



BURMA REPORT

November 2010

မြန်မာ - မှတ်တမ်း

Issue N° 90

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

"AAPP(Burma)" <info@aappb.org> For Immediate Release - 20 October 2010



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand

e.mail: info@aappb.org website: www.aappb.org

For Immediate Release -
Date: 20 October 2010

e.mail: info@aappb.org - website: www.aappb.org

Rhetoric is not enough: Governments must act now and support a commission of inquiry on Burma.

[Maesot, Thailand] The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners- Burma warmly welcomes the report of Tomas Quintana, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma and urges the international community to act now to ensure his recommendations become a reality. The report exposes the in-creasing repression faced by the people of Burma in the lead up to the elections, and calls for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, and for -accountability and justice through a commission of inquiry.

The Special Rapporteur's report to the UN General Assembly states that the new electoral framework and its implementation by authorities have further prohibited the enjoyment of the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Documentation by AAPP of the arrest of 11 students in September for anti- election campaigning supports his findings.

AAPP appreciates the Special Rapporteur's repeated calls for the military regime to release all prisoners of conscience. Sadly, his efforts have been to no avail and at least 2,193 political prisoners remain in jail for simply exercising their basic civil and political rights. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) repeatedly denies the existence of political prisoners and refutes claims of torture and ill-treatment in Burma's places of detention.

The Special Rapporteur said: "Some have already spent most of the past two decades imprisoned...for their involvement in calling for democratic transition in Myanmar, such as the leaders of the 88 Generation students' group, currently serving 65-year prison sentences. He recalls that he "met some of these women and men — student leaders, monks, political party leaders and ethnic minority leaders — during prison visits... These people have a legitimate role to play in these historic elections. An immediate unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience is necessary for the elections to be credible".

Quintana's report places responsibility for the fate of the Burmese people in the hands of the international community: "The pursuit of justice and accountability will require tremendous effort. The international community must stand ready to help and support the people of Myanmar as they undertake these steps".

This report goes further than his ground-breaking March 2010 report to the Human Rights Council by stating: If the Government fails to assume this responsibility, then the responsibility falls to the international community... [Of] particular concern is article 445 of the 2008 Constitution, which may impede the Government from effectively addressing justice and accountability in the future. With the possibility of impunity enshrined in the Constitution, the United Nations can establish a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity through resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly or the Security Council, or the Secretary-General could establish it on his own initiative.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

He adds: Justice and accountability are the very foundation of the United Nations system rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which calls for an international order in which the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration can be fully realized. Failing to act on accountability in Myanmar will embolden the perpetrators of international crimes and further postpone long-overdue justice.

AAPP urges ASEAN, the European Union, and other states to stand with the people of Burma and pledge their support for a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity in Burma, as recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur.

“The international community has long been aware of the systematic nature of human rights violations committed in Burma, and it is time they started to investigate them; the people of Burma are dying, mere rhetoric is not enough,” Bo Kyi Joint Secretary of AAPP said.

“A growing number of countries, including the United States, France, United Kingdom and Australia, have backed the call of activists, both inside Burma and around the world, by publicly supporting a UN commission of inquiry. Hopefully, this new report will inspire other UN member states to do the same”.

There is no doubt that the military junta of Burma is one of the worst human rights violators in the world. Torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, forced labour, and the recruitment of child soldiers are widespread and systematic and committed by representatives of the regime and its supporters.

“AAPP has spent years documenting human rights violations in Burma and has strong evidence that the torture experienced by political prisoners is widespread and systematic, and we are ready to help an inquiry whenever needed. While the past decade has seen a strengthening of legal measures to bring human rights violators to justice, in Burma after nearly 50 years of successive military rule, impunity and a pervasive culture of fear prevail,” said Bo Kyi.

In response to questioning from the Special Rapporteur, the SPDC stated: “Concerning allegations of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes, there is no occurrence of such crimes in Myanmar.”

“As long as the military regime continues to respond with denial in the face of such horrific and harrowing human rights abuses, then we need to ensure that these violations are adequately addressed through independent channels. Establishing a commission of inquiry is a necessary first step to ending impunity and bringing the abusers to justice,” Bo Kyi said.

