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

AFP - August 11, 2009 - 5:08PM - The Age <<http://www.theage.com.au/>>
<<http://www.theage.com.au/world/suu-kyi-gets-more-time-plus-hard-labour-20090811-egsi.html>>

Suu Kyi gets more time, plus hard labour

Burmese democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi has been ordered to stay under house arrest for 18 months after a prison court convicted the Nobel laureate at the end of her internationally condemned trial.

The court at Rangoon's Insein jail on Tuesday sentenced her to three years' imprisonment and hard labour for breaching the terms of her house arrest after a US man swam to her lakeside residence in May.

The head of the ruling junta signed a special order commuting the sentence and allowing the frail 64-year-old to serve out just a year and half under house arrest, Home Affairs Minister General Maung Oo said outside the court.

The ruling means that she will still be in detention during multi-party elections promised by the military regime next year. Her party won a landslide victory in the country's last democratic polls.

American John Yettaw, 54, the man who swam to her house, was sentenced to a total seven years' hard labour and imprisonment on three separate charges but it was not clear if the terms would run consecutively or concurrently.

Security forces sealed off the area around the jail and the ruling junta allowed diplomats from all foreign embassies in Rangoon and local journalists to attend the hearing.

Ms Suu Kyi has been in detention for 14 of the past 20 years since Burma's ruling military junta refused to recognise her National League for Democracy's landslide victory in elections in 1990.

It was not clear whether she would serve the new period in detention at her crumbling lakeside villa or at another location.

State-run newspapers carried a commentary on Tuesday that warned her supporters not to cause trouble and told foreign countries not to meddle in Burma's affairs.

"The people who favour democracy do not want to see riots and protests that can harm their goal," said the version in the Government mouthpiece New Light of Myanmar (Burma).

Critics had accused the junta of using the charges as an excuse to keep her locked up for the elections, particularly as they were lodged just days before the latest period of her house arrest was due to expire.

Her lawyers argued during the trial that she could not be held responsible for Mr Yettaw's actions, and that the legal framework for her initial detention at her house was under a 1975 law that has been superseded by later constitutions.

Ms Suu Kyi told the court that she did not report the American to the authorities for humanitarian reasons. The junta says she gave food, shelter and assistance to Mr Yettaw, who has diabetes.

Mr Yettaw, a Mormon whose teenage son died two years ago in a motorbike crash, had testified that he swam to her house after receiving a "message from God" that he had to protect her against a terrorist plot to assassinate her.

He was given three years for breaching security laws, three years for immigration violations and one year for a municipal charge of illegal swimming.

The Irrawaddy, Newsletter for Tuesday, July 14, 2009 - news@irrawaddy.org - <<http://www.irrawaddy.org/>>

Ban Says 'Credible' Election Depends on Suu Kyi's Freedom

By LALIT K JHA Tuesday, July 14, 2009 - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/print_article.php?art_id=16319>

WASHINGTON — United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says he told Burma's junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe that Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners should be released if the regime wants the 2010 election to be "credible."

"I urged Snr-Gen Than Shwe that this election should be fair and free, but also legitimate, inclusive and credible. To be credible and legitimate, Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners should be released," Ban told reporters at UN headquarters in New York on Monday after briefing the UN Security Council on his talks with the Burmese junta in Naypyidaw earlier this month.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon in Dublin, Ireland. (Photo: AFP)

"I emphasized that, without participation of Aung San Suu Kyi, without her being able to campaign freely, and without her NLD party [being able] to establish party offices all throughout the provinces, this election may not be regarded as credible and legitimate," Ban said.

Suu Kyi has spent most of the past 19 years under house arrest and is currently on trial in Rangoon, charged with violating the terms of her detention order. Even if she were free, she is barred by the junta-formulated constitution from standing for public office in an election.

Ban told the 15-member Security Council the junta's refusal to allow him to meet with Suu Kyi was not only a deep disappointment, but also a major lost opportunity for Burma.

"While this should not define our efforts, allowing such a meeting would have sent a constructive and conciliatory signal, both inside and outside Myanmar [Burma]," he said.

Ban said he had raised with the generals a range of fundamental issues of concern for the future of the country.

During his two meetings with Than Shwe and then subsequently with the Burmese Prime Minister, Ban said he made specific proposals with a particular focus on three outstanding concerns which, he argued, if left unaddressed, could undermine any confidence in Burma's political process.

