



BURMA REPORT

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Free Burma, free Aung San Suu Kyi

March 19, 2007 – **The Irrawaddy** - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6826&z=163>

Another protestor arrested in Rangoon - Khun Sam

The BurmaNet News, March 17-19, 2007 - Issue # 3164 - www.burmanet.org - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

Burmese authorities kept up pressure on dissidents in Rangoon with the arrest this weekend of another protestor from the February 22 demonstration.

Soe Myint Htein, 42, was arrested on Friday by the Special Branch of the Burmese police while he was in a tea shop in North Okkalapa Township.

Thein Aung Myint, a fellow protestor and brother of Soe Myint Htein, who was previously detained and released, told *The Irrawaddy* on Monday: "He was taken from a tea shop for being a demonstrator, and now we hear that he is in the Aung Thabye interrogation center."

The arrest of Soe Myint Htein brought to 17 the number of protesters apprehended by Burmese authorities following the February 22 demonstration that called for better living conditions, better health care and 24-hour electricity.

Apart from Soe Myint Htein, 16 protesters who were arrested in late February and early March have been freed without charge.

Meanwhile authorities banned a religious ceremony near Theingyi Market in Rangoon, in which a 40-year-old protestor, Htin Kyaw, was preparing for a ceremony to become a monk, by other members of the anti-government demonstration.

Htin Kyaw shaved his head on Saturday in preparation for the ceremony on the following day. But authorities cancelled the ceremony on Sunday.

"This is a religious event and he should not have been prohibited [to become a monk] like this because of pressure from authorities," said a monk in Rangoon who teaches the principles of Buddhism. "Anyone can become a monk when the superior monks agreed to it."

Anti-government protests are rare in Burma, where authorities deal harshly with dissent.

Daily Times-03-27-2007 - Myanmar junta vows to crush opponents -

"anilverma7" <anilverma7@yahoo.com> - NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoogroups.com

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar put on a show of might and defiance at its annual military parade Tuesday, with junta chief Than Shwe displaying few signs of his reported ill health in his new capital city.

Some 15,000 troops took to the echoing parade ground of the military-ruled nation's newly built capital Naypyidaw for Armed Forces Day, marching in the shadow of statues of old Burmese kings and flags bearing army crests. Senior General Than Shwe, who stood in the morning sun without faltering for about one hour, delivered a speech rebuking countries such as the United States which have taken the junta to task over human rights and democratic reform.

"Judging from lessons of the history, it is certain that powerful countries wishing to impose their influence on our nation will make any attempt in various ways to undermine national unity," he said. He also vowed to "crush, hand-in-hand with the entire people, every danger of internal and external destructive elements obstructing the stability and development of the state."

After his 10-minute speech, a medal-bedecked Than Shwe inspected the troops, standing upright out of the sunroof of his stretch Mercedes. The parade began as the sun rose over Naypyidaw, a city the military secretly carved out of the jungles of central Myanmar.

The arena had an almost festive atmosphere, with smiling generals keen to show off the new capital to foreign media, allowed to travel here for the first time.

The public is barred from the event, which marks the beginning of resistance to Japanese occupation during World War II. It is one of the few times of the year when Than Shwe allows his image to appear in official media.

The 73-year-old was under particularly intense scrutiny this year, amid widespread rumours that his health may be failing. He spent two weeks in Singapore for medical checks in January, and upon his return staged an unusual series of appearances in state media to allay any concerns about his well-being. afp



The Irrawaddy - April 09, 2007 - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6934&z=163>

Splinter Rebels Overrun KNU Battalion Headquarters By Shah Paung

THE BURMANET NEWS - April 7-9, 2007 Issue # 3179 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>-www.burmanet.org

KNU Battalion 101 abandoned its headquarters Monday after three days of skirmishes with splinter rebel groups, which forced hundreds of villagers from Karen State in Burma to flee to Thailand, border sources said on Monday.