###

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

For more information –

Bo Kyi (Joint Secretary): +66 (0) 819 628 713
 begin_of_the_skype_highlighting +66 (0) 819 628
 713 end_of_the_skype_highlighting

Tate Naing (Secretary): +66 (0) 812 878 751

The Irrawaddy, Newsletter for Thursday, October 7, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19658

Release Political Prisoners before Election: Ban

By LALIT K. JHA

Thursday, October 7, 2010

WASHINGTON—United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday urged the Burmese military junta to hold a “credible and inclusive” election and to free all political prisoners before the election, scheduled for Nov. 7.

“This election is going to be the first ever in 20 years,” Ban said. “I have been urging and stating publicly that this election must be conducted in a transparent and inclusive and credible manner, with all political prisoners freed before the election.”

“That’s what I have conveyed—a strong message to Myanmar [Burma]; that’s what I am going to continue to press,” Ban told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York.

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting, Ban said he had a number of meetings with leaders in the region including those from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) countries, besides meeting the Burmese foreign minister.

"I have had very close meetings, consultations with the countries concerned. During the General Assembly, I had a meeting with the 10 Asean foreign ministers," Ban said. He also had a meeting with the prime minister of Thailand and Burma was an issue of discussion.

"During all my interactions with those Asean and other key member states, an inclusive and transparent election is a high priority," Ban said in response to a question.

Meanwhile, at the US State Department, spokesman P J Crowley said there is no sign that the elections would be free and fair. The US has said the election lacks international credibility.

In Geneva, Mexican Sen. Rosario Green, the p-resident of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, urged the Burmese regime to immediately release 12 lawmakers from jail before the November elections.

In her report to the IPU Council, Green said in a about one month the citizens of Burma will take part in elections, the first in 20 years. "This should be a reason for joy, but it is not," she said.

"In Bangkok, the IPU called on the Myanmar authorities to do everything possible to ensure inclusive, free and fair elections. There are currently 2,100 political prisoners still waiting for their release. This includes the 12 parliamentarians whose cases are being examined by the IPU and who remain imprisoned for merely having exercised their freedom of expression," Green said.

"They have all been sentenced on the basis of legal proceedings which blatantly disregarded their right to a fair trial. They are not the only ones, however, who are excluded from the political process," she said.

Green said in the past, the committee examined many other cases of parliamentarians in Burma who ended up in prison for speaking their minds.

"None of them can stand in the elections, because all those who have been the subject of a conviction are automatically disqualified." Green said.

Tin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com>, NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoogroups.com, Burma Related News - Oct 07, 2010

AFP - <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ihw6WvwsLaiqV_1hsM5wPMIPiPsg?docId=CNG.6f90940f6d9bb44d73f1c586d3a44fbb.811>

World parliaments urge release of jailed Myanmar MPs

Wed Oct 6, 2010

GENEVA (AFP) – The world association of parliaments on Wednesday called on Myanmar to immediately release 12 lawmakers from jail ahead of elections next month.

In a resolution, the human rights committee of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) urged Myanmar's military junta to "immediately and unconditionally end their incarceration."

"Twelve parliamentarians are continuing to languish in prison simply for having exercised their rights to express themselves," it said.

The committee raised "serious doubts" about the junta's desire to ensure that the historic elections were a "sincere" reflection of the will of Myanmar's people.

Mexican senator Rosario Green, the head of the committee, underlined that the 12 were among 2,100 political prisoners on the country.

"They have all been sentenced on the basis of legal proceedings which blatantly disregarded their right to a fair trial," she said

Green said that in the past the IPU's watchdog had examined "many" other cases of parliamentarians in Myanmar "who at one time or another ended up in prison for speaking their minds."

"None of them can stand in the elections, because all those who have been the subject of a conviction are automatically disqualified," she added.

On Tuesday, European and Asian leaders at an EU-Asia summit in Brussels joined forces to urge Myanmar's junta to release political prisoners and ensure that the November 7 elections were free and fair.

Critics have dismissed the elections as a sham due to the exclusion of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest, and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

The junta announced last week that Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, would be released after the country's first elections in two decades.

The IPU is an association of 155 parliaments from around the world.

Green said her human rights committee had examined the cases of 305 parliamentarians from 35 countries, notably including disappearances in Eritrea and Rwanda.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>, NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, Datum, Wed, 20. Oct 2010

Bangkok Post - <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asia/202291/un-chief-to-visit-china-and-attend-asean-summit>>

UN chief to visit Thailand- Published: 20/10/2010 at 05:58 AM

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will visit Thailand and attend an Asean summit on a four-nation Asian tour starting next week in which the Burma election and human rights could be key topics.