He defined the three issues as the release of all political prisoners, including Suu Kyi; the resumption of a substantive dialogue between the junta and the opposition; and the creation of conditions conducive to credible and legitimate elections.

"Addressing these three concerns, including with the support of the United Nations, is therefore essential to ensure that the political process is all-inclusive and serves the interest of all the people of Myanmar [Burma] in a way that can be broadly accepted by the international community," Ban said.

Any successful transition would require overcoming the country's twin legacy of political deadlock and civil conflict and it was in the interest of all to ensure that any gains made so far become irreversible, he said.

"While the government has a primary obligation to address the concerns of all stakeholders, every stakeholder has a role to play and a responsibility to assume in the interest of the nation," Ban added.

He said Than Shwe had "pledged to make the elections free and fair."

"But I said then, and reiterate today, that it is up to the Myanmar [Burmese] authorities to translate this into concrete action, to ensure the inclusiveness and credibility of the process and to demonstrate concretely Myanmar's [Burma's] commitment to cooperate with the international community," Ban told the Security Council.

Ban said he conveyed in the clearest terms what is expected of Burmese military leaders. "It is up to them to respond positively in their country's own interest," he said.

"AAPP(Burma)" <info@aappb.org>



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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Media Statement - for immediate release

16 July 2009

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Political Prisoners' Rights Group Issues Challenge to Burmese Junta

[Mae Sot, Thailand] The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) (AAPP) today cautioned UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and members of the UN Security Council not to fall for yet another hollow promise by the ruling military regime in Burma. The call follows the recent announcement by Burma's UN ambassador U Than Swe that the Myanmar authorities will "grant amnesty to prisoners on humanitarian grounds with a view to enabling them to participate in the 2010 elections."

Since November 2004 there have been a total of five amnesties for prisoners. According to the ruling State Peace and Development Council's own figures, 38,618 prisoners were released under those amnesties. AAPP figures show that only just over 1% of them were political prisoners.

"The regime does not even acknowledge the existence of political prisoners," said Bo Kyi, Joint-Secretary of AAPP. "If they truly want to show the world that they are serious about democratic reform, the first step is to officially recognize political prisoners, and the fact that they have been arrested on political grounds. But words are not enough. We need to see practical implementation of a concrete time-frame for the rapid release of all of Burma's political prisoners."

The organisation today set out its demands to the military regime calling for the release of all of Burma's political prisoners, and their free participation in the country's democratization process:

1. Officially recognise the existence of political prisoners
2. Withdraw the charges against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and release her unconditionally
3. Immediately release the estimated 136 political prisoners known to be in bad health
4. Allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to resume its impartial mandate to inspect prisons, with immediate effect
5. Immediately cease the practice of transferring political prisoners to remote jails, and return all political prisoners to facilities in their home towns, to allow their family members to visit easily
6. Publicly declare a concrete timeframe for the release of all political prisoners before the end of 2009, to give them an opportunity to participate in the country's democratization process
7. Allow all political prisoners and former political prisoners to freely participate in the country's democratization process, without restrictions.

There are currently 2,160 political prisoners in Burma's detention centres, labour camps and jails. There are some 10,000 former political prisoners in Burma.

-ENDS

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Notes to editors:

- Since October last year, at least 357 political activists have been sentenced to harsh prison terms of up to 104 years.
- Since last November, at least 237 political prisoners have been transferred to prisons away from Rangoon. 75% of them have been moved to Burma's most remote prisons, up to 1,200 miles from Rangoon.
- According to the SPDC's publicly released figures, a total of 38,618 prisoners have been released in five separate amnesties since November 2004. According to AAPP figures, 461 (or 1.2%) of them were political prisoners.
- In February 2009, 6,313 prisoners were released. 31 of them were political prisoners.
- In September 2008, 9,002 prisoners were released. 9 of them were political prisoners.
- In November 2007, 8,585 prisoners were released. 20 of them were political prisoners.
- In July 2005, around 400 prisoners were released. 341 of them were political prisoners.
- In November and December 2004, 14,318 prisoners were released. 60 of them were political prisoners.

Assistant Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

Web: <http://www.aappb.org>, <http://www.fbppn.net>

"There can be no national reconciliation in Burma, as long as there are political prisoners."

