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Euro-Burma Office - "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be> -

PRESS RELEASE - NOBEL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

13 Nobel Peace Prize Winners seek to visit Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma - "She Should Be Immediately Released"

Geneva, 5 Jan. 2007. Laureates worldwide - from Seoul to Washington- will seek visas today to visit sister Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the only imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate. The day after Burmese Independence Day, thirteen Peace Prize Laureates will submit visa applications in 9 countries in a collective effort to visit Suu Kyi. "We hope to visit our sister, who today is spending her 4088th day in detention," said Shirin Ebadi. „We want to personally tell her that the world has not forgotten her and the people of Burma, and we want to tell her that we support her movement's call for a UN Security Council resolution on Burma.“

„We welcome the recent proposal of a Security Council resolution on Burma, and urge all members to support it immediately," said Jody Williams, 1997 Laureate and one of the founders of the Nobel Women's Initiative (NWI), who initiated today's action. „As the elected leader of the Burmese people, we have to ensure Suu Kyi's voice reaches beyond the walls that confine her. When I visited her in 2003 she asked that we use our liberty to promote hers and that's what were trying to do," Williams added.

Suu Kyi, one of only twelve women to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize, was awarded the Prize in 1991 in recognition of her work in the non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma. She has spent most of the last sixteen years in detention. Her political party, the National League for Democracy, won the 1990 general election in a landslide victory. The military junta refused to recognize the election results and placed Suu Kyi, along with other pro-democracy activists, under house arrest. Since 1996, the Burmese Army has destroyed over 3,000 villages in the eastern part of the country and forcibly recruited an estimated 70,000 children as soldiers.

In December 2006 a draft resolution on Burma was circulated in the Security Council, calling on the Burmese military dictatorship to end attacks against civilians and immediately release Suu Kyi and more than 1,100 other political prisoners in Burma. The resolution also calls on the military junta to „desist immediately from the use of systematic rape of women and girls as an instrument of armed conflict." The junta is known to use systematic rape as a weapon of war and force women and girls into sexual slavery and other forms of forced labor.

The following Laureates or representatives of Laureate organizations will apply for visas to visit Suu Kyi in nine countries today:

Wangari Maathai (Kenya, 2005) will apply in South Africa; Shirin Ebadi (Iran, 2003) will apply in the US; President Kim Dae-jung (South Korea, 2000) will apply in South Korea; Jody Williams (US, 1997) will apply in the US; Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (UK, 1995), represented by Sally Milne who will apply in the UK; Rigoberta Menchu Tum (Guatemala, 1992) will apply in the US; International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (US, 1985), represented by Ron McCoy who will apply in Malaysia, Mary-Wynne Ashford who will apply in Canada, Gunnar Westberg who will apply in Switzerland and Ime John who will apply in Germany; Lech Walesa (Poland, 1983) will apply in Germany; Adolfo Perez Esquivel (Argentina, 1980) will apply in the US; Betty Williams (UK, 1976) will apply in the UK; Mairead Corrigan Maguire (UK, 1976) will apply in the UK; on behalf of Albert Schweitzer (France, 1952) David Ives will apply in the US; International Peace Bureau (Switzerland, 1910), represented by Arielle Denis who will apply in France.

The following Laureates are unable to apply for visas today but have expressed support for this action:

His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Tibet, 1989), Elie Wiesel (US, 1986), Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa, 1984) and American Friends Service Committee (US, 1947).

For additional information see www.nobelwomensinitiative.org or contact media@nobelwomensinitiative.org.

The Nobel Women's Initiative was established in 2006 by sister Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan Maguire to help strengthen work being done in support of women's rights around the world.

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FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

January 8, 2007 - Inter Press Service

Defiant public blitz on junta with letters - *Marwaan Macan-Markar* BurmaNet News, January 6-8, 2007 - Issue # 3116 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Bangkok: A handwritten letter to a military dictator may sound like an ineffective and risky way of conveying defiance especially in this age of Internet, where e-mails, blogs and websites have combined to threaten political authority in a number of countries.

But in Burma, where a strict censorship regime is in force, and where access to information technology is limited, the good, old-fashioned letter is taken recourse to by the country's long-suffering people to express growing dissatisfaction with Rangoon's junta.

