bodies were bloody and the riot police dragged them from each side. Ko Kyaw Thein, a staff member with the Budget Department, took a bamboo stick from the police and shouted at youths, ‘Who the hell are you?’ He beat them again so that the blood came out from those boys’ mouths. Both of them died on the scene. The two boys had arrived before any other detainees. I do not know where they took the bodies”.*<sup>428</sup>

The following day, on 28 September, two more young men were also reportedly beaten to death at City Hall, after being severely assaulted by SPDC army soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID) #66. According to reports, all articles of worth were looted from their bodies by soldiers: *“Their valuables, such as watches and necklaces, were removed from their bodies by soldiers after the youths died. Their bodies were seen being taken away in trucks at around 11:00 pm that night”.*<sup>429</sup>

There have also been three separate reports from Kyaikkasan Racecourse regarding the death of four individuals. According to one report, an unidentified youth reportedly died at the hands of SPDC army soldiers at Kyaikkasan Racecourse on the 29 September. Eyewitness reports maintained that his body was taken away by SPDC army soldiers from LID #66.<sup>430</sup> Yet another report has asserted that U Toke Lone Gyi (a.k.a U Han Tint Lin) of Shwe Pyi Thar Township, who was arrested near Sule Pagoda on 29 September was heavily beaten during his detention at Kyaikkasan Racecourse, and subsequently died

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<sup>426</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>427</sup> Source: “News Updates from Democratic Voice of Burma,” DVB, 11 October 2007.

<sup>428</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>429</sup> Source: “Detained Youths Die from Injuries,” DVB, 7 October 2007.

<sup>430</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

at Rangoon Hospital.<sup>431</sup> Two unnamed Rangoon University zoology students were also reported to have died following interrogation at Kyaikkasan Racecourse. It has been reported that they drowned while being tortured during their interrogation.<sup>432</sup>

Two persons arrested in relation to the protests outside of Rangoon are also known to have died as a result of their treatment during detention. In both cases the SPDC has obstructed any investigation into the cause of the deaths. On 7 October, the family of NLD Youth member Ko Win Shwe was informed that he had died while detained at Police Battalion #13 in the town of Palate, Mandalay Division. He had been arrested along with five other colleagues on the night of 26 September in Kyaukpadaung in Mandalay Division. The family was informed that his body had already been cremated at the detention centre, thus preventing any investigation into the cause of death. Reports testify to the fact that he died as a result of the treatment received while under interrogation.<sup>433</sup> Similarly, Venerable U Thilavantha, Deputy Abbot of the Yuzana Kyaungthai Monastery in Myitkyina, was allegedly beaten to death in detention on 26 September, having also been beaten the night before when his monastery was raided. The pathologist was ordered to declare the cause of death to be a pre-existing heart condition.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>432</sup> Source: "Detainees Dying Under Interrogation, Say Burmese Sources," *Irrawaddy*, 10 October 2007.

<sup>433</sup> Sources: "Only now, the full horror of Burmese junta's repression of monks emerges," *The Independent*, 11 October 2007; "UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge," AHRC, 24 October 2007; "Detainees Dying Under Interrogation, Say Burmese Sources," *Irrawaddy*, 10 October 2007.

<sup>434</sup> Source: "Those who died during the protest in Burma," AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/died\\_sept\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/died_sept_07.html) on 6 January 2008; "No return to Normalcy," AI, 9 November 2007.

## Treatment of Monks

The authorities took steps to disrobe all monks and nuns arrested in relation to the protests. This act of disrobing is in itself a significant form of debasement for Buddhist monks. Moreover, it created a more enabling environment for the mistreatment of these monks by the authorities who could now proceed as if dealing with civilian laypersons. In reality, however, the SPDC possesses no mandate in which to disrobe any member of the monastic community. The act of disrobing is illegitimate if not done willingly, and as such, the monks continued to be monks albeit in civilian clothing. Further reports have testified that monks were only fed in the afternoon or during the evening, at a time when their Buddhist practice dictates they are forbidden from eating.<sup>435</sup>

In a number of cases, the act of disrobing was conducted by senior members of the Sangha and members of the *Sangha Maya Nayaka* Committee who remain under the control of the SPDC. According to some reports, this was the case at the Mingaladon military detention facility where it was reported that over 600 monks were amongst the detainees. Following their disrobing the authorities proceeded with their interrogations.

*“Day and night, one monk after another was taken out of the cells to be interrogated. Some returned with swollen heads and bruised bodies, others with bent backs or limbs. ‘You are no longer monks’, the guards liked to tell us, ‘You are just bald-heads now’.”*<sup>436</sup>

Similar reports emerged from Insein Prison where security forces asserted that they would no longer use traditional Pali terms of respect when addressing the monks:

*“The authorities had changed the monks’ robes with the ordinary clothes. They wore the Longyi [Burmese men’s sarong], the same as ordinary people. The abbot of Maggin Monastery was not good in health. There were many monks there. The authorities told the monks: ‘You are not monks, you are ordinary people. So, you should reply to us by using ‘yes’, and not use the language of the Buddha’s dispensation. You are wearing ordinary clothes.’ The authorities used language like ‘you’ and ‘I’ when they spoke to the monks’.”*<sup>437</sup>

One member of the *Sangha Maya Nayaka* Committee called upon to disrobe monks detained in the GTI compound reportedly refused the request once he had arrived at the facility and witnessed the conditions that his fellow monks were subjected to.

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<sup>435</sup> Source: “Monks in hell,” *Irrawaddy*, 11 October 2007.

<sup>436</sup> Source: “Hundreds of Shan monks pinched in crackdown,” SHAN, 10 October 2007.

<sup>437</sup> Source: “Over 70 people released,” DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

*“An abbot from the Insein Sangha Maya Nayaka [Committee] was called upon to carry out the task of defrocking these monks. However, even before the arrested monks began to repeat the chants which would result in them denouncing their monkhood, the [abbot] declined to continue, citing Sangha regulations”<sup>438</sup>*

In instances where the security forces were unable to disrobe the detained monks through their control of the Sangha, they simply resorted to removing the robes themselves through the use of physical force.

*“I was defrocked at [Kyaikkasan] Racecourse. They brought some monks from the Sangha Council. But I told them they cannot defrock me without my will so they left. Later though, I was forced to change into civilian clothes by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The police stood by with batons. I had no choice. But I still comported myself as a [member of the] Sangha”<sup>439</sup>*

*“The arrested monks were kept inside the GTI compound. The soldiers told one monk, ‘Hey guy, you’re not a monk. You’re just a man. So you must wear normal clothes. Here come and eat.’ When the monks refused, they hit the monks’ heads with their rifle butts, beat them with sticks and punched them. The authorities asked the monks to give their [Burmese] birth names instead of their ordained [Pali] names. If someone’s birth name was Maung Pyu, they were told to shout ‘Maung Pyu’ for one or two hours or they would be beaten. After an hour or two, the authorities would ask, ‘Do you remember now? If you do, you are not a monk. You are a normal man. Take off your robe.’ Then they pulled off the monks’ robes”<sup>440</sup>*

Once the robes had been removed, the authorities at the detention facilities showed no deference to the monks and proceeded to interrogate and brutalise them as they did with civilian detainees. As described by one detainee, *“The monks were also tortured at [the] GTI. Their backs had blue and black bruises”<sup>441</sup>*

*“I was handcuffed from the back and then tied with the shackles. They sent me from the GTI to Pa Lae [Myothit Township]. There I slept with the handcuffs and shackles. It was very bad, as I was bitten by many mosquitoes. We were provided with no blankets [and] no mats”<sup>442</sup>*

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<sup>438</sup> Source: “Detained monks being forcefully defrocked,” DVB, 30 September 2007.

<sup>439</sup> Source: “Interview with U Tayzawbawtha, a Former Detainee,” DVB, 28 October 2007.

<sup>440</sup> Source: Testimony provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>441</sup> Source: “Over 70 people released,” DVB, 26 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>442</sup> Source: “Interview with U Tayzawbawtha, a Former Detainee,” DVB, 27 October 2007.

*“Monks and laypersons were interrogated day and night inside the prison. There were countless numbers of interrogators. We were severely beaten several times when we were interrogated. However, the worst thing that I had felt was to see the monks beaten and the monks being forced to take off their saffron robes. The monks were also forced to confess to actions that they did not commit. When I heard the monks being rudely sworn and called ‘You, guy’, I became doubtful that Burma is a Buddhist nation.”*<sup>443</sup>

One 18-year-old novice monk, released after seven days at the GTI detention facility, suffered severe bruising on his face and arms. Following his release, he reported that, “[d]ay and night, we had to sit in crowded rows with our heads bowed down. If we spoke, looked up or fell asleep, we would be hit.”<sup>444</sup> An elderly monk, also detained at the GTI facility reported that soldiers had ripped the robes from the monks’ bodies, beat them and made them “jump like frogs.”<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Source: Testimony of “U A---”, provided to HRDU by a confidential source.

<sup>444</sup> Source: “Burmese monk speaks of interrogation horror,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 2007.

<sup>445</sup> Source: “In Myanmar, Fear Is a Constant Companion,” *New York Times*, 20 October 2007.

## IX. Analysis of the Crackdown: Intent to Brutalise, Cover Up and Discredit

Throughout the violent crackdowns on columns of peaceful demonstrators, numerous trends can be discerned which belie any claims that SPDC security forces were operating under methods designed to placate and control violent mobs, or to disperse these crowds. While their tactics undoubtedly achieved the aims of control and dispersion, they went far beyond any accepted standards of necessity and proportionality, and reveal a deeper intent to brutalise and intimidate the protestors, who were treated as legitimate military targets during their peaceful protests.

As stated by Professor Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, in his assessment of the crackdown, *“the decision by the security forces to shoot to kill and to severely beat protesters causing death constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life and violates the right to life, as the lethal force used was unnecessary and disproportionate”*.<sup>446</sup>

Not only did security forces frequently fire live rounds directly at demonstrators, but their use of rubber bullets can also be taken as a statement of intent. Reports from demonstrators and photographs of spent cartridges carried in the media suggest that the rubber bullets used were not the large ‘baton round’ type, but metal ball bearings coated with a layer of rubber, capable of inflicting fatal injuries, particularly at short range (less than 40 metres).<sup>447</sup>

*“The soldiers did not give any warning or announcement [at Tamwe Township State High School No.3 on 27 September]. When they fired, we ran away. Many people ran into a small lane. People who could not run away lay down on the ground. I ran into the small space between buildings. Soldiers tried to shoot the people who ran into buildings. One of my girlfriends ran up the stairs of a building. Once she got to the top, she could not run any more. At that time, a soldier shot at her, and she was hit near the eye. She said it was rubber bullet but a lot of blood came out from the wound”*.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>447</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Win”, 27-year-old male civilian, 6 November 2007.

Moreover, despite the presence of fire trucks at the scene of certain crackdowns, these were never used as a non-lethal method of crowd control. For instance, there were seven fire trucks present at Sule Pagoda on 27 September, when the military opened fire with live rounds and killed a number of demonstrators.<sup>449</sup>

The events at Tamwe Township State High School No.3 on 27 September as well as those beside Thakin Mya Park on the same day, when the authorities fired indiscriminately into the groups of protestors, also make clear that their intent went beyond that of merely dispersing the crowd. Significantly, no warning was given of an impending crackdown on either occasion, just as no warning was given before the initial crackdown at Sule Pagoda on 27 September.