MYANMATHADIN <<http://www.myanmathadin.com/>>- Thu, 09. Jul 2009 23:15:07 - [News - World Source](#)

VOA News Thursday, 09 July 2009 - <<http://www.myanmathadin.com/news/world/593-g8-calls-on-burma-to-release-political-prisoners.html>>

G8 Calls on Burma to Release Political Prisoners

Major industrialized nations have issued a call for Burma to free all political prisoners, including pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Leaders from the Group of Eight welcomed the United Nations secretary-general's efforts to communicate the international concerns to Burma's military government.

But the G8 statement said Burma's military leaders failed to take the opportunity of Ban Ki-moon's visit to the country to respond to those concerns.

The declaration said there is an urgent need for an inclusive process of dialogue and national reconciliation that will lead to what it called "transparent, fair and democratic multiparty elections."

G8 leaders said they remain prepared to respond positively if Burma undertakes substantive reforms.

On Thursday, the U.N. chief discussed Burma with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the sidelines of the G8 summit.

Burmese leaders denied Mr. Ban's request to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi during his visit to Burma last week.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for 13 of the past 19 years, is on trial for allegedly violating the terms of her house arrest.

She could face a five-year prison sentence if convicted of charges that stem from allowing an American intruder to stay at her home overnight after the man swam across a Rangoon lake to get there.

THE BURMANET NEWS - July 18 - 20, 2009, Issue #3757 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Voice of America - July 20, 2009 - <<http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-07-20-voa13.cfm>>

ASEAN Foreign Ministers discuss challenges, Burma's human rights

— Daniel Schearf -



Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva addresses opening ceremony of 42nd Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, in Phuket, 20 Jul 2009

Phuket, Thailand - Thailand's prime minister has defended the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' plans for a human rights body. Abhisit Vejjajiva made the comments at the opening of ASEAN's annual foreign ministers meeting.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva says the Association of Southeast Asian Nations needs to be a community of action.

"ASEAN must be able to act decisively and in a timely manner to address both internal and external threats and challenges to the security and welfare of its member states and peoples," he said. "Effective action must replace extended deliberation. We must show to the world that ASEAN is ready to meet any challenge and is well prepared to act decisively."

ASEAN has long been criticized as a talking shop because of its tradition of acting only on consensus.

But in May Thailand, the current chair, issued its strongest criticism yet of member state Burma for its prosecution of democracy and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and jailing of political prisoners.

The trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, on charges of violating the terms of her detention, and Burma's rights abuses are in focus as the ministers agreed on the terms of the region's first human rights body.

Full details of the body's functions have not yet been released, but officials say it will not have the power to investigate or punish human rights abusers such as Burma.

Mr. Abhisit told journalists Monday this does not mean that protection of human rights will be ignored. He says while the body will first focus on the promotion of human rights, protection will come later.

"But it's better to make a start than to leave this hanging with no progress at all," he said. "So, we recognize the concerns of people who work on this issue, we will take them on board and we will do what we can."

Foreign ministers from ASEAN's 10 members on Monday began four days of meetings on improving regional cooperation.

The ministers are expected to discuss challenges affecting the region, including terrorism, the economic crisis, influenza pandemic, and climate change, among other issues.

They meet later in the week with dialogue partners from 17 nations and groups of nations, including the European Union, the United States, and North Korea. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva addresses opening ceremony of 42nd

Thailand wants to arrange an informal meeting of the six nations involved in talks on ending North Korea's nuclear programs. But, in a sign that Pyongyang is not interested, the reclusive nation plans to send a lower-level official rather than a foreign minister.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>[NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NCGUB: News & Articles on Burma, Wednesday, 22 July 2009

AFP/ir - <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/444045/1/.htm>

Clinton says ASEAN should consider Myanmar's expulsion

Posted: 22 July 2009 1833 hrs

PHUKET, Thailand - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should consider expelling Myanmar if it does not release imprisoned Aung San Suu Kyi, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Wednesday.

Asked on Thai television whether ASEAN should kick out the military-ruled member state if it does not free the pro-democracy leader, Clinton replied: "It would be an appropriate policy change to consider."

Myanmar -- ASEAN's problem child since it joined the bloc in 1997 -- recently sparked outrage by putting the Nobel peace laureate on trial over an incident in which an American man, John Yettaw, swam to her lakeside house.

"I regret deeply this unfortunate incident, which she had nothing to do with, and which served as an excuse for them to put her on trial," Clinton said, referring to Yettaw's uninvited intrusion.