A letter-writing campaign, launched in the first week of the New Year, saw tens of thousands of people in and around Rangoon seeking the special envelopes and sheets of paper meant for this drive, say the organisers, a highly respected group of former university students, known as the '88-Generation Students'.

"This is an effort to break the silence. To get people to openly write about their grievances to the military government," adds Naing Aung, secretary-general of the Forum for Democracy in Burma, a group of Burmese political exiles who work closely with the 88-Generation. "It is not enough to just complain. This is to get people to show their courage by standing up and openly identifying themselves as critics."

The month-long letter-writing drive, known as the 'Open Heart' campaign, is the latest effort by the 88-Generation to "raise the people's voices," Naing Aung explained in an interview. "It is a peaceful way of expressing the public's views, because protests are banned, the media is censored, and there are no elections."

Yet this effort, where the people are encouraged to directly address Burma's strongman, Than Shwe, with the problems they face, comes with a high personal risk, including a jail term, if it provokes the ire of the junta. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), as the junta is officially known, currently holds over 1,100 people in jails for expressing their thoughts on a range of subjects. These political prisoners include opposition parliamentarians, Buddhist monks, journalists, writers, students and political activists.

The 88-Generation, who derive their name from being students who led a pro-democracy protest in 1988, which was brutally crushed by the military regime, mounted this effort on the success of three other campaigns conducted last year. The first was a signature campaign in October, calling for the public to endorse a plea for the SPDC to release all political prisoners, including detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. An estimated 60,000 people signed that petition.

Such a rare sign of public dissent in a climate of increasing oppression was followed by an equally impressive show of public support when the 88-Generation resorted to two more creative ways to register discontent. One was the 'White Expression' campaign, where members of the public were asked to wear white clothes as a mark of honesty and purity. The other: a multiple religious prayer meeting, where people were encouraged to hold silent prayers, including candle light vigils, in temples, churches and mosques.

Burmese political activists are welcoming this shift in the public mood as a further indicator of the deepening frustration across the South-east Asian nation that is run by a regime that is seen as incompetent, corrupt and oppressive.

Last year saw the price of rice, a staple dish in the Burmese diet, rise by 30 percent. Yet at the same time Than Shwe's daughter was married in a lavish event where champagne flowed, the bride was decked in diamonds and pearls and the newly wed reportedly receiving gifts worth millions of dollars.

"The people want to cooperate in this campaign because of the growing suffering. Some people don't care what will happen to them because they are just angry," Zaw Min, spokesman for the Democratic Party for a New Society, an opposition party banned by the SPDC, told IPS. "People are increasingly identifying themselves as they express their opinion."

It is an emerging political undercurrent that has also struck journalists working for the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), a radio and television station that has its headquarters in Oslo and is run by Burmese political exiles. "More and more people inside Burma are voicing their anger through our programmes," Than Win Htut, a DVB senior reporter told IPS. "Some have even walked for half a day to get to a telephone from their village to criticise the SPDC's inefficiency or abuse of power."

Such momentum has been taking shape over the past two to three years, he adds. "The people are feeling more confident to complain about the SPDC unlike earlier. There is clearly a change in attitudes."

Among the factors that have triggered this rising tide of discontent is the arrest of the country's former intelligence chief

and Prime Minister Gen. Khin Nyunt and his allies within the regime, say Burma analysts. Khin Nyunt, who received a 44-year suspended sentence in July 2005, had close contacts with the country's business community and was viewed by some quarters inside Burma and by South-east Asian governments as a moderate.

"The economy has shrunk noticeably since the purge of Khin Nyunt," Debbie Stothard of the Alternate ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) Network on Burma, a regional human rights lobby, told IPS. "The business people who had benefited lost out. And the sense of dissatisfaction grew wider, with many becoming fed up with Than Shwe, who has diverted money to his own small clique."

"The sense of outrage and anger is growing," she added. "There is a feeling that change is very possible and that is why more and more people are taking risks to speak out," she said.

Agence France Presse - 09 January 2007

US pressing ahead with UN resolution condemning Myanmar military rulers

Burma News - 10 January 2007 - "EBO" Euro-Burma Office <burma@euro-burma.be>

WASHINGTON - The United States will table a revised draft resolution at the UN Security Council calling on Myanmar's military rulers to halt attacks on ethnic minorities and free political prisoners, the State Department said.

