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

The IRRAWADDY - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=16568>

Suu Kyi Remains Upbeat Says Her Lawyer

By AUNG ZAW

Saturday, August 15, 2009

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was positive and cheerful after returning to her Inya Lake residence, one of her lawyers, Kyi Wynn, told The Irrawaddy on Friday.

"She was not dejected and I was surprised to see that, on the contrary, she appeared cheerful and was laughing," the lawyer said.

Suu Kyi met with her lawyers on Wednesday around the dining table in her lakeside house, he said, adding that Suu Kyi appeared upbeat as she spoke of the trial.

Suu Kyi knew the verdict would be "guilty," but was not upset and showed no signs of bitterness, Kyi Wynn said.

However, the Burmese pro-democracy leader had expressed surprise that the regime had revived a "dead constitution" in order to implicate her, he said, in reference to the 1974 constitution which is officially invalid since a new constitution was approved last year.

Kyi Wynn previously said that Suu Kyi had privately told him that the charges against her were invalid as she was charged under the 1975 State Security law, which was annulled by the 2008 constitution.

During the trial, Suu Kyi told her lawyers that she and her defense team were facing a "crisis of constitution." Suu Kyi was referring to a 1975 law enacted under the 1974 constitution, which became invalidated when the military seized power in 1988.

In addition, under the junta's "seven-step road map," the country approved a new constitution in May 2008 by national referendum, which would also invalidate the 1975 act.

Kyi Wynn said that the regime had revived the 1974 constitution in order to charge Suu Kyi, and claimed that the old constitution was null and void.

The lawyer also said that the defense team was surprised to learn that Snr-Gen Than Shwe's letter to the court was dated and issued on the August 10th and not on August 11th, the day the judge read out the final verdict.

Suu Kyi initially received a three-year prison sentence, but that was immediately commuted to 18 months under house arrest when Home Affairs Minister Maung Oo read out Than Shwe's letter to the courtroom announcing his decision to cut her three-year sentence in half.

The suspended sentence was also applied to the verdict against Suu Kyi's two companions, Win Ma Ma and Khin Khin Win.

Suu Kyi is now a prisoner again in her own house, but her lawyer said that she is preparing to appeal.

"Suu Kyi wants to appeal and she is correct," he said. "But the chances of success are very slim—she was convicted even before she was arrested."

Kyi Wynn likened the house arrest restrictions imposed on Suu Kyi to keeping a child in a boarding school.

The restrictions against the opposition leader and her two companions are: they must only live in Suu Kyi's residence located on University Avenue; they are only allowed to go out into the house's yard; they can get access to doctors and nurses for health reasons; Suu Kyi can meet guests in accordance with permission from the authorities concerned; she can watch local TV channels such as Myawaddy and MRTV (Myanmar Radio and Television), as well as local newspapers and journals; and she can request paper if she needs to write something.

"Suu Kyi doesn't usually watch television, but is an avid reader and spends most of her time reading books during her

house arrest," the lawyer said.

When asked whether they could bring her foreign newspapers and magazines, her lawyers were told that all materials must be submitted to the authorities for screening.

Her lawyers have also noticed that local security forces and the police have elevated the watchtower which overlooks Suu Kyi's compound. Another noticeable change at her home since she was detained in May is that all the bushes have been cleared.

Suu Kyi is aware of the outpouring of support and the international reaction to the verdict against her, said the lawyer.

"But she is always looking forward to a dialogue," Kyi Wynn added.

When asked about China's stance toward Burma and Suu Kyi, the lawyer warned that China is playing with fire.

Political observers have said that because of the highly publicized trial and the international attention that she received during the trial, Suu Kyi's status is strengthened both inside and outside Burma and that she has gained a stronger position in Burmese politics than before.

"She was almost forgotten [before the trial]," a diplomat in Rangoon said, adding that the irony is the regime has promoted her status and international standing.

Suu Kyi has already spent nearly 14 of the past 20 years under house arrest, although Tuesday's conviction was the first time she has been found guilty of any offense.

THE IRRAWADDY Newsletter, September 3, 2009 - news@irrawaddy.org

Suu Kyi's Lawyer Lodges Appeal against Her Conviction

By THE IRRAWADDY Thursday, September 3, 2009 - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=16714

Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyer lodged an appeal on Thursday against her conviction and sentencing for allegedly allowing an American intruder to stay in her home for two days.

The lawyer, Nyan Win, submitted the appeal to the Rangoon Division's court. He said a decision was expected on Friday.

"If they accept it we will present our argument here," he told The Irrawaddy. "If not, we have to go to a higher court,"

Nyan Win said the appeal was based on 11 submissions, but he declined to elaborate. Suu Kyi was sentenced to a further 18 months of house arrest on August 11 after being found guilty of breaking the terms of her detention by sheltering the American intruder, John Yettaw.

