



BURMA REPORT

May - June 2008

မြန်မာ - မှတ်တမ်း

Issue N° 60

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

ASIA TIMES

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Southeast Asia - May 14, 2008 - http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JE14Ae01.html

Why Myanmar's junta steals foreign aid - By Brian McCartan

CHIANG MAI, Thailand - Myanmar's generals may have more than self-promoting propaganda in mind by commandeering aid provided by international donors and insisting that the military deliver it without the assistance and expertise of foreign disaster relief personnel. The junta's control of aid and food stocks may rather be a hedge to remain in power.

The junta's insistence on holding a constitutional referendum at the preset date on Saturday, despite the widespread destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis, demonstrated clearly its determination to hold onto power at all costs. The regime only postponed the election in 47 townships affected by the cyclone in Yangon and Irrawaddy Divisions.

The referendum was labeled a sham by rights groups, Myanmar's political opposition and several foreign governments. The seemingly overwhelming "Yes" vote the constitution received was widely predicted after months of government intimidation. Fears of vote rigging were largely borne out by widespread reports from opposition political and media organizations.

Yet the generals apparently have a different agenda in their handling and distribution of international aid, which has been widely criticized for not allowing foreign aid workers to assist with distribution. While the first priority was clearly solidifying their rule through the referendum, they are also haunted by an almost pathological fear of a split inside their own ranks. During the popular demonstrations in September last year there were numerous reports of dissent within the rank and file, especially when it came to shooting monks who were in the forefront of the demonstrations.

The generals will likely have come to the same conclusions as many outside observers: their rice bowl has been badly damaged in the Irrawaddy Delta region and will likely not recover quickly. This is going to put a severe strain on existing rice stocks at a time the purchase of foreign rice has become increasingly expensive due to surging global commodity prices.

From the junta's perspective, the group that needs to be fed first is the 400,000 strong military, rather than the desperate civilian survivors of the crisis. With their respective family members, the military's associated numbers could be as high as 2 million, according to one Western military source. To the generals, the people now gathering in makeshift camps can be controlled, but only if the military remains united. An army without food or with starving families, especially in an army where most of the soldiers were forcibly recruited, is much more likely to revolt.

Lack of food is a perennial problem in Myanmar's army. In a report released on May 9 by Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), based on interviews with army deserters, the group said, "Threats, physical abuse and under nourishment are rife in the [Myanmar] army." While the soldiers interviewed by KHRG were serving at the frontline where food is often scarce, foreign residents in Myanmar have also commented on the malnourished look of soldiers in urban areas like Yangon and Mandalay.

In the 1990s, orders were issued to the army to be self-sufficient and live off the land. According to numerous reports by human rights groups like KHRG, Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Shan Human Rights Foundation and international groups like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, this policy has resulted in looting, extortion, forced labor and the forced confiscation of land for military farms.

These abuses have been noted in particular in the insurgency-plagued border areas, as well as in the relatively more peaceful central areas of the country - including the Irrawaddy Delta. These methods have kept the soldiers fed, at least at a basic subsistence level. Falling morale, however, is a problem in the military and the leaked documents of several high-level military meetings noted rising desertion levels and discontent in the ranks before the cyclone hit.

Some of this, according to deserters, is due to insufficient rations for themselves and their families. While a pressing problem, it had not become so severe that whole units were deserting or revolting. Now, with severe food shortages looming through the damage wrought by Cyclone Nargis, if soldiers are not given priority in aid distribution and are unable to feed themselves, the possibility of mutiny rises.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Death to the military

Cyclone Nargis did not only kill civilians, destroy homes and wipe out crops; it also took its toll on the military. The navy was particularly hard hit by the cyclone and the ensuing tidal wave. According to a senior opposition military officer, many navy ships were sunk and several hundred sailors were killed in the storm. The naval station on Haingyi Island, the headquarters of the Pamawaddy Regional Command, was particularly hard hit. The Irrawaddy magazine, citing Myanmar naval sources, reported that up to 25 vessels were destroyed and 280 officers and sailors had gone missing.

The navy was not the only service to suffer. The Irrawaddy Delta is the operational area of the Southwest Regional Command, headquartered at Bathein. The command comprises 13 battalions spread out in camps throughout the region, including Pyapon and Mawlamyinegyun, both areas hard hit by the cyclone. The Southwest Command is also a politically important post.

Previous commanders of the post include Senior General Saw Maung, leader of the 1988 palace coup that installed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which was renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997, as well as current junta leader Senior General Than Shwe and General Thura Shwe Mann, the current number three in the SPDC, joint commander-in-chief of the military and widely tipped to be a possible successor to Than Shwe.

From 1949 to the early 1970s, the Irrawaddy Delta was a battleground between the army and insurgents of the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burmese Communist Party. Although both groups were pushed out of the area in the early 1970s, the army remained. In 1991, during what was called the "Bogalay Crisis", the KNU sent fighters and arms to the delta for an abortive insurrection. Although quickly crushed, the army expanded its presence through various camps situated in the region.