"This resolution calls on the Burmese regime to act to stop the violence against ethnic minorities and to begin a legitimate process of political reform which includes freeing of political prisoners," department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

He said the measure was being proposed under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, meaning it does not call for sanctions against Myanmar.

McCormack said Washington hoped to submit a final version of the resolution to the Security Council for a vote by the end of the week, though there was no immediate evidence that China or Russia were prepared to drop their earlier opposition to the measure.

"We're intensively working the diplomacy in support of that resolution," McCormack said.

Reuters - November 23, 2006

UN panel rebukes Myanmar

Burma News - 24 November 2006 - Euro-Burma Office- "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

UNITED NATIONS, New York: A key UN panel rebuked Myanmar and Belarus for human rights abuses amid a growing debate about whether any country should be named and shamed for rights violations.

The panel, a General Assembly committee examining human rights issues, rebuked Myanmar in a resolution passed by a vote of 70 to 28 with 63 abstentions. The document said the country's government refused to investigate widespread human rights violations, such as summary executions, torture, forced labor, sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers.

The resolution singled out attacks by the military on villages in Kayin state and other ethnic provinces, harassment and arrest of student leaders and the continuing house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy Tin Oo, leaders of the opposition National League for Democracy. Myanmar has long been criticized by UN human rights bodies for its military leadership that refused to acknowledge Aung San Suu Kyi's overwhelming win at the polls in 1990.

Mon, 08. Jan 2007 - AP - By EDITH M. LEDERER

Myanmar Urged to Free Political Inmates -

Exclusive News on Burma/Myanmar - <ThaungN@aol.com >

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Myanmar's military government on Monday to release all political prisoners including pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

He also urged the government to make "further concrete progress" on all issues raised by his predecessor Kofi Annan including human rights, democratic reforms and national reconciliation.

Ban noted the government's decision on Jan. 3 to grant amnesty to 2,831 prisoners and welcomed reports that this included up to **40 political prisoners**.

"The secretary-general urges the Myanmar authorities to go beyond this first step by releasing all other

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political prisoners in the country, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," U.N. spokeswoman Michele Montas said.

The United Nations and human rights groups estimate the junta is holding more than 1,100 political prisoners.

Myanmar's junta took power in 1988 after crushing the democracy movement led by Suu Kyi. In 1990, it refused to hand over power when Suu Kyi's party won a landslide election victory. Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

Since her party's election victory, Suu Kyi has been in and out of detention. She is kept in near-solitary confinement at her home and is generally not allowed telephone contact or outside visitors.

The United Nations has run into stiff opposition in its efforts to win support for a Security Council resolution to press Myanmar's military government to change policies that Washington believes pose a threat to international peace and security.

China and Russia, two of the five permanent, veto-wielding council members, strongly opposed putting Myanmar on the council's agenda and do not support a resolution.

Reuters - 29 December 2006

Army-ruled Myanmar adjourns constitution talks

Burma News - 03 January 2007 - Euro-Burma Office "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

Yangon: Myanmar's military rulers adjourned a constitution-drafting convention on Friday which is expected to reconvene for its final session next May, delegates said.

Convention convener Lieutenant-General Thein Sein told the 1,000-plus delegates, most of them handpicked by the junta, they would resume their work at "a time convenient for all," one delegate said.

"Although he did not say exactly when, it is understood that the convention will resume in May next year for the last session," the delegate told Reuters.

The junta, which has run the former Burma under various guises since 1962, says the convention is key to a seven-stage "roadmap to democracy" laid out in 2003 by former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, who was ousted in October 2004.

Western governments, analysts and diplomats say it is nothing but a smokescreen to preserve the generals' grip on power, especially while opposition figures such as Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi remain under house arrest.

Critics point to a key objective of the convention which ensures a "leadership role" for the army in politics.

January 5, 2007 - Associated Press - INSIDE BURMA

Myanmar junta leader's absence from official event raises health concerns

BurmaNet News, January 5, 2007 Issue # 3115 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

Yangon: The leader of Myanmar's military government did not attend an official Independence Day dinner as he underwent a medical check in Singapore, fueling concerns about the health of the 73-year-old general, diplomats said Friday (05.01.07).

