



BURMA REPORT

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Issue N° 53

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

The Irrawaddy Online News Alert - The Irrawaddy <news@irrawaddy.org> - Monday, November 12, 2007

UN Resolution against Burma - November 12, 2007

By **Lalit K Jha** / United Nations - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9281

Led by Portugal on behalf of the European Union, more than 40 countries have tabled a resolution at a key UN committee expressing concern about the human rights situation in Burma and calling for the Burmese junta to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for its citizens.

The resolution was tabled at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on Friday and, as expected, was opposed by Burmese diplomats who argued that it had been overtaken by events in their country, essentially the visits of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights.

The five-page resolution, which is considered to be in a draft stage until passed, "strongly calls upon" the Burmese Government to not only exercise utmost restraint and to desist from further arrests, but also to lift all restraint on peaceful political activity.

It calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, including: the leaders of the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo; the leader of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, Khun Htun Oo, and other Shan leaders; and the 88 Generation Students' group leaders, Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi.

The resolution, which is expected to come up for a vote next week, asks the military government to provide "safe and unhindered access" to all parts of the country to the UN and all other international humanitarian organizations in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered to all persons in need throughout the country.

Expressing grave concern over the systematic violation of human rights in the country, it strongly calls upon Burma to put an immediate end to recruitment of children as soldiers, and take urgent measures to put an end to the military operations targeting civilians in the ethnic areas.

The resolution calls for the lifting of restrictions on access to and flow of information from the people of the country, including open access to the Internet and restoration of the independence of the judiciary system and due process of law.

Responding to the draft resolution by exercising the "right of reply," the representative of Burma said it has been overtaken by events in the past few days—UN special envoy Gambari had confirmed positive developments after his recent visit to Burma, and had released a statement that noted that Aung San Suu Kyi was ready to cooperate with the Government toward a successful dialogue.

October 26, 2007 –**The Irrawaddy** - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9135

Gloomy start to Burma's festival of lights - Yeni

THE BURMANET NEWS - October 26, 2007 Issue # 3329 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Friday's full moon over Burma signals the advent of the country's Festival of Lights and the end of Buddhist Lent.

Houses, public buildings, pagodas and monasteries throughout Burma are festooned with lights, creating a colorful evening landscape. This year, however, the festive mood is dampened by the reappearance on the streets of Rangoon of hundreds of riot police armed with assault rifles and tear gas.

The ominous turnout, coming one week after the regime lifted the nighttime curfew on Rangoon, appears to be a security precaution on the one month's anniversary of the start of the bloody crackdown on peaceful demonstrations led by Buddhist monks.

Rangoon residents said the eastern gate of Burma's landmark Shwedagon Pagoda and Sule pagodas—the city's top religious shrines and the focus of the recent protests—and some leading monasteries were tightly guarded by police and pro-government groups.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

"We need to show up ID cards to the authorities even when we go into the monastery's compound," a businessman told The Irrawaddy.

Observers suggested the reappearance of heavy security in Rangoon is a sign that tension remains high between the people of Burma's former capital and the country's military rulers. Some sources say anti-regime posters and graffiti are appearing on buildings in downtown Rangoon. "Killer Than Shwe" and "Killer Tatmadaw (Armed Forces)" are two of the most popular slogans.

Constrained by these circumstances, Burmese monks have been prevented from carrying out their traditional practices, including their single-file walks beyond the monasteries to collect alms from crowds of devotees.

"We are still holding patam nikkujjana kamma (a boycott of alms from members of the military regime)," a Pakokku monk told The Irrawaddy. "We won't accept the alms they offer until they apologize for their treatment to the Sangha [the community of Buddhist monks]."

"Sometime the authorities offer alms indirectly, but we send them back or we donate them to poor people who hunger."

Burmese monks began their patam nikkujjana kamma in protest at the violent way in which protesting monks were dispersed by the authorities and pro-junta thugs in Pakokku, Upper Burma, in early September. The monks called for a government apology, but received only violence in reply.

Asked by The Irrawaddy how the monks were surviving, one replied: "We can survive with the alms offered by local residents."

Burma's military regime claimed this week that "bogus" monks had connived with political activists they had previously met in prison in staging last month's mass anti-government protests.