Suu Kyi has been detained for more than 14 of the past 20 years.

Meanwhile, she has asked the junta to allow visits by her doctor and to approve a plan to renovate her home and improve its security. Nyan Win said no reply has yet been received to her request.

"EBO" - "Burma_news" <burma_news@verizon.net>

THE Washington Post - Monday, August 24, 2009 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/23/AR2009082302437.html>

Strategies of Dissent Evolving in Burma

Activists Find Political Breathing Room in Humanitarian Nonprofit Groups

RANGOON, Burma -- Call it the evolutionary school of revolution.

After years of brutally suppressed street protests, many Burmese have adopted a new strategy that they say takes advantage of small political openings to push for greater freedoms. They are distributing aid, teaching courses on civic engagement and quietly learning to govern.

"We are trying to mobilize people by changing their thought process," said an entrepreneur in the city of Mandalay who is setting up classes on leadership. He added half in jest, "Civil society is a guerrilla movement."

Government critics including many Burmese say opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's return to house arrest this month underscores the junta's resolve to keep her out of reach of the population ahead of parliamentary elections next year that many dismiss as a sham. But a growing number of educated, middle-class Burmese are pinning their hopes on what they call "community-based organizations," finding outlets for entrepreneurship and room to maneuver politically in a country with one of the world's most repressive governments.

At first light on a recent Sunday, a dozen doctors piled into two old vans, stopped for a hearty breakfast of fish stew and sticky rice, then headed out to dispatch free medicine and consult villagers an hour outside Rangoon. The group first came together two years ago to care for demonstrators beaten by security forces during monk-led protests. When Tropical Cyclone Nargis hit in May 2008, killing an estimated 140,000 people, the doctors joined countless Burmese in collecting emergency supplies for survivors while the junta rebuffed foreign aid dispatches.

Like many of those ad hoc groups, the doctors have since developed an informal nonprofit organization, meeting regularly and volunteering at an orphanage and in villages near Rangoon. The group's leader secured funding from a foreign nonprofit agency and named his team "Volunteers for the Vulnerable," or V4V.

But to avoid having their activities labeled as activism, the leader negotiates weekly with the authorities for access to the villages under cover of an anodyne Burmese fixture -- the abbot of a local Buddhist monastery.

For their own safety, the V4V founder said, "not even all our members know the name of the group."

Successive military governments in Burma since 1962 have clamped down on civil society and forbade associations of more than five people. Burmese say they have come to see the activities of semi-illicit groups such as V4V as rare outlets for entrepreneurship and for maneuvering politically.

"There is still room to change at the small scale," said an AIDS activist, sipping juice in a teashop. "Many people say civil society is dead. But it never dies. Sometimes it takes different forms, under pretext of religion, under pretext of medicine."

A 32-year-old writer here said his father was a local township representative for Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy.

But the young writer sees a role for himself beyond the opposition party.

He said his life was transformed after he took a three-month course at a Rangoon nonprofit agency called Myanmar Egress, which runs classes for Burmese interested in development. Like many of the people interviewed for this story, he spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

He then quit his job at a business journal to freelance opinion columns under a pseudonym and has co-founded a nonprofit with other Egress alumni.

"I came to realize my daily life is being involved in politics, in the political economy," he said, a resolve triggered by the scenes of poverty he witnessed along his daily commute on a creaking, overcrowded bus through Rangoon. "My belief is that without political knowledge . . . people will just go around town and get shot. I am doing what I can as an educator and a journalist."

Civic Duties

Many people in Rangoon expressed feeling a similar sense of duty as they have watched their military rulers decimate the education system and deepen poverty through mismanagement of the economy. In the past 50 years, Burma has fallen from among the richest countries in Asia to the bottom of regional development rankings.

"In Burma, the middle class is very thin," said a 38-year-old graphic designer who in 2004 helped found an undercover nonprofit group that recruits potential political leaders. "We need to grow, strengthen that. Most democratic countries have a broader middle class. It is the only way to go forward."

Such groups have also allowed urbanites to network in ways previously inconceivable.



Burmese men read news on arrested dissident Aung San Suu Kyi earlier this month. Many activists are shunning protests for work with nonprofit groups. (By Khin Maung Win -- Associated Press)

Humanitarian and Political

On a recent afternoon, students crowded into a musty hotel conference room for a three-hour lecture on civil society sponsored by Myanmar Egress.

Ten minutes before the class was to begin, barely a seat was vacant and still the students poured in, laughing, chatting or rifling through notes that curled at the edges in the damp heat. "They have a thirst for knowledge. They want to know. . . . They don't even take a break," said a 28-year-old Egress teacher, observing the 105 young adults from the back of the room. "This place is quite free, the only place we can talk about these things."