United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks to journalists in the northeastern French city of Strasbourg. Ban will visit China and attend an Asean summit on a four-nation Asian tour starting next week in which the Burma election and human rights could be key topics.

Ban will go to Thailand and Cambodia, before the key summit in Vietnam and talks with China's President Hu Jintao in Beijing, UN spokesman Farhan Haq told a press briefing.

The UN leader will hold talks with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and other Thai government representatives during a brief stay in Bangkok on October 26 before moving on the same day to Cambodia.

In Phnom Penh, he will meet with King Norodom Sihamoni and Prime Minister Hun Sen. Ban will also visit the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the UN-backed tribunal dealing with mass killings and other crimes committed under the Khmer Rouge three decades ago.

Ban moves on to Vietnam on October 28 to attend a summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and the UN, and meet with President Nguyen Minh Triet and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung,

officials said.

The UN leader has urged Asean to put more pressure on Burma to free Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition figures ahead of the country's much criticised election on November 7.

Ban will start the key China leg of his tour on October 30 in Shanghai.

He will attend the closing of the World Expo in Shanghai before a brief visit to Nanjing and then head for Beijing for the talks with China's president and other leaders.

The visit will come as China maintains its angry campaign against the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to jailed dissident Liu Xiaobo.

Ban has not criticised China but said the Nobel award recognized a "growing international consensus for improving human rights practices and culture around the world."

It will be Ban's fourth visit to China since taking over as UN secretary general in 2007. He was previously there in July 2009 and twice in 2008.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> :[NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, 03. Oct

Khaleej Times - <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/opinion/2010/October/opinion_October12.xml§ion=opinion&col =>

An election notworthy of support - Win Tin 3 October 2010 -

Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, recently said the world must exercise "utmost vigilance" to ensure the approaching elections in Myanmar (Burma) are free and fair.

We are disappointed in such comments, which focus on the election as something important for our country, as something worth waiting and watching for, although this election is not the solution for Burma.

The elections, scheduled for November 7, are designed to legalise military rule in Burma under the 2008 constitution, which was written to create a permanent military dictatorship in our country.

After the election, the constitution will come into effect, a so-called civilian government will be formed by acting and retired generals who all are under the military commander-in-chief, and the people of Burma will legally become the subjects of the military.

Our party, the National League for Democracy, and our ethnic allies have refused to accept the regime's constitution and have decided to boycott the elections. The military regime's constitution and severely restricting election laws demonstrated to all of us the true intention the regime has for this election – the legalisation and legitimisation of military rule in our country.

We refuse to abandon our aspirations for democracy in Burma and give the regime the legitimacy it wants for its elections. With millions of people of Burma supporting our position, we hoped the international community would understand the regime's intentions as clearly as we do and pressure the regime to stop its unilateral and undemocratic process.

Until recently, the United Nations demanded the regime commit itself to an all-parties inclusive, participatory, free and fair process through political dialogue with democratic opposition and representatives of ethnic minorities. But now an important phrase — “all-parties inclusive” — is surprisingly excluded from their statements and speeches. Although Ms. Pillay urged the world to exercise “utmost vigilance,” there is no need to wait until the Election Day to make a judgment.

The election commission was appointed by the regime and filled with loyalists who unilaterally decided that many candidates are ineligible to run. The electoral laws and by-laws impose severe restrictions on political parties. Thousands of political prisoners — including our leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi — are not allowed to participate in the election or be members of the parties.

The regime's prime minister and cabinet ministers have switched to civilian dress, transformed their mass organisation into their political party, and are campaigning with the use of state properties, resources, funds and threats. The election commission is shamelessly violating its own rules in favor of the prime minister's party and other proxy parties of the regime.

Is it really necessary for the international community to wait until election day to see whether the elections are free and fair?

Unfortunately, some European countries are not only watching the regime's elections, but also supporting them. They discussed with us their belief that the election is the only game in town, and suggested that we, the National League for Democracy, should participate.

