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Free all political prisoners, free Aung San Suu Kyi, free Burma.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> -[NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, 28.09.2010 14:39:20

DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA (DVB) <<http://www.dvb.no/elections/un-gets-nod-from-china-over-burma-pressure/11968>>

UN gets nod from China over Burma pressure

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Published: 28 September 2010

Burma's looming election will not be credible unless the military rulers release Nobel prize-winning opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a UN ministerial group said Monday.

The group – which included ministers from neighbours China and India, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia as well as Britain and the United States – “clearly reiterated the need for the election process to more inclusive, participatory and transparent,” UN chief Ban Ki-moon said after the meeting.

“Members called for steps to be taken for the release of political detainees including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“This is essential for the election to be seen as credible and to contribute to Myanmar's [Burma] stability and development,” Ban told reporters after the meeting of the Friends On Myanmar group.

No Burmese government representative was at the meeting, held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Ban met Burma's foreign minister, U Nyan Win, at the UN headquarters on Sunday though.

“I conveyed my strong wish and expectation that this election should be conducted in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner,” Ban said of his meeting with the minister. He also pressed for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, who has spent most of the past two decades under house arrest.

Burma has banned her National League for Democracy and nine other opposition parties from taking part in the 7 November election, Burma's first in two decades. The opposition has said the vote will be a sham. The junta has said however that Aung San Suu Kyi will be allowed to vote.

Ban said the run up to the election will be “critical” and that the ministerial group called on Burma to take “a more constructive and forward-looking approach” with the international community.

He added that the ministers, from countries with widely varying attitudes to Burma, “reiterated their commitment to work together to help Myanmar address its political, humanitarian and development challenges, in parallel and with equal attention.

“The group also reaffirmed unity of purpose and action to encourage Myanmar to make further efforts towards national reconciliation and democracy.”

The United States and European Union have sanctions against Burma. But China has shielded Myanmar from UN sanctions while India hosted Burmese junta leader Than Shwe on a state visit in July.

“At this critical stage in Myanmar's transition, it is all the more important that the group, and especially Myanmar's neighbors, encourages Myanmar to engage meaningfully with my good offices,” Ban said.

The UN chief has expressed mounting frustration with the Burmese junta in recent months. The government has even refused a visit by his chief of staff, Vijay Nambiar.

“We have been trying to visit, somehow this year. It has not been possible. I expressed my regret about that fact,” Ban told reporters.

The secretary general has also urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Burma, to take a tougher line on the junta over the elections.

He warned ASEAN leaders on Friday that if the election was not seen as credible it “could reflect on ASEAN's collective values and principles.”

Ban said he would again press ASEAN and Burma at the regional group's summit in Hanoi next month. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will also be there.

A UN rights envoy has called for an investigation into whether the junta's treatment of opponents represents torture that could lead to a crimes against humanity case.

Ban said that any action would have to be decided by UN members. Aung San Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory in the last election in 1990 but the junta never allowed her to take office.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Tin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] Burma Related News - Sep 10-22,

The Mizzima - Thursday, 23 September 2010 - <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/world/4391-france-joins-calls-for-un-inquiry-into-burma-abuses.html>>

France joins calls for UN inquiry into Burma abuses -

Thomas Maung Shwe

Chiang Mai (**Mizzima**) – French representative Jean-Baptiste Mattei expressed at a UN Human Rights Council meeting last Friday his government’s support to “establish an international commission of inquiry” on human rights abuses in Burma.

His comments were revealed in a summary of the meeting held last Friday, posted recently on the website of the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

France is now the eighth nation to come out in support of the UN launching a commission of inquiry on Burma, joining Australia, Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and the United States, along with many rights groups that have documented such crimes including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, all of which have endorsed such an inquiry.