Fighting between rival armies took place Saturday, Sunday and Monday between Karen National Union troops and the junta-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, which is allied with other splinter groups. The infighting drove hundreds of villagers to Thailand, observers said.

The headquarter base was located opposite Mae Ramat District of Tak Province, Thailand. More than 200 Burmese villagers have arrived in Mae Ramat and an estimated 300 other villagers have left their homes, according to the KNU General-Secretary Mahn Sha.

Reuters reported that recent clashes killed at least 17 people and wounded 19 others, citing Thai military sources. Confirmation of casualties from both sides was not available on Monday. However, KNU battalion 101 soldiers on the front line told *The Irrawaddy* on Monday that their unit killed one soldier and four others were injured.

Border-based relief groups, including the Karen Refugee Committee and the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium, are providing assistance to newly arrived refugees.

Since Saturday, Karen ceasefire groups, including the KDBA and other Karen ceasefire groups, have engaged the KNU's 7th Brigade's Battalion 101 and Battalion 24.

A Burmese trader who arrived in Myawaddy from Kawkaeik on Sunday said, "All of the trucks, passenger buses and cars have to stop along the road. Many army trucks are carrying wounded or dead soldiers."

According to a DKBA source, in the KNU 6th Brigade area opposite Umphang District in Tak Province, fighting has not occurred, but villagers are moving toward the border because the DKBA has sent more troops into the 6th Brigade area. The DKBA broke away from the KNU in January, 1995.

The Free Burma Rangers, a relief group, reported on Saturday that in early April the Burmese Army launched an attack on a Karen village in Kyauk Kyi Township, killing at least one villager. More than 900 people were displaced.

On Saturday night, traders in Three Pagodas Pass said a hand grenade exploded at a Burmese Army camp opposite Sangkhlaburi District in Kanchaburi Province, Thailand, injuring a civilian and a Burmese soldier.

OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS KAREN NATIONAL UNION KAWTHOOLEI

KNU Statement on New Military Operation by SPDC - 12-4-2007

Shan-EU <shaneu31@yahoo.com> - 13.04.2007 - [**freeburma**] <freeburma@yahoo.com>
 [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK@yahoogroups.com,

Starting from April 7, 2007 the SPDC military clique launches a military operation against the base area of the KNLA 7th Brigade, in Pa-an District of the KNU. In this operation, LIBs 231, 355, 356, 546, 98 and 28 from MOC-12, and some DKBA units are being used. With regard to this, we, the KNU, issue a statement as follows.

1. In July 2006, the SPDC tried to use the ploy of taking Gen. Bo Mya to Rangoon for medical treatment, but as it was rejected by Gen. Bo Mya himself, the SPDC suffered a shameful setback. Once again when Bo Htin Maung defected and surrendered to the SPDC on February 22, 2007, the SPDC suffered another blow of shame, as the 6 battalions of the KNLA 7th Brigade and the 3 battalions of KNLA General Headquarters explicitly opposed it. As a result of its failures, the SPDC became pathologically incensed and started this military operation, in order to put pressure on the KNU.
2. In fact, since February 2006, the SPDC has been launching ferocious military operations in the KNU base areas of Toungoo, Nyaungglaybin, Papun and Thaton Districts, in the northern part. These military operations have caused the destruction of more than two hundred villages and the emergence of about 25,000 destitute internally displaced persons (IDP), who have to flee from their hearths and homes and hide in the jungles.
3. Some news media are wrongly portraying the military clashes as the Karens fighting among themselves. The truth of the matter is that the SPDC is launching military operations against the KNU and the Karen people and they are part of the SPDC military clique's agenda to divide the KNU, destroy the Karen people's revolutionary resistance and enslave the Karen people protractedly. The use of some Karen armed groups now in these operations is also in accordance with a long-time arrangement systematically planned by the military clique.
4. We, the KNU, will continue to struggle on, with unfailing loyalty to the Karen people, until they gain the right to decide their own political destiny, and oppose all acts within the Karen people to destroy national unity and the unity of the revolutionary resistance. We will oppose all kinds of defeatism within the Karen community and cooperate with those who truly have patriotism. We urge every Karen to see the actual common enemy of the Karen people, not to do anything benefiting the enemy and oppose the treacherous tactics of the enemy, using Karen to fight against the Karen.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