Furthermore, these groups of protestors were deliberately blocked in, where, upon reaching a roadblock, security forces would quickly take up a position behind the group as well, followed by the firing of live rounds into the trapped masses. Perversely, those attempting to flee the scene were not spared. As has been documented, one student in the process of climbing the wall away from the protest at Tamwe Township State High School No.3 was shot in the back of the head.

In general, SPDC security forces actually became more emboldened and aggressive when persons fled from their attack, and calls were often made from the leaders of demonstrations for the people to continue to sit or to walk away slowly rather than run.

*“Around one or two minutes after the army truck came they started to shoot continuously, firing more than ten times. I heard shouting from the crowd, ‘the people are dying, they are killing the people, run away, run away’. Others were saying, ‘don’t run, don’t run’ because when the people sit down they beat them and when they ran they would shoot them. When I looked back I saw two boys and one girl lying still on the floor. I do not know if they were dead”*<sup>450</sup>

The SPDC typically provided its own assessment of the actions of its security forces, accusing protestors of violence for which they were forced to respond:

*“Because of the difficult situation, the security forces opened fire to disperse the crowd, using just a little force against the violent protesters. Because they opened fire, the protesters dispersed”*<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Source: *Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma*, HRW, December 2007.

<sup>450</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Zin Aung”, 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>451</sup> Source: “Four killed in Myanmar protest crackdown,” AFP, 26 September 2007.

It is evident that protestors did use aggressive tactics at times, throwing stones and firing catapults (slingshots) at security forces. However, at each and every site of a crackdown, it was SPDC aggression and violence which sparked this response, not the opposite. At times, this aggression was aimed at monks, who civilians felt compelled to defend, despite calls from other monks to continue to march peacefully. Even in South Okkalapa Township, where angry crowds aggressively and angrily confronted security forces, it was the violence of the night before, perpetrated by agents of the SPDC against the monks of Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery, which initiated this confrontation. As one protestor testified concerning the crackdown at Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September:

*“People were getting angry. They had never witnessed a monk being beaten by the police before. The people took some bricks in their hands but the monks stopped them from using them. We really wanted to attack the authorities but one of the monks implored us to remain peaceful”*<sup>452</sup>

In his December 2007 report to the UN Human Rights Council, Professor Paolo Sergio Pinheiro was clear in his assessment of the chain of events:

*“The view that the peaceful demonstrations of last August and September are at the origin of the unrest is difficult to accept in the light of the sequence of events. It seems more accurate to say that a state of violent disturbance and disorder erupted as the result of the use of excessive force by the State and its agents”*<sup>453</sup>

Many reports have also claimed that the SPDC planted members of its security apparatus within crowds in order to stir up trouble and thus justify a violent response. However, given the covert nature of such operations these claims have proved difficult to verify.

*“Some of the demonstrators who took part in the protest were the member of USDA and the Swan Arr Shin. We couldn’t identify them at first, but I noticed that some demonstrators changed their character on 27 and 28 September. They taunted the security forces before the protest started, and damaged a nearby store. They later helped to arrest the demonstrators when the security forces cracked down on the protest”*<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Khin Soe”, 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>453</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>454</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zeya Aung”, 47-year-old male civilian protest leader, 20 October 2007.



Two student activists shot dead by SPDC army soldiers during protests in Rangoon on 27 September 2007. [© Reuters].

## Hired Thugs

It is with a brand of perverse irony of which the SPDC has become a specialist that the cause of the demonstrations, the economic plight of the population, was also an enabling factor in their suppression.

Civilian gangs, known locally as the *Swan Arr Shin*, or in English the “masters of physical force”, were mobilized to suppress demonstrations in August and September. Members of the *Swan Arr Shin* (SAS) have typically been recruited from the poor underclass of Burmese society, or from those who owe a monetary debt to the SPDC. They are reportedly paid between 3,000 and 5,000 kyat per day, far more than they could hope to earn working a regular job.<sup>455</sup> Alternatively, those persons who rely upon SPDC permits to conduct their businesses are often forced to join this group.

*“People join the Swan Arr Shin because they are very poor, and can get money if they provide information about the NLD members and activists. The firemen and USDA members are always asked to monitor the activity of the NLD. If they can arrest persons from information obtained by the Swan Arr Shin, they don’t need to watch that person anymore.”*<sup>456</sup>

*“The people who join the Swan Arr Shin are jobless. At first they were paid 3,000 kyat a day. When the demonstrations began, this increased to 5,000 kyat a day.”*<sup>457</sup>

During the crackdown, members of the SAS conducted their tasks alongside members so of the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA). While the USDA is ostensibly a social welfare organization, it lacks any independence from the SPDC, and is well known for its acts of political violence.<sup>458</sup> Various reports have placed the USDA at the centre of the recruitment and command of the SAS, effectively making the SAS a mercenary wing of this organization.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Sources: “Junta frees prisoners for anti-protest mobs,” *The Independent*, 29 August 2007; “If You Can’t Beat Them, Beat Them Up,” AHRC, 26 July 2007; “Worrying Resurgence of Government-Backed Goon Squads,” AHRC, 15 June 2007; “Contrary to Claims of Burma’s Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days,” AAPPB, 27 August 2007.

<sup>456</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*Ma Khin Oo*”, 47-year-old female civilian, 30 October 2007.

<sup>457</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Thu Nyunt*”, 37-year-old male political activist, 20 October 2007.

<sup>458</sup> For further information on the USDA and their role in political violence see *Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006*, HRDU, June 2007 and *The White Shirts: How the USDA will become the new face of Burma’s Dictatorship*, Network for Democracy and Development, May 2006.

<sup>459</sup> Sources: “Junta frees prisoners for anti-protest mobs,” *The Independent*, 29 August 2007; “If You Can’t Beat Them, Beat Them Up,” AHRC, 26 July 2007; “Worrying

USDA secretary U Aung Thaung, along with riot police chief Colonel Than Han have been reported to have been responsible for the operations of the militia.<sup>460</sup> While less ostensibly a mercenary force, the USDA also relies heavily upon economic incentives for its recruitment, as well as the simple act of forcing persons to join.

*"I know many of the USDA members in my neighbourhood. They were provided with loans at low interest rates once they joined".<sup>461</sup>*

*"Some people are forced to join [the USDA], especially vendors. They have to join or they will face trouble in their daily lives. If they refuse, their shops on the road can be removed".<sup>462</sup>*

*"I'm not a political activist; just a normal civilian. I joined the protests as I, like other people in villages, have grown impatient with the local authorities and the USDA using their power to harass the civilians. The USDA is the worst. For example, they steal our fishing territories, they make deals with cow and buffalo thieves and make money out of it, and they cut money from basically every business we make".<sup>463</sup>*

*"When we were in the 8<sup>th</sup> Standard [Grade] in high school we were given a USDA membership card. At first we were asked by our teachers to give them our photos. After a few days, we were delivered the USDA membership cards".<sup>464</sup>*

Members of the USDA and SAS receive numerous trainings given by the military, in such things as the use of bamboo sticks which were heavily and brutally used by their members during the crackdown. These groups have been increasingly empowered by the SPDC to fulfil the security function of the State.<sup>465</sup> In April 2007, Human Rights Watch (HRW) explained the current division of labour for repression in Burma:

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Resurgence of Government-Backed Goon Squads," AHRC, 15 June 2007; "Contrary to Claims of Burma's Junta, More than One Hundred Activists Arrested in Five Days," AAPPB, 27 August 2007.

<sup>460</sup> Source: "Burma: 2007 Protests Against Fuel Prices," AHRC, August 2007

<sup>461</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ma Zin Aung", 26-year-old female civilian, 1 November 2007.

<sup>462</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Khin Soe", 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>463</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Maung Nay Min", 29-year-old male civilian, 5 November 2007.

<sup>464</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Aye Maung", 22-year-old male NLD Youth member, 24 October 2007.

<sup>465</sup> Sources: "Burma: Violent Attacks on Rights Activists- Government Militias Beat and Harass Opponents, HRW, 24 April 2007; *Development by Decree: the Politics of*

*“In the countryside the military attacks civilians, burns villages and uses people as slave labour, while in the cities government-backed groups beat opponents and force thousands to attend staged mass rallies in a fake display of loyalty to Burma’s ruling council”.*<sup>466</sup>

Early in 2007, police sources in Rangoon confirmed to the opposition media that members of USDA have increasingly taken over their role in *“maintaining law and order”*.<sup>467</sup>

This increased role was evident during the August and September demonstrations. During this time, the USDA and SAS arrested and assaulted what remains an unknown number of people from the streets and their homes. While Article 128 of the Burmese Code of Criminal Procedure provides for the use of civil forces to disperse assemblies, Article 130 provides for the use of as little force as is consistent with dispersing an assembly, in order to avoid *“injury to person and property”*. The callous beating of demonstrators went far beyond this limit. Furthermore, these groups lack any legal mandate to arrest individuals from their homes, and such arrests can be more accurately described as abductions, in contravention of the most basic tenets of international law.

While the USDA and SAS are entirely controlled by the SPDC, the junta, and even some foreign media, continue to portray these organisations as “pro-government groups”. Two days after the events at Pakokku, on 7 September 2007, the SPDC commented on the event, stating that *“the people will not accept any acts to destabilise the nation and harm their interests and are willing to prevent such destructive acts”*.<sup>468</sup> Implicit in this statement, is the assertion that the members of the USDA and SAS, who violently attacked monks in Pakokku, are *“the people”*, and as such are ostensibly representative of the larger population. The USDA and SAS are agents of the SPDC, and to try and represent those persons who assaulted members of the monastic community as *“the people”* is an attempt to not only legitimise its own views as having popular support, but to also exonerate itself from blame for its own actions.

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*Poverty and Control in Karen*, KHRG, 24 April 2007; “Burmese Authorities Give Military Trainings to USDA Members,” DVB News, 7 May 2007.

<sup>466</sup> Source: “Burma: Violent Attacks on Rights Activists - Government Militias Beat and Harass Opponents, HRW, 24 April 2007.

<sup>467</sup> Source: “What Is The Burmese Junta's Next Political Move?” *Mizzima News*, 22 June 2007.

<sup>468</sup> Source: “Myanmar junta blames exiles for unrest,” Reuters, 7 September 2007.

### **Interview with Former Swan Arr Shin Member**

*"I live in [Mayangone] Township in Rangoon Division. I work in a brokerage house as a porter. I was arrested and convicted for committing theft in 2005/06. But I'm now working and living decently.*

*"Recently, on 23 September 2007, my old acquaintance Pho Suu a.k.a. Kemmendine a.k.a. Thein Zaw came to me and said that he would give me a net wage of 3,000 kyat per day, with free meals if I could not earn that much [where I was] and wanted to work with him. When I asked him what [the work involved], he replied that we have to work with the police force in raiding and arresting the bootleggers and prostitutes in Insein and North Okkalapa Townships. He added that he would give me a 'Swan Arr Shin' armband to avoid mistaken identity during raids. Then I agreed to work with him, believing that this was legal work, working in tandem with the police force, raiding and arresting bootleggers and prostitutes, and could earn 3,000 kyat per day.*

*"Then Pho Suu told me to visit him that night on 23 September at 10:00 pm. I followed him with a glad heart, expecting a daily wage of 3,000 kyat. I found many other people like me when we reached Riot Police Battalion No.1. We had no work at all from 23 September to 25 September. We were given meals on time and given liquor every evening. Then on 26 September, at about 8:00 am, the police officer ordered about 100 of us to fall in and gave us a briefing. He said that we were now going to attack and assault the enemy together with the police force and ordered us to perform our duty well with full loyalty. Then we were taken away after boarding the waiting trucks.*

*"On the trucks, we were given a bamboo stick each. We left Riot Police Battalion No.1 at about 8:30 am and reached [downtown] Rangoon at about 10:00 am. At that time, I saw an unprecedented scene of many monks, nuns, students and the people marching in procession peacefully and chanting prayers and the Metta Sutta near the eastern gate of Shwedagon Pagoda and Kyethun Buddha Image. I will never forget this scene. At about 11:00 am I heard a volley of gunfire.*

*"The army started firing their guns and the police followed suit. Pho Suu told me that I could beat indiscriminately anyone in front of me and he would take full responsibility for it.*

*"Then he started beating monks himself. I did not dare to beat the monks, nuns, people and students. Yes, I was once a convicted thief, but I'll never do such a cowardly act. It's impossible for me to beat the monks whom I worship everyday. If I haven't got money, I would probably commit theft again, but will never do such a wicked act as killing monks, nuns, students and the people. So I didn't join them in beating the monks and the people on that day".<sup>469</sup>*

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<sup>469</sup> Source: "Burma Update 274," PDC, 29 November 2007.