France has endured a wave of criticism since last month’s decision by President Nicolas Sarkozy (above, at the Munich Security Conference last year) to proceed with the deportation of thousands of Roma to Eastern Europe. Even so, the French last Friday joined many countries’ recent calls for a UN commission of inquiry into ‘gross and systematic’ abuses by the Burmese regime. Photo: Sebastian Zwe

Aung Din, executive director of rights group, the US Campaign for Burma, welcomed France’s stance. “[The] French coming on board is a positive development,” said the former political prisoner, who runs the organisation that is also campaigning for a boycott of elections in Burma on November 7.

In March, the UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, issued a report to the UN Human Rights Council, which stated that in Burma, there existed a pattern of “gross and systematic” human rights abuses. Quintana’s report called on the UN to consider launching a “commission of inquiry with a specific fact-finding mandate to address the question of international crimes” committed in Burma.

During the meeting several countries including Norway, the US, Ireland, Switzerland and Japan expressed concern about the human rights situation in Burma, the treatment of ethnic minorities and the much-criticised national elections.

During its allotted right-of-reply time, the Burmese regime fired back against the charges, claiming, “that the allegations against Myanmar [Burma] were completely false and unfounded. There were no crimes against humanity in Myanmar and the government had negotiated ceasefires with 17 of the 18 rebel groups. The military only conducted counter-insurgency activities and not acts of military aggression. With regard to the issue of impunity, any member of the military who breached national law was subject to legal punishments. The Myanmar governmental authority said that there was no need to conduct investigations in Myanmar since there were no human rights violations there.”

The Burmese regime representatives at the meeting were likely very pleased when China, used its time to make reference to the French government’s recent wave of deportations of Roma

(formerly known as Gypsies) back to Romania and Hungary.

France, a permanent member of the UN Security Council has endured a wave of criticism from within its fellow human rights group and many of its European neighbours since last month’s decision by President Nicolas Sarkozy to proceed with the deportation of thousands of Roma to Eastern Europe, despite the fact they are EU citizens and, in theory, are legally allowed to live anywhere in the European Union.

Other nations present at the meeting that put up a vigorous defence against charges of human rights abuses were North Korea and Iran.

The Irrawaddy Newsletter for Tuesday, September 21, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org/

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19516>

Acquino Asked to Support UN Inquiry into Junta War Crimes

By THE IRRAWADDY

Tuesday, September 21, 2010

A leading international rights group, Human Right Watch (HRW), called on Philippines President Benigno S. Aquino III on Monday to support the establishment of the UN-created International Commission of Inquiry for Burma.

The international Commission of Inquiry (CoI) would investigate human rights abuses, crimes against humanity and possible war crimes committed by the Burmese military regime in Burma.

In an open letter send by the New York-based rights group to President Aquino, the HRW said, "We urge the Philippine government to join other states to publicly support the establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry for Burma and to actively engage on behalf of a UN resolution that will make it happen."

"We encourage you to raise this issue within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which could be accomplished at the US-ASEAN summit later this week in New York," said the letter.

HRW also highlighted the importance of the Philippines publicly supporting the CoI for Burma and that such commission should investigate reports of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Burma by all parties since 2002 and identify perpetrators of such violations with a view to ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.

For more than a decade, impunity for serious human rights violations has continued in Burma. An international inquiry would be a significant step toward justice, said the letter.

According to human rights groups, the Burmese junta's troops and the ethnic armed groups have been responsible for numerous serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including sexual violence against women and girls, deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, summary executions of civilians and captured combatants, torture, use of child soldiers, attacks on populations' livelihood and food supplies, forced displacement of populations and use of anti-personnel landmines. Non-state armed groups in Burma also have been implicated in serious abuses, including forced labor, recruitment of child soldiers, and anti-personnel landmine use.

In the letter, the HRW also asked President Aquino, "In your inaugural address, you said that 'there can be no reconciliation without justice. When we allow crimes to go unpunished, we give consent to their occurring over and over again.'" This rings particularly true for Burma, where abuses by the military government, as well as by armed ethnic minority groups, have gone unpunished for decades.