According to military opposition sources and residents, it can be safely assumed that many of these camps would also have been wiped out by the recent storm. Military bases and camps of the Yangon and Western Commands, responsible for Yangon Division and Arakan State respectively, would also likely have been affected.

No estimates of military casualties are available, but the toll on the soldiers could be on a par with civilian casualties in the area. Many soldiers and their family members in the Irrawaddy Delta and Yangon would likely have lost family members, or currently are struggling to get food and other necessities.

For the generals, this is where the importance of international aid comes in. With rice crops and storage facilities destroyed, bases wiped out, already discontented soldiers running out of food and with many of their family members dead, injured or unable to feed or fend for themselves, the military leadership needs to move quickly to preserve their hold over the rank and file and thus their hold on political power.

Several witnesses claim that aid supplies given by the generals, with certain military leaders' names painted on the packages, are only a propaganda exercise. They say that once the video cameras are turned off, the soldiers pack up the remaining undistributed aid and take it away. In one state-television broadcast, labels with the names of army generals were shown pasted over aid packages clearly saying "Aid from the Kingdom of Thailand".

The World Food Program temporarily halted aid flights on Friday after the military seized two food shipments, but resumed them the next day saying the scale of the humanitarian crisis necessitated sending the aid even if they could not control its distribution. More aid is now arriving in Myanmar, but relief officials say it is only a trickle and much more will be needed to avoid a wider humanitarian disaster.

Official government statistics now stand at 28,458 dead and 33,416 people missing. According to figures presented by the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, based on their own assessments, an estimated 1,215,885 to 1,919,485 people have been adversely affected by the cyclone. They also estimate there are anywhere between 63,290 to 101,682 dead and 220,000 missing.

Yet the junta continues to hamper aid efforts by denying visas to humanitarian relief specialists, many of whom are now stranded in neighboring Bangkok. The military regime has consistently said it wants the relief supplies, but not the aid workers. It especially does not want aid workers who may control the distribution of relief supplies, precisely because that would keep the military from monopolizing the dispersal of the aid and prevent it from channeling it to its own members.

These numbers will likely rise as fuller assessments are made and many survivors succumb to disease, deprivation and starvation. Of particular concern to relief agencies is the threat of diseases such as cholera, malaria, typhus and dysentery brought on by the lack of proper shelter and sanitation and with drinking water contaminated by the dead.

Residents of Yangon and the Irrawaddy Delta say that the local population is increasingly outraged by the junta's lack of assistance and its hoarding of aid. To the junta's top generals, far away in their bunkers in their secluded new capital at Naypyidaw, the aid distribution policy is apparently political survival at all costs. But as it becomes more apparent to the wider suffering population that the junta is only looking after its own that policy could stoke more unrest than it avoids.

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BurmaNet News, May 14, 2008 -May 14, 2008 Issue #3466 -"Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

THE IRRAWADDY
Covering Burma and Southeast Asia

NLD Slams Plan for May 24 Referendum Vote

By **WAI MOE** - Wednesday, May 14, 2008 - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=12026

The National League for Democracy (NLD) has condemned the Burmese military government's plan to go ahead with the constitutional referendum on May 24 in the devastated areas affected by Cyclone Nargis.

The NLD, one of Burma's leading opposition groups, said in a statement on Wednesday the party has information that the junta will go ahead with its plan to hold the referendum on May 24 in 40 townships in Rangoon Division and seven townships in the Irrawaddy delta.



Multimedia ([View](#))

"It is not the right time to hold the referendum in the cyclone-hit region because people are dying and still struggling. Diseases are spreading day by day," said an NLD statement. "The State Peace and Development Council [the official junta title] has responsibility for the lives of the survivors."

The NLD said the government should concentrate on humanitarian work among the survivors.

A member of the NLD disaster committee, Aye Kyu, who is now in Laputta, said diarrhea is widespread in the township and many people, especially children, are living in trauma.

A Burmese doctor who recently returned from Laputta, one of the worst-hit areas, told The Irrawaddy on Wednesday that up to seven survivors died every day at emergency relief camps in the town. Homeless survivors are also staying at monasteries, temples and schools. About 100,000 survivors are in the town, he said.

The doctor said authorities seized medicine and medical equipment from volunteer Burmese medical workers in Laputta. The medicine and equipment were provided by Merlin, an international nongovernmental organization (INGO) operating in Burma.

A staffer from an INGO in Rangoon that works on aid operations, said, "We can't give any support directly to the community."

The junta-backed newspaper, The New Light of Myanmar, on Wednesday published photographs showing survivors giving the two-handed sign of respect, usually reserved for the Buddha, to Lt-Gen Myint Swe, who inspected a relief camp in Hlaingthayar Township in Rangoon.