5. Constantly rejecting dialogue for resolving the fundamental political problems of the country fairly and launching military attacks viciously against the Karen revolutionary resistance by the SPDC, in accordance with the policy of total annihilation, are not correct acts. For that reason, we decidedly condemn them and, with this statement, call upon the SPDC to resolve the country's political problems, justly, through dialogue.

March 16, 2007 **The Irrawaddy** - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6821&z=163>

NLD urges appointment of special UN envoy to Burma

THE BURMANET NEWS - March 16, 2007 - Issue # 3163 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Burma's opposition party, the National League for Democracy, has urged the United Nations to appoint a new, highly qualified special envoy to Burma. The post has been vacant for more than one year.

U Lwin, the party's secretary, told The Irrawaddy he hopes the UN will soon find a replacement for high profile Malaysian diplomat Razali Ismail, who resigned his post in 2005.

„We hope some one who has a good understanding on Burma and the region will be appointed and come to Burma,“ U Lwin said. He did not say who the NLD might support for the position.

Asked whether the NLD preferred a Westerner or Asian, the former deputy prime minister who served under the late dictator Gen Ne Win said it didn't matter as long as the envoy had in-depth knowledge of Burma and knew the heads of the governments in the region.

What matters most, he said, is that a special envoy understands both Burmese politics and regional politics.

Last year, some Asian diplomats were tipped as possible special UN envoys to Burma, among them former Philippine president Fidel Ramos, Jose Ramos-Horta of East Timor and former Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas.

U Lwin said NLD representatives met twice with former UN under secretary-general for political affairs Ibrahim Gambari, and the UN diplomat didn't understand politics in Burma well enough. Gambari visited Burma twice last year and critics said the trips were used by the junta to deflect strong international pressure on the regime and to forestall calls for the release of detained Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Gambari was allowed to meet with the NLD icon in a government guest house.

Former UN envoy Razali Ismail, who took part in negotiations between the NLD and the regime, was denied access to the military-run nation for almost two years. He resigned his post when he was denied a visa to enter Burma.

Gambari was appointed acting envoy by the former UN chief Kofi Annan. He was replaced as UN under secretary-general for political affairs by American diplomat B Lynn Pascoe in February.

Gambari, however, is expected to make a return visit to Burma, according to Thaug Htun, a UN representative of the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

"He has been invited again (by the military government), and he might be able to go in again," Thaug Htun said.

"There have been considerations at the UN to institutionalize its work in Burma through regular visits by its envoys and opening relevant offices in the country," he said.

Observers expect an effort will be made this year in the UN Security Council to bring up the issue of child soldiers in Burma.

Editorial-April 2007 - **By The Irrawaddy** - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6867&z=108>

The Power of One - 02.04.2007 - The Irrawaddy <news@irrawaddy.org>

Politics in Burma - particularly since the popular pro-democracy uprising swept the nation in 1988 - seems to be the exclusive domain of politicians, activists or dissidents. The „people power“ movement fueled by the strength and courage of individual citizens seems to have all but disappeared.

For the last 19 years, opposition groups and activists have struggled to keep the democracy movement's flame alive, but their efforts lack the strength to overthrow the dictatorial State Peace and Development Council.

Similarly, ordinary citizens have lacked the resolve to stand against Burma's ruling junta, which has never hesitated to crush with extraordinary brutality any sign of individual or collective dissent among its people.

But the situation is changing. On February 22, a group of some 20 people - most of them not actively involved in politics - staged a

demonstration in downtown Rangoon.