"In promoting human rights in Burma, you would be following your mother's lead. Former President Corazon Aquino stood strong for justice in Burma," said the letter.

The effort to establish a CoI was initiated in March by UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana. It is already supported by Australia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, the UK and the US.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscsoms.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, 22. Sep 2010

DEMOCRATIC VOICE OF BURMA (DVB) - <<http://www.dvb.no/news/burma-cornered-at-un-rights-debate/11876>>

Burma cornered at UN rights debat

By FRANCIS WADE Published: 22 September 2010

Delegates from 12 countries delivered a scathing denunciation of the human rights situation in Burma late last week at a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Burma's delegate at the conference, Maung Lwin, faced bruising remarks from diplomats from the EU, US, Australia, Japan and Norway, with the looming elections and a possible UN inquiry into war crimes in the pariah taking centre-stage at the 17 September debate.

"Japan continued to have serious concerns regarding the democratisation process in Myanmar [Burma]," a summary of the proceedings said. "The current situation in which prisoners of conscience, including Aung San Suu Kyi, could not stand for political office in the forthcoming general elections was regrettable."

The sentiment was echoed elsewhere: Norway made reference to "gross and systematic violations of human rights" in Burma, while Washington urged "an international commission of inquiry...to examine allegations of serious violations of

international law”.

The debate on Burma formed part of a wider discussion on global situations that “require the Human Rights Council’s attention”. A statement on the Council’s website said that while some delegates denounced rights abuses around the world, “other speakers said this exercise was counter productive and reflected the prevailing double standards in dealing with human rights which only targeted countries of the south”.

This certainly appeared to be the position taken by Maung Lwin, who reacted to the condemnation by saying that the Burmese junta argued that issues surrounding human rights should “only be resolved in a cooperative, non-politicized and non-selective manner”.

He also defended the junta’s “every effort to hold free and fair elections in a peaceful and stable manner”, following attacks from Belgium, Norway, UK, Denmark and others on the 7 November polls, Burma’s first in 20 years.

“Myanmar was transforming toward democratic society and the destiny of Myanmar should be decided by its own people,” Maung Lwin continued. “It was not fair to make prejudgements and set preconditions on the upcoming elections from outside with the intention of interfering in internal affairs.”

The build-up to the vote has been shrouded in controversy – international monitors are banned, and a number of clauses in the 2008 constitution, such as the awarding of a quarter of parliamentary seats to the military prior to voting day, appear to be an obstacle to any democratic reform in the military-ruled country.

The Irrawaddy Newsletter, September 2, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19360>

Than Shwe to visit China

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thursday, September 2, 2010

BEIJING — Burma's junta chief Than Shwe will visit China next week, the Chinese government announced Thursday, in another sign of the close ties between the neighbors.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said junta chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe would make a four-day visit starting Tuesday, with stops in Beijing and at the Shanghai Expo.

Premier Wen Jiabao visited Burma in June, the first trip by a senior Chinese leader in almost a decade.

Than Shwe's trip comes ahead of elections in Burma in early November, which the junta is portraying as a key step in shifting to civilian rule after five decades of military domination. Critics call them a sham and say the military shows little sign of relinquishing control.

China is Burma's main ally, giving diplomatic and economic support. Burma's junta is shunned by the West because of its poor human rights record and failure to hand over power to the winners of the last elections two decades ago.

China is now Burma's third largest trading partner and investor after Thailand and Singapore, with bilateral trade totaling \$2.9 billion in 2009. Up to January 2010, China had invested \$1.8 billion in Burma, or 11.5 percent of Burma's total foreign direct investment.

China's then-President Jiang Zemin visited Burma in December 2001.

The Irrawaddy Newsletter for Tuesday, September 21, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/>

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19520>

China to Loan Burma 30 Billion Yuan

China has agreed to give Burma a 30 billion yuan (US \$4.2 billion) interest-free loan. The agreement was reached during junta chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe's five-day state visit to China on Sept. 7-11, according to Burma's Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (MNPED).

