



NATIONAL COALITION GOVERNMENT UNION OF BURMA

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Press Release

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Burmese Military Condemned For Delaying Aid For Cyclone Victims

What is it with the Burmese generals and their sense of priority? Even when the death toll from Cyclone Nargis is now over 22,000 people and more than 40,000 people are missing and a million left homeless and starving, they still had the gall to delay the visas of officials from international agencies who are visiting Burma to help.

International aid agencies and those in the field are reporting about "survivors in desperate in need of help" but the generals are dragging their feet. In some areas, there are reports of soldiers preventing aid workers from distributing food and forcefully taking over the distribution process.

Lest these generals forget, we would like to remind them that the enormous problems facing the country today are humanitarian and not political. The devastation on a national scale caused by the cyclone is already causing havoc, particularly in areas of Irrawaddy Division, where people are literally fighting for food.

The cyclone is bound to have a long-lasting impact on the country and many challenges need to be tackled now. Burma, which has never seen natural disasters of this magnitude since time immemorial, neither has the capacity nor the capability to handle the situation. The generals must open up the country now to international agencies and governments and enable the disaster relief programs to begin on a massive scale now.

The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) also wish to urge governments and international agencies to strategically coordinate the delivering of aid and rehabilitation efforts, and if needed, to force the Burmese military to cooperate immediately. Cyclone victims have suffered enough and a day delay in the assistance program will only threaten more lives.

We have also been receiving reports about the generals incredulously ordering the building of polling stations in some areas instead of helping rebuild homes. Legitimizing military rule through the national referendum is definitely not an answer to the challenges facing the country now.

The NCGUB, therefore, calls on the Burmese generals to place their political ambitions on the backburner, at least for the foreseeable future, and devote their attention on using all resources available to tackle more pressing national issues.

Disaster relief and humanitarian assistance for the cyclone victims must be carried out now and on a massive scale with the help of the international community. The national referendum must be postponed until the situation in the country is stabilized so that cyclone victims will also be able to exercise their rights like the other people in the country.

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