When we explained our rationale for not legitimising military rule, they turned to others and now help them to make their way in the regime's election game. They have gone so far as to help pro-regime academics and opportunists travel to Europe to promote the regime's election and gather support for their favorite parties.

Even though some democratic parties have European support, their chances of winning seats in the election are very slim, as more restrictions on their campaign activities are revealed each day.

The regime is determined to capture almost all of the contested seats in the national and state parliaments by use of fraud and threats.

With 25 per cent of the seats in Parliament reserved for the military, it is more and more clear that almost all the seats will be controlled by the military and its cronies. Even if some lucky candidates get elected, they will have no authority to promote change. The Parliament has no power to form the government, no authority to legislate military affairs, and no right to reject the president's appointees and budget.

One might ask what is the solution, if it is not the election. It is dialogue, which we have been calling for many years. Meaningful political dialogue between the military, the National League for Democracy led by Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnic representatives is the only way to solve problems in Burma peacefully.

The military has no desire to talk. But if the international community seriously exercises strong and effective pressure on the regime, the combination of pressure from outside and peaceful resistance inside the country will force the regime to

come to the dialogue table.

I wish that our friends in Europe would abandon their dream of expecting something impossible from the election, and start taking serious action against the regime with the aim of starting a dialogue. They should begin by creating a UN commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations in Burma.

Win Tin is a founder of Burma's National League for Democracy party and a member of its central executive committee. He was a political prisoner from 1989 to 2008

mtinky17@yahoo.com,NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahooogroups.com 02.10.2010 00:17, NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahooogroups.com
The Irrawaddy Newsletter, October 1, 2010, <news@irrawaddy.org>, <www.irrawaddy.org>

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19605>

Suu Kyi Will Face 'Another Depayin' When Released

By BA KAUNG

Friday, October 1, 2010

After she is freed on Nov.13, detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will tour the country to rally supporters and ignore the possibility of attacks similar to the Depayin massacre, say political colleagues.



pro-democracy advocate stands beside a picture of Suu Kyi at a rally in New Delhi in March. (Photo: Getty Images)

She will go around the country and reach out to the people even if she faces another Depayin," said Win Tin, one of the leaders of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), which has been disbanded for failing to register as a political party. Win Tin was referring to the junta-orchestrated deadly ambush on Suu Kyi and her convoy in Depayin, Sagaing Division, during the evening of May 30, 2003, when she was making a political tour of the area. Suu Kyi narrowly escaped with her life and at least 100 of her supporters died in the attack. "The political awakening will be high again in the public once Daw Suu is released," Win Tin said. "Even while under house arrest, she has posted letters outside her compound and given us political messages."

On Nov.13, a week after the elections, the Nobel Laureate will be freed when she completes her 18-month term of house arrest, the *Agence France-Presse* news agency reported on Thursday, quoting unnamed Burmese government officials.

Win Tin said he expects that the regime will impose restrictions on Suu Kyi's movements when she is released. But the NLD is currently consolidating and preparing itself so that it can carry out mass-based activities under Suu Kyi's leadership in the post-election period, he said.

"But we have no plans to carry out a mass uprising," he said. "We were not in a position to do that. But with the aim of opening a dialogue with the regime, we will put pressure on the regime through non-violent activities."

Meanwhile, the Burmese regime's political oppression continued as it detained a number of university students last week for advocating an election boycott, and its courts on Thursday sentenced 13 people accused of bomb plots and other activities to disrupt the elections to long prison sentences.

Despite the fact that some NLD members quit the party to contest the election, saying the election is a chance for gradual democratic changes, the party retains hardcore members across the country.

Khin Saw Htay is one of them, an NLD leader in Yenanchaung Township in Central Burma. She said she had decided to turn her back on Suu Kyi if the latter had not chosen to boycott the polls.

"Daw Suu once called for civil disobedience against unjust decrees," she said. "Now she must call for defiance against unjust laws."

The Irrawaddy - Newsletter for Friday, October 8, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19678>

Supreme Court Will Hear Suu Kyi

By THE IRRAWADDY

Friday, October 8, 2010



Kyi Win, left, and Nyan Win, right, both lawyers for the Burma's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, leave Supreme Court after filing her lawsuit against the military government over dissolving her National League for Democracy on Oct. 5. (Photo: AP)

Burma's Supreme Court issued a public notice on Thursday saying that it will hold a hearing on Oct. 18 for detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's latest appeal against her house arrest.