The European Union urged the Burmese military junta on Tuesday to allow relief supplies and aid workers access to the 1.5 million people facing hunger and disease in the aftermath of cyclone.

France, Britain and Germany have called for governments to deliver aid to cyclone victims without the military junta's agreement, if necessary.

"We have called for 'responsibility to protect' to be applied in the case of Burma," the French junior Human Rights Minister, Rama Yade, said on Tuesday. ###

[thewest.com.au](http://www.thewest.com.au) - <http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuId=29&ContentID=75029> - "Hla Kyaing" <hla.kyaing@gmail.com> [freeburma] Burmese News

Burma votes across cyclone zone

24th May 2008, 15:45 WST

Voters in Burmese regions devastated by cyclone Nargis three weeks ago, many hungry and destitute, cast ballots today in a referendum that many said was meaningless because the country's junta has already declared victory.

Five million people were eligible to vote on a constitution that the military says will lead to democratic elections in two years, but that critics say will only extend the generals' grip over the country they've ruled for nearly half a century.

The regime says the charter was overwhelmingly approved by 92.4 per cent in the first round of voting on May 10, held in parts of the country spared by the cyclone.

Even though their votes will not change the outcome, people left their patched-up homes and makeshift shelters to cast ballots at schools, temples and community centres that served as polling stations.



A woman holds her child as she stands besides her damaged house in a village affected by Cyclone Nargis near Pyapon

"My vote is nothing for them," said a 30-year-old taxi driver.

"They won already. What's important for me is trying to earn some money today."

His feeling is shared by many in Burma's main city of Rangoon, where many people still have no reliable water or electricity, while food prices have tripled in the three weeks since the storm.

The situation is even worse in the nearby Irrawaddy Delta, which bore the brunt of the storm that left 133,000 dead or missing, with 2.4 million in desperate need of food, shelter and medicine.

Only 25 per cent of the people in need have actually received any help, according to the United Nations, creating the prospect that some storm victims could receive ballot papers before getting any aid.

People whose homes were destroyed have said they were forced out of schools where they had sought shelter so that the classrooms could be used as polling stations.

And the few evacuees lucky enough to live in emergency shelters say authorities have combed through the camps to register everyone over 18 to vote.

"What can I do? I voted Yes like everyone else did," said Ko Naing, a 45-year-old resident of Hlaing Tharyar township, where thousands still live in temporary shelters on the western outskirts of Rangoon.

Many people were afraid to talk about the referendum, fearing retribution from the military and its omnipresent informants.

"I will tick Yes," said 30-year-old shop assistant Khin Min. "I am afraid I will be put in jail if I vote No."

Kyaw Kyaw, 20, was only a toddler the last time Burma held a national election, in 1990, when democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi led her National League for Democracy to a landslide victory.

The party was never allowed to govern, and she has been under house arrest for most of the years since.

But Kyaw Kyaw said she was more concerned with continuing her university studies than with voting.

"I also cast a Yes vote, like others did. But I'm not very interested in it. I have to take care of my education," Kyaw Kyaw said.

Aung San Suu Kyi has not been allowed to speak about the referendum, but her party has opposed it and urged the military to focus its resources on cyclone relief instead.

But Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to vote. A Burmese official said that authorities brought her an advance ballot yesterday morning.

RANGOON - AFP ###

THE IRRAWADDY
Covering Burma and Southeast Asia

Cyclone Survivors Don't Want UN Chief to Visit Delta

Wednesday, May 21, 2008 -By THE IRRAWADDY - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=12181

Many cyclone survivors in the Irrawaddy delta say they don't want UN chief Ban Ki-moon to visit their camps and temporary shelters for fear the military regime will tighten security and intimidate people who have lost family members and homes.

Burma's best-known comedian Zarganar and other Burmese private donors who visited the cyclone-ravaged delta recently said that many cyclone survivors are so desperate for food and relief supplies they do not want the UN secretary-general and his delegation to jeopardize the situation.



Prime Minister Thein Sein oversees the relief effort in Twante Township. (Photo: NLM)

Already suffering from fatigue and depression, many of the cyclone survivors who are now homeless have endured the additional stress of being part of the regime leaders' "inspections," said Zarganar.

In Kungyangone, police and local authorities drove through the streets using loudspeakers to tell people not to go out begging for food along the road one day before Snr-Gen Than Shwe visited the town on May 19.

They warned cyclone victims that they would be arrested and punished if they took to begging in the street.

Local officials in Kungyangone prepared in advance food packages and relief supplies in front of tents to show Burma's paramount leaders that their relief operation was going well.

Private Burmese aid donors who traveled to the delta said that, in spite of the devastation caused by the cyclone, the regime wanted

to portray a positive image. The philanthropists said that the regime is concerned that the reality on the ground is in sharp contrast with the propaganda broadcast on the news in the state-run media.