The allegation was made by Religious Affairs Minister Brig-Gen Thura Myint Aung during a meeting with senior monks in Rangoon, and reported by state-run radio and television. The state-run New Light of Myanmar also claimed that 48 blocks of TNT were found two weeks ago after investigations that led to the arrest of U Kovida, a 23-year-old monk at Rangoon's Nan Oo monastery.

"They accuse us of being destructive elements," said a Burmese monk, "In fact, they destroy our traditional religious practice through the use of military might."

A senior Rangoon monk said: "We Buddhist monks make no overnight journeys except for an important reason until October full moon day. Now they force young monks who came from the rural areas to study Buddhist literature in the cities to go back home. This also is an insult to the community of monks."

According to the Buddhist decree, monks must remain in their monasteries for the three months between the full moons of July and October. During this period, known as Buddhist Lent, they devote themselves to their religious duties.

October 18, 2007 - **Radio Free Asia**/Burmese Service - URL: http://www.rfa.org/english/burma/2007/10/18/burma_monk/

Burmese Monks' Leader Speaks From Hiding - 18.10.2007

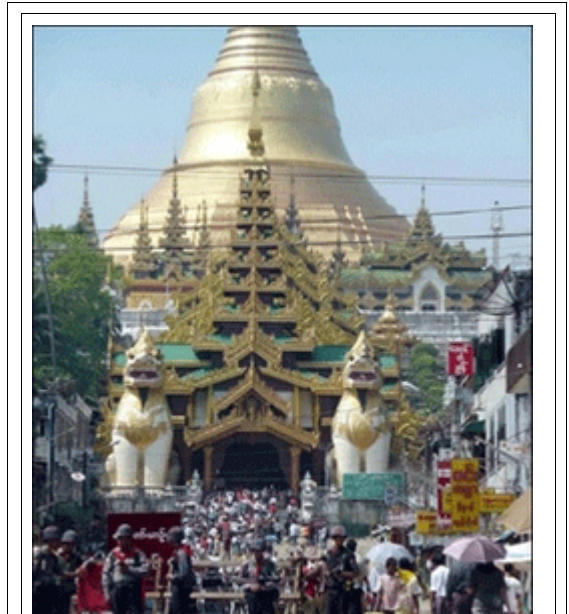
THE BURMANET NEWS - October 19, 2007 Issue # 3324 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>- www.burmanet.org

Many people are being killed, imprisoned, tortured, and sent to forced labor camps. I hereby sincerely ask the international community to do something to stop these atrocities.

Monks' leader U Gambira

U Gambira, a leader of the All-Burma Monks' Alliance that spearheaded nationwide protests in Burma in September, became a fugitive following the deadly Sept. 26-27 crackdown on protesters nationwide.

"My situation is not good. I have slept without shelter for two nights. I am not very well now. My security is pretty bad," he said, speaking from an undisclosed location. "Now these fellows are trying to butcher me. Now if you are done talking, as



Buddhist devotees offer prayers at the Rangoon's Shwedagon Pagoda under tight military control [Photo: AFP]

soon as you hang up, I have to move somewhere..."

"The important thing for overseas Sanghas [monks] is to carry out the Burmese cause continuously, with unity. At the moment, as you know, we cannot do anything inside Burma. We have been assaulted very badly. A few got away, a few left. I am still trying to get away but I haven't succeeded."

He read the following message to U.N. Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari, U.S. President George Bush, and to the world:

"Mr. Gambari... I wish to say, please do something effective and practical for Burma. Measures such as economic sanctions and arms embargo will take time (years) to achieve a political solution. What is most important is for today, for tomorrow. Please tell Mr. Gambari that I am very grateful for his active participation in Burmese affairs. I have a tremendous respect for him. But please tell him to implement the most effective practical measures in Burma. Please try. Please send U.N. representatives to Burma to carry out various ways and means to get political results now. For today."

"To Buddhists all over the world and activists and supporters of Burmese movement, please help to liberate the Burmese people from this disastrous and wicked system. To the six billion people of the world, to those who are sympathetic to the suffering of the Burmese people, please help us to be free from this evil system. Many people are being killed, imprisoned, tortured, and sent to forced labor camps. I hereby sincerely ask the international community to do something to stop these atrocities. My chances of survival are very slim now. But I have not given up, and I will try my best."