Some members of the groups reject any political motive in their activities, describing them as purely humanitarian. But others say that in Burma the two are intrinsically linked.

"At every meeting of nonprofits, the solution is always, in the end, political," said a Rangoon scholar who works with a foreign development organization.

The scholar is associated with a loose circle of influential academics, writers, negotiators between the junta and restive ethnic minorities, and businessmen at home and abroad who share a goal of finding a way through the political impasse.

"It's not that we oppose the NLD, but at least we take advantage of the opening space. . . . The NLD can't set a course. We have to find an alternative," said the scholar, who served 15 years in prison for writing about human rights.

But Suu Kyi's trial has made him less sanguine about prospects for change in next year's elections, the country's first since 1990. Going forward, he said, the key is "to prime the population for the transition."

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Burma Newscasts - Tuesday, September 1, 2009 - <http://burmanewscasts.blogspot.com/2009/09/cracks-in-castle-wall.html>

Cracks in the Castle Wall - By MIN ZIN GUEST COLUMN

Loopholes in the new Burmese constitution could be exploited by opposition groups to win influence after next year's election

In politics, a direct, frontal attack is rarely wise; co-opting the opponent's game plan for one's own purposes is a more powerful ploy. Opponents of Burma's military junta should bear this in mind as they consider their strategy for dealing with next year's election.



Min Zin is a Burmese journalist in exile and a teaching fellow at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Journalism. A longer version of this article is available on www.irrawaddy.org

Most mainstream opposition groups, including the National League for Democracy (NLD) and major ethnic ceasefire groups, have announced that they will not take part in the 2010 election unless the constitution is revised and the political process is made more inclusive. They say they can't accept the constitution as it stands because it denies fundamental ethnic rights and allows the military to seize power again "if there arises a state of emergency."

A closer examination of the junta's constitution reveals, however, that it is not the impregnable fortress that it at first appears to be. There are a number of weaknesses in the castle battlements that opposition groups can exploit if they are prepared to take a multi-pronged approach.

The first vulnerability lies in the fact that after the 2010 election, there will be two power centers, the military and the government, which will inevitably be at loggerheads over the command structure and personal interests. No matter who pulls the strings, this new power arrangement will lead to either a serious internal split or the inefficiency of the ruling body.

Another Achilles' heel is the constitution's de facto demotion of regional military commanders. Although the constitution enshrines ultimate power in the commander in chief of the military, it fails to provide similar authority to regional commanders in their localities. As key pillars in the military regime's power

structure, the regional commanders are like warlords in their domains. However, under the new constitution, they are under the control of the chief ministers of the regions or states, who in many cases may be civilians. This could result in a situation where regional commanders oppose not only local power arrangements but also Naypyidaw's control.

The third loophole in the constitution is that if non-military parties sweep to victory or win a clear majority of the 75 percent of seats not reserved for the military, a non-military candidate could become president. Failing this, non-military parties could gain control of the legislative agenda, giving them influence over everything from defense and foreign

affairs to the economic and social sectors. Thus Snr-Gen Than Shwe, who leads the ruling junta, appears to be determined to fill the remaining parliamentary seats with members of a military-backed political party based upon the membership of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a mass organization formed by the junta in September 1993.

Snr-Gen Than Shwe votes in the referendum election on the new constitution.

However, this leads to the fourth problem facing the regime. As a political party, the USDA's existing nationwide organizational structure (and its thuggish reputation, which could be used to intimidate voters) would give it a great advantage in the 2010 election. The problem is that the new constitution bars parliamentary candidates from receiving any support directly or indirectly from the state. As the USDA currently enjoys such advantages, it would run afoul of the regime's own constitution if it sought to field candidates in the election. Therefore, if the military wants to create a new political party or parties, it must ensure that they do not bear any resemblance to the USDA in terms of name recognition, resources or intimidating power.

Perhaps these concerns are the reason the regime keeps delaying the promulgation of the electoral law, which was reportedly ready to be published early this year: Than Shwe wants more time to secure his bet for more power. Meanwhile, however, the credibility of the election and the legitimacy of the new power arrangement it is intended to put in place have already been hurt by the likely non-participation of the NLD and the refusal of several ethnic ceasefire groups to disarm or participate.

In fact, the opposition could create leverage by remaining outside the regime's election process while opening a new proxy front within the regime's game plan. Even if opposition groups don't take part in the election using their current organizational identities, they could set up proxy political parties to participate in the 2010 election. Through these proxy parties, the opposition could attempt to maximize civilian control of the post-election parliament.