The military authorities are eager to show that situation is under control, the Burmese donors said.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is scheduled to meet with Snr-Gen Than Shwe in Rangoon this week after being snubbed for more than a week by the reclusive junta leader. He will also visit the Irrawaddy delta, the region most devastated by tropical cyclone Nargis on May 2-3.

With another high-level visit on the way, cyclone survivors are saying "No more visits!" said Zarganar, who is now actively involved in the relief effort.

Before the arrival of any VIP guests, more soldiers are deployed and security guards clear roads, he said. Meanwhile, cyclone survivors who are already without sufficient food and relief supplies are now concerned that their rations will be cut because private donors will be unable to visit them during the UN secretary-general's visit.

Ban is scheduled to stay in Burma for several days and plans to attend a donor conference on Sunday in Rangoon.

Aung Naing Oo, a Burma analyst based in Thailand, said that the regime is security conscious and more people will suffer because of the UN's high-level visit to the area.

"The regime will clear roads and the surrounding areas when Ban is scheduled to visit," he said. "People who are begging from dawn to dusk will not get food or money to survive during his visit."

Zarganar also expressed concern that Ban won't see the true severity of the situation on the ground.

"The regime," he said, "would project a positive image. But people on the ground won't be allowed to say anything by THE IRRAWADDY and will be punished if they do."

Meanwhile, hundreds of villagers who took refuge in monasteries and schools in Bogalay after the cyclone have been forced to return to their villages by security forces.

Sources in Bogalay also confirmed that a boat carrying cyclone survivors sank near Bogalay on Monday evening. No further details were immediately available. ###

Reuters - Fri May 16, 2008 - THE BURMANET NEWS, May 16, 2008 Issue #3468, "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org
<http://www.reuters.com/article/featuredCrisis/idUSBK219409> -

Cyclone beggars line roads of Myanmar delta

KUNGYANGON, Myanmar, May 16 (Reuters) - The rows of beggars on either side of the road stretched for miles, twin columns of human misery left by the winds and waves of Cyclone Nargis.

Without clothes or shoes, the thousands of men, women and children made destitute by the cyclone could only stand in the mud and rain of the latest tropical downpour, their hands clasped together in supplication at the occasional passing aid vehicle.

Any car that did stop was mobbed by children, their grimy hands reaching through a window in search of bits of bread or a t-shirt.

The desperate entreaties expose the fragility of the claims by Myanmar's military government to be on top of the distribution of emergency relief in the worst-hit Irrawaddy delta, where up to 2.5 million people are now clinging to

survival.

They also make all the more questionable the reclusive junta's refusal to admit large-scale foreign aid operations and the workers to run them.

That refusal is motivated by fear the operations might threaten the generals' grip on power in a country that has known only military rule for the last 46 years, critics say.

Aid volunteers were shocked by the roadside scenes, which suggest conditions in the delta are deteriorating rapidly with what little rice and food that could be salvaged from the ruins of inundated villages now running out.

"The situation has worsened in just two days. There weren't this many desperate people when we were last here," one relief volunteer said.

In the storm-struck town of Kunyangon, around 100 (60 miles) southwest of the former capital, Yangon, the situation was little better, even though the former Burma's military rulers have started distributing small amounts of emergency food there.

"I am one of the few survivors," said one lady in her 60s, who did not want to be named. "I came here to ask for some rice."

Her clothes -- a grubby grey top and faded black longgyi, or sarong -- are the same she wearing when the May 2 storm struck, sweeping away her home and possessions.

"I only survived by climbing a tree," she said.

Around the town, the countryside remains a mess of half-submerged trees, snapped electricity pylons or bamboo poles -- the skeletal remains of a house -- leaning at crazy angles.

Villagers say they are slowly burying the bloated corpses of friends and relatives that have littered the rice fields for the last two weeks. But the stench of death remains.

PRIVATE AID

Frustrated by the speed of the official response, ordinary people were taking matters into their own hands, sending trucks and vans into the delta with clothes, biscuits, dried noodles, and rice provided by private companies and individuals.

"There are too many people. We just cannot give enough. How can the government act as if nothing happened?" said one volunteer, who declined to be named for fear of reprisals.

Some said pro-regime thugs were even harassing volunteers in the western suburbs of Yangon.

Soldiers at military checkpoints leading out of the city were seizing digital cameras from aid volunteers to try to stop news leaking out to the outside world, others said.

With almost total distrust of the government, private aid is being left in the care of Buddhist monasteries, to be distributed by the monkhood, whose immense moral authority makes it the only institution capable of standing up to the military.

Going through the roll-call of the needy is a grim task.

"We need to give aid to this family," said one monk pointing to a list in a temple in one village.