Killings, torture, labor camp

"...I would like to make an appeal to President Bush: Please take pride as a President who has worked hard for Burma to achieve something before his term expires."

"I might not have very long to live. I, Gambira, speaking by phone with you right now, have a very slim chance of survival. Please try your best to relieve our suffering. It will be worse in future when they [the junta] have laid down their roadmap so they can remain in power forever—it will be a blueprint to oppress us systematically. Once they establish their constitution, the Burmese people will suffer for generation after generation."

Translation by Ko Ko Aung for RFA's Burmese service. Service director: Nancy Shwe.

October 25, 2007 - Associated Press

Suu Kyi Meets Junta's Official

THE BURMANET NEWS - October 25, 2007 Issue # 3328 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, under house arrest for 12 of the last 18 years, met for about one hour with a Burmese military government official Thursday afternoon, a diplomat said.

Suu Kyi was driven a few minutes from her home to a government guest house, where she held talks with newly appointed liaison minister, Aung Kyi. The information came from a diplomat who did not want to be identified for political reasons.

A retired major general, Aung Kyi, was appointed to the post on October 8 to hold talks with Suu Kyi.

It is not clear if this is Suu Kyi's first meeting with Aung Kyi, who on Wednesday was elevated to labor minister from deputy labor minister.

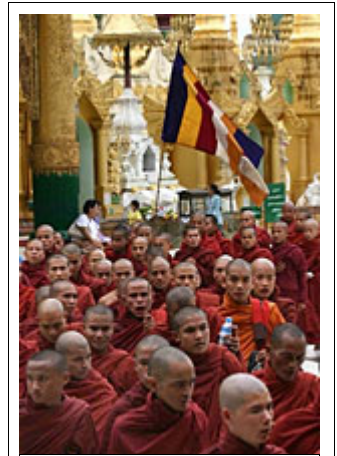
With Aung Kyi's appointment, the junta said it hoped to achieve "smooth relations" with Suu Kyi. Early this month the New Light of Myanmar newspaper, a mouthpiece of the junta, printed a brief official announcement on its front page saying that Kyi had been appointed "minister for relations" to coordinate contacts with Suu Kyi, the country's democracy icon.

Appointing a liaison officer was suggested by UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari during his September 29-Oct. 2 visit to Burma, state media said.

Gambari met with both top junta officials and Suu Kyi.

A protest movement began August 19 over the government raising fuel prices. It mushroomed over weeks into a broad-based anti-government movement pressing for democratic reforms.

Tens of thousands demonstrated, the largest protests in nearly two decades of brutal military rule.



Sept. 23, 2007. Buddhist monks march in Rangoon. Photo: AFP

Gambari's trip came after troops quelled mass protests with gunfire. The government said 10 people were killed, but dissident groups put the death toll at up to 200 and say 6,000 people were detained, including thousands of monks.

Aung Kyi's exact duties have not been detailed, but it appeared he would coordinate all of Suu Kyi's contacts with both the regime and the United Nations, which is seeking to end the political deadlock between democracy advocates and a military that has ruled since 1962.

Aung Kyi has a reputation among foreign diplomats, UN officials and aid groups as being relatively accessible and reasonable compared to top junta leaders, who are highly suspicious of outsiders. He has had the delicate task of dealing with the International Labor Organization, which accuses the junta of using forced labor.

Early this month the government announced that junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe was willing to meet with Suu Kyi - but only if she met certain conditions, like renouncing support for foreign countries' economic sanctions against the military regime.

Than Shwe has only met Suu Kyi once before, in 2002.

October 26, 2007 – **The Irrawaddy** - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9128

Tay Za: A targeted sanction hits the bulls-eye – By Aung Zaw

THE BURMANET NEWS - October 26, 2007 Issue # 3329 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

The high-flying young Burmese tycoon Tay Za is grounded—at least for now.

Faced with fresh US sanctions imposed by President George W Bush, Tay Za, 43, may be in serious financial trouble, say Rangoon sources.

The new US-imposed sanctions against Burma's military government, put into effect on October 19, froze the bank accounts of an additional 25 military officials and 12 businessmen or business entities closely associated with the regime.