The notice, which was posted at the Supreme Court, stated that the judges will decide whether to consider the "Special Appeal," according to Suu Kyi's lawyer Nyan Win.

In February, Nyan Win's arguments against the detention of Suu Kyi were rejected by the Supreme Court, but he then submitted another appeal which was responded to only on Thursday.

Suu Kyi had her house arrest extended by 18 months in August 2009 for allegedly violating the terms of her house arrest by briefly sheltering an uninvited American intruder, John W. Yettaw, in her home in May that year. She is expected to be released soon when her sentence expires on Nov. 13, just days after Burma holds a general election.

"We are appealing on the basis that she is totally innocent," Nyan Win said. "The fact that she is due to be released soon is irrelevant. We must continue this legal battle due to the fact that she is serving a criminal sentence."

The issue of a public notice from the Supreme Court comes days after Suu Kyi filed an appeal at the same Supreme Court in Rangoon challenging the dissolution of her political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which was disbanded by the Burmese military authorities for refusing to register for the Nov. 7 election, citing unfair electoral laws.

It remains uncertain as to whether the Supreme Court will rule on hearing the legal challenge by the detained Nobel Peace

Prize laureate over her party's status, but the regime has warned that the NLD's insistence on acting as a political organization would amount to a violation of existing laws.

THE BURMANET NEWS - October 13, 2010 Issue #4061. "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>. www.burmanet.org

The Mizzima - <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/election-2010-/4442-ethnic-leaders-join-nld-vote-boycott-roadshow.html>>

Ethnic leaders join NLD vote-boycott roadshow

Myint Maung

Wednesday, 13 October 2010

New Delhi (Mizzima) – Ethnic leaders from the group made up of ethnic political parties that contested in the 1990 general election, have joined the National League for Democracy's "no vote" campaign ahead of elections on November 7.

The main opposition NLD party left Rangoon yesterday for Kachin State on week-long roadshow trip organisational trip accompanied by Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) party leader and Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) secretary Aye Thar Aung. They briefed NLD township, ward and village level organising committee members from 11 townships in Mandalay Division.

"I am glad and encouraged at meeting organising committee members from townships, wards and villages for the first time after the authority dissolved NLD," Aye Thar Aung said.

NLD central executive committee member Ohn Kyaing, NLD women's wing members Phyu Phyu Thin, Hla Hla Moe, Aye Aye Mar, NLD youth wing member Myo Nyunt and Aye Thar Aung met organisers from Mogok, Singu, Madaya, Thapeikkyin, Patheingyi, Tadaoo, Amrapura, Singai and Pyinoolwin townships and exchanged their views on boycotting this year's national elections.

Fellow ethnic minority and CRPP leader, Zomi National Congress (ZNC) chairman Pu Cing Tsian Thang, joined NLD leaders in a similar trip to southern Shan State and Soe Win from the National Democracy

Party joined NLD leaders in their trip to western Pegu Division.

Upon reaching Kachin State, Aye Thar Aung said he would pass on some of the motions passed at the CRPP meeting held on September 3 month including a resolution not to vote in upcoming polls.

The group resolved to boycott 2010 general election, to discuss issues and difficulties being faced by ethnic people including concerns over the building possibility that a new wave of civil war would break out amid growing tension between junta forces and armed ethnic groups under ceasefire that have rejected the junta's Border Guard Force (BGF) demand.

They also decided to discuss the 2008 constitution and to tell people in ethnic areas that building a genuine federal union and national unity could only be achieved through enacting a constitution based on the Panlong spirit that would entrench democratic and ethnic rights.

"The Kachin [Independence Organisation's armed wing] said that they would not need to bear arms if the Union [of Burma] was based on the Panlong agreement. And the CRPP has reached a resolution on how to build a Union in future based on that agreement. We will discuss these matters with the people during this trip. Another topic will be on the current situation of distrust of the SPDC [junta] by armed ethnic groups and their delay in disarming themselves," Aye Thar Aung said.

The junta's electoral watchdog, the Union Election Commission (UEC), issued a notice mid-last month that claimed five old political parties including the NLD were automatically dissolved as they had failed to re-register with the UEC during the stipulated time. The NLD has since conducted roadshows to explain to the public their no-vote policy. They have completed trips to almost 10 of the states and divisions.