Than Shwe's absence from the Thursday evening dinner for military leaders, officials and diplomats was briefly noted by state-run newspaper, the New Light of Myanmar, which said the ruling council's No. 2 official, Sen. Gen. Maung Aye, attended the gala event on Than Shwe's behalf.

It was the first time since Than Shwe took power in 1992 that he did not host the annual dinner. This year marks the 59th anniversary of the country's independence from Britain.

Than Shwe flew to Singapore Dec. 31 for a visit that the junta has refused to discuss. Foreign Ministry officials have confirmed the trip but described it as a private visit.

Diplomats have said they were told the visit was for a routine medical checkup.

An Asian diplomat said Friday it was unusual for Than Shwe to skip such a major event, adding that diplomats had not received any updates on the general's health. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity citing embassy policy and the sensitivity of the subject.

Than Shwe is believed to be in poor health, suffering from diabetes, hypertension and other ailments.

Speculation spread in August 2005 that Than Shwe was ill and had sought medical treatment in Singapore, but the junta dismissed the talk as rumors.

Myanmar: ICRC pressed to close field offices - Press Release by ICRC - from: "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be> - 29.11.2006 09:14

International Committee of the Red Cross

ICRC - 27-11-2006 Press Release 06/133

Myanmar: ICRC pressed to close field offices

Geneva/Yangon (ICRC) - The government of Myanmar recently ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to close its five field offices in the country (Mandalay, Mawlamyine, Hpa-an, Taunggyi and Kyaing Tong), effectively making it impossible for the organization to carry out most of its assistance and protection work benefiting civilians who live in difficult conditions in border areas.

The Myanmar authorities also announced that ICRC visits to detainees would not be allowed to resume. Those visits were halted in December 2005 since the ICRC was no longer able to carry them out in accordance with its standard procedures.

The ICRC utterly deplores the decision by the Myanmar authorities to close its field offices as it places in jeopardy the accomplishments of the humanitarian work already carried out in behalf of the most vulnerable among the country's population, in particular people held in prison or living in sensitive border areas. "We had years of productive discussions with the Myanmar government, and our work since 1999 has had a tangible impact on people's living and security conditions," said Pierre Krähenbühl, the organization's director of operations. "The ICRC is seriously worried that those most in need today will bear the brunt of the current standoff."

Owing to the ICRC's increasing inability to do effective work in Myanmar and to the deterioration, and subsequent cessation, of dialogue with the government, the organization's activities have had to be scaled down in recent months to a few limited projects in the field of physical rehabilitation for amputees. In addition, assistance activities for civilians in sensitive border areas were first severely hampered, then prevented completely.

Over the past 12 months, the ICRC has tirelessly sought to restore a constructive dialogue during meetings with the government of Myanmar to address pressing issues of humanitarian concern. The latest of these took place on 17 November, at the ICRC's request, between its president, Jakob Kellenberger, and Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Nyunt Maung Shein. Unfortunately, despite the ICRC's strenuous efforts, there has been no sign of the deadlock being broken, a fact which now forces the organization to review its operational framework in the country.

The ICRC has always worked in Myanmar in faithful accordance with the mandate assigned to it by the international community. It remains committed to helping all vulnerable people covered by that mandate – wherever they are – in full transparency and with the agreement of the government. The ICRC is convinced of the value of its work in Myanmar. It is determined to re-engage the government in dialogue so as to re-expand its scope of action and thus alleviate the drastic restrictions today imposed on its humanitarian action in the country.

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Irrawaddy - January 9, 2007

ARV treatment denied new HIV/AIDS patients in Rangoon

Burma News - 10 January 2007 - [Euro-Burma Office](mailto:burma@euro-burma.be) "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

Hospitals and clinics in Rangoon treating HIV/AIDS sufferers have stopped providing antiretroviral (ARV) drugs for new patients, saying stocks have been exhausted, according to a member of the opposition National League for Democracy concerned with the welfare of victims of the disease.

The NLD is currently caring for more than 300 HIV/AIDS sufferers, who are receiving ARV treatment. Hospitals and clinics treating them had denied ARV drugs to more than 40 others who had recently fallen ill, said the NLD's Phyu Phyu Thin.

Phyu Phyu Thin charged that HIV/AIDS sufferers were dying while waiting for ARV treatment. Five of the patients cared for by the NLD had died since stocks of ARV drugs ran out at the end of December, she said.