Bush's executive order has made life difficult for Tay Za's companies, which are either based in Burma or linked to Singapore: Pavo Trading Pte Ltd, Air Bagan Holdings Pte Ltd and Htoo Wood Products Pte Ltd. Pavo Trading is a sister company of the Htoo Group of Companies run by Tay Za.

The targeted sanctions have hit at least one target where it hurts: in his pocketbook.

This week, Air Bagan Ltd suspended flights from Rangoon to Singapore, as of November 4, citing the effects of the economic sanctions against the airline's owner, Tay Za.

"It is no longer profitable... the airline has very few passengers," a businessman close to Tay Za told The Irrawaddy on Friday.

A letter signed by the airline's sales and marketing manager, released on Wednesday, said "the final blow" came when the company was informed by its Singapore bank that "they will no longer deal with us for the time being."

"Sanctions have been imposed on our airline and also our parent company in Singapore," the letter said. "This has indeed caused us a lot of pain and anguish, as with these sanctions we now have no access to aircraft spare parts. We are now facing some major obstacles that need to be dealt with in the next few months."

Gossip is swirling around Tay Za in Rangoon business circles. Rivals are watching his new difficulties with a mixture of envy and delight.

"He planned to launch an ocean liner, and he had sent a survey team to Singapore," a journalist in Rangoon told The Irrawaddy. "But now, I was told that he is in debt."

Many businessmen in Burma resent Tay Za and his business empire, especially his close connection to junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe and his family, and Gen Thura Shwe Mann, friendships which have brought him exclusive business opportunities and great wealth.

"There is no fairness in our open-market economy," said a businessman who requested anonymity. "Tay Za is always rewarded with export and import licenses and government projects."

Earlier, the gossip mill in Rangoon bestowed a derisive nickname on Tay Za: "Thura," as in "Thu=He" and "Ra= Be Given." "He Be Given," because he won all the favorable business deals.

One example: airplanes owned by Tay Za parked at the Rangoon International Airport are not obliged to pay parking fees and last year the government loaned ATR (Fokker) aircraft to Air Bagan. Unconfirmed reports also say that Than Shwe's family members have business shares in Air Bagan.

Tay Za may be knocked down a notch or two in his bank book, but the tycoon has no shortage of friends in high places, sources say, and he has apparently hedged his bet on the future by befriending Kyaing San Shwe, Than Shwe's son, as one of his circle of friends.

A few years ago, diplomatic sources say, Tay Za sealed his friendship by buying Kyaing San Shwe an American-made Hummer, the civilian version of the military Humvee, a status symbol in America, which now turns heads on Rangoon streets.

Courting the children of powerful generals and placing them on the boards of his companies appears to be one of Tay Za's business strategies. An important coup was his friendship with Aung Thet Mann, the son of the junta's No. 3 leader, Gen Thura Shwe Mann, who is tipped to take over the leadership when Than Shwe goes.

Aung Thet Mann, a young businessman who is also on the US sanction list, is on the board of Htoo Trading Company, and Aung Thet Mann's company, Ayer Shwe Wah, is now a part of Htoo trading Company.

Tay Za set up his first company after he dropped out of the Defense Services Academy and eloped with his girlfriend, Thida Zaw. With an initial capital investment of US \$333,333, the company exported timber and over the years Tay Za gained timber rights over large areas of virgin forests. Tay Za was close to former forestry minister Lt- Gen Chit Swe. A famous story among businessmen in Burma says the young tycoon rushed to the home of Lt-Gen Chit Swe, offering him 200 million kyat when the minister was purged in 1997.

The Htoo Trading Company now deals in timber, transport, tourism, construction, property development, palm oil production and military arms deal.

Tay Za subsequently expanded his dealings with the Rangoon regime by supplying the military with aircraft parts through his company Myanmar Avia Export, Burma's sole representative for Russia's Export Military Industrial Group, known as MAPO, and of the Russian helicopter company, Rostvertol.

Military analysts say Tay Za was instrumental in the junta's decision to purchase advanced MIG-29 fighter-bombers and helicopters from Russia.

Informed Rangoon sources say many Russian arms dealers who visit Rangoon stay at one of Tay Za's hotels, especially Espace Avenir, an executive apartment complex.