Aung San Suu Kyi

The ruling junta snubbed United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon by refusing to let him visit Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon's notorious Insein prison, deepening concerns in the international community.

US President Barack Obama has described the court proceedings as a "show trial" and Myanmar has already been slapped with US sanctions for its detention of political prisoners.

On Tuesday Clinton also said she was "deeply concerned" by reports of human rights in Myanmar, "particularly by actions that are attributed to the Burmese military concerning the mistreatment and abuse of young girls."

Concerns over Myanmar's possible military cooperation with North Korea are set to dominate discussions at Asia's biggest security forum in the Thai resort island of Phuket, where Clinton arrived on Wednesday from Bangkok.

Responding to Clinton, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said his country, an ASEAN member, opposed expelling Myanmar from the bloc.

"We are still in favour of discussing with Myanmar so that they will be serious in implementing the roadmap towards democratisation," Najib told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

Myanmar Foreign Minister Nyan Win met his Japanese counterpart Hirofumi Nakasone in Phuket on Wednesday, and the issue of Aung San Suu Kyi came up, a spokesman for the Japanese minister said.

Nakasone urged Myanmar to release all political prisoners, resume dialogue with the opposition and prepare a "positive environment" for elections promised by the ruling generals in 2010, the spokesman said.

Nyan Win "listened very carefully" and explained that Myanmar "did its best to assist" Ban when he visited the country earlier this month, added the spokesman.

Nyan Win said Myanmar's government "responded as they believed appropriate" to Ban's request to visit her, the Japanese spokesman said.

Tin Kyi <mtinkyi7@yahoo.com> - [8888peoplepower] Burma Related News - July 23, 2009.

The Mizzima News - <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/regional/2498-asean-expects-burma-to-respond-to-intl-concerns.html>>

Asean expects Burma to respond to Int'l concerns

by **Mungpi**

Thursday, **23 July 2009 22:06**

New Delhi (Mizzima) – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their dialogue partners on Thursday concluded the regional security forum, exhorting Burma to release opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose trial will hear the final argument on Friday.

Thailand's Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, in his press statement as the Chairman of the Asean Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conferences and ASEAN Regional Forum reminded military-ruled Burma to be responsive to international concerns.

Kasit said the Asean as well as members of the ARF respect the sentiment of friendship and goodwill and would like to assist Burma in its efforts to promote democracy, human rights and the well-being of her people.

"At the same time, it is hoped that Myanmar would also be responsive to the international community's concerns," Kasit said.

Delegates from Burma led by Foreign Minister Nyan Win, during the four day conference held in Thailand's resort island of Phuket faced criticism and strong worded messages from several quarters over the trial of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

On Wednesday evening, US officials met the Burmese delegation and conveyed the importance of Burma implementing the terms of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1874 on North Korea, which imposed sanctions on North Korea over its recent missile and nuclear tests.

US Secretary of State Clinton did not join the talks with the Burmese delegation.

During the talks, according to a statement by the US State Department, the US officials also pointed out their expectation from Burma to release Aung San Suu Kyi and to begin a process of freeing political prisoners, and making the election scheduled for 2010 open, transparent and credible.

Clinton, during a press briefing on Thursday said, this view was not only of the US, "It was very widely and, I must say, from the heart – it was really expressed from the heart by so many people."

On Wednesday, Clinton said Asean should consider expelling Burma from the grouping if the ruling regime sentences the detained Nobel Peace Laureate.

But later on the same day, she also said, the US would expand relations with Burma if the military junta releases Aung San Suu Kyi.

"If she [Suu Kyi] were released, that would open up opportunities, at least for my country, to expand our relationship with Burma, including investments in Burma. But it is up to the Burmese leadership," Clinton said.

But her remarks were refuted on Thursday by Thailand's Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva saying there are "insufficient grounds" to expel Burma from the 10-member bloc.

Speaking in his capacity as the current chair of Asean, Abhisit said while the west and Asean share the same goals regarding democracy in Burma, the policies cannot be the same.

He also said, expelling the military-ruled country over the detention of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is not likely solve the problem but will only further isolate the country.

"There are not enough grounds to expel Myanmar [Burma] from ASEAN", reports quoted Abhisit as saying. "If we do that, it will further isolate Myanmar [Burma] and would not solve the problem."

But he reiterated that Asean wishes to see Burma achieve democracy and is monitoring the situation there including the trial of

Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the 1990 election winning National League for Democracy party, is currently facing a trial on charges of violating her detention terms for allegedly harbouring an American man, John Yettaw, who swam to her lakeside home in early May.