“The interest-free loan agreement between China and Burma was reached after Than Shwe met China's president Hu Jintao in Beijing,” said an official from the MNPED.

Than Shwe led a 34-member delegation that included ex-generals and businessmen such as Tay Za, who is reportedly close to Than Shwe’s family, and Zaw Zaw, who owns Max Myanmar Group of Companies.

“The 30-year loan is intended to help fund mass hydropower projects, road construction, railway development and

information technology development," said the MNPED official, who provided no further details regarding the loan. A Rangoon-based economist said that accepting the loan from China may leave Burma's military government subject to Chinese influence.

"It is obvious that if we receive the 30 billion yuan, we have to accept Chinese companies in Burma and the migration of Chinese workers into Burma. The loan received from China helps Chinese people and their companies. Ordinary Burmese people will not get economic opportunities from this agreement," the economist said.

"The government also has not published how they will manage the loan, or how much Than Shwe can spend in the military development sector," he added.

Meanwhile, a military source in Naypyidaw said Than Shwe is not willing to submit military expenditures to the new parliament that will convene after the Nov. 7 election.

"Than Shwe is not willing to submit the military budget bill to the parliament, so he wants to arrange military budgets before parliament is convened. Burma has recently bought military equipment including aircraft and ships," the military source said.

Burma also received a US \$1.2 billion loan from China in 2009 for economic development and information technology development.

THE BURMANET NEWS, September 10, 2010, Issue #4039 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

AFP - Fri. Sept., 10, 2010 <http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20100910/wl_asia_afp/myanmarvoteunrestarmy>

Myanmar riot fears after two men shot by troops -

YANGON (AFP) – Fears that the deaths of two young men shot in a quarrel with troops could spark unrest prompted [Myanmar state media](#) to insist Friday that the incident was "not a fight" between the army and the public.

As authorities try to avoid anti-government feeling ahead of the country's first elections in two decades, the [New Light of Myanmar](#) said the violence that killed Soe Paing Zaw, 19, and Aung Thu Hein, 23, was "just a drunken brawl".



AFP – Myanmar soldiers take part in a military parade in the new capital Naypyidaw in March. Fears that the ...

The paper claimed there was a "plot" to use the incident to provoke riots in the country, adding people wanted to help the state "wipe out such elements provoking mass protests for political gains".

"The government is now gearing up hand in hand with the people... (to take) action against those elements deceiving the people into taking to the streets with the intention of destroying State stability and peace," it said.

Soe Paing Zaw and Aung Thu Hein, who were shot dead on Saturday night in Bago, north of Yangon, were hurriedly cremated in the town on Tuesday afternoon amid tight security, according to witnesses.

A memorial service at their homes in the town on Saturday is also expected to be heavily guarded as the junta tries to avoid unrest ahead of the November 7 vote -- although there have not been any reported protests so far.

An unnamed Myanmar security officer said authorities would keep tight control over the situation as they "do not want any unrest ahead of the election".

The pair were killed after a taxi they were travelling in with five others was hit by a motorcycle carrying two army officers, who had been drinking beer nearby.

According to the report, one officer ran away from the fight and came back with four security troops from Bago Railway Station, one of whom fired the fatal shots.

"In reality, it was just a drunken brawl in the street between some young soldiers and some young civilians, not a fight between the [Tatmadaw](#) and the public," the paper said, using the term for Myanmar's feared military.

"Such cases take place sometimes," it added.

The report said that a lawsuit had been filed against the servicemen involved and stressed a "fine tradition" of punitive action being taken against offending soldiers.

It did not mention how many people would face the lawsuit, but soldiers who are to be prosecuted are thought likely to be dismissed from the army before facing criminal proceedings.

"Officers concerned called at the houses of the two victims to beg the pardon of their parents," the paper said.