ARV treatment is offered in Rangoon by the AZG clinic of the Dutch branch of the French-based Médecins sans Frontières and the Rangoon Infectious Diseases Hospital [Wai Bar Gi].

The World Health Organization reported last month that Burma has 339,000 HIV/AIDS sufferers. Japan pledged last November to donate US \$2.65 million to Unicef to help fight HIV/AIDS and malaria in Burma, while the Norwegian government is to contribute \$819,948 towards combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

PRESS RELEASE - January 10, 2007 - Burma Campaign UK

Burma student democracy leaders released; regime trying to manipulate UN Security Council

BurmaNet News, January 10, 2007 - January 10, 2007 Issue # 3118 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

The Burma Campaign UK today welcomed the release of 88 Generation Student leaders

Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kway, Min Zeya and Myint Aye. The five were arrested in September 2006, and have been held without charge since then.

While their release is very welcome, it is clear this is a cynical ploy by the regime to try to head off a Security Council resolution on Burma that is likely to be voted on before the end of the week, said Yvette Mahon, Director of the Burma Campaign UK. "We urge Security Council members not to be duped by such a blatant attempt to manipulate their discussions."

Burma has more than 1,100 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

Shortly before his arrest, Min Ko Naing repeated his call for the UN Security Council to pass a binding resolution requiring the restoration of democracy in Burma.

Min Ko Naing is Burmas most prominent pro-democracy leader after Aung San Suu Kyi. He spent more than 15 years in detention, and was released in 2004 having served five years more than he had been sentenced to. He had been tortured and kept in solitary confinement.

The regime in Burma has consistently defied the United Nations, ignoring over a dozen calls for Aung San Suu Kyis release by the Secretary General, and 29 resolutions by the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Commission. The regime has also defied repeated calls by the International Labour Organisation to end forced labour. Demands for UN Security Council intervention increased following the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2003. The campaign was given fresh momentum following publication in September 2005 of a report *A Threat to the Peace* - commissioned by former archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Czech President Vaclav Havel from global law firm DLA Piper. The report found that Burma does fit the criteria for UNSC intervention, and called on the UNSC to pass a binding resolution requiring the restoration of democracy to Burma, and the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. The Security Council held its first discussion on Burma in December 2005. The first formal discussion on Burma was held on 29th September 2006, after the USA asked for Burma to be placed on the formal agenda, and 10 of the 15 members voted in favour. Burmas democracy movement has repeatedly called for a Security Council resolution.

For more information, contact Mark Farmaner on 07941239640

BBC News - 10 January, 2007 - Published 01:13 GMT

Burmese activist wins Luther King prize

Documentation and Research Department <nddoc@cscoms.com> - NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoogroups.com

The Martin Luther King Prize for 2007 has been awarded to a Burmese pro-democracy campaigner, Lian Hmung Sakhong.

Dr Sakhong is the General Secretary of Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC), a political coalition advocating a tripartite dialogue to solve the political impasse in Burma.

The prize, established by a group of peace activists in Sweden and worth twenty-five thousand dollars, will be presented to the exiled Dr Sakhong at the Swedish parliament next week.

Dr Sakhong was detained several times by Burma's military rulers and fled the country in 1990 to settle in Sweden.

AP - By EDITH M. LEDERER

China, Russia Veto Myanmar Resolution

ASEAN news & photos essay update - <ThaungN@aol.com> - Sat, 13. Jan 2007

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - China and Russia blocked the Security Council from demanding an end to political repression and human rights violations in military-ruled Myanmar, rejecting a resolution proposed by the United States.

The vote was 9-3 in favor of the resolution, with South Africa joining China and Russia in the opposition. Indonesia, Qatar and the Republic of Congo abstained. While they were in the minority, China and Russia were able to kill the resolution because they have veto power as permanent members of the council.

The two argued that the U.N.'s most powerful body was not the proper forum for discussing the Southeast Asian nation because the country doesn't threaten international peace. China and Russia both have human rights records that have frequently been criticized.

Myanmar's U.N. Ambassador Kyaw Tint Swe thanked China and Russia and the countries that abstained. Had the resolution been adopted "it would have created a dangerous precedent," he said.

