

Asia-Pacific People's Partnership on Burma (APPPB)
**SUMMARY OF DEMONSTRATIONS AND RELATED EVENTS IN
BURMA**

September 2-8, 2007

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SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

This week saw continuing protests in Burma, with crowds at some demonstrations numbering in the thousands. While the focus of the protests continues to be on the sudden fuel price hike in August, the demands have broadened to include the release of those people abducted or arrested in the crackdowns that have followed each demonstration. The military continues to use as proxies the civilian Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) and Swan-aah-shin, usually giving members payments to harass, beat, and abduct peaceful protestors and onlookers.

Perhaps the most significant demonstration this week occurred in Pakkhoku, Magwe Division in Central Burma. As you will read below, monks led the protest. Their leaders were violently attacked and detained, and for the first time the authorities used firearms to break up the demonstration, firing above the monks' heads. The monks reacted by not allowing the local officials to leave the monastery, burning vehicles, and destroying the homes of one USDA and one Swan-aah-shin member. Pakkhoku is home to the second-largest community of Buddhist monks in the country, with the largest being in nearby Mandalay. Because of the large clerical community and the area's history as a hotbed of political activism by monks, the protest, arrests, and retaliations have the potential to trigger more widespread protests. Also, the use of firearms to warn demonstrators indicates the authorities will be willing to use lethal force to respond to unarmed protestors.

We can't sit back and watch the people who sponsor us sink into poverty. Their poverty is our poverty as well. – Monk in Pakkhoku

The call for involvement of the UN Security Council continues to grow, and the 88 Generation Student Group this week appealed directly to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to urge the Security Council to take action on Burma, not only for the current tensions but to support efforts for democratization and national reconciliation.

The authorities used civilians to fight with civilians. Members of the Union Solidarity and Development Associations (USDA) started pulling and pushing us. At that time I offered my hand to them for a handshake and told them that, "you are also civilians, and you are fully aware of the difficulties faced by the people. So come with us." At that time a boy shook my hand and said "please disperse your groups." I shook hands with three of them. – Ma Nilar Thein, an 88 Generation Student leader

DEMONSTRATIONS

Sunday, September 2 2007

Buthi-daung, Rakhine State

Ko Bu Maung conducted a solo protest in Buthi-daung in Rakhine State on Sunday morning. He demonstrated near the port, holding a placard calling for a decrease in commodity prices. Onlookers cheered him on until police arrived and arrested him.

Monday, September 3 2007

March from Labutta, Irrawaddy Division

Activists Ko Aung Moe Win, Ko Htay Win, and Ko Kyi began a protest march in Labutta, deep in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division, with the intention of leading people to Rangoon. As they made their way through the town, about 1,000 people joined them, and onlookers cheered the protestors on and offered food and money. They carried a banner stating, "We are peacefully demonstrating for the decrease of prices of basic commodities." As the crowd reached the outskirts of the town, township authorities and police arrested all three leaders and took them in army jeeps to Myaungmya Prison.

Kyaukse, Mandalay Division

Over a dozen artists conducted a silent march through SPDC Sr. Gen Than Shwe's native town of Kyaukse in Mandalay Division on Monday to show their support for the call to lower fuel prices. The march concluded at a local pagoda where the artists held a prayer vigil. Ko Kyaw Thu Moe Myint, who had intended to lead the march, was arrested on Sunday night at home but the artists proceeded with the demonstration anyway.

Tuesday, September 4 2007

Pakkhoku, Magwe Division

A protest took place on Tuesday in Pakkhoku, Magwe Division. About 10 NLD members led by U Hlaing Aye, a Member-elect of Parliament and NLD township chairperson, marched peacefully to the township office of the SPDC. There, they delivered a letter demanding the decrease of fuel prices. According to eyewitnesses, roads along the march were full of onlookers and followers cheering on the activists and offering food and water. The protest ended peacefully, with no disturbance from the authorities.