"Party members are more consolidated and the party is stronger after these meetings. We can say this is a significant and progressive result of survival and revival. Party members abide by our policy of non-voting in the election. If some of them go and cast their vote this time, they will never be free from fear. But we can say how many people didn't vote only after the election," Ohn Kyaing told Mizzima.

The CRPP was established on September 16, 1998 by the NLD, which won more than 80 per cent of seats in the 1990 general election and ethnic parties that also won seats, to call on the junta to convene the Hluttaw (parliament)

Member parties are the ALD, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, the Shan State Kokang Democratic Party, the Mon Nationality Democratic Front, the ZNC and Union Nationalities League for Democracy.

THE BURMANET NEWS - October 23 - 25, 2010 Issue #4069 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

The INDEPENDENT - <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/the-faces-of-change-in-burma-2115655.html>>

The faces of change in Burma

Three women are standing up to the junta – by taking part in an election they know they can't win

By Phoebe Kennedy in Rangoon

Monday, 25 October 2010

She has been described as a "princess" of Burmese politics, but for Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, the daughter of an independence hero, the pursuit of her father's dream of democracy in Burma is far more important than the trappings of her elite status. "I have sold all my gold, all my jewellery," said the 62-year-old, who is standing as an opposition candidate in Burma's 7 November election, the first in 20 years. "Everything that I put aside for my old age, for my medical fees, I have put into this campaign."

With her childhood friends Mya Than Than Nu and Nay Ye Ba Swe, Ms Kyaw Nyein is joint-secretary of the opposition Democratic Party, which hopes to field 50 candidates in the vote. The so-called "three princesses" are all daughters of senior Burmese ministers who held office during the short period of democratic rule that followed independence from Britain in 1948.

Despite their pedigree, the three have endured the same financial hardship, constant surveillance and intimidation faced by all opposition candidates, in order to fight an election they know they cannot win. Their aim, says Ms Kyaw Nyein, after nearly half a century of military rule, is simply to have their voices heard.

"Even though this election is very unfair, we want to be there in the parliament with the army people. We will be fewer than them, but we will raise our voices if we have to," said Ms Kyaw Nyein, who, like her father and mother, served several years in Rangoon's Insein Prison for her dissident activities.

Followed by plain-clothed special branch officers, she has been on the campaign trail since early September in the rural constituency in central Burma that she hopes to represent. "By motorbike, bicycle or on foot I am getting to the most remote places to explain the meaning of the election and to persuade the people to vote for us," she said.

The splintered opposition movement is running against the might of the Burmese junta's proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which is amply funded and stacked with ex-military candidates, including its Prime Minister, Thein Sein.

The party has offered new members and potential voters sweeteners such as cheap mobile phone access and gifts including spectacles, sarongs, food and cash. "I say to people: 'Take the presents, but don't vote for those lousy people,'" laughs Ms Kyaw Nyein, an energetic mother of five grown-up children and three adopted teenagers.

Election rules drawn up by the regime gave parliamentary candidates just two weeks to raise the £325 needed to register to stand, not a large sum in the West but equivalent to an average annual wage in Burma. As a result, cash-strapped opposition parties have only managed to put up candidates in less than 20 per cent of all constituencies, leaving the USDP an open field across much of the country. In some of the border areas where ethnic insurgents have been fighting the government, and where ethnic opposition parties were expected to do well, the regime has called off the election altogether.

The many injustices have proved too much for Burma's most famous opposition party, the National League for Democracy, led by detained democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. From her home in Rangoon, where she is held under house arrest, Ms Suu Kyi urged her National League for Democracy (NLD) party to boycott the 7 November vote, charging that the process is unfair and undemocratic. As a consequence, the party that won a resounding victory in the last elections in 1990 – a result which was ignored by the generals – was disbanded by the authorities.

But confusing the picture for voters, renegade NLD members have formed a breakaway party to contest the election, and have been joined by younger political hopefuls who, having witnessed the failure of Burma's "Saffron Revolution" in 2007, feel frustrated by the failure of the opposition movement to break years of autocratic rule.

"We respect Aung San Suu Kyi's decision, but we think it is the wrong one," said 38-year-old Myat Nyarna Soe, secretary of the Rangoon division of the newly formed National Democratic Force (NDF). "How can we negotiate if we are quiet? I want to go to parliament and persuade the government that they need to change for the sake of the country."