If found guilty, she could be sentenced up to five years in prison. -----.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NCGUB: News & Articles on Burma, 20 July 2009

Democratic Voice of Burma - <http://english.dvb.no/print_news.php?id=2728>

Mass opposition arrest on Martyrs' Day

July 20, 2009 (DVB)—Around 20 members of Burma's opposition National League for Democracy party were briefly detained yesterday whilst returning from an annual celebration marking Martyrs' Day.

Around 50 National League for Democracy (NLD) members had marched to the Martyr's Mausoleum in Rangoon to pay their respects to General Aung San, Burma's independence leader and father of Aung San Suu Kyi, and other national heroes.

The event was marred by tight security, and 20 people were arrested on their return, said NLD spokesperson Nyan Win.

"About 30 to 40 people who went to the Martyrs' Hill this morning were nabbed in a truck but all were released after about 30 minutes," he said.

"Apparently they were detained for wearing t-shirts with pictures of General Aung San and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi."

According to one NLD member, security officials had also collected personal information from each person as they entered the mausoleum.

"They also check our bags for digital equipments such as mobile phones, cameras and voice recorders and didn't allow us to take those into the mausoleum," he said.

"I felt so disturbed about it; I wanted to salute our national leaders who brought us independence without any restriction."

Suu Kyi, who is on trial at Rangoon's Insein prison on charges of breaching conditions of her house arrest, marked the day by sending food to patients inside the prison hospital.

Government officials also visited the mausoleum and laid wreaths in remembrance.

General Aung San was instrumental in setting in motion Burmese independence from British rule, although he was assassinated in July 1947, six months before it was successfully achieved.

As a revered symbol of civilian rule, the military government is now reportedly removing references to General Aung San from school textbooks.

Reporting by Thurein Soe and Ahunt Phone Myat

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"Scoop" World - <http://www.scoop.co.nz/> - Press Release: Terry Evans - Friday, 10 July 2009

Aung San Suu Kyi Held in "Gulag-like Conditions"

Press Release: Terry Evans - <<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0907/S00207.htm>>

The British intelligence service MI6 has reported that the world's most famous political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi, is being held in "gulag-like conditions" while being tried at Rangoon's infamous Insein prison.

MI6 stated that, "Her trial has all the elements of an old-time People's Court hearing. No public are admitted. The defence lawyers cannot discuss the hearing outside the court. Suu Kyi sits in a dock under guard, and cannot speak to her judges directly. No reporters are allowed to cover the hearing."

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Her lawyer Nyan Win also confirmed that Suu Kyi was only allowed to read the state-controlled press, and was being denied access to "uncensored information via foreign broadcasting".

The junta's appalling treatment of Burma's democratically elected leader is sure to be raised before the UN Security Council in August, and again in September when the US takes over the chair from the UK.

In the past Burma has been able to rely on the vetoes of two permanent members of the Security Council - China and Russia - to block unfavorable resolutions. However, informed sources say that China is extremely disappointed by the Burmese regime's recent treatment of UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NCGUB: News & Articles on Burma, Monday 27 July 2009

The Associated Press - Jul 27, 2009 - <<http://www.thestar.com/news/world/article/672291>>

Amnesty gives top honour to detained Myanmar democracy leader

SHAWN POGATCHNIK

DUBLIN – Myanmar's democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, on Monday was named the recipient of Amnesty International's highest honour, the Ambassador of Conscience Award. The human rights watchdog said it hoped this would help protect her as she faces a potential prison sentence.

Amnesty Secretary General Irene Khan said the award was timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of Suu Kyi's initial arrest on July 20, 1989, as she led a campaign to oust Myanmar's military dictators.

Suu Kyi's opposition party, the National League for Democracy, won national elections in 1990 but the military refused to relinquish power. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 but has been under house arrest for 14 of the past 20 years.

"In those long and often dark years, Aung San Suu Kyi has remained a symbol of hope, courage and the undying defence of human rights," Khan said.

Suu Kyi, 64, is on trial for allegedly harbouring an American who swam out to her residence uninvited. The offence of violating house-arrest rules carries a potential five-year prison sentence, and foreign diplomats have been barred from key parts of her trial. Suu Kyi's supporters accuse Myanmar's junta of seeking to put her behind bars until after elections planned for 2010.