"No," another monk beside him interjected. "They're all dead." (Writing by Ed Cropley; Editing by Jerry Norton) ###

(DVB) Democratic Voice of Burma- <http://www.dvb.no/> , May 18, 2008 – Shan-EU <shaneu31@yahoo.com>, Sun, 18. May 2008

Please come quickly say people of Burma - <http://english.dvb.no/news.php?id=1301>

May 18, 2008 (DVB) – "...We want the international community to enter the country by any means...as it is very important to save lives...therefore, we want them to enter as soon as possible. They (the authorities) are unable to save people and they must accept people who could. There is nothing more important than human life." (Reverend U Pyinnyar Wunthar, Buddhist monk)

"We are away from Cyclone Nargis and we don't know the situation. But the Abbot of Thidagu Reverend Nyan Neisara, U Zagana (renowned comedian) said in the media that there are many people who are in trouble as the result of the storm and villages disappeared, people don't have food and drink. People are in trouble. As the majority are accepting thus, as

for us, the sooner the better. Whichever country comes to our country and helps, we like it the more. Here (in Burma), I heard that there are only 6 or 7 helicopters for rescue. And in the delta region, roads are in ruin and it is not very easy to travel on water paths..." (U Myin Lwin, National League for Democracy, Kyaupadaung, Upper Burma)

"It is time the international aid comes in. We are in trouble. All the people want it to come in. They are all the people who would welcome with garlands. Our hometown heard that the Americans, French and British are here and ready to come. If the American army, the French and British came, there are many people who will welcome them with garlands...people are feeling very dejected and we are in desperate need of the international aid." (U Aye Khaing, National League for Democracy, Kyaupadaung, Upper Burma)

"...The military government has no ability to help Cyclone Nargis victims. We support any kind of international aid whether it be the US or EU...We cannot say whose are our members due to security reasons inside the country."

(Myint Oo, New Generation Democratic Force, Burma)

"Our country desperately needs foreign expert knowledge, machinery and technicians, monetary and material helps and in this kind of situation, it is important that the government needs to allow them to come in urgently. If they do not do that, the UN should give necessary helps needed to protect lives, in accordance with the international law. We have great desire for the UN to intervene. If they do come, I will welcome them gladly as a monk and as a citizen." **(A Buddhist Abbot, Mandalay, Upper Burma)**

"...I heard from the government media that the government donated 750 tents. Would they be sufficient while hundred of thousands of people are in trouble? As a civilian from Magwe Division, I feel great sadness and I don't want anyone to be in trouble...In order to normalise situation, I want the international troops including the UN to come in as soon as possible. We also want to notify all the people who want to help, now waiting in international waters and the government concerns that we demand you to come in as soon as possible and help." (Aung Hlaing Tha, National League for Democracy, Thayet, Upper Burma)

"We the people want the international aid troops to come in as soon as possible...If we are ignored, it will be an insult to humanity. We agree and accept the entry and we the audience are waiting when they are going to come in. We are praying for their entry...only then would we get help. Inside the country, the government could do nothing. Private helps are not effective. Even if they are effective, the size of destruction is so vast that it is necessary that the air force and navy of the EU, US, etc need to come in as soon as possible. People are readily waiting for the troops to help." **(A school teacher) ###**

Wed., May, 21, 2008 - Aung Than Oo <AtoBurma@web.de> - Burma Büro e.V., Cologne <burmabureaugermany@t-online.de>

Humanitarian Assistance statement

President George W. Bush

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Fax: 202-456-2461

May 20, 2008

Dear Mr. President:

It is our humble request to your government to act on Burma now. We strongly believe that it is the most appropriate time to go into Burma under the banner of humanitarian intervention. The US intervention will be seen as divine intervention by the Burmese people, not only to help the cyclone victims but also to finally free the entire nation from the military yoke.

In 1988, our people demonstrated in front of the US Embassy not to oppose the US government but to show our willingness for a US invasion. Thousands of people marched every day in front of the US embassy and hoping that US army might come in and free them. It was wishful thinking, and it never did happen.

Right now, after Nargis cyclone, people are desperate to get help from western countries. The US is their first priority; we look up to your government.

Our people have suffered enough under the cruel military generals who never respect human lives, religion and their own promise.

The following is why we believe it is necessary for the US, France, Britain or UN to lead the divine intervention.