## Targeted and Intentional Killings

While in many cases shooting into crowds was conducted indiscriminately, in other instances it is apparent that the security forces deliberately targeted specific individuals.

Kenji Nagai, the Japanese photojournalist killed at Sule Pagoda on the 27 September, is a case in point. An examination into his death by the Japanese police force has found that he was initially shot in the back from less than a metre away, as he was brandishing a camera.<sup>470</sup> He was then shot again while lying on the ground by a soldier standing directly over him. Though his body has been returned to the Japanese Government, his camera has not.<sup>471</sup>

It is clear from statements and policy before, during, and after the crackdown that the prospect of media coverage of events such as those in Sule Pagoda was something that the SPDC was determined to prevent. As one witness testified of events on the 29 September in Rangoon, “[t]he troops pursued fleeing people into buildings, singling out people with cameras. If they were captured, the troops beat them while shouting, ‘Is it you who sends those pictures out?’”<sup>472</sup>

Similarly, in the mindset of the SPDC and when methods of crowd control are transposed with tactics employed in a military assault, it is possible to discern that a student wearing an NLD Youth badge and brandishing a fighting peacock flag, while chanting loudly and leading a group of protestors, might be seen to be a legitimate military target. On the 27 September on Pansodan Road, such a young man was killed with a single shot to the head. The military had fired directly at him and from a significant distance.<sup>473</sup>

In another instance, one eyewitness told HRDU how his friend was shot while being carried on someone’s shoulders wearing an Aung San Suu Kyi t-shirt and shouting political slogans, near Sule Pagoda on 27 September.

*“He was intentionally shot by a soldier. He told me later that he had seen the soldier pointing his gun directly at him. He also said he had seen the Japanese journalist take a photo of him before he fell down. Both he and the man holding him fell down, and then tried to run away. When they got to the 33<sup>d</sup> Street Junction two people helped them hide between the cars. They took of his Aung San Suu Kyi t-shirt and threw*

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<sup>470</sup> Source: “Tokyo: Police says Nagai Shot at Point-blank Range,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, 27 November 2007.

<sup>471</sup> Source: “Tokyo to Yangon: Hand over Nagai’s Camera,” *The Japan Times*, 2 October 2007.

<sup>472</sup> Source: “Two Shot in Clash with Troops; People with Cameras Singled Out,” *Irrawaddy*, 28 September 2007.

<sup>473</sup> Source: “Eyewitness Account of Bloody September 27,” *Irrawaddy*, 2 November 2007; *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007.

*it away, as they feared it could get him shot if he was seen wearing it. One of the men took off his longyi [sarong] to cover the injury on his thigh”<sup>474</sup>.*



Evidence of a violent crackdown. Hundreds of shoes lay strewn in the streets of Rangoon after their owners discarded them so that they could run faster to escape the violence witnessed upon them by SPDC army soldiers and their agents on 27 September 2007. Sadly, the owner of these blood-soaked shoes was not so lucky and managed to escape only after sustaining what appears to have been a severe injury. [© Reuters].

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<sup>474</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

## Removal of the Dead and Wounded

Numerous testimonies gathered from those present reveals a predetermined policy to remove bodies from the scene of each crackdown as a means to cover up the extent of killing and brutality.

Reports from Tamwe Township State High School No.3 suggest the bodies of at least five high school students, who were killed during the crackdown on the 27 September, were removed from the scene. The injured were also rounded up onto trucks and taken away.<sup>475</sup> Similar reports were received from Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda, Pazundaung, and Pansodan Road.

*"They told us to lie down on our stomachs on the ground. 'Nobody raise their heads!', they shouted as they were beating us. No one dared to put their head up because they would have been beaten. There were about 500 people on the ground. A girl was ordered to sit down and her head was bashed with a stick because she was slow in doing so. She was only in her twenties. She was a good-looking girl. She was bleeding. I think they took the injured people and dead bodies away in the trucks as we were lying on the ground. I could not see any dead bodies or wounded protesters when we were allowed to get up again".<sup>476</sup>*

*"I witnessed two people beaten to death near our barrier. They were both men, aged between 25 and 30. These men were beaten on their backs and their waists as they tried to escape the attack. When they fell to the ground, the soldiers beat them collectively. The soldiers dragged their bodies by the legs back to the junction where many people could see their dead bodies lying beside the military trucks".<sup>477</sup>*

The fate of a monk presumed dead during the crackdown at Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September reveals the lengths that security forces resorted to in order to cover up the evidence:

*"He was heavily beaten twice on his head. After that time, he did not move, he just lay on the ground lifeless. About ten minutes later, they removed his robes and redressed him in a t-shirt and longyi [sarong]. Two members of the riot police then picked up his*

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<sup>475</sup> Source: "UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots," AHRC, 30 September 2007.

<sup>476</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Khin Soe", 21-year-old male student, 26 October 2007.

<sup>477</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "U Htun Win", 56-year-old male civilian, 10 November 2007.

*body; one took the legs and the other the arms and they threw him onto their truck”.*<sup>478</sup>

In the event that security forces were unable to claim the bodies at the time, they returned later so as to demand the bodies from their relatives. The Asian Human Rights Commission reported that, in South Okkalapa Township, eight corpses remained on the street by the evening following the crackdown on the 27 September. Some of these persons were known to local residents and were taken back to their houses. It was reported that soon after, security forces conducted searches of houses in the area, and took the bodies away.<sup>479</sup> Another report has claimed that the bodies of two men in their 30's who were shot during the crackdown in South Okkalapa Township were taken by the military the following day, at which time they paid the families 20,000 kyat each before removing the corpses.<sup>480</sup>

## Treatment of the Injured

Armed security forces patrolled hospitals in Rangoon during the days of the crackdown, and hospital staff were ordered to inform the authorities of all persons admitted with injuries.<sup>481</sup> SPDC army soldiers guarding the entrance to the emergency treatment department of Rangoon General Hospital checked all the injuries of those brought to the hospital during this time.<sup>482</sup>

An injured monk seeking treatment at Rangoon General Hospital for wounds on his leg, was ordered to remove his robes before he could be administered treatment. When he refused, staff at the hospital were forced to contact the Deputy Minister of Health for permission, which was only belatedly granted.<sup>483</sup> In some townships of Mandalay Division, such as Myingyan and Taungtha, hospitals were ordered not to treat those monks who persisted in their boycott of

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<sup>478</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “*U Zin Oo*”, 45-year-old male civilian, 26 November 2007.

<sup>479</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots,” AHRC, 30 September 2007.

<sup>480</sup> Source: “As Burma’s junta reclaims streets, locals stand up for monks,” *The Age*, 2 October 2007.

<sup>481</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge,” AHRC, 24 October 2007.

<sup>482</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots,” AHRC, 30 September 2007; “Detained monks being forcefully defrocked,” DVB, 30 September 2007.

<sup>483</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): Protests continue despite heavy security; more people and monks taken away; townsfolk defend monasteries with slingshots,” AHRC, 30 September 2007.

the military regime.<sup>484</sup> The owner of a pharmacy had his car confiscated under accusation of having helped injured monks by providing them with medicine.<sup>485</sup>

There have also been reports of those receiving treatment in hospital being removed by the authorities, despite the fact that they were still in need of treatment.

*“My friend, who is also a monk, was shot in his shoulder on Pansodan Road Bridge. He visited the hospital to receive treatment. On the same day, the security forces searched the hospital and found him, even though he had tried to hide. They took him away. He was detained in Insein [Prison] for a month. When he was released his injury was still bad. He had not received any treatment in prison.”*<sup>486</sup>

Another monk, believed to be around 30 years old, was removed from the critical care unit at Rangoon General Hospital and taken to an unknown location on the 29 September. He had been shot in his arm. The relative of another patient, stated:

*“The monk is gone. We don't know where they will [take] him to. The monk's arm has been cast in plaster. He was in hospital for 3 days. They took him away yesterday morning. I mean the policemen. We were not allowed to talk to each other.”*<sup>487</sup>

From the same hospital, six patients who had been receiving treatment for wounds sustained during the crackdown were abducted by soldiers on 3 October; with no word given to their families as to where they were taken.<sup>488</sup> A day earlier, the wife of one of these persons, Ko Mya Than Htaik, had reported:

*“He's doing well mentally but he can't walk. He can't even sit up. The bullet entered through the big toe and went out just below the knee. He's getting better but the family members are not allowed to see him, except our nephew who sleeps over in the ward. His mother is 70 plus and she would like to see her son, but was not allowed to enter.”*<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge,” AHRC, 24 October 2007.

<sup>485</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Zaw Oo”, 40-year-old male civilian, 11 December 2007.

<sup>486</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Na Thein”, Buddhist monk, 13 December 2007.

<sup>487</sup> Source: “A Monk Wounded by Gunshot Transferred Out of Hospital by Junta,” DVB, 2 October 2007.

<sup>488</sup> Source: “UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge,” AHRC, 24 October 2007.

<sup>489</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

Later reports placed Ko Mya Than Htaik at the GTI temporary detention compound, where he was said to have been denied medical treatment.<sup>490</sup> Among the other patients taken from the hospital, one man was reported to require a below the knee amputation after a bullet had shattered his shin.<sup>491</sup>

Other reports have testified to persons, seriously injured, requesting not to be taken to hospital, as they were wary of being punished for their involvement in the protests. The family of Ko Ko Win, who had been heavily assaulted at Sule Pagoda on 27 September, were initially too afraid to send him to hospital. Ko Ko Win ultimately died a month later from the injuries that he had sustained.<sup>492</sup>

*“When we arrived at Pansodan Bridge, we saw a man being carried by his two friends. His clothes were stained with blood. His friends told us that he had been shot in the leg. They were searching for taxi. We heard the injured man ask his friends not to take him to the hospital but to take him home instead, because he did not want to be arrested”.*<sup>493</sup>

Similarly, the families of those who were being treated in SPDC-administered hospitals were keen to take their relatives either home or to private clinics, and paid bribes to do so.