Their demands were not related to the broader political objectives of the nation's foremost opposition party, the National League for Democracy. They did not ask for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi or the country's nearly 1,200 political prisoners. Nor did they ask for the removal of the ruling junta and the advent of democracy in Burma.

The small band of citizens merely demanded that the government take care of its people. They asked for a resolution of Burma's crippling economic and social ills and the end of civil corruption. In other words, they simply addressed the day-to-day inequalities that affect every citizen of the country.

Frustrated by the increasing challenges of daily life in Burma, the protesters dared to express their opinions about government failings - for many years a sure ticket to one of the country's many prisons - and their courage brought several onlookers into the protest and earned the sympathy of many others who refused to participate directly.

Unsurprisingly, 16 members of the group were detained, interrogated and eventually released.

Also in February, a 65-year-old man in Rangoon put his complaints about skyrocketing commodity prices on paper and fixed the sheets to the fence in front of his home. In his letters, Thein Zan also criticized Burma's state-run press, which only publishes the rankest government propaganda.

Thein Zan was quickly arrested and remains in detention under the charge of inciting public unrest.

Burmese people often ask when democracy will be return to their country. One might well respond, as Aung San Suu Kyi has done: „To get that answer, you should ask yourself what you have contributed for democracy.“

Suu Kyi has long been a vital catalyst for popular - and individual - dissent. „Politics and the future of our country have something to do with each and every one of you,“ she has said. This does not require everyone to become a politician, but it does require that they contribute whatever they are able to - even if that means simply telling the truth.

Without a truly people-powered movement, little will change in Burma. But a free and flourishing life will be possible when individual citizens stand up and assume their role in politics.

NDD Weekly Inside News Commentary-No. 285 – Mar. 2, 2007

Network for Democracy and Development Documentation and Research Department

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Ethnic Ceasefire Groups: Digging Their Own Graves

"As the National Convention has been attended by the most comprehensive turnout comprising of ethnic delegates from all over the country, representatives of ethnic groups who have returned to the legal fold and persons from all walks of life, I would like to say that demands for dialogue by those who are trying to undermine it have faded into thin air under the splendor of the highly meaningful National Convention." Thus spoke Lt. Gen. Thein Sein, Chairman of the Convention Convening Commission (NC), at the closing day of the tenth session of the convention on December 29, 2006.

Thein Sein's main point in this statement is that with **over six hundred (633 persons) out of more than one thousand delegates (1088 persons)** currently attending the NC being ethnic delegates - some of whom represent ethnic ceasefire groups and surrendered parties or splinter factions - there is no need to hold separate dialogue with anyone. This kind of talk is a clear reply not only to the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, the Committee Representing Peoples' Parliament (CRPP) and political activists both inside and abroad persistently demanding to settle national reconciliation by dialogue but also to ethnic forces calling for tripartite dialogue.

Armed ethnic revolutionary groups which have cut ceasefire deals with the junta one after another since 1989 on the pretext of finding peaceful means to solve political problems and ethnic rights issue could not freely and openly talk about political issues and ethnic rights now but have to draft a constitution that would blatantly legitimize military dictatorship in Burma.

Representatives of ethnic ceasefire groups attending the State Peace and Development Council's NC had once cried for total annihilation of "military dictatorship and great-Burman chauvinism" to achieve democracy and ethnic rights during the time they were pursuing armed revolution. Some of those groups had even attended the "Seminar on Union of Burma's Constitution" called by the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB)-the largest border-based political alliance in 1994 on Thai-Burma border where they fervently talked about ethnic rights and not compromising anything, even on wordings. It is unbelievable that the once active and daring revolutionaries are now meekly doing military dictators' bidding.