A doctor and former civil servant in the department of health, Dr Nyarna Soe only became involved in politics this year. "Things weren't getting better, so I decided to quit as a government servant. I could not remain behind the curtain any longer."

The NDF's campaigning ambitions are limited: they plan to print pamphlets and posters, paid for by party members who have sold their cars and their houses to support the cause. The party will be by far the biggest among the opposition groups, fielding 163 candidates. The USDP, however, is likely to fight nearly all of the 498 civilian seats in the two-chamber national parliament. A further 166 seats will be reserved for unelected military officers.

Dr Nyarna Soe accepts that there will be no need for the junta to tamper with the election results this time. "There is a difference in manpower, money, everything. It's a competition between them and us, and they've already won," he said. "But I believe this is our only gateway. If there is another way, please tell me."

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscsoms.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, 13.10.2010 15:36:58

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19722>

USDP To Secure Advance Votes

- By KO HTWE

October 13, 2010

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) discussed five options for securing advance votes from government staff, soldiers and junta-backed civic organizations to ensure their victory in the upcoming elections, according to a USDP township official.

The order to secure advance votes came from party headquarters after Township and quarter-level leaders held a meeting in Rangoon on Monday.

"We discussed how to take advance votes from members of 30 civil societies in Rangoon," said a USDP official from Alone Township, Rangoon, on Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The meeting focused on five options that included taking advance votes from adults more than 50-years-old and from civil service personnel who support the party. They also discussed cooperating with ward authorities and sub Election Commissions in order to get votes for USDP candidates.

Votes would also be sought from families who live in areas where the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), the forerunner of the USDP, had paved roads.

Finally, the order included taking advance votes from families who are member of government-sponsored civic organization such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation,

the Myanmar Red Cross Society and the Myanmar Fire Brigade and other government-sponsored groups.

The junta formed these civil organizations to build up strong civilian backing in the government. Most of the junta leaders' wives are patrons or have taken active leadership in the organizations.

Meanwhile, ward authorities took family lists at the beginning of the month in Tarmway Township in Rangoon but have not given documents back to the families, said another local resident.

"The USDP created a community-based organization in our street and they began paving the road but then stopped, requesting the head of the organization to sign at least 100 members for the party if they wanted the paving to be completed," said a Tarmway township resident speaking on condition of anonymity.

According to local authorities pressure is being put on people to vote USDP but the junta-backed proxy party has an infamous reputation among the public.

The USDP originated from the USDA, which was formed in 1993. Snr-Gen Than Shwe was patron and most junta chiefs played important roles in the organization. In April, the USDA was transformed into the USDP, which inherited all the assets of the former mass organization.

USDA members participated in the deadly attack on pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy near Depayin in May 2003 as well as the brutal crackdowns on monks and demonstrators throughout September 2007.

helga yan <helga.yan@web.de>

The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=19779>

Post-election Chief Ministers Already Selected, Sources Say -

By BA KAUNG

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

The Burmese regime has reportedly already selected several former high-ranking military officials as the future chief ministers for regional and state governments to be formed after the Nov. 7 election.

All the selected retired military officials are candidates of the junta's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), according to sources.

Myint Swe, the former military chief of the Bureau of Special Operations (5), is selected to be the chief minister in the Rangoon Region [previously the Rangoon "Division"] government, while the same posts for Mandalay Region, Tenasserim Region, Sagaing Region and Mon State would go respectively to ex-Lt Gen Ye Myint, ex-Lt Gen Khin Zaw, ex-Lt Gen Thar Aye, ex-Maj Gen Aye Myint.

All were formerly the military commanders in their respective regions and states.

According to the junta-drafted 2008 Constitution, the country will have a bicameral parliament at the national level and a regional parliament in each of seven states and seven regions. The president of the national government can appoint elected candidates for the positions of chief ministers of the state and regional governments.

While seven regions are mostly Burman-populated, seven other states have large ethnic majorities.

Since the governments in ethnic-populated States are expected to have an ethnic representation, some chief minister posts have reportedly been reserved for former military officials with an ethnic background.

Retired military colonel Kyaw Zan Hla, an ethnic Arakan and a USDP candidate running for a parliamentary seat in western Burma's Arakan State, is rumored to become the chief minister of the Arakan State government.