*“Some people in my quarter who were involved in the protests were badly injured during the attacks by the riot police. Their families did not know where they were. They asked the police but could not find anything out. They later discovered that they had been taken by the authorities and placed under guard in the government hospital. When they went to the hospital they were told by the authorities that they must pay at least 40,000 kyat to secure their release. They were not receiving sufficient care in the hospital; there is a lack of medicine and treatment. The families were also concerned because they are under the guard of the authorities. So they have had to pay this money to secure their release and to take them to a local clinic for treatment”.*<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> Source: “A Monk Wounded by Gunshot Transferred Out of Hospital by Junta,” DVB, 2 October 2007.

<sup>492</sup> Source: “NLD youth member dies from protest injuries,” DVB, 7 November 2007.

<sup>493</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Min Zaw”, 30-year-old male civilian, 27 October 2007.

<sup>494</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Maung Kyaw”, 21-year-old civilian, 5 November 2007.

## Secret Cremations

For the majority of those killed during the crackdown the SPDC has denied any knowledge of the event, made no attempt to identify the dead, to investigate the cause of death, to return the bodies to their families, or to give them even the minimum Buddhist burial rites.

Persistent reports from local residents have testified to the fact that Ye Way Crematorium in North Okkalapa Township was operated throughout the night from 27 September through to 30 September. During this time, a perimeter was established around the crematorium, and armed guards patrolled the surrounding area, threatening local residents who looked out of their windows. Military trucks covered with tarpaulins were sighted entering and exiting the area on those nights and streams of smoke were reported to be rising from the crematorium's chimneys.<sup>495</sup>

The Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) news agency received information from a staff member at the crematorium who had reported that 20 bodies had been burnt on the night of the 30 September alone.<sup>496</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, has also heard from "*credible sources [which] report a large number of bodies [wrapped in plastic and rice bags] were burned during the night, between 4 am and 8 am*" and that "*normal employees were instructed to keep away, and that the facility was operated on those nights by State security personnel or State-supported groups*".<sup>497</sup>

The SPDC's refusal to account for the dead and the disappeared, has not only served to cloud their culpability, but it has left many families in state of constant anguish over the fate of their relatives. Buddhist monk, Ashin Sanda Thiri, was among those reported missing, after earlier suffering a bullet wound to the leg. His family received unconfirmed reports that his body was cremated at a Rangoon Cemetery, although it has subsequently been reported that he is detained in Insein prison.<sup>498</sup> Similarly, the SPDC has refused to account for the whereabouts of five persons who disappeared following the shooting outside Tamwe Township State High School No.3, where it is known that a number of bodies were removed from the scene by the security forces.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Source: "Secret cremations hide Burma killings," *Sunday Times*, 7 October 2007.

<sup>496</sup> Source: "9:00 pm Burma Local Time DVB News," DVB, 1 October 2007, translation by HRDU.

<sup>497</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>498</sup> Source: "UPDATE (Burma): Three teenage sisters and a young mother of two have disappeared," AHRC, 3 October 2007; and *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>499</sup> Source: *AAPP List of the Disappeared*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/disap\\_sept\\_07.htm](http://www.aappb.org/disap_sept_07.htm) on 6 January 2008.

Outside of Rangoon, the SPDC has also made attempts to cover up those killed by its security forces. On 17 October, the dead body of 37-year-old NLD member Nyi Pu Lay, from the town of Gwa in Arakan State, was found floating on the Gwa River after he had been missing for four days. One local resident reported that, *“When the police learnt about it [the body], they immediately took it away and cremated it. His family members [later] identified him from his clothes”*.<sup>500</sup> His wife was subsequently interrogated by the police. *“Local police took her away for interrogation on 3 November, but we cannot ask her what they questioned her about as she seems to be too scared and dare not speak”*.<sup>501</sup>

State-run press, however, continued to report that only 10 people were killed during the crackdowns. In contrast to this, the SPDC has belatedly acknowledged the deaths of 15 persons to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma. One of these victims was photojournalist Kenji Nagai whose body was returned to Japan at request of the Tokyo Government. The remaining fourteen bodies were reportedly cremated at the Htain Bin Crematorium. Of these fourteen, three reportedly remained unidentified when they were cremated on 1 October.<sup>502</sup> The Special Rapporteur, however, stated in his December 2007 report to the Human Rights Council that *“several reports of killings indicate that the figure provided by the authorities may greatly underestimate the reality. To date the Special Rapporteur has received information regarding the killing of 16 additional persons”* and that *“[a]ccording to information received and based on credible eyewitness reports, there were more than 30 fatalities in [Rangoon alone]”*.<sup>503</sup>

Despite the hurried nature of these cremations, police chief, Brigadier General Khin Yi has predictably laid the blame for their inability to identify these bodies with unnamed *“external elements”*:

*“What’s interesting is that there would not be any unidentified death cases if they resided around here. As the incidents occurred due to the links between the internal and external elements, we cannot say that all the detainees were from near here. They might have come from other organizations we haven’t known from the border region. That was why some death cases could not be identified”*.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Source: “Junta releases a few detainees, several missing,” *Mizzima News*, 27 October 2007.

<sup>501</sup> Source: “Junta threatens political activists in Arakan State,” *Mizzima News*, 5 November 2007.

<sup>502</sup> Source: *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Human Rights Council, 6<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda Item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>503</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> Source: “Nay Pyi Taw - The following are the questions of journalists and answers of officials concerned at the press conference,” NLM, 3 December 2007.

While the families and relatives of the identified bodies were reportedly able to participate in the cremations, they have nevertheless been restricted in investigating the cause of death, and restricted in their rights to a proper Buddhist funeral.

Sixteen year old, Maung Thet Paing Soe was shot outside Tamwe Township State High School No.3 on 27 September. His body was immediately removed from the scene. His family were only able to see his body after bribing U Win Naing Oo, the chairman of the Dawbon Township chapter of the USDA, with 8,000 kyat. U Win Aung Oo only allowed four family members to see the body before it was cremated at the Htain Bin crematorium, but prevented them from conducting any final Buddhist rites on the body.<sup>505</sup> Though it appeared that he had been shot in the head at close range, the family was not given a copy of the death certificate. His aunt reported that *"there was a big hole on the back of his head and the brain was gone. We assume it was a gun-shot wound"*.<sup>506</sup>

Similarly, on 1 October, the SPDC arranged hasty and tightly-controlled cremations for Ko Tun Tun Lin and Maung Zeya Naing, from South Okkalapa Township, who were both beaten to death on 27 September. The Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the families that no more than ten persons could attend the funerals, each of whom had to bring their national identification card. They were forbidden from holding prayer sessions for the dead.<sup>507</sup>

The regime also arranged for the rushed cremations of those who died in custody, and forced pathologists to falsely declare the cause of death to be natural. Venerable U Thilavantha, Deputy Abbot of the Yuzana Kyaungthai Monastery in Myitkyina, died as a result of injuries received both on the night of his arrest and his subsequent detention. The authorities forced the pathologist to declare the cause of death to be a heart ailment.<sup>508</sup>

On 7 October, the family of NLD Youth member, Ko Win Shwe was informed that he had died while being detained at Police Battalion #13 in Palate, Sagaing Division, and that his body had already been cremated at the detention centre, thus preventing any investigation into the cause of death. Reports testify to the fact that he died as a result of the treatment received while under interrogation.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Source: "Dead boy's family not allowed to conduct funeral rituals," *Mizzima News*, 1 October 2007. "UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during protests emerge," AHRC, 24 October 2007.

<sup>506</sup> Source: "Family members speak about teen protestor's death," 19 October 2007.

<sup>507</sup> Source: "Junta attempts to cover up," DVB, 1 October 2007.

<sup>508</sup> Source: "Those who died during the protest in Burma," AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/died\\_sept\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/died_sept_07.html) on 6 January 2008; "No return to Normalcy," AI, 9 November 2007.

<sup>509</sup> Sources: "Only now, the full horror of Burmese junta's repression of monks emerges," *The Independent*, 11 October 2007; "UPDATE (Burma): More details of deaths during

## Suppression of Information

In Burma, every effort is made to ensure that people only see, hear, read, and learn about things that support the junta's position in power. The SPDC controls not only Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the country but also maintains a strict censorship of the Internet. There are no independent Burmese television channels, and all independent press publications must submit their work to the SPDC's Press Scrutiny and Relations Department (PSRD) prior to publication.

However, the proliferation of cheap transistor radios inside the country has meant that approximately 95 percent of civilians rely on foreign radio broadcasts for information about events inside their own country.<sup>510</sup> The main sources of outside information are the daily Burmese language radio broadcasts by Radio Free Asia (RFA), Voice of America (VOA), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB).

The SPDC has been extreme in its reaction to the spread of independent news inside the country. Anyone found to have provided information to these news services is severely punished. Burmese state-run newspapers run stories almost daily that attack the foreign media, especially the BBC, VOA, and RFA, and at SPDC-organized rallies, and those persons forced to attend are required to shout slogans denouncing these radio stations.

Throughout the duration of the August and September protests, the SPDC responded to the spread of information by increasing its policy of censorship to totalitarian levels. Internet and phone networks completely cut, and journalists, or those who spoke to them, attacked and arrested. Meanwhile, SPDC-controlled media, continued to denounce external and internal agitators as the underlying cause of the demonstrations, while also working to discredit those monks who took part.

## The Internet

Since the advent of the Internet, Burma's military junta has retained a tight and systematic control over all use of Internet and electronic mail in the country. In December 2006, an online poll conducted by Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) recognized Burma as the world's worst offender of Internet freedom, with the organization asserting that *"the Burmese government's Internet policies are even more repressive than its Chinese and Vietnamese neighbours"*.<sup>511</sup>

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protests emerge," AHRC, 24 October 2007; "Detainees Dying Under Interrogation, Say Burmese Sources," *Irrawaddy*, 10 October 2007.

<sup>510</sup> Source: "Thanks to the Foreign Burmese Radio Services," *Narinjara News*, 11 June 2003.

<sup>511</sup> Source: "Burma Number One Internet Enemy," *Mizzima News*, 7 November 2006.

As the demonstrations grew in size, the SPDC responded by increasing its already significant control over the Internet. Numerous websites and 'blog sites' were blocked,<sup>512</sup> and on 3 September, SPDC authorities blocked access to popular video sharing site YouTube which carried videos of the demonstrations inside Burma.<sup>513</sup>

Nevertheless, techno savvy independent Internet bloggers in Burma were able to circumvent restrictions and post pictures, videos and reports of the ongoing protests and crackdowns. Their success in doing so had multiple implications.

Primarily they provided a window into events for the outside world and helped unite international solidarity with the protestors. This is something that was significantly lacking during the 1988 uprising, when the news of over 3,000 deaths took days to reach the international media.

In addition, a boomerang effect can be discerned in terms of news distribution inside Burma. Although Internet access was heavily restricted during the days of the crackdown, and only a tiny percentage of the Burmese population has access to the Internet anyway, many images and stories posted on blog sites were picked up and reused by foreign media who, in turn, transmitted this news back into the country. It is highly likely that such distribution of news was a major contributing factor for the rapid growth of the nationwide demonstrations.

One regrettable consequence was the personal risk these bloggers exposed themselves to in performing this duty. On 30 November, Aung Gyi (a.k.a Aung Thwin) was arrested by the authorities, while reportedly trying to post pictures of the authorities shutting down Maggin Monastery. It has also been reported that at least 14 persons have been arrested at Internet cafes in relation to the crackdown.