On public insistence, some of the ceasefire groups' representatives attending the SPDC's convention made certain demands or requests. At the convention which resumed in May 2004, thirteen ceasefire groups presented a joint paper demanding seven points regarding power sharing in legislative sector. Also before the convention started again in February 2005, six ceasefire groups collectively wrote to the Chairman of the Convention Convening Commission, demanding reassessment and revision of convention procedures. However, such demands were not made in a strong principled manner but just for show. Consequently, the SPDC generals did not blink an eyelid in response. Besides paying no attention to ethnic ceasefire groups' demands, the SPDC even apprehended Shan State Army (SSA)

patron Maj. Gen. Hso Ten, who is also a delegate to the convention and sentenced him to lengthy jail terms. The junta paid no heed to five ceasefire groups' request to release him.

Although SPDC generals are not in a habit of giving in to ceasefire groups' demands, the latter have to promptly carry out the generals' calls. When the NLD and the CRPP demanded the SPDC to convene a parliament in October 1998, many ceasefire groups had to issue statements denouncing such a move in favor of the SPDC. They also had to denounce Sao Khampha and his team's declaration of Shan State's independence in April 2005. Further, when China and Russia vetoed the draft resolution in the UN Security Council in this January, thirty-three cease-fire, surrendered or splintered groups, with the exception of the New Mon State Party, were made to issue statements opposing the US, UK and the NLD.

Now that the sham National Convention attended by ceasefire groups and many ethnic elements has successfully adopted detailed principles for several sections of the Constitution, including the "Section on Armed Forces" which would formally endorse military dictatorship, the tone of SPDC generals is getting harsher. They are now starting to hint that the next session of the NC would be held within 2007 at an appropriate time, that experts would draft a constitution based on principles adopted by the convention and that this constitution would be approved by a referendum.

It is not known what terms were reached to solve political problems and ethnic rights issues when armed ethnic groups and SLORC/SPDC started ceasefire talks, but by the end of 2004, Northeastern Command chief, Maj. Gen. Myint Hlaing, dispensed notices warning armed ethnic groups to strictly observe the following thirteen points to which they have agreed:

- 1. Do not contact opposition organizations;**
- 2. Renounce armed struggle;**
- 3. Do not expand manpower over existing strength, do not recruit new men, do not open military training courses or exercises;**
- 4. Submit detailed list and set-up of manpower and firepower;**
- 5. Do not extort money and opium taxes;**
- 6. Do not commit robbery, looting or bullying the people;**
- 7. Move under government supervision, and outside assigned areas, report to army camps and move without arms;**
- 8. Stay away of aboveground political parties;**
- 9. Do not interfere in government's executive, administrative and judicial affairs;**
- 10. Do not spread out but fix a place where development work is desired;**
- 11. The government must try its best to support the ethnic group's livelihood;**
- 12. Under government leadership, the group must be transformed into an armed force protecting local populace interests;**
- 13. Effectively support government's drug combating work.**

Looking at these regulations, it is evident that the military junta's ceasefire arrangements with armed ethnic groups are not aimed at achieving genuine peace and national unity but are a systematic ploy to control and crush the armed ethnic groups. Therefore, ceasefire groups need to reassess their degree of achievement in their intention to enter ceasefire deals and attend the National Convention.

Is it true that ethnic regions are developing in great strides as the junta claims? Can the local people really enjoy progress or the benefits of natural resources born of their land? Are the ceasefire groups aware of massive expansion of the dictatorships' armed forces? Or the containment of ethnic groups by the deployment of junta troops in places just a short distance from their headquarters while at the same time they are being restricted through prohibition of manpower expansion, recruitment, military training and military exercise? How much have they been able to serve their people's interests? To what extent have they been able to defend their own people? Could they even defend themselves? Do they still have their true base areas and their own people supporting them? Could they definitely refute the fact that they are now earnestly serving the military dictatorship and great-Burman chauvinism against which they had claimed to fight for the sake of democracy and ethnic rights? All these questions should be asked upon themselves, we suggest in goodwill.

Do they think they have done as much as they can, and hence consider shifting the burden of responsibility onto the people to achieve peace and national unity? Do they feel that having raised their necessary points in the convention, they now cannot be blamed for not succeeding as ultimately the people have the right to reject the constitution drafted to suit the SPDC's desires? If this is the case, then history cannot accept such organizations or leaders.