In spite of having no direct business investments in America, Tay Za appears to be feeling the effects of targeted sanctions, and he is paying a price for being the No. 1 friend of the junta.

October 20, 2007 - The Irrawaddy Online News Alert - The Irrawaddy <news@irrawaddy.org>

Continues Crackdown as US Applies Sanctions - By Wai Moe - 20.10.2007

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9067

The Burmese junta continued its crackdown on pro-democracy activists on Friday, even as the US added additional sanctions on 11 more junta officials and 12 business cronies.

Troops raided a house in Tamwe Township in Rangoon early Friday morning, arresting five people who are connected to the 88 Generation Students' group.

San San Tin, 60, Thet Thet Aung, 27, Noe Noe, 20, Thein Than Tun, 43, Kyaw Swa, 25, were arrested in the home of San San Tin, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), a human rights group.

Soe Tun, a spokesperson of the 88 Generation Students group, told The Irrawaddy on Saturday that recent raids and arrests have sometimes involved the arrests of an activist's family members who are taken hostage in exchange for the activist who is in hiding.

One example occurred on October 8, according to reports, when the home of Thet Thet Aung, an 88 Generation Students member, was raided by soldiers and her husband, Chit Ko Lin, was arrested. A few days later, her mother and mother-in-law were arrested as hostages, according to reports. Police arrested Thet Thet Aung in her hiding place on Friday.

Assessing the current state of affairs, Soe Tun said, "The junta appointed a liaison officer to mediate a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, but the generals are still going forward with their road map to democracy. It is not a positive sign. If

they want dialogue, first they must stop crackdowns and arrests and release political prisoners. At the least, the junta should allow the ICRC (the International Committee of the Red Cross) to meet with political prisoners."

Pokpong Lawansiri, the Southeast Asia program officer with the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, said the continuing crackdown shows the military junta does not care about the resolution passed by the UN Human Rights Council or the calls for dialogue by the international community.

"It also means the international community, particularly Burma's neighboring countries, do not work hard enough for the Burmese people," he said. "The Asean reaction was very weak. The Asean countries need to take more concrete actions critical of the junta."

Continues Crackdown as US Applies Sanctions

"Shan-EUgroup" <Shan-EUgroup@yahoo.com> - Mon, 6 Nov 2007

OPINION: **Give Myanmar a big taste of democracy** - 06 November, 2007
By **AMY CHEW**

Indonesia, which was ruled by a military government for 32 years and transformed itself into the world's third-largest democracy, wants to share its experiences with the military rulers of Myanmar, writes AMY CHEW TO the outside world, Myanmar's defiance defies logic.

In the face of international revulsion at the brutal crackdown on last month's peaceful protests by the country's Buddhist monks, the regime continues to detain thousands and hunt for dissidents.

In 1988, a large-scale student uprising was crushed with the same brutality.

The brutality, according to Indonesia's special envoy to Myanmar, retired Lt-Gen Agus Widjoyo, reflects the regime's "poverty of ideas" as three generations of military officers rise through the ranks without experiencing democracy or civilian rule.

Shunned and embargoed by Western and democratic countries, the regime turned inwards to become even more conservative.

Agus said: "In the past, the United States provided most of the training and education for Myanmar's military. After the US stopped, that only accelerated the involution of conservative thinking within the military: they feel entitled to their power.

"The lack of openings for Myanmar's officers to experience the role of the military in a democratic political system, professionalising the military as is happening in other countries, contributes to the junta's poverty of ideas."

As such, the regime only knows how to respond to dissent, however peaceful, with the same method it has employed ever since it seized power in 1962, with brute force.

The regime arrested 3,000 people and claimed that 13 people died during the crackdown. Human rights groups placed the death toll at a higher number.

For real change to take place in the country, it has to start with reforming the military as it holds absolute power in the country.

Agus called on Indonesia and democratic countries to engage with Myanmar's junta, to expose it to democratic values and civilian rule.

"I am aware this is not a popular call to make, but for real change to happen, it has to start with reforming the military.

"The best bet, the shortest and least violent way, is if the military can voluntarily transfer power through a transitional mechanism and finally hand it over to a democratic government.