Myanmar, which has been ruled by the military since 1962, has seen sporadic eruptions of civil unrest over the years, but most have ended in a bloody victory for the junta.

The country has banned civilians from holding any weapons and strictly controls press and other freedoms to maintain an iron grip on power.

Upcoming elections -- the first since democracy icon [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) was denied power after her party's landslide victory in the 1990 polls -- have been criticised as a sham aimed at putting a civilian face on military rule.

The Irrawaddy Today's Newsletter for Tuesday, September 28, 2010 - news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org,

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19573>

Monk Jailed for Anti-Electioneering

By WAI MOE and MIN NAING THU Tuesday, September 28, 2010

On the third anniversary of the monk-led mass demonstrations in September 2007 and ahead of the Nov.7 Elections, a special court held in Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison on Monday sentenced a monk to 15 years imprisonment with hard labor for anti-election campaigning.

"Ashin Ukkamsa was sentenced for 10 years under the electronic act, four years under the press registration act, and one more year under act 505-B— so all including, he gets 15 years in jail," said Khin Htay Kywe, the monk's defense lawyer who spoke to *The Irrawaddy* on Monday.

"The court reached the verdict even though prosecutors failed to provide solid evidence or strong testimony during the trial," she said, adding the monk was forced to disrobe when he was arrested.



Ashin Ukkamsa in robes (Photo IMNA)

Ukkamsa, an ethnic Mon, was arrested in January in Thanbyuzayat Township carrying anti-election flyers as well documents in a laptop device. Shortly after interrogation, he was transferred to Insein Prison. A man who was arrested with the monk was later released after interrogation.

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma, a Thailand-based Burmese human rights group, said Burma currently keeps 256 monks and six nuns in prison.

To mark the anniversary of the monk-led demonstrations in 2007, which also came to be known as the Saffron Revolution and was the biggest anti-military protest in two decades, Burmese monks around the world called for the release of all detained monks and reform of the state monastic council.

"The state monastic council should deal with the affairs of the 'Sangha' [monks] and 'Sasana' [Buddhism], but the current council is doing whatever the ruling junta wants and cannot therefore represent monks," said Ashin Pyinnya Jota of the Indian branch of Sasana Moli, the international Burmese monks organization.

Meanwhile, Ashin Pyinnya Sara, a monk and keen researcher of Arakan history, is due to be sentenced by the district court in Sittwe, Arakan State, on Wednesday. He was arrested in July for alleged sexual misconduct.

However, local sources refute the accusation, suggesting there were other motivations as the monk was actively engaged in beneficial social programs and ran a school for more than 150 orphans.

Revered by the public and the strongest institution in Burma after the military, Burma's 400,000 monks represent a potential threat to the military, which has about 350,000 troops.

When monks attempted to compromise in politics, the junta reacted with a brutal crackdown, murdering, beating up, arresting and forcibly disrobing monks and ransacking monasteries, observers said.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Since the 1988 military coup, the monks have challenged the junta twice, refusing to perform religious rituals for the military and their families in 1990 and 2007. The boycotts were a strong moral shock to the superstitious military officials in the majority Buddhist country.

Under Burmese law, monks are barred from voting and running for office in the country, but observers said monks played a significant role in the 1990 elections favoring pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, which won 82 percent of constituencies.

In 2008, nearly one year after the Saffron Revolution, the junta held a national referendum on the constitution. During the referendum, government security forces deterred monks from approaching polling centers.

THE BURMANET NEWS - September 23, 2010 Issue #4048 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

BBC Burmese - September 23, 2010 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11376829>

Indifferent mood greets Burma polls – Soe Win Than

There are six weeks to go before Burma's first election in 20 years, but many feel that the result is already clear.



Many Burmese people think the same faces will be in power after the polls

Although over 30 political parties will contest the 1,163 seats in the national and regional parliaments, most people believe that the same faces that rule Burma now will be in power after the polls.