Therefore, ethnic ceasefire groups and ethnic political parties attending the SPDC's sham National Convention should not let themselves be cast adrift if their demands are not met. Like the New Mon State Party, they ought to stand firmly on their convictions. If they shun the soon-to-be-resumed last session of the convention categorically and express their organization's principles and position plainly for the last time for tyrants to see, we assume that the obstinate SPDC generals would inevitably have to agree to a tripartite dialogue.

End of report/ Friday, March 02, 2007 - Documentation and Research Department, NDD

Mizzima News (www.mizzima.com)

USDA orders attack on human rights activists: Activists - Ko Dee

Aung Thu <aungthu@t-online.de> - <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2007/April/32-Apr-2007.html>

April 19, 2007 - Two human rights activists were ruthlessly beaten up by a group of 100 people in Hinthada in lower Burma. The township head of the Union Solidarity and Development Association masterminded the assault, activists alleged.

"We are sure that the secretary of Hinthada Township USDA, U Nyunt Oo ordered the beating. He was holding a walkie-talkie at the time of the assault. It seems that he was waiting for an order from his superiors," said Myint Aye of the self-styled network of human rights promoters.

Two human rights promoters Maung Maung Lay and Myint Naing were beaten up by a group of people at Oakpon village 10 miles from Hintada yesterday at about 1 p.m. Myint Naing is also a resident of Hintada. Activists said they will report the case and go for legal action.

Myint Aye, Maung Maung Lay, Yin Kyi and Tin Maung Oo left Rangoon for Hintada to promote human rights awareness.

After a training programme in Oakpon village, about 100 people wielding sticks beat up Maung Maung Lay and Myint Naing. Reportedly, about 300 people were waiting to attack the activists in a monastery and on the village main road.

Mizzima has learnt that the authorities warned the host of the trainee not to allow more training and shot at the house.

"Beating by groups is a criminal offense. So whoever did it or whatever marginalization masterminded it, it is criminal in nature and action needs to be taken against the culprits. By doing so, I hope, it would help such cases not to recur in the future," said Ko Ko Gyi, a leader of 88 Generation Students.

The two victims of the attack have been admitted to Rangoon general hospital with serious injuries.

VOA News - Washington - 21 April 2007

Rights Group Condemns Attacks on Burmese Human Rights Activists -

Aung Thu <aungthu@t-online.de>

Amnesty international says it is concerned about reports of an attack on Burmese human rights activists.

Burmese media report the two activists Maung Maung Lay and Myint Naing were beaten by dozens of people as they left a village in Hinthada, Irrawaddy division on Wednesday.

Reports say the two were hospitalized with serious injuries.

Amnesty said Friday the pair had been conducting activities to raise awareness about human rights standards and were members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters organization.

The rights group called on Burmese authorities to investigate the attack and bring those who carried it out to justice.

It also called on the government to protect the victims and witnesses of the incident from intimidation, threats or violence.

The Washington Post - Tuesday, April 3, 2007 - Page A23 -

A Lifeline for the Burmese - By Morton Abramowitz and Jonathan Kolieb

Jean Gale <JZGale@yahoo.com> - [[freeburma](http://freeburma.org)] freeburma@yahoo.com

International policies aimed at opening up Burma's military regime are failing even as they overlook a continuing major tragedy. In January the situation in Burma could not even win serious attention in the U.N. Security Council. The world needs an approach that focuses not on fostering democratic governance but on the critical health and education needs of Burma's long-suffering people.

Western economic sanctions, international diplomatic pressure and "engagement" with the ruling junta by its Asian neighbors have produced scant progress. Given the military's deep stake in the economy, it is unlikely to relinquish power. Rebellion is improbable, and regime change by outside forces is not an option. As long as India and China maintain strong trade, development assistance and military ties with the regime, and Burma produces more natural gas, efforts to end or reduce five decades of military control will be ineffective.