Taunggok, Rakhine State

Around 1,000 people staged a peaceful protest march in Taunggok, a coastal city 250 miles (400 kms) northwest of Rangoon, demanding the release of Ko Sithu and Ko Than Lwin, who were abducted on August 31 after staging a peaceful march. The protest started with 15 members of the NLD going to the local government offices to demand the release of the two. They made speeches at two busy public locations and then the crowd grew to over 1,000 people. The authorities reported that Ko Sithu and Ko Than Lwin had been sent to Thandway, the capital of Thandway District of Rakhine State. The crowd dispersed without incident about an hour later.

Hakha, Chin State

25 NLD members staged a demonstration in Hakha, the capital of Chin State, demanding that the authorities fix the rising prices of commodities, end the municipal council's tax hikes, and return a social welfare program. They also called on the authorities to stop detaining peaceful protestors.

Myitkyina, Kachin State

Kachin students at Myitkyina University in the capital city of Kachin State displayed posters demanding a roll back in oil prices, cessation of a hydropower project and land confiscation, and the scrapping of the outcome of National Convention. No reaction came from the authorities.

Prayer Vigil at Shwedagon Pagoda

15 people gathered for a vigil at Shwedagon Pagoda on Tuesday. The vigil, during which participants pray for the release of NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has been held frequently on Tuesdays since her third period of house arrest began in 2003. Authorities on September 4 arrested the leader, Ma Mya Mya San, without giving any explanation.

Wednesday, September 5 2007

Bogalay, Irrawaddy Division

The NLD in Bogalay held a demonstration and public discussion on the rise of fuel and commodities prices. USDA and Swan-aah-shin members abducted several of the organizers, including NLD local chairperson U Aung Khin Bo, but the crowd of several hundred people did not disperse and demanded the release of the event organizers. An attempt by USDA and Swan-aah-shin members to take a protester U Khin Maung Chit to the office of the local authorities was thwarted by the crowd, who put themselves between the NLD leader and those trying to abduct him.

Pakkhoku, Magwe Division

For the second day, demonstrations were held in Pakkhoku. More than 500 monks participated in the protest, and soldiers fired gun shots into the air and dragged away some of the monks to disperse the crowd. There were also reports that authorities tied three monks to a pole, beat them with rifle butts and bludgeons, and then arrested and disrobed them. Six monks were taken away at the time, and three of them were released in the evening. DVB reports that the demonstration drew over 10,000 onlookers, some of whom were beaten with bamboo sticks to force them to disperse. The events in Pakkhoku on Wednesday mark the first time since protests began over two weeks ago that troops have fired guns to disperse the crowds.

Thursday, September 6 2007

Pakkhoku, Magwe Division

To retaliate for the abduction of their leaders, monks in Pakkoku on Thursday took 20 local authorities hostage at Maha Visutarama Monastery (aka Ah Le Tiak), holding them for about six hours. The authorities had entered the monastery ostensibly to apologize for firing shots at the previous day's demonstration as well as to ask the abbot to stop any further protests by monks. While the authorities were being held in the monastery, other monks, cheered on by about 1,000 onlookers, set fire to four of their cars which were parked outside the monastery grounds. After it was confirmed that the three monks who were detained on the previous day had been released, the 20 local authorities were allowed to leave the monastery. Later in the evening, monks destroyed the houses of one local USDA leader and the hut-like residence of a local member of Swan-aah-shin.

Ongoing Hunger Strike Ends

Activists being held in the Kyiakkasan Detention Center ended their hunger strike on Thursday. About 40 detainees began the hunger strike last week after their colleague, Ye Thein Naing, was not given access to medical treatment after suffering a broken leg when authorities and the militias broke up a protest. On Monday, they were removed from Kyaikkasan Detention Center to an unknown location by security forces; reports suggest they were split up and placed in various police stations throughout Rangoon. On Thursday, the hunger strike ended when authorities guaranteed medical treatment for Ye Thein Naing, who was reportedly released on Wednesday and taken to hospital.