At the same time, opposition groups such as the NLD, the New Mon State Party and others must stand strong in opposing the "illegitimate" constitution and election and continue their fight for genuine reconciliation. Just because they loathe the undemocratic constitution, the opposition should not consider total disengagement from mainstream politics. The opposition must be savvy in combining both inside-out and outside-in strategies to usher in political change.

In fact, the formation of proxy parties and participation in the 2010 election will help prevent a split within the opposition groups. Otherwise, policy disagreements between moderates and radical activists within the NLD as well as individual ethnic groups might lead to open splits when the election law comes out and the junta plays more rounds of divide and rule. Proxy tactics could also help bring new recruits to the opposition movement.



Snr-Gen Than Shwe votes in the referendum election on the new constitution.

However, no one should harbor any illusion that the presence of opposition proxy parties in the 2010 election will spark a magical power shift to civilian control. That will happen only if there is sufficient public pressure to challenge the military-dominated status quo, forcing the military to negotiate with the opposition, which would then be in a position to push for a genuine transition to democratic rule.

Another factor that could determine the success or failure of the approach outlined here is the ability of non-military MPs to maintain a sense of common purpose. There is a danger that parochial interests will blind non-military MPs to broader issues, or that self-interest will lead them to compromise their reform agenda. Non-military MPs would not necessarily form a monolithic bloc or be unanimous in their approach to the military's domination. Vote rigging and intimidation in the election could further undermine the chances of a genuine opposition presence in the parliament.

That said, however, the contradictions embedded in the constitution will provide unprecedented opportunities for those who seek to break the military's hold on power. If a moderate military leadership emerges in a post-Than Shwe era, those proxy MPs and ministers who are in the mainstream can work with them for gradual reform. In the event of mass demonstrations on the streets, proxy parties will be well-placed to play a role.

The opposition should be creative in opening a new proxy front as part of a multi-pronged strategy to exploit the cracks in the junta's fortress.

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The NewsWeek - <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/213129>>

The Swimmer Speaks - By Tony Dokoupil - Aug 21, 2009

John Yettaw, just back from his Burmese prison odyssey, explains how he unwittingly created an international diplomatic crisis.

How was a retired bus driver from Missouri able to make a flipper-clad, two-kilometer swim to the heavily guarded house of Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi, one of the world's most famous dissidents? While John Yettaw languished in Burmese jail during his trial for "illegal swimming," all we could do is speculate. But now, in an exclusive interview with NEWSWEEK, Yettaw has offered an explanation: Burmese security officials let him. "I don't know why they didn't stop me," he says. "The man with the AK-47 shook my hand and let me in."

In his first full-length interview, conducted by telephone from his home in central Missouri, Yettaw addressed the rationale for his undiplomatic dip, responding to critics and speaking at length about his commitment to Burma. "I want to free Myanmar. I want to stop the suffering there. I am antijunta. I will never be at peace, emotionally or psychologically, until that woman is free, until that nation is free," he said.

Yettaw burst onto the front pages of the world's papers in May, when he had made an uninvited two-day visit to the home of Suu Kyi. "The Lady," as locals call her, trounced opponents in the country's last open election in 1990, but the junta refused to recognize the results and has kept her under arrest for 14 of the past 20 years for trying to topple the regime. She was due to be released on May 27, just weeks after Yettaw showed up, well ahead of next year's landmark national elections—the first in two decades. But earlier this month, Suu Kyi was sentenced to 18 more months of home confinement. On Sunday, Yettaw was freed from seven years of hard labor when U.S. Sen. Jim Webb negotiated for his release; he was deported back to the United States.

A quixotic man who didn't have a passport until last year, Yettaw is an unlikely protagonist on the international political stage. The junta has said it believes that antigovernment activists used Yettaw to embarrass its leaders, while Suu Kyi's supporters say that the government used the American as a pretense for keeping their best-known critic under house arrest rather than risk igniting the opposition ahead of the 2010 elections. Yettaw's family, for its part, doesn't know what to believe. After years of questions that have gone unanswered and behavior that doesn't quite add up, they have come to accept Yettaw the way he is—bighearted but unsteady—without asking too many follow-ups.

Late Thursday night, the 53-year-old Missourian remained an enigmatic figure, failing to clarify lingering questions and offering rambling and occasionally contradictory responses. "I have to be careful what I say or it will hurt the people of Myanmar," he explained, using Burma's other name. Echoing his court testimony, he says he traveled to Burma hoping to visit the Nobelist Suu Kyi—and to warn her that he'd learned, in a divine vision, terrorists were planning to assassinate her. He denied that the military junta ruling the country had put him up to the visit. "I've been accused of being CIA, of being on the books of the junta. The idea is just ridiculous," he said.