A further unfortunate consequence of the fact that hundreds of photos and videos of the demonstrations were readily available on the Internet has been that it appears to have made the work of SPDC intelligence gathering somewhat easier. During the height of the crackdown, security services circulated photos of demonstrators to police stations and police informers. It has been reported that soldiers and plainclothes officials arrived at homes bearing photographs of their intended targets that were pulled off the Internet.<sup>514</sup> Scores of people were reportedly arrested on the basis of these photos.<sup>515</sup>

On 26 September, the first day on which violence was used against protestors in Rangoon, the SPDC responded to the successful flow of information inside and

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<sup>512</sup> Sources: "Foreign correspondents phones under censorship blade," *Mizzima News*, 12 September 2007; "Junta blocks popular blogs," *Mizzima News*, 26 September 2007.

<sup>513</sup> Source: "Burma blocks You Tube," *Mizzima News*, 7 September 2007.

<sup>514</sup> Source: "Secret cremations hide Burma killings," *Sunday Times*, 7 October 2007

<sup>515</sup> Source: "Four Burmese journalists and two "comedian-columnists" in prison as police round-up goes on," RSF, 12 October 2007.

outside of the country by closing Internet cafes in Rangoon.<sup>516</sup> In addition, the SPDC-controlled Internet service provider (ISP), Bagan Cybertech, reduced its bandwidth, preventing the transmission of photos and video over the Internet.

On 28 September, the regime then completely shut down the country's two ISPs.<sup>517</sup> The official explanation was that maintenance was being carried out.<sup>518</sup> However, trucks loaded with SPDC army troops were seen raiding the offices of Burma's second ISP, Myanmar Info-Tech, at noon that day.<sup>519</sup>

SPDC officials, however, continued to be able to send email messages (after verification and approval of their content) from inside the Department of Posts and Telecommunications building. Reporters Sans Frontiers commented that "*Military prior censorship, long applied to the print media, is now being applied to the Internet, this case of prior control of all information sent by Internet is unique in the world*".<sup>520</sup>

Access to the Internet was only restored on 6 October, by which time the protests had been suppressed. All email messages sent to Burmese email addresses during the time of Internet blackout were deleted from the ISPs and access to news websites and blog sites during this time was unattainable.<sup>521</sup> The SPDC subsequently established its own blog sites, which they attempted to present as independent and credible sources of information. This move allowed the dissemination of misinformation as well as the monitoring of Internet use.<sup>522</sup>

After two weeks of slow-speed Internet connectivity, on 1 November, Internet access throughout Burma was again interrupted. The cut followed a small demonstration by monks in Pakokku the previous day. In all likelihood, this correlation can be assumed to be more than mere coincidence. Internet service was eventually restored on 3 November, although connection was reportedly very slow.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Sources: "Burma - News blackout accompanies military crackdown on protests," RSF, 26 September 2007; "Burma -Internet disconnected, newspapers closed and foreign journalists under surveillance as junta tries to seal off Burma," RSF, 28 September 2007.

<sup>517</sup> Sources: "Burma - Internet disconnected, newspapers closed and foreign journalists under surveillance as junta tries to seal off Burma," RSF, 28 September 2007; Burma forces storm cities," AFP, 28 September 2007; "Troops Take Back Control in Myanmar," AP, 29 September 2007.

<sup>518</sup> Source: "Burma 'cuts all Internet links'," *Bangkok Post*, 28 September 2007.

<sup>519</sup> Source: "A Rangoon Diary by Thierry Falise," *Irrawaddy*, 1 November 2007.

<sup>520</sup> Source: "With Internet still disconnected, concern mounts about fate of monks and Civilian detainees," RSF, 30 September 2007.

<sup>521</sup> Source: "Five journalists currently held, four others released - Internet restored for a few hours," RSF, 9 October 2007.

<sup>522</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>523</sup> Sources: "Myanmar axes Internet, UN official ahead of Gambari visit," AFP, 3 November 2007; "Burmese Internet cut-off said to prevent news flow about protests," DVB,

## Telephone Networks Severed

In early September, staff from the Directorate of Military Engineers visited the Office of Post and Telecommunications, where they ordered the bugging of phone lines of prominent activists. Included on their list of around 50 persons were Su Su Nway, Phyu Phyu Thinn, Htay Kywe and Hla Myo Naung – all of whom had gone into hiding by that time – as well as U Myint Thein, a spokesperson for the NLD. As some numbers on their list were mobile phones, which could not be bugged, the authorities ordered that these lines instead be cut.<sup>524</sup>

On 11 September, SPDC authorities then cut off the mobile phones of several journalists working for the foreign media.<sup>525</sup> The following day, the junta cut the last telephone line at the NLD headquarters in Rangoon.<sup>526</sup> On 26 September, the day on which the crackdown began, the SPDC disabled the vast majority of the country's mobile phone networks.<sup>527</sup>

## The National Press

The Press Scrutiny and Relations Department (PSRD), a division of the SPDC Ministry of Information, examines every publication in Burma for anything perceived as being “anti-regime” and ensures that nothing can be reported inside the country that might run contrary to their interests.

The PSRD not only rejected all articles in which the protests were covered in an independent and objective manner, but Rangoon-based journals and periodicals were actually ordered to publish articles favourable to the SPDC and denouncing the demonstrations. They were directed to print stories accusing pro-democracy activists of orchestrating the protests and portraying the protesters as agitators creating violence.<sup>528</sup> Many journals adhered to these demands. For instance, on 9 September, many publications were forced to publish an official statement accusing

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4 November 2007; “Internet back in Burma at snails pace,” *Mizzima News*, 4 November 2007.

<sup>524</sup> Sources: “Junta taps journalists' telephones, cuts off their mobile connections,” SEAPA, 12 September 2007; “During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists,” RSF, 20 September 2007; “Burmese government cuts off activists' mobile phones,” *Irrawaddy*, 10 September 2007.

<sup>525</sup> Source: “Myanmar cuts phone service to activists, journalists,” AFP, 16 September 2007.

<sup>526</sup> Source: “Burma - During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists,” RSF, 20 September 2007.

<sup>527</sup> Source: “Burma- News blackout accompanies military crackdown on protests,” RSF, 26 September 2007.

<sup>528</sup> Sources: “Junta orders Rangoon based journals to denounce ongoing protest,” *Mizzima News*, 24 September 2007; “Burmese journals suspend publication due to government demands,” DVB, 28 September; “During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists,” RSF, 20 September 2007.

Min Ko Naing and other 88 Generation Student Group activists of inciting a revolt.<sup>529</sup>

While the SPDC threatened reprisals against newspapers that refused to obey these orders, several publications, including those owned by the Eleven Media and Pyi Myanmar press groups took the decision to close rather than submitting to such restrictive demands.<sup>530</sup>

Concurrent to its heightened suppression of independent media, the SPDC stepped up its own propaganda through state-owned press and television. In the past, a favoured tactic in the event of undesirable news events has been to simply not report on them. This tactic, however, has become increasingly untenable with the proliferation of radios providing access to foreign and exiled media. Nevertheless, the state-run press initially opted to largely ignore the nationwide demonstrations. As the protests mushroomed in size and scope and news quickly spread of SPDC brutality, the military-controlled press quickly changed their tact. The SPDC-controlled media became a means for the junta to justify its actions, by constructing its own version of events in order to pre-empt or defend against other views. As is common in Burma, these constructed accounts portrayed the victims of state violence as having incited the situation, and characterised the security forces as being disciplined in their response, thus ostensibly absolving them from any claims of malpractice.<sup>531</sup> One such report read: *“Because of the difficult situation, the security forces opened fire to disperse the crowd, using just a little force against the violent protesters. Because they opened fire, the protesters dispersed”*.<sup>532</sup> Likewise, the blame for instigating the violent protestors was placed with exiled and foreign media. On 11 October, the SPDC-controlled English language *New Light of Myanmar* stated *“If we think about the causes of unrest in 1988 and today, we can see that it is all because of foreign media, such as BBC, VOA and RFA,”*<sup>533</sup>

In a December statement, Police Chief Brigadier General Khin Yi continued in the same vein when he labelled the Democratic Voice of Burma *“the most notorious foreign broadcasting station airing fabricated news about Myanmar”*. Contrary to this view, two days later, the organization was commended by Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) for its reliable coverage of the September demonstrations.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Source: “During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists,” RSF, 20 September 2007.

<sup>530</sup> Sources: “Internet disconnected, newspapers closed and foreign journalists under surveillance as junta tries to seal off Burma,” RSF, 28 September 2007; “Soldiers shut down newspapers,” RSF, 26 September 2007.

<sup>531</sup> Source: *BURMA: The Human Rights Situation in 2006*, AHRC, 21 December 2006.

<sup>532</sup> Source: “Four killed in Myanmar protest crackdown,” AFP, 26 September 2007.

<sup>533</sup> Source: “Arrests Continue in Burma,” *Irrawaddy*, October 11, 2007.

<sup>534</sup> Source: “Regime Asks Asean Journalists to Help Counter 'Negative' Reporting,” *Irrawaddy*, 6 December 2007.

## Deliberate Targeting of Journalists

The climate in which both national and foreign journalists operate in Burma has always been tightly controlled. The control and intimidation of journalists was heightened to new levels in response to the protests. From the beginning of the protests, the SPDC denied visas to all foreign journalists,<sup>535</sup> and during the protests, foreign and local journalists were repeatedly reminded to stay away from the demonstrations.<sup>536</sup>

On 15 August, the day in which the fuel price rise first took effect, two men, who had photographed large crowds waiting on the streets of Rangoon, were taken into custody and detained for the night.<sup>537</sup> On 19 August, Burmese correspondents of foreign news media reported being subjected to intimidation from plainclothes police and USDA members, who were said to insult and threaten those journalists while brandishing weapons. The following day, Brigadier General Hla Htay Win, commanding officer of the Rangoon Regional Military Command issued orders explicitly banned journalists from taking photos of demonstrations. Security forces were directed to seize and destroy the cameras of those who persisted in their coverage. On 23 August, members of the USDA alongside the police, physically blocked journalists from reaching a group of protestors in Rangoon, and their cameras were confiscated.<sup>538</sup>

On 28 August, Burmese photographer, Win Saing, was arrested while taking pictures of the NLD's regular Tuesday prayer session for political prisoners at the Shwedagon Pagoda, and only released on 1 November 2007.<sup>539</sup> Similarly, on 18 September, three Burmese journalists covering the now much larger monk-led demonstrations in Rangoon were arrested and questioned by the police. Two of those arrested worked for Japanese media (Asahi TV and Kyoto News Agency). The third worked for *The Voice Journal*, a Rangoon-based magazine. Only the Asahi TV journalist had his camera returned to him, albeit without its digital memory card.<sup>540</sup>

During the height of the violent crackdown on demonstrators, on 26 September, several journalists were reportedly injured, including Than Lwin Zaung Htet of the *Voice Journal*. As discussed above, on 27 September, Kenji Nagai, a 50-year-old

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<sup>535</sup> Source: "Burma - During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists," RSF, 20 September 2007.

<sup>536</sup> Source: "Junta taps journalists' telephones, cuts off their mobile connections," SEAPA, 12 September 2007.

<sup>537</sup> Source: "Milking the Cow Dry," AHRC, 23 August 2007.

<sup>538</sup> Source: "During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists," RSF, 20 September 2007.

<sup>539</sup> Source: "Junta taps journalists' telephones, cuts off their mobile connections," SEAPA, 12 September 2007; "AAPP List of Released," AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_released\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_released_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>540</sup> Source: "During one month of protests, military government steps up propaganda, censorship and violence against journalists," RSF, 20 September 2007.