Multiple vetoes in the Security Council are rare, raising questions about unity in the months ahead when the council will have to deal with difficult issues including Sudan's conflict-wracked Darfur region and the follow-up to sanctions against North Korea and Iran .

Myanmar's junta took power in 1988 after crushing the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been in detention for much of the last 18 years. Hundreds of her supporters remain in prison.

"This resolution would have been a strong and urgently needed statement by the Security Council about the need for change in Burma," said Acting U.S. ambassador Alejandro Wolff, using Myanmar's former name.

Still, he said, "the people of Burma should not be disheartened" because the vote reflected differences over the Security Council's jurisdiction, not about their plight.

All 15 council members "recognize that there are problems in the areas of human rights, social issues, political freedom," he said.

The last multiple veto was in 1989 by the U.S., Britain and France on a Panama resolution and the last double veto by China and the former Soviet Union was on a 1972 Mideast resolution.

"We find that attempts aimed at using the Security Council to discuss issues outside its view are unacceptable," Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said, noting that problems in Myanmar were being addressed by other U.N. bodies.

China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said he voted against the resolution for the same reason. The veto was only China's fourth, and Wang expressed regret, saying it was clear Myanmar was not moving quickly enough to promote stability.

He urged the military regime to move toward "inclusive democracy" and "speed up the process of dialogue and reform."

Though he abstained, Indonesia's ambassador, Rezlan Jenie, was highly critical of Myanmar, a fellow member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. ASEAN has tried to restore democracy in Myanmar, he said, but there has been no progress on the ground.

"Myanmar must respond to the imperative of restoring democracy and improving human rights," Jenie said. "We will do everything in our power ... to bring about positive change in Myanmar."

Wolff said the U.S. aim was to put the situation in Myanmar in the global spotlight and to support its people.

He accused Myanmar's military regime of carrying out arbitrary arrests, torture, rapes and executions, of waging war on minorities and building new cities while refugees flee the country, "narcotics and human trafficking grow, and communicable diseases remain untreated."

The United States views these actions as "contemporary threats that the council and the international community needs

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to address before they become imminent ... threats to international peace and security," he said.

Along with the U.S., Britain, France, Slovakia, Peru, Ghana, Belgium, Italy and Panama all supported the resolution.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, who co-sponsored the resolution, said his government wants to see a strengthened relationship between the United Nations and Myanmar to reduce poverty and promote development, and to establish democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Hindustan Times - ASEAN's new rules against errant members worries junta -

[NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] <NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoo.com>
-Burma Related News - Jan 15-16, 2007. - "TIN KYI" <tinkyi@sbcglobal.net>

Myanmar has been internationally criticised because of its failure to democratise and to release political prisoners, and its possible objections to proposals in the charter could block ASEAN -- which currently practices decision-making by consensus -- to adopt any strict regulations.

"From what they (Myanmar) mentioned at the various discussions, I can say that it is an issue of concern to them," Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda told the agency on the sidelines of a broader regional summit of 16 Asian leaders, including Myanmar's Prime Minister Gen Soe Win.

Wirayuda stressed the ASEAN charter was still in the planning stage, but added that Indonesia "supports basically the idea of strengthening the compliance of member states to the principles, policies and decisions of ASEAN."

Indonesia also has proposed that ASEAN establish a three-country committee tasked with finding new ways to constructively engage Myanmar and spur it to fulfill its promise to implement democratic reforms, Wirayuda said.

ASEAN cannot abandon Myanmar because the region's interests are closely linked with the nation, Wirayuda said, adding that the recent US effort to bring Myanmar's situation to the UN Security Council illustrates growing international concern.

"Perhaps in a way, the US move was a good lesson for Myanmar and for ASEAN, instead of distancing ourselves from our member country that has become an international concern," Wirayuda said.

Washington had introduced a UN resolution -- vetoed by China and Russia last Friday -- calling on Myanmar to release all political prisoners and speed up progress toward democracy.

Beijing and Moscow argued that the UN's most powerful body was not the right place to discuss Myanmar because it does not pose a threat to international peace and security.

Myanmar's current junta took power in 1988 after crushing a pro-democracy movement.

In 1990, it refused to hand over power when Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a landslide election victory.