Still, the question remains: why didn't guards stop Yettaw as he made his way across the lake to the home of the country's most famous prisoner? Yettaw had made a similar aquatic bid for the Suu Kyi house in November 2008, but he was turned away by her on-site companions. He told family that he had been captured by guards at gunpoint on his way back from her house. The guards, he says, apparently unaware of his first attempted visit to Suu Kyi's house, bought his story that he had fallen into the lake while fishing and let him go.

"EBO" - "Burma news" <burma_news@verizon.net> - Wed, 26 Aug 2009 08:03:24 - THE BURMANET NEWS - August 26, 2009 Issue #3784 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

The New York Times - Washington - Published: August 25, 2009 - Times Topics: Myanmar

We Can't Afford to Ignore Myanmar - By JIM WEBB

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/26/opinion/26webb.html?_r=1>

EIGHT years ago I visited Myanmar as a private citizen, traveling freely in the capital city of Yangon and around the countryside. This lush, breathtakingly beautiful nation was even then showing the strain of its severance from the outside world. I was a guest of an American businessman, and I understood the frustration and disappointment that he and others felt, knowing even then that tighter sanctions would soon drive them out of the country.

This month I became the first American political leader to visit Myanmar in 10 years, and the first-ever to meet with its



Sukree Sukplang / Reuters-Landow

John Yettaw, the American whose release from a Burmese prison was negotiated by U.S. Sen. Jim Webb, arrives at a military airbase in Thailand on August 16.

reclusive leader, Senior Gen. Than Shwe, in the haunting, empty new capital of Naypyidaw. From there I flew to an even more patched-and-peeled Yangon, where I met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the opposition leader and Nobel laureate who remains confined to her home. Among other requests, I asked Than Shwe to free her and allow her to participate in politics.

Leaving the country on a military plane with John Yettaw — an American who had been sentenced to seven years of hard labor for immigration offenses, and whose release I had also requested of Than Shwe — I was struck again by how badly the Burmese people need outside help. They are so hardened after decades of civil war and political stalemate that only an even-handed interlocutor can lift them out of the calcified intransigence that has damaged their lives and threatened the stability of Southeast Asia.

For more than 10 years, the United States and the European Union have employed a policy of ever-tightening economic sanctions against Myanmar, in part fueled by the military government's failure to recognize the results of a 1990 election won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party. While the political motivations behind this approach are laudable, the result has been overwhelmingly counterproductive. The ruling regime has become more entrenched and at the same time more isolated. The Burmese people have lost access to the outside world.

Sanctions by Western governments have not been matched by other countries, particularly Russia and China. Indeed, they have allowed China to dramatically increase its economic and political influence in Myanmar, furthering a dangerous strategic imbalance in the region.

According to the nonprofit group EarthRights International, at least 26 Chinese multinational corporations are now involved in more than 62 hydropower, oil, gas and mining projects in Myanmar. This is only the tip of the iceberg. In March, China and Myanmar signed a \$2.9-billion agreement for the construction of fuel pipelines that will transport Middle Eastern and African crude oil from Myanmar to China. When completed, Chinese oil tankers will no longer be required to pass through the Straits of Malacca, a time-consuming, strategically vital route where 80 percent of China's imported oil now passes.

If Chinese commercial influence in Myanmar continues to grow, a military presence could easily follow. Russia is assisting the Myanmar government on a nuclear research project. None of these projects have improved the daily life of the average citizen of Myanmar, who has almost no contact with the outside world and whose per capita income is among the lowest in Asia.

It would be wrong for the United States to lift sanctions on Myanmar purely on the basis of economic self-interest, or if such a decision were seen as a capitulation of our long-held position that Myanmar should abandon its repressive military system in favor of democratic rule. But it would be just as bad for us to fold our arms, turn our heads, and pretend that by failing to do anything about the situation in Myanmar we are somehow helping to solve it.

So what can and should be done?

First, we must focus on what is possible. The military government in Myanmar has committed itself to elections in 2010, as part of its announced "seven steps toward democracy." Many point out that the Constitution approved last year in a plebiscite is flawed, since it would allow the military to largely continue its domination of the government, and that the approval process itself was questionable. The legislation to put the Constitution into force has yet to be drafted. The National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, has not agreed to participate in next year's elections.

But there is room for engagement. Many Asian countries — China among them — do not even allow opposition parties. The National League for Democracy might consider the advantages of participation as part of a longer-term political strategy. And the United States could invigorate the debate with an offer to help assist the electoral process. The Myanmar government's answer to such an offer would be revealing.

Second, the United States needs to develop clearly articulated standards for its relations with the nondemocratic world. Our distinct policies toward different countries amount to a form of situational ethics that does not translate well into clear-headed diplomacy. We must talk to Myanmar's leaders. This does not mean that we should abandon our aspirations for a free and open Burmese society, but that our goal will be achieved only through a different course of action.