Meanwhile, Burma's 52 million people endure increasingly appalling conditions. About one-third live in poverty; male life expectancy is only 56 years. More than 30 percent of children under age 5 suffer malnutrition, and nearly half of all

children never attend school. Tuberculosis and malaria are endemic in some areas, and the country's mortality rates are among the highest in Asia. At least 37,000 people died of HIV-AIDS in 2005, and more than 600,000 others are infected with HIV.

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The junta's brutal conflicts with ethnic minorities have resulted in tens of thousands of Burmese killed and thousands of villages destroyed. More than half a million people have been internally displaced, and some 150,000 Burmese minorities live in camps along the Thai-Burmese border. Reports persist of forced labor, human trafficking and vast numbers of forcibly recruited child soldiers.

Burma's deprivation also fuels instability across Southeast Asia. Drug trafficking emanating from Burma is extensive, and more than a million Burmese have fled ethnic conflicts and poverty, taking with them high rates of HIV-AIDS and other infectious diseases.

The military leadership bears responsibility for the degradation of the people. Beyond negligence, the junta increases the people's suffering through mismanagement of the economy, vast underfunding of key social services (despite rising oil and gas revenue), and restriction of personal freedoms and political development. The internationally accepted principle of the "responsibility to protect" apparently does not apply for Burma's people. Moral indignation is the practical extent of Western responses to these atrocities.

Providing humanitarian assistance to a desperate people is a better response.

Annual international assistance to Burma of \$150 million, however useful, is grossly insufficient. Almost every other developing country receives more. The depth of Burma's situation warrants a multiyear commitment on the order of \$1 billion annually from international donors -- public and private -- to fund improvements in health and education, including upgrading the country's crumbling infrastructure in these sectors. A consortium of donors should be established to review projects and their implementation, to pursue cooperation from the Burmese government and to monitor the delivery of aid.

There is, of course, peril in a humanitarian approach. Millions of aid dollars may well be diverted by the junta, and the flow of aid might convince the government that it need not reform. Nor can we be sure the government would accept such a program. Cooperation with the regime, in any event, will be patchy -- the junta has long placed onerous restrictions on aid agencies already there. But cooperation must be pursued, as there is no possibility of working on a large scale inside Burma without such efforts.

Western officials and politicians may bridle at this approach. Certainly, vigilance is required to minimize the hazards of working in Burma. But risk is unavoidable, and the costs of inaction -- measured in mortality, drug addiction and infection rates -- loom larger. The international community is caught between the need to address the downward spiral of the Burmese people and not wanting to inadvertently support the Burmese military government or see international aid wasted. But this dilemma will not be solved in any reasonable time frame by relying on the shibboleths of "engagement" or "pressure."

Concerned countries will continue their efforts to free Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratically elected Burmese leader who remains under house arrest, and to get the military to embrace meaningful political change. These efforts, however important, are an insufficient response to Burma's worsening situation. The focus must shift from Burma's generals to its people. Imagining that a massive and sustained increase in humanitarian aid can produce political change in Burma over the long term may be a triumph of hope over reality. A program cannot be justified on that score. But if we can improve the lives of millions and avert further human disaster, it is incumbent upon us to try.

Morton Abramowitz is a senior fellow at the Century Foundation and a former U.S. ambassador to Thailand. Jonathan Kolieb is a research associate at the Century Foundation.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/02/AR2007040201263.html?nav=rss_opinions/columnsandblogs

Mizzima News - (www.mizzima.com) – 19. Apr 2007 - mizzima@mizzima.com

Interview with 88 generation student leader Ko Ko Gyi

Aung Thu <aungthu@t-online.de> - <http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/Interview/Jan-2007-08.html>

Q: Were you released alone or did you come out with the rest?

Ans: I and Ko Min Zeya were released at the same time. We learnt that after we were freed Ko Pyone Cho followed, and then Ko Htay Kywe and finally Ko Min Ko Naing were released. All five of us were summoned separately and were sent back home separately. We were kept separately but i was not released from Aung Tha Pyay.