Japanese photojournalist, was killed by a shot fired into his back at close range. An SPDC army soldier then stood over him before shooting him once more. At the time he was brandishing a camera and was clearly a member of the media. Rather than being protected by the fact that he was a member of the press, it is far more likely that this fact was a major contributing factor in his being shot. His camera was removed from his dead body by security forces.

Many other journalists were arrested during the days of the crackdown. On 27 September, Win Ko Ko Latt, a 27-year-old journalist with the Rangoon-based *Weekly Eleven News Journal* was arrested while covering the demonstration in front of Tamwe Township State High School No.3. He was carrying a camera at the time. He was detained for nearly a month before being released.<sup>541</sup> On 28 September, Min Zaw, the Burmese correspondent of the Japanese newspaper, *Tokyo Shimbun*, was taken from his home by plainclothes security personnel for questioning.<sup>542</sup> He was held for six days before being released, during which time his mobile phone was confiscated.<sup>543</sup>

Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, a cameraman, was also arrested during the height of the crackdown. As he was injured on the head, he was held at Insein Township Hospital, before he was released at the end of October.<sup>544</sup> Likewise, 20-year-old Nay Linn Aung, of the *7-Days Journal* was detained for almost a month before being released.<sup>545</sup> Kyaw Zeya Tun, 23, from *The Voice Journal* was reported missing during the crackdown. It was later discovered he had been taken into custody, and was only released in early October.<sup>546</sup> Ko Thu Ya Soe, a 30-year-old photographer who works for the German news agency, European Pressphoto Agency (EPA), has been missing since the start of October. He was last seen taking photos near the Sule Pagoda in Rangoon.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Source: "Irrawaddy Updates," *Irrawaddy*, 27 September 2007; "News photographer missing, eight other journalists still detained," RSF, 23 October 2007.

<sup>542</sup> Sources: "Burma - At least four journalists arrested in Rangoon, including Japanese daily's correspondent," RSF, 30 September 2007; "Junta detain reporter for Japanese newspaper," AP, 30 September 2007; "Authorities detain reporter for Japanese newspaper in Myanmar," AP, 30 September 2007.

<sup>543</sup> Source: "Soldiers Hunt Dissidents in Myanmar," AP, 4 October 2007; "At least five journalists arrested in Rangoon," RSF, 3 October 2007.

<sup>544</sup> Source: "News photographer missing, eight other journalists still detained," RSF, 23 October 2007.

<sup>545</sup> Source: "News photographer missing, eight other journalists still detained," RSF, 23 October 2007.

<sup>546</sup> Source: "Five journalists currently held, four others released - Internet restored for a few hours," RSF, 9 October 2007.

<sup>547</sup> Source: "News photographer missing, eight other journalists still detained," RSF, 23 October 2007.



The death of Japanese photojournalist Kenji Nagai. These two photographs, taken in sequence near the Sule Pagoda on 27 September 2007 clearly show what appears to be the intentional killing of a member of the international media. [© Reuters].

## Providing Information to the Media

It was not only professional journalists who were targeted during the crackdown, but also those persons identified as giving information to media - 'citizen journalists', who had taken it upon themselves to gather information during the crackdown.

Civilians who provide information to foreign and exiled media have long been targeted by successive regimes in Burma. Officers at the Military Security Force (SaYaPa; the restructured Military Intelligence network) have reportedly been trained in methods of identifying the sources used by foreign media, and the purchase of U.S-made intercept devices has additionally enhanced their capacity to monitor phone calls.<sup>548</sup>

On 7 September 2007, SPDC authorities in Pakokku, Magwe Division, arrested four local residents for allegedly providing foreign media with information on the incidents of the 5 September.<sup>549</sup> They were later charged with damaging public property according to Section 6 (1) of the 1947 Public Property Protection Act, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.<sup>550</sup>

Similarly, on the evening of 26 September, authorities arrested Tin Yu from his home in Hlaingthaya Township in Rangoon. They informed his family that he was being arrested because he had spoken with foreign media. They did not inform the family where they were taking him. It has since been ascertained that he was detained in Insein Prison, where he continued to be interned at the time of publication.<sup>551</sup>

In early October, it was reported that the SPDC Ministry of Information, the official SPDC-controlled news agency and the security forces had been instructed to work together to identify the "citizen journalists".<sup>552</sup> Security forces then purposely sought out individuals carrying cameras in downtown Rangoon, and as a result, several persons were arrested.<sup>553</sup> SPDC army soldiers even seized a camera being used at a wedding ceremony. The authorities also visited the offices of various international NGOs in Rangoon and questioned staff about technological equipment, such as cameras and mobile phones.<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> Source: "Junta Cracking Down On Media Informers," *Irrawaddy*, 10 February 2006.

<sup>549</sup> Source: "Pakokku residents arrested for foreign media contact," DVB, 11 September 2007.

<sup>550</sup> Source: "Pakokku Residents Jailed For Property Damage," DVB, 10 October 2007.

<sup>551</sup> Sources: "Rangoon man arrested for talking to foreign media," *Irrawaddy*, 1 November 2007; *Detailed List of Detainees since peaceful Protests began on August 19*, AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/list\\_arrest\\_aug\\_sep\\_07.html](http://www.aappb.org/list_arrest_aug_sep_07.html) on 6 January 2008.

<sup>552</sup> Source: RSF, 5 October 2007.

<sup>553</sup> Source: "At least five journalists arrested in Rangoon," RSF, 3 October 2007.

<sup>554</sup> Source: "Arrests Continue in Burma," *Irrawaddy*, October 11, 2007.

On 18 October, Shwe Pein (a.k.a. Htay Naing Lin) and Chan Aung (a.k.a. Nyi Htay), of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) group, were sentenced to two years with hard labour for allegedly communicating with exiled media about the arrest and sentencing of two NLD members in Sagaing Division. In their prosecution, Deputy Police Chief Kyaw Htay relied upon telephone records and called an official from the SPDC's communications department to testify against the two. The Judge, Daw Khin Myat Tar, found the defendants to have "*sent news to foreign broadcasters with intent to injure State tranquillity and the rule of law by causing alarm to the public*".<sup>555</sup>

Foreign journalists who have left Burma reported on the increasingly difficult task of finding reliable Burmese sources, stating that, "*[t]hey are afraid and [one] no longer know who is who, those who took part in the demonstrations have been arrested or are in hiding*".<sup>556</sup>

## Defamation of the Sangha

In justifying the raids of monasteries and the violence visited upon the monastic community, the SPDC persisted along its earlier tack of drawing a distinction between "*bogus*" monks who had violated the *Vinaya* (discipline) of the Buddha, and those who they deemed to be genuine monks. In an address to the *Sangha Maya Nayaka* Committee on 24 October, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, SPDC Minister for Religious Affairs stated that:

*"Due to political agitation of unscrupulous persons from inside and outside the nation, who are always committing destructive acts, monks' protests broke out in August and September 2007. When we look into the entire problem we have found out that bogus monks who in reality are ex-convicts were making plots in advance with the intention of generating a monk protest"*.<sup>557</sup>

He claimed that some of the monks leading the protests had "*attended explosive courses and community organizer courses*" in Mae Sot, Thailand, where many exiled opposition groups are based, adding that "*most of the monks who hatched plots with [the] intention of generating a monks' protest are not real monks. They are ex-convicts and bogus monks*".<sup>558</sup>

It is evident that security forces made no such distinction, between genuine and "*bogus*" monks, when conducting their night time raids on monasteries, or while violently suppressing the peaceful demonstrations. The *New Light of Myanmar* claimed that the authorities carrying out these "*purification searches*", had been

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<sup>555</sup> Source: *Article 2, Vol. 6 No. 5-6, AHRC, December 2007.*

<sup>556</sup> Source: RSF, 5 October 2007.

<sup>557</sup> Source: "A group of unscrupulous destructive elements tried to taint noble clear waters of Sasana," *New Light of Myanmar, 25 October 2007.*

<sup>558</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

unable to distinguish between the real monks and impostors and so were forced to arrest everyone.<sup>559</sup> Unsurprisingly, the article made no mention of the indiscriminate use of violence or the destruction and looting of property.

In a further effort to discredit those monks who participated in the protests, the article alleged that alcohol, pornography, “*sexual materials*”, women’s clothing, Nazi head bands, anti-government literature and a variety of weapons had been seized during the raids. At the same time, the SPDC-controlled press published photographs of SPDC officers kneeling and bowing before ‘genuine’ senior monks providing cash and food donations.<sup>560</sup>

The SPDC then pursued this line of argument to the extreme by forcing female detainees to confess to having had sexual relations with a number of these “*bogus*” monks. In one case, the SPDC reported:

*“According to the confession of Ma Ei, 24, daughter of U Than Htay of Taungzun village, Bilin Township, she had an affair with Pyi Kyaw. They lived together illegally. She became pregnant two times - in February and August 2005. Abortion was made under the arrangement of Pyi Kyaw.”*<sup>561</sup>

In fact, Pyi Kaw, the Abbot of Shwedaung Monastery, was her uncle, and Ma Ei had been staying at the monastery in order to look after her aged and paralysed grandmother. Her grandmother responded to the concocted story, stating:

*“She has been with us since she was young (7–8 years old). The Abbot is my youngest son. They [SPDC] arrested both of them. We have been staying in this monastery for about ten years. ... It is not true at all. How could they accuse her of such a thing[?] She looked after me. She was with me all the time.”*<sup>562</sup>

Ma Ei was detained in Insein Prison, and according to fellow detainee, Ma Ohnmar, she had been forced to confess to having an affair with the Abbot: “[*She*] was under tremendous pressure and she had to give testimony as a government witness ... and she was released about two weeks earlier than us”. According to Ma Ohnmar, Ma Ei had denied ever having sexual relations with any monks, least of all her uncle, and had been forced to agree to the fabricated story.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Source: “Monk responds to government accusations,” DVB, 8 October 2007; “In Myanmar, Fear Is a Constant Companion,” *New York Times*, 20 October 2007; “After the riots, Burma returns to an unspoken terror,” *The Guardian*, 13 October 2007.

<sup>560</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>561</sup> Source: “A group of unscrupulous destructive elements tried to taint noble clear waters of Sasana,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 25 October 2007.

<sup>562</sup> Source: BBC interview on 6 November 2007 via “Courage to Resist,” WLB, November 2007.

<sup>563</sup> Source: “Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution,” DVB, 27 October 2007.

Ma Ei's cellmate, Hnin Hnin, was also used by the SPDC as a means to attempt to defame the monks of Ngwe Kyar Yan Monastery. A report carried by the *New Light of Myanmar* attested that:

*"Hnin Hnin [a.k.a] Hnin New Moe who did sundry matters of [Ngwe Kyar Yan] Monastery and U Tezinda [a.k.a] Toke Kyi were bookies of two- and three-digit and football gambling. They lived together. Thanda Kyaw, sister of Hnin Hnin, who lived with her, had an affair with monk Maung Tint and she fell in love with monk Ngakhe".*<sup>564</sup>

However, Ma Ohnmar testified that in reality, *"They [SPDC] recited what she [Hnin Hnin] should say and she repeated after them. They documented it on videotape".*<sup>565</sup>

## The Pro-SPDC Rallies

The SPDC also engaged in gauche attempts to portray such viewpoints as having popular legitimacy. In the weeks following the protests, during which time the SPDC had violently enforced its ban on assemblies of more than five persons, the junta organized numerous rallies, in which thousands of people were forced to attend. Those who took part were forced to hold placards condemning *"external interference"* and accused the BBC, VOA and RFA of *"airing a skyful of lies"*.<sup>566</sup> The SPDC has referred to the rallies as evidence that the majority of the Burmese people do not support the protestors; however, those in attendance have reported being forced to join or offered incentives to do so.<sup>567</sup> Several reports have testified to persons being arrested for refusing to participate, or being critical of these rallies.