The United States refused to talk to the Chinese until 1971, more than 20 years after the Communist takeover, and did not resume full diplomatic relations until 1979. And yet China, with whom we seem inextricably tied both as a business partner and a strategic competitor, has no democracy and has never held a national election.

The Hanoi government agreed to internationally supervised elections for Vietnam in 1973, as a result of the Paris peace talks; Washington did not raise this as a precondition to furthering relations. As someone who has worked hard to build a bridge between Hanoi and America's strongly anticommunist Vietnamese community, I believe the greatest factor in creating a more open society inside Vietnam was the removal of America's trade embargo in 1994.

Third, our government leaders should call on China to end its silence about the situation in Myanmar, and to act

responsibly, in keeping with its role as an ascending world power. Americans should not hold their collective breaths that China will give up the huge strategic advantage it has gained as a result of our current policies. But such a gesture from our government would hold far more sway in world opinion than has the repeated but predictable condemnation of Myanmar's military government.

Finally, with respect to reducing sanctions, we should proceed carefully but immediately. If there is reciprocation from the government of Myanmar in terms of removing the obstacles that now confront us, there would be several ways for our two governments to move forward. We could begin with humanitarian projects. We might also seek cooperation on our long-held desire to recover the remains of World War II airmen at crash sites in the country's north.

Our ultimate goal, as it always has been, should be to encourage Myanmar to become a responsible member of the world community, and to end the isolation of its people so that they can live in economic prosperity, under an open political system.

Jim Webb is a Democratic senator from Virginia.

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The Irrawaddy - Tuesday, August 18, 2009 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art_id=16589>

Suu Kyi Clarifies Her Sanctions Policy - By WAI MOE

Burma's detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi told US Senator Jim Webb on Saturday that "interaction" must first be established inside the country, according to her lawyer.

The comment was made in response to Webb's assertion that, with regard to sanctions, Burma "needs interaction with the international community," the lawyer said.



A pro-democracy activist holds a portrait of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi during a protest in New Delhi in August. (Photo: Reuters)

"Daw Suu told me that when she met with Senator Webb on Saturday she reiterated the need for the Burmese regime to first interact 'inside the country.' She said only when that happens 'will Burma benefit from relations with the international community,'" said Nyan Win, Suu Kyi's lawyer, who met her for about one hour on Monday afternoon.

Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Tuesday, Nyan Win said he asked Suu Kyi about the recent reports in several British newspapers that she had agreed to an overturn of the international tourism boycott on Burma. "She replied that she had not discussed the issue with anyone recently," Nyan Win said.

According to the lawyer, who is also a spokesperson for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, Suu Kyi's stance on sanctions has not changed since she issued a statement in 2007.

"Suu Kyi said that as she was not the one who imposed sanctions against the Burmese regime, she is not in a position to lift those sanctions," he said.

The NLD leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate has in the past, however, offered an olive branch to the ruling generals. In November 2007, following the crackdown on monk-led demonstrations, she said, "In the interest of the nation, I stand ready to cooperate with the government in order to make this process of dialogue a success ..."

Suu Kyi said she explained to Webb that despite some early agreements with Maj-Gen Aung Mye Thaw, the minister of relations, who was appointed by the government to liaise with her after the monk-led protests, nothing ultimately transpired from the meetings.

Nyan Win said that one of topics raised during Suu Kyi's conversation with Webb was China's influence within the Burmese regime. The US senator apparently referred to Beijing's involvement in Burma as a "fearful influence."

"However, Daw Suu told Webb that she rejects such terminology with regard to China, and she wants Burma to be on good terms with all its neighboring countries as well as the international community at large," Nyan Win said. "She said

China is Burma's neighbor and wants to be a good friend of Burma. She said she did not see China as a fearful influence."

Another issue raised by Webb on Saturday was about the participation of her party, the NLD, in the coming elections in 2010. She told Webb that she needed to discuss the matter with members of her party thoroughly, her lawyer said.

Suu Kyi met with the Democratic senator in Rangoon on Saturday. On Monday, Webb told reporters at a press conference in Bangkok that Suu Kyi favors the removal of some of the international sanctions applied by the US and EU.

"I don't want to misrepresent her views, but my clear impression is that she is not opposed to the lifting of some sanctions," Webb said.

Webb is known for his strong criticism of the US administration's Burma sanctions, arguing that isolating Burma has strengthened China's grip, weakened US influence and done nothing to improve the junta's behavior.

According to Nyan Win, Suu Kyi made no comment on whether she considered the US senator's trip to Burma to have been beneficial.