"The key words are voluntary intent from the military for a transitional period of power-sharing at an agreed reconciliation process with the people of Myanmar.

"Then the outside world can co-operate and work together, based on the needs expressed by the Myanmarans."

Agus was in Myanmar last month to attend the funeral of late prime minister Soe Win and held talks with generals from the junta.

Agus, a reformist general, speaks with insight and experience.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Indonesia of the past shares many similarities with Myanmar.

Former president Suharto, a general, ruled the country with an iron fist for 32 years until his ouster in 1998 by an economic crisis and uprising led by the country's youth and students.

Suharto's New Order regime was backed by the military. The country's generals sat in parliament and the country's highest law-making body, the People's Consultative Assembly.

The military also occupied many top positions in the cabinet and state-owned enterprises, making their hold on the country absolute.

The US-trained and educated Agus was among the crop of generals who fought to professionalise and remove the military from politics.

But there is one stark difference: Suharto and his regime brought development to the country and lifted millions out of poverty.

Myanmar, on the other hand, has done little or none at all in improving the welfare of its people.

Member of parliament Mar-zuki Darusman, from Indonesia's largest political party, Golkar, said: "It's a very stark picture. There's been an unjust, incompetent military regime exploiting the people without any benefits compared with what Suharto had been able to give Indonesia in terms of development. "

By 2004, the military-appointed seats in the upper and lower house were scrapped, thus completing Indonesia's transformation into the world's third-largest democracy when civilian rule took over and the military returned to the barracks to concentrate on the country's defence.

Agus said: "The junta is not aware that professionalising the military within the context of democracy and transparent government will always be in the best interest of the nation and should not be seen as losing its power."

Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda called for the world to address the "psychological insecurity" of the Myanmar military junta's future in a more democratic society as part of the efforts to get the regime to reform itself.

Hassan said: "We should also address the psychological nature the regime is facing. What would be the state of the military in a new context of Myanmar in a more democratic situation?"

Some 15 years ago, Myanmar had looked at Indonesia as a model to develop its own system. Hassan said: "It is true Myanmar looked at Indonesia as a comparison as to how to develop their systems 15 to 20 years ago and they were surprised when we transformed ourselves from a military government to a full-fledged democracy.

"And that is why now we are in communication with them. I wish Myanmar could come to us and we can share the experience."

But Agus believes the military junta sees the Indonesian experience as a messy transition to democracy.

Myanmar's crackdown angered many segments of Indonesian society who less than 10 years ago threw off their yoke of fear to take to the streets to oust Suharto.

Indonesian human rights groups, non-governmental organisations and politicians want the government to do more to push Myanmar's regime to halt its brutality.

Haris Azhar, of the Commission for Disappearances and Victims of Violence, said: "At a certain level, Indonesians can feel what the Burmese people are going through because they have experienced it before.

"The issue of human rights -- arbitrary detentions, disappearances, kidnappings -- must form the substance of reform and not talk of a new constitution.

"Because then we end up being caught with the procedures of democracy and not democracy itself."
http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Tuesday/Columns/2077978/Article/index_html

BBC News, Monday, 22 October 2007, 21:47 GMT 22:47 UK

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7057425.stm> - Aung Moe Win <aung_m_win@yahoo.com>

Burma allows human rights visit – The military government in Burma has agreed to allow the UN's expert on human rights to visit after refusing permission for four years.

Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, who visits countries to check on their human rights performance, made repeated requests to visit during that time.

Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win wrote to the UN suggesting that Mr Pinheiro could arrive before mid-November.

The UN's special envoy to Burma is also hoping to be allowed to return soon.

Ibrahim Gambari is currently in India awaiting a visa.

On an initial visit just after the military's crackdown on mass protests in September, he met both the military and jailed opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.



Mr Pinheiro has not visited Burma since November 2003

Key questions

Speaking from the US, Mr Pinheiro welcomed news of his invitation, telling Reuters news agency it was "an important sign that the government wants to engage again in constructive dialogue with the UN and the Human Rights Council".

Louise Arbour, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said it was important for the UN to establish the true scale of Burma's bloody crackdown.

"We have to find out what has happened to these people who demonstrated," she told reporters in Ottawa, Canada.

"Where are they? How many - credibly - have been killed? How many are still detained [and] under what conditions?"