For instance, it was reported that villagers in Chin State were given the option to attend pro-SPDC rallies or pay 10,000 kyat fine. Some, who refused to attend, were later arrested and taken to military detention centres.<sup>568</sup> On 16 October 2007, two former schoolteachers were arrested for objecting to an SPDC-organized rally in Paungde Township, Pegu Division.<sup>569</sup>

Win Aung, a schoolteacher in Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Division, was also reportedly sentenced to one year imprisonment after he wore his work uniform

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<sup>564</sup> Source: "A group of unscrupulous destructive elements tried to taint noble clear waters of Sasana," *New Light of Myanmar*, 25 October 2007.

<sup>565</sup> Source: "Junta Coerces Detained Women to Confess to Sexual Relations With Leaders of the Saffron Revolution," DVB, 27 October 2007.

<sup>566</sup> Source: "In Myanmar, Fear Is a Constant Companion," *New York Times*, 20 October 2007.

<sup>567</sup> Source: "Teacher jailed for wearing uniform," DVB, 30 October 2007.

<sup>568</sup> Source: "Burma minority 'fleeing to India'," BBC, 23 October 2007.

<sup>569</sup> Sources: "Bago couple arrested for challenging government protests," DVB, 19 October 2007; "Bago couple's hearing cancelled," DVB, 31 October 2007.

to an SPDC-organized rally. A source inside the Kawthaung Township chapter of the USDA reported that a secret order had been issued to ensure schoolteachers and students did not wear their uniforms so as to disguise the fact that many of those at the rallies were government employees and schoolchildren who had been forced to attend.<sup>570</sup>

Three further persons were arrested on 14 November 2007 after distributing leaflets at the Thiri Mingalar Market in Insein Township, Rangoon which reportedly included statements asserting that the forcing of people to take part in pro-junta rallies violated the Geneva Conventions.<sup>571</sup> It remains unclear precisely what legal precedent these statements were referring to as the Geneva Conventions dictate the laws of armed conflict and not those governing the freedom of association and assembly. Article 20 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), however, clearly states that “[n]o one may be compelled to belong to an association”.

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<sup>570</sup> Source: “Teacher jailed for wearing uniform,” DVB, 30 October 2007.

<sup>571</sup> Source: “Burma Continues Arrests of Activists,” AP, 14 November 2007.

## X. Conclusion

At the outset of the protests, four demands were made upon the SPDC, namely:

1. To issue a public apology for the brutal crackdown on the peaceful demonstration of monks in Pakokku;
2. To immediately reduce all basic commodity prices, fuel prices, and rice and cooking oil prices;
3. To release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all detainees arrested in the ongoing demonstrations over the fuel price hike; and
4. To immediately enter into dialogue with democratic opposition groups to seek national reconciliation and to resolve the crises and difficulties suffered by the populace.

However, not one of these demands has been seriously engaged with by the regime. Rather, the violence visited upon monks in Pakokku was magnified in later crackdowns as a means to repress such claims. Since that time, the regime has continued to demonstrate an unwillingness to address, or even acknowledge, the root causes of the protests, or to engage in any real effort at national reconciliation. Instead the junta has heralded a return to the status quo as something to be lauded by the population of Burma and the international community alike.

On 7 November 2007, SPDC Information Minister Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan, was trying his hardest to assure UN Special Envoy, Ibrahim Gambari, and by extension, the international community, that *“there are no more arrests, night apprehensions and search of monasteries in connection with the incident.”*<sup>572</sup> He added that:

*“The protest in which the people and true monks did not take part has been under control and stability has been restored in the entire nation. So, we have already lifted the martial law ... as peace and stability is prevailing in the whole nation since [the] situation has returned to normal.”*<sup>573</sup>

While rights groups were quick to point out that the crackdown was still ongoing, with arrests and monastery raids evidently continuing, the statement by Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan belies a more significant truth. A return to *“normality”* in Burma is not something that should be accepted, nor commended, by the international

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<sup>572</sup> Source: “UN Envoy holds talks with Spokes Authoritative Team of SPDC, meets NPED Minister, Foreign Minister, Religious Affairs Minister, Labour Minister, members of social organizations, representatives of national races,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007.

<sup>573</sup> Source: “UN Envoy holds talks with Spokes Authoritative Team of SPDC, meets NPED Minister, Foreign Minister, Religious Affairs Minister, Labour Minister, members of social organizations, representatives of national races,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007.

community. Normalcy is the continuation of an abusive military class system within the country sustained through the systematic exploitation and forceful oppression of the population. The crackdown on peaceful protestors in September 2007 was simply a further manifestation of the self-sustaining nature of this repressive system.

The one variable that changed in August through October was that the civilians in the towns and cities of Burma summed up the collective courage to peacefully protest against the situation confronting them. The reaction of the SPDC was entirely consistent with their oft-displayed *modus operandi*. A week after Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan's initial pronouncement, Deputy Defence Minister Major General Aye Myint, typified the SPDC's own view of normality, when he declared that "[n]ow the situation in Myanmar is in normalcy. We totally control all the situation".<sup>574</sup>

A monk from Pakokku, however, provided his own, somewhat different, analysis of the situation:

*"[The people are] still against the government mentally but not physically because we can't do anything. If we do they will arrest us. We don't want to be killed. We don't want to be tortured. The government takes advantage of this. The government suppressed the protests but there's not really quiet. There's a lot of defiance".*<sup>575</sup>

Similarly, an individual who was involved in the protests in Rangoon told HRDU that he believed the general population still felt restless following the protests, suggesting that the right trigger was all that was needed to lead to further demonstrations.

*"The bitter experience and achievement of our September movements are still in the hearts of all of the people. The people have been motivated by the September demonstrations. I would like to send a message to Burmese people to take part in the future movements for democracy in Burma and at the same time I would like to request the whole world to support our people's struggle for our cause".*<sup>576</sup>

During his address to the UN Special Envoy, SPDC Information Minister, Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan also lectured on the intricacies of Burmese politics, as a means to justify the military's continued grip on power through the rhetoric of security and stability:

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<sup>574</sup> Source: "We are in control: Myanmar defence official," AFP, 14 November 2007.

<sup>575</sup> Source: "Spies, suspicion and empty monasteries - Burma today," *The Guardian*, 15 December 2007.

<sup>576</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with "Ko Aye Maung", 22-year-old male NLD Youth member, 24 October 2007.

*“To discuss [Burma’s] affairs, you should have thoroughly studied not only the current situation of [Burma] but also the significant facts throughout the history, we would like to suggest. In fact, [Burma’s] affair is subtle and very complicated. We have over 100 national races who have been residing all over the country together since long long ago. Our nation has suffered the internal armed insurrection for many years and it is still in existence till today. Politically, we are not mature and there are a variety of parties. Thus, it would be a very serious mistake if [Burma’s] affair is viewed superficially for seeking a solution like that of other nations. Hence, in addition to current situation of our country, other matters such as the nationalities’ affairs, internal insurgencies, political, economic and social affairs, etc. along the history are to be studied thoroughly and reviewed correctly. In this way, correct and proper review and assessment can be made.”<sup>577</sup>*

It is a common strategy of the SPDC to highlight the country’s ethnic diversity and history of internal armed conflict as a means to justify their continued role in ensuring the non-disintegration of the Union. It is a view that has been picked up on by some journalists and foreign governments alike in the wake of the protests. China, for instance, has continued to emphasise the need for stability, and has insisted that *“We cannot permit Myanmar to fall into chaos, we cannot permit Myanmar to become another Iraq. No matter what ideas other countries have, China’s stance on this is staunch.”*<sup>578</sup>

The regime’s stubbornness over addressing the root causes of the protests is further evidenced in their unwillingness to accept any responsibility for the endemic levels of poverty within the country. Given that the economic situation is demonstrably the result of SPDC design and self interest, it is little wonder that there is an ingrained reluctance to bring about any level of reform. On 24 November 2007, Charles Petrie, the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator in Rangoon, issued a public statement in relation to the demonstrations. In it, he stated:

*“The [protests] clearly demonstrated the everyday struggle to meet basic needs, and the urgent necessity to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country. ... [T]he UN system in Myanmar [Burma] sees every day that in this potentially prosperous country basic human needs are not being met. ... The concerns of the people*

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<sup>577</sup> Source: “UN Envoy holds talks with Spokes Authoritative Team of SPDC, meets NPED Minister, Foreign Minister, Religious Affairs Minister, Labour Minister, members of social organizations, representatives of national races,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007.

<sup>578</sup> Source: “China Says Myanmar should not be another Iraq,” Reuters, 14 November 2007.

*have been clearly expressed through the recent peaceful demonstrations, and it is beholden on all to listen”.*<sup>579</sup>

In response, the SPDC ejected him from the country and SPDC Information Minister, Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan later angrily responded:

*“Anti-government groups, global powers that are supporting them and even some UN officials are slandering the government’s efforts to implement the task including our Millennium Development Goals to develop the people’s socio-economy. We openly say that we cannot accept such biased slanders. In reality, not only the developing countries like ours but also the developed countries are also facing the problem of poverty which is an international dilemma”.*<sup>580</sup>

It is indicative of their priorities that the SPDC has referred to its lack of mandate to conduct necessary economic reforms; *“The government to be elected by the people [following completion of the seven step roadmap] will try its best to seek ways and means to tackle the problem ‘lowering consumer prices’ and it will be the one capable of handling the problem”.*<sup>581</sup>

Such statements, however, are incongruous with the regimes enactment and implementation of a host of laws and orders enabling it to repress fundamental freedoms, and its continued capacity and willingness to set economic policy for its own benefit.

The aversion of the SPDC to reforming its economic policies, or to counter the abuses committed by its armed forces under the rubric of counter-insurgency or their Self-Reliance Program, will mean the continued impoverishment of the population. It is also likely to lead to further economic shocks such as those that sparked the September protests, for which the populace is entirely unequipped to cope. Sharing this view, Sean Turnell of Burma Economic Watch (BEW) has predicted more of the same in stating that *“further reforms such as this, half-hearted and most damaging to the general populace – are still in store, not least because the underlying reasons requiring them won’t go away”.*<sup>582</sup>

Certain apparent concessions made following the protests, including the appointment of a special liaison officer to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and permitting Professor Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human

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<sup>579</sup> Source: “Statement of the United Nations Country Team in Myanmar,” UNIC, 25 October 2007.

<sup>580</sup> Source: “UN Envoy holds talks with Spokes Authoritative Team of SPDC, meets NPED Minister, Foreign Minister, Religious Affairs Minister, Labour Minister, members of social organizations, representatives of national races,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 7 November 2007.

<sup>581</sup> Source: “It is time to take correct path,” *New Light of Myanmar*, 8 October 2007.

<sup>582</sup> Source: “Burma Junta Refuses To Bear Share of Pain,” *Financial Times*, 12 September 2007.

Rights in Burma, to visit the country, are not ends in themselves. They rather are a means often employed by the regime to deflect global condemnation and to placate the international community without actually bringing about any fundamental changes in the country or the way in which it is governed.