Since then, the Nobel laureate has been in and out of detention, and she is currently kept in near-solitary confinement at her home.

January 18, 2007 - **Philippine Daily Inquirer**

The Burmese peoples open heart - Debbie Stothard

BurmaNet News, January 17, 2007 - Issue # 3122 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

As the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations posed for the traditional group photo at the 12th Asean Summit in Cebu, many must have been secretly grimacing behind their smiles at the thought of the troublesome regime in Burma (Myanmar).

While Burma's ruling military junta dusts off its 10-year-old excuse it is democratizing step-by-step, the Burmese people have courageously embarked on a simple quest to communicate with their dictatorship. The Open Heart campaign has ordinary people writing directly to Senior General Than Shwe to communicate their grievances. For most of us in the Asean, writing a letter may be routine, but for these people, it is a peaceful assertion of their freedom of expression. By including their identity details, it is also an act of defiance because hundreds of people have been jailed in Myanmar for much lesser acts.

While cynics may claim that people cannot eat democracy, the people of Burma realize that they are literally being starved by a dictatorship. In 2006, the price of rice rose by 30 percent, even as the military diverted

national funds to acquire new military hardware and to complete a new state-of-the-art capital. While child malnutrition reached 70 percent in many regions of the country and 25,000 people were displaced by military attacks in 2006, Than Shwes daughter was bestowed with gifts worth \$50 million at her scandalously extravagant wedding last July.

The Asean must take responsibility for the deteriorating situation in Burma. By using engagement as a euphemism to shield the Burmese government from pressure, the Asean has emboldened it to misbehave further.

Burma joined the Asean in 1997. At the time, around 210,000 refugees had fled the country. Now the number is five times higher, more than a million asylum-seekers have left the country, and another million of its people are internally displaced. And since then, Burma has acquired the dubious distinction of being the worlds No. 2 producer of heroin, opium and amphetamines. Burma now exports annually about 900 million amphetamine pills to Thailand alone. It is also a net exporter of HIV/AIDS to its neighbors, making border areas in India and China home to the highest rates of drug addiction and HIV infection.

Apparently unsatisfied with its notoriety, Burma has gone on to recruit the worlds largest number of child soldiers (70,000) and is the only government in the world still using antipersonnel land mines on a regular basis, usually against civilians in rural areas. The traditional and non-traditional threats to regional security are indisputable.

The repression has not just impoverished civilians and lower-ranking soldiers; it has caused such widespread human tragedy that ordinary people have been moved to risk detention and further persecution by writing letters to their dictator. They realize they must speak for themselves since over 1,000 of those who have done so from charismatic democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to ethnic, student and labor leaders and journalists have been gagged and detained.

In the face of this courage, it is startling and disappointing that the Asean leaders seem to have chosen to disempower themselves of a peaceful, political solution to the Burmese problem. The Asean has expressed its desire to see reforms in Burma and has gone as far as openly expressing frustration and anger at its government. Unfortunately, Asean leaders seem to feel that this is all they can do.

Asean leaders know very well that the Burmas so-called roadmap to democracy hinges on the drafting of a new constitution to guarantee military dominance over the Parliament and the Cabinet. The drafting process has excluded 90 percent of the elected legislators and subjected participants to conditions described by a United Nations expert as a mass house arrest. In November 2005, ethnic Shan leaders who attempted to discuss the constitution-drafting process independently were rounded up and sentenced to between 70 and 106 years in jail!

Asean leaders know that they cannot be jailed or tortured by the Burmese government for speaking up. They also realize that Burma has treated them with contempt by abusing their solidarity and severely undermining their credibility.

The Asean will not be able to earn the respect or get the cooperation of Burmas ruling generals unless it is willing to back rhetoric with leverage. The Asean is in a position, through Indonesias seat on the United Nations Security Council, to compel the regime to deliver genuine reforms.

Burma is already on the official agenda of the Security Council. What is needed is a non-punitive resolution. The Asean has the opportunity to empower itself by engaging in this process. If not for the sake of the people of Burma, then for its self-respect.

Debbie Stothard is a coordinator of Altsean-Burma (Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma), a broad regional network of groups and individuals supporting human rights and democracy in Burma. Stothard, a Malaysian, has been working on Burmese issues for more than 18 years.

Free Burma, free Aung San Suu Kyi

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