The government has founded its own political party - the Union Solidarity and Development Party - headed by the incumbent prime minister.

Most ministers and senior military officers who in recent weeks have resigned from their army positions will run for the USDP.

While other parties struggle to find enough candidates, the USDP is the only party that will contest all constituencies.

The election law provides that when there is only one candidate in a constituency then that candidate will be declared the winner. This means that the government party has already bagged a number of seats even before elections are held.

These seats will be supplemented by the 25% of seats guaranteed under the new constitution for the military, which means unelected military officers will sit in parliament.

The prevailing mood among the electorate in Burma is mostly of indifference.

Ko Zaw, a Rangoon resident, told the BBC: "I have no interest in the elections. I don't believe anything will change after the polls. The generals have made sure that they will stay in power."

Intimidation

The elections have been mired in controversy from the outset.

The political party that overwhelmingly won the last elections in 1990 but was never allowed to govern, the National League for Democracy (NLD), has decided not to take part, citing the undemocratic nature of the junta-approved constitution. Women search for their names on a list of eligible voters, in Yangon on 21 September 2010 Prominent pro-democracy names - including Aung San Suu Kyi's - are not on the electoral register

It argues that the elections will merely cement the military's continued hold on power.

Last week, the government's election commission formally disbanded the party because it had not registered for the polls.

The NLD has been calling on people not to vote in the elections.

Articles in state-run newspapers have threatened NLD leaders with prison terms for disrupting the electoral process.

Other parties have also complained that the government party is enjoying unfair privileges.

While many parties are struggling to find money to campaign, the USDP has access to unlimited state funds. Ministers

can use state facilities to campaign in their constituencies.

Parties have also complained of their supporters being harassed by the authorities.

"When we went to an area to explain our party policies to the residents, police followed us and watched closely," said Aye Lwin, chairman of the Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics.

"After we left the area, those who came to the meeting were questioned by local authorities. This intimidates those who want to support us."

Despite all this, some believe elections offer a space, an opening for political movement.

"We know these elections will not bring about a democratic government straight away," said Thein Nyunt, a leader of the National Democratic Front, founded by former NLD members.

"But this is the only opening at the moment available in the country. It's not right to talk now about what we cannot do in the parliament. We have not been there yet."

But others warn that the parties which do take part give the elections the hint of legitimacy which the junta desperately wants, when the shape of the future parliament is already clear.

The military regime which has ruled Burma since 1988 will come to an end after the elections but a new form of civilianised military rule will certainly continue.

THE BURMANET NEWS, September 24, 2010 - Issue #4049 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

BBC News - September 24, 2010 - <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-11406008>>

Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi 'on voters' list'



Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party was forced to disband under new election laws

Burma's detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi is on a voters' list for the first general election in 20 years, eyewitnesses have told the BBC.

Ms Suu Kyi's election victory in 1990 was annulled by Burma's military junta.

She is under house arrest and was at first excluded from the electoral roll.

Eyewitnesses say her name is now on a follow-up list for her ward in Rangoon. There has been no official comment, and it is not clear if she would be allowed out to cast her vote in November.

The development comes as Burma's military rulers are attending an annual UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Many Western nations and the UN are critical of Burma's poor human rights record and refusal to hand over power to Ms Suu Kyi's party in 1990.

Analysts say Ms Suu Kyi's inclusion would have little impact on the outcome of the vote. She has told dissatisfied citizens that they do not have to participate in the 7 November polls.

Her National League for Democracy party was forced to disband under new election laws.

BBC Burmese journalist Soe Win Than says most people believe that the same faces that rule Burma now will be in power after the polls.

The government has founded its own political party - the Union Solidarity and Development Party - headed by the incumbent prime minister.

Some 25% of seats are guaranteed under the new constitution for the military, which means unelected military officers will sit in parliament.