“ We have to find out what has happened to these people who demonstrated ”

Louise Arbour

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

The timing of the invitation is significant because of a summit of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) due to open on 17 November, the BBC's Laura Trevelyan reports from the UN.

Asean has been severe in its condemnation of the Burmese regime's repression of the protests and if Burma can be seen to be co-operating by letting Mr Pinheiro in, that could take the sting out of further criticism, our UN correspondent reports.

Urgent visit

Mr Gambari is for his part hoping to try and start political talks between the Burmese government and Ms Suu Kyi.

The US Ambassador to the UN, Zalmay Khalilzad, has appealed for Mr Gambari to be allowed to return.

"We are calling on all those with influence to redouble their efforts to get Mr Gambari there as quickly as possible," he said.

"The Burmese have said he can come but at a later date in November. We would like to see that happen as soon as possible."

While in India, Mr Gambari is pressing for Asian nations to take the lead in resolving the political crisis in Burma.

Western nations are trying to maintain public pressure on the generals by imposing further sanctions and calling for political progress.

But diplomats say the Burmese government is most likely to respond to prodding from China and India, countries in the region with significant trade links, our UN correspondent adds.

The Burma file - The first Post-News desk special – 12.11.2007

Search begins for detainees - <http://www.newsdeskspecial.co.uk/2007/11/search-begins-f.html>

UN envoy Pinheiro will not be stonewalled – 12.11.2007

The UN special envoy on human rights, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, today began a difficult task. He has to try to establish how many monks and other protesters died in the September demonstrations in Burma and to discover the whereabouts of detainees reported by their families to be still missing.

Pinheiro (right) arrived in Burma on Sunday for a five-day visit, two days after another UN official, Ibrahim Gambari, returned to New York claiming a measure of success in persuading the military regime to begin talks with the opposition.

Gambari had no success, however, in another important task set for him by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – namely to secure the release of detainees arrested during and after the demonstrations. That job has now been handed to Pinheiro, who has made it clear that if the regime fails to at least allow him access to the detainees he will immediately cut short his mission.

The outspoken Brazilian lawyer has run foul of the regime before, and was barred from visiting Burma four years ago after accusing the junta of making “absurd excuses” to keep political prisoners locked up. He cut short an earlier visit after finding a listening device under the table of a prison room where he was interviewing detainees.

Burma has an estimated 1,500 political prisoners, most of them held in inhuman conditions. Hundreds of others arrested during and after the September demonstrations, including many monks, are being held without charge. At least two have reportedly died during interrogation.

The official death toll in September’s demonstrations stands at 13, but independent sources, including several Rangoon-based diplomats, say the true figure is at least 10 times that. On the political front, the UN announced at the close of Gambari’s mission: “We now have a process going which would lead to substantive dialogue.”

The basis of the UN optimism appears to be the regime’s decision to allow opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi to meet senior colleagues of her National League for Democracy, and to issue a public statement saying she was ready to talk to the junta.



Many commentators, however, point to the junta’s brusque rejection of a Gambari proposal for tripartite talks attended by himself, the junta leaders and Suu Kyi. “The only basis on which the junta will talk to Suu Kyi is if she accepts its seven-point ‘road map’, which essentially maintains the status quo,” said Burmese exile writer Min Win. “This is just another delaying tactic, and Gambari appears to have swallowed it.”

November 14, 2007 - **The Irrawaddy** Online News Alert:- http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9304

Gambari Told Junta to Release Suu Kyi to Show Commitment - By Lalit K Jha / United Nations - November 14, 2007

The UN Special Envoy on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, on Tuesday told the UN Security Council that he called on the military leaders to release pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to show the world they want to start a national reconciliation process.

“I have stressed to the government that the best way to make real their commitment to dialogue with Suu Kyi is to release her without delay so that she can become a full partner in dialogue,” Gambari told the 15-member security council.

Briefing the council on his five-day trip to Burma last week, Gambari reviewed in detail some of the positive developments in Burma since the council’s Presidential Statement on October 11.

He said the positive developments were small steps toward a democratic system, and there were still major constraints in achieving that goal.

“The process would require time, patience and persistence,” he said.

He said a process is now in motion that could lead to substantive dialogue with concrete outcomes.