Q: What did the authorities interrogate you about while you were detained?

Ans: They questioned us regarding the allegations they made against us in the newspapers. They asked us for our views on national reconciliation. They also asked how we view the National Convention.

Q: Why do you think you were released?

Ans: It's a kind of coincidence. It is a strange coincidence in a way that we were released at a time when the United Nations Security Council is to vote on the Burma issue and at a time when the ASEAN leaders are meeting. And it is also at a time when the National Convention is in recess.

Q: While you were detained, there were reports that all of you were handed over to the military by the home ministry. Is it true?

Ans: It was only a change of the place where we were kept. There was no change in the way they dealt with us.

Q: Did they inform you that they had taken remand five times or were you told that you all had to go to court? And how do you know that they had taken court remand? What are your views on it?

Ans: We were taken in the morning of September 27, 2006. We were not informed about how we were charged and under what act we had been detained. And on November 20, we were informed that we had been charged under 5 (J) and had been remanded for the second time. We don't know why we were not informed of the first remand.

That's not the way it should be. And after that they took another remand from another township and transferred us there. We were released from the third township that we were transferred to. We were transferred to Bahan township, Seikan township and Kyaukthada township. And each time the days of remand were over they would come and inform us that they had taken another remand. Looking at the judge who came to inform me, I felt sorry. They were about the same age as us; they might have been even younger than us. As judges, they did not have the right to decide over our case but they had to come and inform us of the decision that was already taken. So, looking at them I felt sad about the judicial system that our country has.

Q: When you were arrested, there were reports that the junta was trying to create a misunderstanding amongst the five of you. What is your experience regarding this when you were arrested?

Ans: We did not have the opportunity to interact with each other. After they took us away they kept us separately. We could not communicate. All five of us were able to meet only when we were released. Another thing is that I believe there could have been nothing that could create a misunderstanding among us, especially we who have been working together closely since 1988. Even if they had stopped us from interacting with each other, I don't think there could be any serious misunderstanding among us.

Q: How much hope do you have on United Nations Security Council's resolution on the Burma issue?

Ans: The most important role of the United Nations is that if the people of a country do not have the chance or cannot solve their own internal affairs then they only have the UN to fall back upon. That is in the international arena. And for Burma, it is extremely important for the UN to intervene. That's why since the very beginning we have supported the initiative to put Burma on the UNSC agenda. And in supporting this, our intention is not to fight against any particular group but we want to promote the role of UN in the process of national reconciliation. Therefore, the intervention of the UN in Burma's problem is very important. But on the other hand, we are not going to stay idle waiting for the UN to intervene. Even now we are doing what we can and are looking for ways where people can participate. And that's why, even when we were arrested, our brothers and comrades initiated ways in which people could participate and we saw the participation was very encouraging.

Q: Do you think you can move around freely after being released? And what are the activities that you plan?

Ans: While talking about moving around freely, I would just like to add a few things. In fact, freedom is concerned only with individuals. Even if they arrest me and put me in jail, as long as my mind is free no body can control me. They might be able to control me physically. So, I say that our freedom depends on the way we think and is more about our psychology. So, the question whether we will be able to work freely after our release does not depend on who is giving or not giving us permission. I'd like to say that we are freely doing what we should and what we can.

Q: Your analysis on Burmese politics in 2007?

Ans: When you say analysis on Burmese politics in 2007, I cannot predict like astrologers. But to analyse the political situation in 2007, I would say that it will depend on how much we can do and how much we can strive. I would say that it depends on how much effort we can make. In reality, the politics of our country is at a critical junction; it is a junction of do or die.

Therefore, as everybody has said over and over again that political stake holders, the military authorities, political parties and ethnic leaders should keep aside their differences and personal grudges and start thinking of a way to work together. And that is what we need to do. We will be emphasizing on this matter.

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