Nevertheless, the fact that the SPDC felt obliged to make such gestures, however meaningless they may be, demonstrates that the regime is responsive to the demands of the international community. It is thus crucial for the international community and the United Nations to maintain and increase its efforts, and add real weight and purpose to those initiatives that are already underway. A failure to do so will mean yet another missed opportunity, resulting in the continued suffering of the Burmese people under military rule.

Much as had happened following the mass demonstrations of 1988, we may never know the actual number of those who were detained or killed for their part in the September 2007 protests. Official statistics provided by the regime are at best conservative and at worst complete fabrications of the truth, and though we may never know the true human toll, there is little doubt that the real number of dead is far higher than that suggested by the SPDC. According to the AAPPB, at least 84 persons still remained unaccounted for by the end of January 2008, four months after the crackdowns.<sup>583</sup> It is unknown whether these individuals languish in detention or if they have been killed, however, it is quite likely that at least some of this number belong to the latter category.

Contrary to the assertions of the SPDC, the will of the Burmese people has once again been made evident: that the Burmese people seek freedom from the oppressive and exploitative rule of the SPDC. It is thus imperative that the international community acknowledges these wishes and bands together behind the Burmese population to ensure that such atrocities cannot continue.

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<sup>583</sup> Source: "Those who disappeared during the protest in Burma," AAPPB, accessed at: [http://www.aappb.org/disap\\_sept\\_07.htm](http://www.aappb.org/disap_sept_07.htm), on 28 January 2008.



A young Buddhist monk hold his alms bowl high in the emblematic gesture of “overturning the alms bowl”, symbolizing the excommunication of the SPDC, and all its agents, allies, and associates. *[unknown]*.

## XI. Recommendations

The main obstacle in Burma today is the unwillingness of the SPDC to address the problems faced by the Burmese populace or to make any sincere efforts towards reconciliation. Given this intransigence, the international community must continue to make concerted and coordinated efforts to press the regime for change.

The mediation efforts of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary General must be strongly backed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and other relevant mechanisms of the United Nations. There must also be critical engagement by individual countries of concerned and regional groupings in addition to diplomatic and economic pressures which target the regime as well as an increase in support for the democracy movement.

*“We would really like the international community and the United Nations to help us and to see the whole picture regarding the situation in Burma. They need to take strong actions against the military government to stop their abuses as soon as possible. It is unarmed civilians who continue to suffer under the military government’s persecution”.*<sup>584</sup>

*“We, the people couldn’t do much because they oppress us with weapons. I thought and believed that we were winning this time but they stopped us with force. To achieve victory in our struggle, we need help in the form of international pressure against the SPDC”.*<sup>585</sup>

## To the UN Security Council

Given the extent of the violence used to suppress the peaceful September 2007 protests in Burma in flagrant disregard of the appeals of UN and world leaders to show maximum restraint, the UN Security Council should adopt a binding resolution that:

- Deplores the use of violence against the peaceful demonstrations and ongoing arbitrary detentions and practice of torture in detention centres;
- Expresses deep concern on the lack of tangible progress and lack of inclusiveness in the process towards national reconciliation and calls

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<sup>584</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “U Shwe Min”, 31-year-old Buddhist monk, 14 October 2007.

<sup>585</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ma Nay Lin Naing”, 43-year-old female civilian, 7 November 2007.

on the SPDC to take positive steps for a transition via an inclusive process towards a democratically elected government;

- Calls on the SPDC for the early lifting of restrictions placed on political parties, the early release of those placed under detention including, but not limited to, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and to implement effective and meaningful dialogue between all parties concerned;
- Calls on the SPDC to provide immediate and unhindered access to all areas of Burma to the relevant UN agencies and other international humanitarian organizations to allow the distribution of humanitarian aid to those in need;
- Requests the UN Secretary General to provide for his Good Offices and pursue his discussion on the situation of human rights and the restoration of democracy in Burma and to report the progress this process back to the UNSC;
- Calls on the SPDC to fully cooperate with the UN Secretary General (UNSG) in order to perform his Good Offices mandate and implement an equitable national reconciliation and democratic transition plan for Burma, which includes members of the democratic opposition parties and representatives of ethnic nationalities in addition to members of the SPDC; and
- Calls on the immediate and unconditional imposition of arms embargo against the Burmese regime.

## **To the Good Offices of the UN Secretary General**

In order to facilitate discussions among all parties concerned and make the national reconciliation process irreversible, the SPDC should accept the mediation of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary General and that process needs to be institutionalized as soon as possible. At a minimum, the institutionalization of the mediation role of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary General should include the following:

- Agreement on regular and unimpeded visits of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General (SESG) in accordance with a prearranged schedule;
- Agreement on an agenda of open discussion;
- Creation of a liaison office of the SESG in Burma;
- Formation of an expert Working Group to suggest policy options; and
- Convene regular consultative meetings with members of UN Core Group on Burma

## To the UN Human Rights Council

The NCGUB was encouraged by the convening of the UN Human Rights Council's Special Session on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar on 2 October 2007 and its adoption by consensus of the *Resolution of the Fifth Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar* in which it was stated that the UNSC was not only “[d]eeply concerned at the situation of human rights in Myanmar”,<sup>586</sup> but also that it “strongly deplored the continued violent repression of peaceful demonstrations in Myanmar”.<sup>587</sup> However, the NCGUB appeals to the Human Rights Council to take the following additional steps:

- Advocate and ensure the immediate unrestricted visit to Burma of Professor Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma so that he may conduct a thorough fact finding mission into the SPDC's suppression of the September 2007 protests;
- Establish a commission of enquiry to look into the systematic and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Burma;
- Institutionalise arrangements for briefings on Burma by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Security Council; and
- Ensure that more information about the communications between the SPDC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) be made publicly available.

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<sup>586</sup> Source: *Resolution of the Fifth Special Session of the Human Rights Council on the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar*, HRC Resolution S-5/1, 2 October 2007, accessed at:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/specialsession/A.HRC.RES.S.5-1.pdf>.

<sup>587</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

## To the Member Governments of ASEAN

*“We were born with no basic human rights under military rule, and we have suffered the abuse of our basic human rights for many years. This government [SPDC] doesn’t take any responsibility for its citizens. The SPDC is like a psychopath. If there is a dangerous psychopath living in your neighbourhood, everybody’s life is in danger. Now that man not only destroys our future but he also kills the monks and civilians. I would like to ask our neighbours not to abstain from their responsibility to stop that man. Our neighbouring countries must take action on Burma now because we all are suffering terribly under the military regime as though we are living next to a psychopath.”<sup>588</sup>*

It is also strongly recommended that the member governments of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiate collaborative regional talks with representatives of the SPDC along with key regional stakeholders such as China to discuss matters of shared concern. Such talks should address the following:

- Shared condemnation for the SPDC’s disproportionate use of violence in the suppression of the September 2007 protests;
- Common concern over the lack of any genuine progress towards democratization and national reconciliation in Burma;
- Acknowledgement that the human rights situation in Burma affects not only neighbouring countries but the ASEAN region as a whole, and as such that it should cease to be considered to be an internal matter for which responsibility lies entirely with the SPDC;
- Further progress on the drafting of the ASEAN charter, with the codification of regional human rights standards and monitoring procedures; and
- The imposition of targeted economic sanctions against the SPDC, its allies, agents, and cronies.

The member governments of the ASEAN grouping should also continue to encourage Burma to not only move towards a democratically elected system of government, but also reduce restrictions placed upon the fundamental and political freedoms of the populace, and to cease the use of military force against unarmed civilians, particularly against those in ethnic areas.

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<sup>588</sup> Source: HRDU Interview with “Ko Shwe Naing”, 32-year-old male civilian, 1 November 2007.

## To the International Community

Though it may often seem as though the SPDC is unresponsive to international pressure, certain conciliatory gestures made on their part for the sole purpose of appeasing the international community while deflecting its condemnation demonstrate that the opposite is true. It is therefore vital that international pressure on the regime is maintained and increased to help bring about substantive change in Burma. To this end, the international community and foreign governments should:

- Condemn the SPDC for its excessive use of violence, the ongoing system of arbitrary arrests in the suppression of the September 2007 protests, and the widespread practice of torture employed in Burma's detention centres;
- Express collective concern over the curtailing of civil and political rights which oppose the policies and programs of the SPDC and the concomitant repression of economic, social, and cultural freedoms in Burma;
- Support and coordinate with the mediation efforts of the UN, the Secretary General, his Special Envoy, and his Good Offices mandate to bring about a peaceful transition to a democratically elected government, genuine national reconciliation, and an overall improvement in human rights standards;
- Advocate for the regular and unimpeded visits of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General;
- Support the drafting of a binding UN Security Council resolution on Burma;
- Maintain international diplomatic pressure on the SPDC, its allies, agents, and cronies with the continued application of targeted economic sanctions, and encourage Burma's trading partners to follow suit by adopting similar targeted economic sanctions;
- Impose restrictions on SPDC members, their families and business associates limiting their access to financial, educational and medical facilities in your respective countries;
- Support calls for the imposition of an immediate and unconditional UN arms embargo against the SPDC;
- Advocate for release of all political prisoners, including, but not limited to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all those arrested in relation to the September 2007 protests, and for the immediate and unconditional cessation of the use of military force against Burmese civilians;
- Sponsor calls for the SPDC to provide unhindered access to all areas of Burma to the relevant UN agencies and other international humanitarian organizations to allow the distribution of humanitarian aid, particularly to internally displaced communities, and where necessary, support the distribution of cross-border aid to such groups;
- Initiate preparations for transitional activities that will facilitate the reconstruction of significant political and economic institutions;

- Champion efforts that will lead to the implementation of genuine and meaningful tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, members of the democratic opposition, and representatives of ethnic minorities; and
- Increase support programs for the promotion of human rights, democracy, national reconciliation, independent media, independent trade unions, gender equality and the empowerment of women, environmental preservation and sustainable development which will be beneficial for pro-democracy and ethnic groups operating inside Burma and in exile.

The NCGUB also welcomes the additional measures recently imposed by the European Union (EU). Unless the SPDC complies with recommendations made in the Council's conclusion, the EU should consider adopting further steps, which at a minimum should include the following:

- Suspension or withdrawal of existing investments in the oil and gas sector in Burma;
- Financial restrictions which lead to the freezing of all EU-based assets of the SPDC, its members, agents, and their families; and
- Imposition of a ban on the import of all marine products from Burma.

Moreover, the NCGUB calls on China to make use of its unique strategic position with the Burmese regime as its strongest political, economic and military supporter. As such, the Government of China should:

- Acknowledge not only that the human rights situation in Burma spills across the country's borders affecting neighbouring countries, but also that the widespread violation of human rights in Burma constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and as such is not an internal matter for which the sole responsibility lies with the SPDC;
- Impose targeted economic sanctions against the regime, including the freezing of SPDC assets held in Chinese banks, a ban on new investment in Burma and enforce an injunction on all business dealings with corporations controlled by or colluding with the SPDC;
- Immediately cease the supply of all arms, ammunition, and other military supplies and materiel to the SPDC; and
- Support movements in the UN Security Council to draft a binding resolution on Burma.





*"All of the people of Burma, including the monks, have been oppressed by military junta for a long time. Basically, we have lost our rights along with military rule. They can arrest and even kill any one at any time. There is no law in our country. They arrested the monks and people for simply praying for the wellbeing of all others".*

- 32-year-old Burmese Buddhist monk

*"We are the military's slaves. We want democracy. We want to wait no longer. But we are afraid of their guns."*

- 46-year-old Burmese writer