"EBO" - "Burma_news" <burma_news@verizon.net> - Shan-EU <shaneu31@yahoo.com> - www.shanland.org

Shan Herald Agency for News - 24 August 2009

Tension sparks people to flee into China

Tension between the two sides has been on the rise after local Burmese authorities recently entered Kokang's gun factory and seized all weapons.

On 23 August in the morning, more than 150 troops of the Burma Army from Hsenwi and Kutkhai were reported to have arrived in Laogai. Three days earlier, about 200 troops from Lashio were sent.

On 23 August, about 30 Kokang officials were also reported to have met in an area controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), on the south bank of the Namting, according to local sources.

Right now, thousands of troops of the Burma Army have been taking positions in Kokang area. Security on the way from Kunlong and Laogai has also been tightened by the Burmese military. Rice and food supplies were also banned to be brought into Kokang areas, said another resident.

The tension between the Burma Army and the Kokang high since the Burma Amy sent an armed force to investigate reports of Kokang force having an armed factory on 8 August.

Newsletter for Sat, 29. Aug 2009 15:19:50 news@irrawaddy.org

THE Irrawaddy - EDITORIAL - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=16666>

Impotent China

Saturday, August 29, 2009

The increased tension and fighting between Burmese troops and ethnic armies along the Sino-Burmese border has sent thousands of refugees fleeing to China. This has prompted Chinese foreign ministry officials to express hope that Burma can "properly deal with its domestic issue to safeguard the regional stability of its bordering area with China."

Authorities in the southeastern Chinese province of Yunnan say some 10,000 people have already fled across the border from Burma in recent days due to the recent clashes. Most are Burmese-born Chinese and Chinese nationals living along the border.

Over the past few months, Beijing has been engaging in quiet diplomacy with Naypyidaw to urge the Burmese junta to solve the ethnic issue along the border in a peaceful way. When Gen Maung Aye visited Beijing in June, Chinese leaders again requested him not to use force against ethnic ceasefire groups and to maintain stability there.

Burmese leaders are also reportedly unhappy, as Chinese continue to support ethnic groups along the border. Many Burmese military leaders harbor anti-China sentiments, as China has in the past heavily backed ethnic armies and the now defunct Communist Party of Burma (CPB). The Wa and Chinese from the Kokang region were former members of the CPB.

However, it seems the Burmese leaders did not listen to China's advice. Instead, the regime went ahead with plans to press the ethnic groups near the border to disarm and form border guard forces. The regime aims to complete this transformation before elections are held next year.

The current conflict has been 20 years in the making. It is a direct result of the regime's refusal to grant the ethnic ceasefire groups the self-determination they seek within the framework of a federal union.

The greatest irony of this situation is that China, a major arms supplier and staunch ally of the repressive regime for the past two decades, has proven to be impotent in its efforts to persuade the junta leaders to find a political solution to this issue.

China has consistently backed the regime at the UN Security Council, exercising its veto power to block resolutions condemning the regime for its brutal repression of dissent, arguing that these actions do not represent a threat to international security.

In early August, Chinese foreign ministry officials even defended the regime's decision to sentence detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to a further 18 months under house arrest, saying that the international community must respect Burma's judicial sovereignty.

After decades of defending the junta, China's leaders are learning the hard way that the Burmese junta's sole concern is its own self-preservation. It cares as little about what Beijing wants as it does about the democratic aspirations of Burma's people.

Like it or not, Beijing's approach to Burma—and its status as an emerging superpower—is being put to the test. Unless it can find a way to rein in the generals, China risks not only instability along its border with Burma, but also appearing to be powerless to defend its own interests.

Nurul Islam Ctg <wisdom_ctg@yahoo.com> -[8888peoplepower] Halt Military Campaigns against Ethnic Nationalities: US

THE IRRAWADDY - <<http://www.irrawaddy.org/>> - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=16694>

Halt Military Campaigns against Ethnic Nationalities: US

The United States has urged the Burmese military junta to cease its military campaigns against ethnic groups in the eastern and northern areas of the country.

The statement on Monday from the Obama Administration comes in the wake of reports that thousands of people have crossed the border into China and Thailand because of the military actions launched by the military government.

"The brutal fighting has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes for safety in Thailand and China, and reduced both stability and the prospects for national reconciliation," said a State Department spokesman, Ian Kelly.

"We urge the Burmese authorities to cease their military campaign and to develop a genuine dialogue with the ethnic minority groups, as well as with Burma's democratic opposition," he said, adding that the US is closely monitoring the situation.

Kelly said the reports that some refugee are returning is good news. "Our call to the Burmese authorities to continue to develop a national reconciliation process stands. But if they are returning, obviously, that's welcome news," he said.

Responding to questions, Kelly said the US Burma review is closer to its conclusion and the final review is expected in the next few weeks.