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

1. Many victims are still not getting food and medical assistance. Many people and children now have sickness and disease.
2. The UN said the World Food Program is getting in 20 per cent of the food needed because of the restrictions imposed by the government. Most of the food and medicine donated from foreign countries are stored in the government warehouse and still waiting for distribution.
3. Instead of helping the victims, the regime is giving ultimatums to the victims. They are ordering the victims to leave from their respected shelters in public schools in Rangoon Division of North Dagon, South Dagon and Daw bon. Even in a big city like Rangoon, in front of everybody they are pushing out all the victims from the shelters. They will do more harm in the remote places in Irrawaddy delta region where the cyclone hit hard. The reason is they want to vacate the schools for the referendum. Their motive proved that their first priority is to approve the referendum, whatever it takes, not to save the lives of the citizens. They are not interested in saving lives because they worry that it will be the beginning of the end of their military rule.
4. In delta region, they are closing down the roads and do not allow the people who live in other divisions or states to come in and donate food and medicine. They are confiscating cameras and video cameras from people who enter the storm hit areas. What is the meaning of this? Because they are worried that all these photos will prove that many lives are in ruins and that the regime is not helping the people.
5. Similarly, they do not allow reporters. The reason is the same as above; the reporters will report to the world about not only the cyclone victims, but also the cruelty of the government. The generals do not want it; they want to hide as much as they can. Now the officials are saying that the country is already coping with the disaster and coming back to normal. If the situation has come back to normal, why do they not allow people to go in?
6. An estimated more than one hundred thousand lives were perished and millions became homeless but we never heard a word from Senior General Than Shwe that he has sympathy for the victims' families or his encouragement for the people. Any country, when there is a disaster the head of state visited there and encourages people to overcome the tragedy. Than Shwe never speak about the cyclone victims in the past 17 days, until May 20, 2008. However, the Chinese Premier visited the earthquake victims and lowered the Chinese flag for showing its sympathy for three days. Than Shwe followed the Chinese footsteps and ordered to mourn three days. The reason is he never cares about the Burmese people or the victims. His guilt makes him quiet. Because of the pressure from the EU and the USA now he is following the Chinese step.
7. ASEAN will send their team members to help cyclone victims; we welcome the move made by the ASEAN, which is based on the SPDC request. However, we do not believe ASEAN's team has enough capacity to help the two million cyclone victims. We strongly believe that the US, France, and the Great Britain have full capacity to help the victims immediately and effectively. Time is running out and we are desperate to wait for your decision.

Dear Mr. President,

If you wait for Burma regime's approval, they will give false hope and buy time for themselves to find a solution which will favor their overcoming the situation. ASEAN involvement is their first step to avoid the US and EU to enter Burma. We love our neighbors but some ASEAN leaders are corrupt and willing to favor the regime instead of helping victims. If the regime successfully block the US and EU to enter Burma, Burmese people will be enslaved for another fifty to hundred years.

Please do not compare Burma with Iraq because Buddhist monks, students, Burmese patriots, and we will happily assist you with whatever you need to go inside Burma and help the cyclone victims and entire nation. We are willing to go together with whoever enters Burma first. We will recruit translators, doctors, and nurses. Many concerned Burmese citizens are willing to join the intervention. Please do not waste the precious time that we have now to enter Burma under the name of "Humanitarian Assistance."

With much hope and wishes,

Sasana Moli International Burmese Monks Organization (USA)
 88 Generation Students (Exile)
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FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

BurmaNet News, May 14, 2008 - Issue #3466 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org
BBC NEWS - May 14, 2008 - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7399830.stm>

'No access' to Burma cyclone zone

Aid agencies say supplies are urgently needed in affected areas Burma's junta has tightened access to areas hit by Cyclone Nargis, despite pleas to allow in foreign aid workers.

A UN official says the regime has erected more checkpoints to ensure foreigners cannot reach affected areas.



Aid agencies say supplies are urgently needed in affected areas

The latest official figures put the death toll at almost 38,500 with 27,838 more missing, state radio said.

The UN says up to 2.5m people need urgent aid and has called a meeting of regional and donor nations to discuss "all options" on aid.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Wednesday's meeting of donors and the Association of South-East Asian Nations would discuss the "mobilisation of resources and aid workers".

He "regretted" the UN had spent much of its time arranging rather than delivering help.

"Even though the [Burmese] government has shown some sense of flexibility, at this time it's far, far too short," he said.

Meanwhile, forecasters say another cyclone is forming off Burma's coast.

The Hawaii-based Joint Typhoon Warning Center said on its website that "a significant tropical cyclone" could develop in the next 24 hours.

Dire warnings

Aid agencies are warning that the ruling generals' refusal to sanction a major international relief effort will cause more deaths.

Chris Kaye, the Burma director for the UN's World Food Programme, said the generals were trying to ensure no foreigners were allowed into the affected areas by beefing up security on checkpoints.

"There is absolutely no progress in getting foreign experts out into the field," he said.

Aid agencies fear the death toll could be far higher than official estimates.

The Red Cross said it had studied figures from 22 organisations and warned the toll could be as high as 128,000.

UN humanitarian affairs chief John Holmes said the organisation had revised up its estimate of 1.5m people "severely affected" by the cyclone to between 1.6m and 2.5m.

Thai leader Samak Sundaravej held talks with the junta, but failed to broker a deal on access for foreigners.

Mr Samak flew to Rangoon for talks with Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein, aimed at persuading the junta to allow more foreign aid workers access.

But he said Gen Thein was adamant the military needed no outside help.

"He insisted that his country with 60 million people has a government, its people and the private sector to tackle the problem by themselves," Mr Samak told reporters in Bangkok after his day trip to Burma.