Former Czech President Vaclav Havel, a fellow Nobel recipient and the first winner of the Ambassador of Conscience Award in 2003, said foreign recognition probably has deterred Myanmar's rulers from imposing even harsher punishments on Suu Kyi.

"I know from my own experience that international attention can, to a certain extent, protect the unjustly persecuted from punishments that would otherwise be imposed. ... Goodness knows what would have happened if her fate had not been highlighted as it is again today," Havel said in a statement.

Irish band U2 is publicly announcing Suu Kyi's award Monday night at a Dublin concert.

U2 – which won the top Amnesty honour in 2005 in recognition of singer Bono's humanitarian work – has been honouring Suu Kyi at each performance of the band's European tour.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NCGUB: News & Articles on Burma, Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Reuters - FT.Com: Tuesday Jul 14 2009 - <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/17b0b038-7022-11de-b835-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=rss>>

Burma tells UN it plans to amnesty prisoners

UNITED NATIONS, July 13 – Burma is planning to amnesty prisoners to enable them to take part in national elections next year, at the request of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the country's UN envoy said on Monday.

But, addressing the UN Security Council, Ambassador Than Swe did not say how many political prisoners would be released, or when, or whether they would include key figures like opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

During a July 3-4 visit to Burma, Mr Ban pressed the ruling military junta to free all political prisoners, including Nobel peace laureate Mr Suu Kyi, who is on trial on charges of breaking the conditions of her house arrest.

"At the request of the secretary-general, the Burma government is processing to grant amnesty to prisoners on humanitarian ground and with a view to enabling them to participate in the 2010 general elections," Mr Than Swe said, speaking in English.

He said the Burma government "intends to implement all appropriate recommendations that (the) secretary-general had proposed". But during Mr Ban's visit the junta refused to allow him to meet Ms Suu Kyi, saying this could influence her trial.

Rights groups say there are more than 2,000 political prisoners in Burma. If the government releases a significant number of them, the move could be seen as justifying Mr Ban's trip, which many analysts have so far portrayed as a failure.

Ban himself reacted cautiously to Mr Than Swe's comments. The UN chief, who earlier briefed the Security Council on his visit, told reporters: "This is encouraging, but I will have to continue to follow up how they will implement all the issues raised during my visit in Burma."

"I am not quite sure ... who will be included in this amnesty," he added.

The Burma government has amnestied prisoners before. It freed 19 political detainees in February as part of a release of 6,000 prisoners after a visit by a UN human rights envoy.

Critics say next year's elections, the final part of a seven-step "road map" to democracy, will be a sham designed to give legitimacy to the current authorities and entrench nearly half a century of army rule in the former Burma.

In his report to the Security Council, Mr Ban said the Burma government needed to deliver on promises to make next year's elections free and fair, to release prisoners and to start a dialogue with the opposition "in the very near future".

"The choice for Burma's leaders in the coming days and weeks will be between meeting that responsibility ... or failing their own people and each one of you," he told the 15 council members.

Most council envoys supported Mr Ban and deplored the Burma junta's refusal to let him see Ms Suu Kyi, who is accused of breaching her house arrest terms by letting an American intruder stay at her lakeside home in Yangon in May.

British envoy Philip Parham said the move demonstrated "the regime's fear of a free and fair political process." If there was an "unjust outcome" in Suu Kyi's trial, "the international community will need to ... respond robustly," he said.

US envoy Rosemary DiCarlo said Ms Suu Kyi faced "spurious charges of violating a house arrest that was illegitimate to begin with". French Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert said that without the prior release of Suu Kyi "any electoral process would be just a parody of democracy".

But in a strongly pro-Burma speech, Chinese envoy Liu Zhenmin said the junta's refusal to let Mr Ban see Ms Suu Kyi was "totally understandable". The international community should treat Burma with "less arrogance and prejudice," he said.

Liu said China remained opposed to any sanctions, making clear that Beijing will pursue its policy of blocking any substantive council action on Burma through its veto.

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The Human Face of Burma's Tragedy By Gordon Brown



A Burmese national holds a portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi outside the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok following the announcement of the verdict against the pro-democracy activist on Tuesday. - AP

Britain's prime minister is calling the conviction of Burmese pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi a "show trial." In a guest editorial, Gordon Brown argues the international community must be firm in its stance against the Burmese regime, which is "virtually alone in the scale of its misrule."