"We were waiting on a number of developments, particularly the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi. Obviously, that has taken place," he said.

"I would expect sometime in the next couple weeks, as we get through the summer holidays and the Labor Day break, that we will have a final review and approval of a Burma strategy.

"I am not going to say which way we are leaning on this. I don't want to prejudge the process," he said.

Meanwhile, New York-based Burma Point urged UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to support the view of Timor-Leste President Jos' Ramos-Horta that the Security Council and countries of the world should freeze funds and assets held abroad by key officials in the military junta.

"Burma has legitimately elected leaders from the 1990 election who were denied the opportunity to represent their people," Burma Point said in its letter to the secretary-general. "We strongly urge the United Nations to acknowledge and accept the credentials of the legitimate leaders representing the people of Burma if such credentials are submitted."

"In the midst of ongoing civil war in upper Burma, lives of not only the ethnic nationalities but also the general population will be spared if members of the United Nations take bold action against the military junta," said Moe Chan, Burma Point executive director

"Member nations must not allow the junta to continue its egregious abuses of its own people. This inaction undermines the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and will forever stand as a blot on the history of the struggle for peace and democracy," he said.

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Campaigners call for commission of inquiry into junta crimes

by Mungpi <<http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/2658-campaigners-call-for-commission-of-inquiry-into-junta-crimes.html>>

New Delhi (Mizzima) - Campaigners say now is the time for the international community, particularly the United Nations, to call on the Security Council to establish a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Burma's military rulers.

With the recent sentencing of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and the continued cleansing of minorities in remote areas of the country, Burma's military rulers have clearly demonstrated their ruthlessness and stubbornness in ignoring calls for reform, three campaign group said on Wednesday.

Debbie Stothard, coordinator for the Alternative Asean Network on Burma (Altsean Burma), one of the three groups that has called on the Security Council to establish a commission of inquiry, said the international community, while offering condemnation through rhetoric, has done little practical to push the junta to implement changes in Burma.

"It is high time that the international community stop accepting the junta's actions and stand up," Stothard told Mizzima on Thursday.

Altsean Burma, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Burma Lawyers Council (BLC) in their statement on Wednesday called on the European Union, which tightened economic sanctions on the junta in the wake of the sentencing of Aung San Suu Kyi, to support their call in setting up a commission of inquiry.

The statement said the new sanctions imposed by the EU are totally inadequate in the face of the worsening human rights situation and ongoing atrocities against ethnic nationalities in Burma.

"These sanctions reflect the political unwillingness of the EU to take a firm stance on this issue and increase dangerously the risk that the regime will consider this as a green light to continue committing international crimes," said Souhayr Belhassen, President of FIDH, in the statement.

On August 11, a special court in Rangoon's Insein Prison announced the verdict of the over two-month trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, finding her guilty and sentencing her to three years of prison with hard labor.

But the country's military Supremo, Senior General Than Shwe, intervened the court session via a special order and commuted the sentence by half, contingent upon good moral behavior, while also allowing her to serve her time at her lakeside home.

Following the sentencing several countries have issued statements condemning the junta, though a few have hailed the junta for its apparent leniency in commuting Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence.

"The EU must not be fooled by the SPDC's [Burma's military government] phony attempt to show leniency on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The SPDC has fulfilled its strategy to keep Daw Aung San Suu Kyi out of the picture while, at the same time, the SPDC tells the world that Burma is on the path to democracy. How can the SPDC's planned elections be given any credence when war still rages in Eastern Burma?" Stothard questioned.

Stothard said several thousand ethnic citizens in eastern Burma are currently being displaced as a result of fresh atrocities committed by the junta's soldiers.

"If the junta is sincere in their plans and want to implement changes, the junta must stop killing the ethnics. Burma's politics is not just about Aung San Suu Kyi and the regime but it is also the issue of ethnic nationalities," Stothard emphasized.

Stothard added that the international community, particularly the United Nations, has not been taking effective measures to force the junta to cease their behavior.

"The UN has very little or no pressure at all on the SPDC. And the SPDC knows that they can continue playing around with international politics," she said, referring to the junta's official name of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Meanwhile, the US-based Global Justice Centre (GJC), in a press statement, denounced UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his reaction over the Burmese junta's sentencing of Aung San Suu Kyi, the only detained Nobel Peace Laureate.

The GJC said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks on the sentencing of Aung San Suu Kyi are totally at odds with his mandate under the UN Charter.

"As a Representative of the UN, and given these circumstances, international law requires Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to call for an end to impunity, not convey his 'disappointment' and call for 'reconciliation'," argued the GJC in their statement.

The GJC said instead of calling the verdict "disappointing" and "deplorable", Ban should refer the situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court, concluding that Ban's remarks "undermine the rule of law."

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