EU envoy Louis Michel is heading for Burma for a three-day visit, where he says he will urge the generals "to be more open-minded and more understanding".

But he told the AFP news agency that his chances of success were "slight".

The continuing diplomatic efforts come amid more dire warnings of the consequences of the cyclone.

The UN's food agency says Burma will face food shortages if farmers cannot return to their fields in the next 90 days.



The UN's food agency fears Burma will face food shortages

"If we are not able to plant before the monsoon, we will have a serious shortage of rice in the country," said Leon Gouws, of the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

Another UN body, the International Organisation for Migration, says it may already be too late to save the many victims who are in need of aid.

"Maybe we should already be looking at rebuilding projects instead of emergency relief," said the IOM's Chris Lom.

"There's been an opportunity lost - in terms of immediate response, maybe we're too late for that."

Residents have told the BBC's Burmese service how private citizens have been trying to distribute water and supplies from their own cars - but soldiers have been confiscating the goods.

A BBC correspondent in Burma described aid delivery as "unco-ordinated and piecemeal".

He said one devastated village - with one-quarter of its 400 houses left standing - had received just one bag of rice from the government.

(AP) - UNITED NATIONS - 19.05.2008 - http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jd9cRtQcZ1_NYZZu10sq6cvTVG2AD90O87T80

UN chief to visit cyclone-devastated Myanmar

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will fly to Myanmar this week and visit the areas hardest hit by Cyclone Nargis, a U.N. spokeswoman said Sunday.

Myanmar's military government has given permission for the U.N. chief to travel to the Irrawaddy delta, where U.N. officials fear tens of thousands of cyclone survivors are not getting adequate aid, U.N. spokeswoman Michele Montas said.

Ban sent U.N. humanitarian chief John Holmes to Myanmar over the weekend to assess the needs of the survivors and urge the isolationist junta to open its doors to more international aid.

The military junta has not allowed most international relief workers into the devastated region.

Myanmar's military leader, Senior General Than Shwe, has refused to take the secretary-general's phone calls or answer two letters sent urging that international relief teams be allowed in quickly to provide relief.

At least 78,000 people were killed in the May 2-3 storm and another 56,000 are missing.

Ban will leave New York on Tuesday and is scheduled to arrive in Myanmar's commercial capital, Yangon, on Wednesday, Montas said.

"He will go to the areas most affected by the cyclone," she said.

The secretary-general will leave Myanmar on May 23 and stop in Bangkok, Thailand, on his way back to New York, she said.

Associated Press - May 24, 2008 - <http://www.wishtv.com/global/story.asp?s=8374748&ClientType=Printable> "Hla Kyaing" <hla.kyaing@gmail.com>

Myanmar to allow foreign help for Cyclone victims

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar (AP) - Myanmar's military government has agreed to let foreign aid workers and commercial ships help survivors in the country's cyclone-ravaged delta region. But it's still refusing to accept aid from U.S., French and British military ships.

Those ships have been anchored off the coast for a week or more and would be able to provide a huge boost in the aid effort because they can send helicopters to hard-to-reach spots devastated by the cyclone three weeks ago.

Myanmar's ruling general Friday told U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (bahn kee-moon) that he will allow aid workers to travel to the Irrawaddy Delta, on condition that it's clear what they're doing and how long they'll stay.

The government has kept the delta virtually off-limits to foreign aid workers.

An estimated 2.5 million people remain in dire straights. The U.N. says only about a-quarter of the survivors have received any kind of aid.

The official death toll in Myanmar stands at about 78,000, with another 56,000 people missing.

Irish examiner- 26 May 2008 - anil verma <anilverma7@yahoo.com>.[NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK]

Nations pledge millions in aid at Burma conference - By John Heilprin

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he is hopeful “a turning point” has been reached in Burma’s cyclone crisis as an international conference yesterday pledged tens of millions of dollars for some 2.4 million survivors in need of aid.

The one-day, 52-nation conference began on a note of optimism after promises by the ruling junta that foreign aid workers could enter the most devastated areas from which they were shut out since the cyclone struck three weeks ago.

Although some nations opened their wallets , others gave notice that aid would be conditional on the generals keeping their promises of full access.

“I hope this marks a turning point in tackling the challenges facing this country,” Ban told some 500 delegates as the conference convened with a minute of silence for the dead.

But he said international relief workers and medical teams from neighbouring countries must have “unhindered access to the areas hardest hit by the disaster”.

Prime Minister Lt. Gen. Thein Sein, shedding his military uniform for the sarong-like “longyi” and traditional jacket, said international aid “with no strings attached” was welcome but only civilian vessels could take part in the operation.

“Relief supplies can be transported by land, air or sea. But if relief supplies have to be transported by water, civilian vessels can come in through Yangon port,” he said.

US, British and French warships, loaded with humanitarian supplies, have been cruising off Burma’s coast.