Some members of opposition parties contesting the election say they are not surprised by the news since they have been experiencing different forms of dishonesty since the election laws were announced.

"We know that the government has set up everything for the post-election [period], but we are not frustrated," said Nay Yee Ba Swe, one of the leaders of the Democratic Party (Myanmar) in Rangoon. "We will try to face all obstacles."

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on BurmaDatum:Thu, 28. Oct 2010

Irish Examiner.com - <<http://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/world/burmas-top-general-will-not-run-in-election-479447.html#ixzz13dhzKv3c>>

Burma's top general 'will not run in election' - October 28, 2010



Thursday, October 28, 2010 - 08:18 AM

Burma's top leader General Than Shwe will bow out of national elections next month, but his role in the country's political future remains unclear, a south-east Asian diplomat said today.

The diplomat, speaking anonymously on the sidelines of an Asian summit in Vietnam, said Burma's foreign minister Nyan Win told his counterparts that the long-time leader of the military-run country would not be on the ballot during the country's first election in 20 years on November 7.

"He will bow out of the scene," the diplomat said, citing what the Burma official said at an informal dinner yesterday for delegates attending a summit for the Association of South-east Asian Nations.

"He will not be a candidate in the upcoming elections."

It was the first time the reclusive government confirmed that Than Shwe would not participate in the national polls. However, it was earlier believed that he would not run because his name did not appear on the candidates' list.

Than Shwe has never spoken about his future and no officials have ever broached the issue of his retirement or whether he would run in elections.

He is widely expected to have some new role and title afterwards. Many think he could become the next president, which is not an elected position.

Reclusive Burma put on a fresh face at an Asian conference in Hanoi, unveiling a redesigned flag and new national name less than two weeks before the long-awaited polling. But many fear the makeover is merely a facade to mask an election already being dubbed a sham.

The election is supposed to be a big step forward in the country's so-called road map to democracy following five decades of military rule.

But critics say the junta has already taken steps to block transparency and ensure that the military remains in power by repressing the country's main opposition party and limiting campaigning.

Democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been imprisoned or under house arrest for 15 of the past 21 years, is expected to be up for release on November 13, just six days after the election.

But Philippine foreign secretary Alberto Romulo said her fate still remained uncertain.

"We all pressed him to release Aung San Suu Kyi, but he was non-committal," he said, adding that the foreign minister agreed to follow the country's laws.

"I am sceptical about that," Mr Romulo said he told the minister. "She has been sentenced and after that she is re-sentenced again with another, so there's no end to it."

Ms Suu Kyi's party is boycotting the election as undemocratic after winning a landslide victory in 1990 that was dismissed by the military leaders.

That leaves the key junta-backed party as the only strong contender to win the upcoming contest.

United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-Moon warned Burma's junta today that unless it freed political prisoners its election may not be considered legitimate or credible.

Mr Ban said freeing the 2,000-plus political prisoners would help create a "perception that this election will be more inclusive".

He acknowledged that the political prisoners may not be "able to actually participate in the vote, but it will create a favourable political atmosphere which will make this perception better".

"But without releasing all political prisoners then there may certainly be some issue of legitimacy or credibility," he said in an interview before his bilateral meeting with Burma's prime minister General Thein Sein in Hanoi this week.

This is the closest Mr Ban has come to criticising the election after repeatedly taking a diplomatic tone by urging the junta to make the poll more inclusive, fair and credible.

But even his latest comments were tempered by hope that the junta would surprise everybody by making some concessions to the pro-democracy movement in a country that has been ruled by the military since 1962.

Ten Years On

The Life and Views of a Burmese Student Political Prisoner

by **Moe Aye**

(Former Burmese Student Political Prisoner)

(170 pages) in German Euro 10.- + Postage

Burma Büro e.V., P.O. Box N° 27 03 66, D-50509 Köln, Germany.

Tel: 0221-9522450 Fax:0221-9522470

e-Mail: <burmabureaugermany@t-online.de>

Published by : Burma Buero e.V.,P.O.Box 27 03 66, DE-50509 Cologne Tel: + 49 (0) 221-9522450 Fax:+ 49(0) 221-9522470

e-Mail: <burmabureaugermany@t-online.de> -

<http://www.burmabureaugermany.com>

<http://www.burma-report.de>