“Such a dialogue would require flexibility on all sides and sustained engagement of the [UN’s] good offices, with the support of the international community, which also needs to hear the concerns of all sides,” Gambari said.

Although Gambari was not able to meet Sen-Gen Than Shwe, he said he had meetings with all of the relevant members of the government. He also met with civil society groups and opposition political parties, as well as the United Nations country team and Suu Kyi.

Referring to the positive steps taken by the junta, Gambari said the Burmese authorities had lifted curfews put in place during the pro-democracy demonstrations, withdrawn visible military presence from the streets and, by its own account, released 2,700 persons detained during the crisis.

"It had also set up meetings with Suu Kyi, appointed a constitutional drafting committee and agreed to receive the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, after four years of his being denied access, as well as a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross," Gambari said.

Gambari said serious concerns remain about the ongoing reports of human rights abuses and the willingness of the government to move forward in a new direction.

Informing the security council that he had frank discussions with the military junta, Gambari said the government has not yet committed to remove restrictions on Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest, and no date has been set to begin a dialogue, though the initial stage of discussions had begun. Finally, the government had yet to propose a time frame for the next steps on its "road map" to democracy, he said.

Conceding that his mission "did not produce all the results" he had hoped, Gambari listed what he said were the positive outcomes from his visit. These included a public statement by Suu Kyi, followed by meetings with members of her opposition party and the Burmese minister for relations, Aung Kyi.

He said the Burmese prime minister assured him that more detainees would be released, no more arrests would be carried out, and the government would consider establishing a broad-based poverty alleviation commission.

An agreement was also reached on an interim arrangement for the United Nations country team, following the Burmese government's disapproval of its current coordinator, he said.

Referring to statements made by the military junta, Gambari said the government expected the international community to recognize its cooperation with the United Nations and not to support punitive measures through the security council.

Gambari also briefed the council on his visits to key Asian countries—Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, India, China and Japan—before his Burma trip.

"All the countries I had visited expressed strong support for the role of the secretary-general's good offices," he said. "While they also considered sanctions counter-productive, they accepted that the international community should mobilize to help address Myanmar's [Burma's] humanitarian and socio-economic problems, commensurate with actual progress in the areas of concern to the international community."

World News - 2007-11-08 18:45:04 - <http://www.pr-inside.com/text-of-aung-san-suu-kyi-s-r291179.htm>

Text of Aung San Suu Kyi's statement released by U.N. envoy

"Shan-EUgroup" <Shan-EUgroup@yahoogroups.com> - Thu, 8 Nov 2007 - Aung Thu <aungthu@t-online.de>

SINGAPORE (AP) - Following is the text of the statement by Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, released Thursday by U.N. envoy Ibrahim Gambari.

«I wish to thank all those who have stood by my side all this time, both inside and outside my country. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General of the United

Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his unwavering support for the cause of national reconciliation, democracy and human rights in my country.

«I welcome the appointment on 8 October of Minister Aung Kyi as Minister for Relations. Our first meeting on 25 October was constructive and I look forward to further regular discussions. I expect that this phase of preliminary consultations will conclude soon so that a meaningful and timebound dialogue with the SPDC leadership can start as early as possible.

«In the interest of the nation, I stand ready to cooperate with the Government in order to make this process of dialogue a success and welcome the necessary good offices role of the United Nations to help facilitate our efforts in this regard.

«In full awareness of the essential role of political parties in democratic societies, in deep appreciation of the sacrifices of the members of my party and in my position as General Secretary, I will be guided by the policies and wishes of the National League for Democracy. However, in this time of vital need for democratic solidarity and national unity, it is my duty to give constant and serious considerations to the interests and opinions of as broad a range of political organizations and forces as possible, in particular those of our ethnic nationality races.

«To that end, I am committed to pursue the path of dialogue constructively and invite the Government and all relevant parties to join me in this spirit.

«I believe that stability, prosperity and democracy for my country, living at peace with itself and with full respect for human rights, offers the best prospect for my country to fully contribute to the development and stability of the region in close partnership with its neighbors and fellow ASEAN members, and to play a positive role as a respected member of the international community. - <http://www.pr-inside.com/text-of-aung-san-suu-kyi-s-r291179.htm>

Ten Years On

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