Last week, state media said they would not be allowed into the country, citing fears of an American invasion to snatch the country’s oil supplies.

Ban estimated the relief operation would last at least six months.

“There is good reason to hope that aid to the worst affected areas of Burma will increase significantly in the coming days. These needs must be funded, immediately,” he said.

Burma’s military regime has said it needs \$10.7 billion (€6.7 billion) for cyclone reconstruction.

Washington’s representative, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Scot Marciel, said the United States was prepared to offer much more than the \$20.5 million (€13m) already donated. But the offer is on condition that international disaster experts are allowed to thoroughly assess conditions in affected areas to determine how best to help the victims.

Australia and European diplomats, including those from Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, also offered conditional pledges, urging Burmese authorities to give aid workers full access. Some, like the Netherlands and Sweden, spoke of the need for the news media to have free access to ensure that people are informed.

The world body has repeatedly failed to convince the military to make democratic reforms and to release opposition leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Nyan Win, spokesman for Suu Kyi’s National League of Democracy, said yesterday there has been “no sign at all” that she would be released. He said a decision on whether to free her or continue her detention would probably come today.

Ban appeared to sideline political issues, saying, “We must think about people just now, not politics.”

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/irishexaminer/pages/story.aspx-qqqg=world-qqqm=world-qqqa=world-qqqid=63590-qqqx=1.asp> ###

Ban Regrets Extension of Suu Kyi's House Arrest

By LALIT K JHA / UNITED NATIONS Wednesday, May 28, 2008

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on Tuesday that he regretted the Burmese junta's extension of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest for the sixth consecutive year.

Ban said the detention of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate was a brief topic of discussion in Ban's meeting with top junta leaders during his visit to Burma last week. He declined to discuss the details of his talk regarding Suu Kyi and it was still unclear whether her house arrest had been extended for six months or one year.

"I would not make any detailed briefings on this, because this is an issue which I have discussed with the leadership of Myanmar [Burma], and I made it quite clear to them that I was there for purely humanitarian grounds," Ban said.

"While we had a brief opportunity of engaging in dialogue on this issue, I told them clearly that I would try to find another opportunity, even at my level, through Mr. (Ibrahim) Gambari (special UN envoy on Burma) to discuss all these political issues at an appropriate timing," he said.

During his three-day trip to Burma last week, Ban met top leaders of the military junta. However, his talks were mostly confined to the humanitarian crisis following Cyclone Nargis, which hit the Irrawaddy Delta on May 2-3.

Referring to his meeting with Sen-Gen Than Shwe, Ban said the issue of Suu Kyi was first raised by Than Shwe.

"We broadly discussed and agreed that this good offices role, mandated by the General Assembly, will have to continue, and if necessary, it should be deepened and broadened," he said.

Ban said last week that the sooner restrictions on Aung San Suu Kyi and other political figures are lifted, the sooner Burma can move towards inclusive national reconciliation, the restoration of democracy and full respect for human rights.

Noting that Aung San Suu Kyi's case is one of the concerns of the international community, Ban said he will continue to address the issue so that she and other political figures could be released as soon as possible.

"This is the crucial element of the democratization of Myanmar [Burma]. You have my firm commitment to see a democratized Myanmar as soon as possible," he said.

Ban declined to comment on the approval of the constitutional referendum on, which the military junta claimed has been supported by more than 90 per cent of the voters.

Ban said he urged the junta leader to complete the seven-point democratization program as soon as possible.

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=12332

AFP - 01 June 2008 - "euro_burma" <euro_burma@verizon.net> (EBO) - Euro-Burma Office, Square Gutenberg 11/2, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

More will die unless Myanmar changes approach: Gates

BANGKOK - More people will perish in Myanmar's cyclone disaster zone unless the regime lifts restrictions on foreign aid, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates warned Sunday, accusing it of "criminal neglect."

Nearly a month after the storm tore through swathes of Myanmar, around 60 percent of the 2.4 million survivors remain without foreign aid, despite some opening-up by the military rulers after an intense UN-led diplomatic push.

The junta blocked entry to overseas aid workers in the critical days after Cyclone Nargis pummelled the impoverished nation on May 2-3, leaving 133,000 people dead or missing.

"Unless the regime changes its approach, its policy, more people will die," Gates said en route to Bangkok after a regional security forum in Singapore.

"I would describe it as criminal neglect."

Gates, who earlier said that Myanmar's initial delays could have cost tens of thousands of lives, added that the United States would decide within days whether to recall four US Navy ships waiting to deliver aid.

He said it was "becoming pretty clear" the junta would not accept military help from the United States, which has been a fierce critic of the regime. ###

Published by : Burma Büro e.V., P.O. Box 27 03 66, DE-50509 Cologne Tel: + 49 (0) 221-9522450 Fax: + 49(0) 221-9522470
e-Mail: <burmabureaugermany@t-online.de> - <http://www.burmabureaugermany.com>

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