The Irrawaddy – Newsletter for Saturday, September 25, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - Saturday, September 25, 2010 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19554>

Ban Seeks Asean Support on Burma - By LALIT K JHA

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Friday made an appeal to the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to help him move Burma towards genuine democracy.

Speaking to the Asean leaders at his annual gathering with them at the UN headquarters in New York, Ban noted that the UN and Asean both want stability and development in Burma and agree on the critical need for a democratic transition and national reconciliation in the country, and for ensuring that this year's election is free, fair and inclusive.



Philippine President Benigno Aquino, left, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

“Failure to meet these expectations could undermine the credibility of the process—which, in turn, could reflect on Asean’s collective values and principles. At the same time, we must also help Myanmar [Burma], so that they can address these humanitarian and development challenges,” Ban said.

“With Asean’s support, I am committed to continue working with the government and people of Myanmar to enable a successful transition to civilian and democratic rule,” he said.

“I count on your support in encouraging Myanmar’s engagement with my good offices,” said the secretary general, who has yet to appoint a new special envoy for Burma—a post that has been vacant since January.

Ban, who has visited Burma and met with the head of the ruling junta, Snr-Gen Than Shwe, has not been able to move the regime any closer to restoring democracy or releasing opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Last week, he voiced concern at a decision by the regime-appointed Union Election Commission to dissolve 10 political parties, including Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy. He called on the authorities to ensure that November’s election is fully inclusive.

In August, Ban called on the military junta to release all remaining political prisoners so that they could fully participate in Burma’s first election in 20 years, due to be held on Nov. 7.

Ban also discussed the current situation in Burma with Philippine President Benigno Aquino.

“With regard to Myanmar, the secretary-general and the president underscored the need to ensure a credible electoral process and, in this regard, the importance of engagement by the countries in the region,” said a UN statement. In an interview on Thursday, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said that Burma’s political system must become “more inclusive” after the election and that Suu Kyi should be allowed to participate.

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter, September 25, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - By LALIT K JHA - Saturday, September 25, 2010 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19553>

Obama Urges Burma to Embark on Process of Reconciliation

By LALIT K JHA

Saturday, September 25, 2010

WASHINGTON — US President Barack Obama on Friday urged the Burmese leadership to embark on a process of national reconciliation by releasing all political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Obama renewed his call during a meeting with the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in New York, held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. The meeting was attended by Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win, but there was no direct contact between him and the US president.



US President Barack Obama walks on the podium before a group photo with Asean leaders on Friday. Standing at the center behind Obama is Burmese FM Nyan Win. (Photo: Getty Images)

“The president believes in the importance of democratic reform and protection of human rights and renews his call on Burma to embark on a process of national reconciliation by releasing all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and by holding free and fair elections in November,” the White House said in a statement after the meeting.

In a joint statement issued together with their US counterpart, the Asean leaders said they “welcomed the continued US engagement with the government of Myanmar [Burma]” and expressed hope that “Asean and US engagement encourages Myanmar to undertake political and economic reforms to facilitate national reconciliation.”

Reiterating a call made at the first US-Asean meeting in Singapore last November, the statement said this year’s election in Burma must be “conducted in a free, fair, inclusive and transparent manner in order to be credible for

the international community.”

“We emphasized the need for Myanmar to continue to work together with Asean and the United Nations in the process of national reconciliation,” the joint statement said.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the State Department reiterated that the US does not believe that the election in November will be legitimate.

“We have made it clear all along that we think the Nov. 7 elections are going to lack legitimacy,” State Department spokesman Mark Toner said.

“We obviously remain concerned about the oppressive political environment in the country and we urge the authorities to release all the political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and I believe there’s 2,100 additional political prisoners,” he said.

“We don’t believe those elections can be free or fair, and we continue to urge the Burmese authorities to begin a genuine political dialogue with the democratic opposition ... and also the ethnic minority leaders, as a first step towards national reconciliation,” Toner said.

Ten Years On

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