The appalling but inevitable outcome of Aung San Suu Kyi's sham trial is final proof that the military regime in Burma is determined to continue defying the world.

Depressing news that she has been sentenced to up to one and a half years further house arrest is not only a tragedy for her and her family, but also for the Burmese people who suffer daily at the hand of tyranny.

This was the moment for the generals to embrace the growing clamour for change and choose the path of reform demanded by the region and the global community.

They comprehensively shunned it. The charges were baseless, the verdict outrageous.

So the international community must respond to this latest injustice with a clear message to the junta that its tyrannical actions will no longer be tolerated.

Further sanctions to target directly the regime's economic interests have been agreed by the European Union in response to the verdict and must be implemented as quickly as possible.

And determined action in the United Nations Security Council must follow. Nothing less than a worldwide ban on the sale of arms to the regime will do as a first step.

An Absurd Mockery of Justice

I also believe that we should identify and target those judges complicit in these political show trials, which are an absurd mockery of justice.

The generals should be in no doubt about the strength of international solidarity with the cause of freedom, democracy and development in Burma. Political and humanitarian conditions in the country continue to deteriorate.

When over 140,000 were killed and millions made destitute by Cyclone Nargis last year the world's efforts to help were resisted, a peaceful uprising by monks in 2007 was violently quashed, ethnic minorities are persecuted and under armed attack.

The media is muzzled, freedom of speech and assembly are non-existent and the number of political prisoners -- jailed only for their unwavering commitment to peace and national reconciliation -- has doubled to more than 2,000.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the most high profile of them. She has long been a symbol of hope and defiance during her 14 years as a prisoner of conscience. She is a most courageous woman. In those long years of isolation, she has barely seen her two sons yet is resolute in her faith in democracy and the Burmese people. Her refusal to buckle in the face of tyranny is an inspiration.

The façade of her prosecution is made more monstrous, therefore, because its real objective is to sever her bond with the people for whom she is a beacon of hope and resistance.

Her treatment can only be read as the junta's reluctance to move towards freedom, democracy and rule of law with Aung San Suu Kyi a central figure in a new Burma.

So unless they immediately free her -- and all political prisoners -- and start genuine dialogue with opposition and ethnic groups, elections next year will have no credibility.

In July, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon demanded such measures on a visit to Rangoon. With this verdict, the generals have publicly snubbed him.

Now comes our greatest test.

In the face of this arrogance, we cannot stand by and effectively sanction the abhorrent actions of a violent and repressive junta -- but show them that the international community is united and coordinated in its response.

We have seen an extraordinary consensus building around the world against the Burmese regime, encompassing the UN, the EU, ASEAN and more than 45 heads of state.

Enormous Potential

All of us must continue to push for genuine political reconciliation and change, especially those countries in the region with the greatest influence.

Burma is rich in natural and human resources and sits at the heart of a dynamic continent. Democratic reform would unleash the country's enormous potential.

And I have always made clear that the United Kingdom would respond positively to any signs of progress, but attitudes must harden in light of this verdict.

The generals are condemning the country and its people to ever deeper isolation, poverty, conflict and despair.

Some may question why Burma warrants so much attention. There are other countries where human rights are ignored or people live in poverty.

But the Burmese regime stands virtually alone in the scale of its misrule and the sheer indifference to the daily suffering of its 50 million people.

Once again my thoughts are with Aung San Suu Kyi -- the human face of Burma's tragedy. But words and thoughts are no longer enough. - **Gordon Brown is the prime minister of the United Kingdom** *****

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com> - [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] NCGUB: News & Articles on Burma, Tuesday, August 11, 2009

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Suu Kyi "should not have been tried or convicted" says Clinton

Washington - US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in a statement released during her tour of Africa, said Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi 'should not have been tried and should not have been convicted.'

Reacting to the new 18-month house arrest sentence, Clinton again called on the Myanmar military rulers to lift Suu Kyi's house arrest, and also to release the more than 2,000 political prisoners being held in the country's prisons.

'The Burmese junta should immediately end its repression of so many in this country, start a dialogue with the opposition and the ethnic groups,' said the statement issued from Washington.

Failure to do this, Clinton warned, would mean 'the elections they have scheduled for next year will have absolutely no legitimacy.'

Read more: http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/asiapacific/news/article_1494830.php/Suu-Kyi-should-not-have-been-tried-or-convicted-says-Clinton#ixzz0NseUhf9m

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