Taunggyi, Shan State

NLD members in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State, reportedly joined worldwide hunger strikes taking place simultaneously in 21 countries around the world, in support of the detained protesters who were staging a hunger strike in the Kyiakkasan Detention Center (see above).

Friday, September 7, 2007

Pakkhoku, Magwe Division

Tensions remained high in Pakkhoku on Friday, as monks attacked a store owned by a prominent government official then allowed onlookers to loot the goods. There were also reports of a protest in Myaing, a small town near Pakkhoku.

Rangoon - Hlaing Tharyar

About 200 workers staged a peaceful protest demanding the salary increase in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial area on the outskirts of Rangoon. No abduction or disturbance from the authorities was reported.

Gwa, Rakhine State

About 10 people marched to the local SPDC office and delivered a letter calling for the lowering of commodity prices.

Saturday, September 8, 2007

Daw-pon, Rangoon Division

Twelve members of NLD staged a peaceful march. No abduction or arrest has been reported.

ABDUCTIONS, ARRESTS, INTIMIDATION, AND SURVEILLANCE

Since last week, fifty-six more activists have been arrested. The list can be downloaded from website of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoner (AAPP) at http://www.aappb.org/list_of_arrest_aug_002_07.html

Many of the activists listed in last week's summary of events have remained in hiding this week, and authorities have continued with intimidation tactics, searching the activists' homes and harassing their family members. Authorities in Rangoon are pressuring local residents to sign a document agreeing to inform them of any information on the 88 Generation Student leaders still at large, particularly Ko Htay Kywe and Ma Nilar Thein. In addition, buses are being stopped and searched on the road to Thailand.

NLD member Su Su Nway, whose name became well known when she successfully sued government officials for imposing forced labor in 2004 and was later jailed, has been in hiding since the August 28 protest in Rangoon's Hlaedan area. She has a heart condition and has reported to the media from her hiding place that she has run out of medicine, but cannot get to a hospital because the authorities are trying to capture her.

At the end of the week, rumors began circulating that 88 Generation Student leader Ko Kyaw Min Yu (aka Jimmy) had died in prison after suffering severe torture at the hands of the authorities. In addition, Ko Kyaw Kyaw Htwe (aka Markee) and Ko Min Zeya were reportedly hospitalized after suffering severe torture. Later reports disputed the rumors, and the uncertainty of the activists' fates further highlights the brutal and secretive nature of the military regime's methods or repression.

The total number of people detained since the August 15 sudden fuel price hike has risen to over 150. Each of them, including Ko Jimmy, Ko Markee, and Ko Min Zeya, were simply demonstrating peacefully and expressing dissatisfaction with the government's economic policy, which has been roundly criticized by UN experts and economists.

RESPONSES

The heightening tension throughout Burma has prompted an increase and a strengthening of calls for the UN Security Council to intervene in the crisis. Most analysts recognize that China is the main stumbling block to a Security Council resolution, but pressure is building on them to recognize their own interest in supporting Security Council involvement in Burma. Of particular interest are the following:

- The 88 Generation Student Group issued a statement appealing to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to revive the Burma issue at the Security Council. Signed by Ko Htay Kywe, one of the group's leaders who escaped arrest and is currently in hiding, the letter said "These violent responses must be seen as early warnings of more brutal violence."
- On the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Sydney, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Jianchao said that China welcomes international efforts to help stabilize the situation in Burma as long as it is done with a "constructive attitude and on the basis of mutual respect." He added, "We hope to see reconciliation and improvement in the situation" in Burma.
- Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of Great Britain, called on the Security Council to consider the current grave situation in Burma.
- Laura Bush, the U.S. First Lady personally called UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and asked him to condemn the junta's brutal crackdown. She also asked the UN – through the Security Council – to take action to prevent further violence and repression in Burma
- The European Parliament adopted a resolution which encourages a binding Security Council resolution on Burma.
- Additional calls for the UN Security Council to take immediate steps to resolve the current crisis and help bring about national reconciliation and democracy in Burma came from –
 - The Nobel Women's Initiative (comprised of female Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams, and Mairead Corrigan Maguire).
 - Burmese groups in exile, including the Overseas Mon Communities and Yaung Chi Oo (a migrant labor organization in Thailand which collected over 2,000 signatures)
 - Freedom House, an international NGO working for worldwide expansion of political and economic freedom (calling on the UN Security Council members meeting this week at the APEC summit to use the gathering as an opportunity to push for democratic change in Burma)
- An editorial in *The Boston Globe*, reprinted by *The International Herald Tribune*, criticized the UN's lack of response, saying "Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and his special envoy for Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari, have had two months to reflect on a June warning about Burma sounded by the International Committee for the Red Cross. Not since it denounced the Rwanda genocide in 1994 has the Red Cross issued such a public condemnation of a government's behavior. ... The United Nations failed to react while another vicious regime was hacking its citizens to death in Rwanda. The organization cannot afford another display of moral blindness."
- *Time* provided a similar analysis in its September 6 feature, "Burma on the Edge," saying, "It's not clear ... what threat unarmed civilians can truly pose to a military that has already shown a willingness to use force to keep order. Without firm action from bodies like the U.N. or economic patrons like China, the country's generals may well be able to muddle through, as they did back in '88. In the meantime, Burma's underground activists are calling for continued resistance."

- Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Myanmar, defended the UN’s lack of strong response to the increasing violence against peaceful demonstrators by highlighting his ability to maintain face-to-face dialogue with the generals. In a press conference later in the week, he called the junta’s crackdown a “setback” for the country, saying it had the effect of calling into question the SPDC’s commitment to democratization, and emphasized that he is “moving very systematically to line up the support of the international community” to work together to spur progress. (Mr. Gambari’s press conference, at which he was asked several times about the possibility of Security Council involvement in Burma, is available at <http://www.un.org/webcast/2007.html>.)

“Myanmar” is listed at the bottom of the September 2007 agenda of the Security Council (see <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/pow.pdf>), indicating that it may be (but won’t necessarily be) discussed. (It does not always appear on the “Provisional Programme of Work.”)

In addition, a letter signed by 28 Hollywood celebrities, including Jennifer Anniston, Robin Williams, and Anjelica Huston, was sent to the UN Secretary-General asking him to personally intervene to secure the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Protests also continued to be held around the world, including a solidarity hunger strike to support those detainees who successfully pressured the authorities to allow access to medical treatment for Ye Thein Naing. These protests provide tremendous moral support for the people demonstrating inside the country. Also, by keeping the issue of Burma in the public spotlight in their respective countries, those demonstrations increase pressure on their governments, as members of the international community and the UN, to prompt Security Council involvement in the crisis.

Annex. 1

(Unofficial Translation)

‘The 88 Generation Students’ Statement on the Unlawful Detainment of Student Leaders

Burma has been governed by a military dictatorship for 45 years. As a consequence of military rule, Burma has become one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. The people of Burma have suffered tremendous hardships in the areas of education, health and social welfare.

In 1974, the military junta adopted the ‘Burmese way to Socialism’. Today they are marching towards the ‘Burmese way to Democracy’, in order to cling on to power and enslave their own citizens. In doing so, they have patronized the 14 year National Convention, in order to draft a constitution that is opposed to the will of the general public.

Simultaneously, the military arrested Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and others who defend the interests of their people. The military level allegations which lead to long-term imprisonments. However the reality is that these individuals have been working tirelessly for peace, justice, and development in Burma

Since August 21, the current military regime has detained 17 leaders of ‘the 88 Generation Students’ including Ko Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi. ‘The 88 Generation Students’ are aligned with the people and are working for a peaceful resolution to the political and economic problems the people of Burma are encountering. In particular, they are making

efforts to change the dictatorial system that is the root cause of impoverishment in the country.

Meanwhile, the 88 Generation Students' leaders have suffered cruel torture by the regime. The regime has efficiently implicated them through numerous allegations. We trust the people of Burma and the international community will not tolerate such obvious political aggressions undertaken by the SPDC.

We, 'the 88 Generation Students', affirm that we will valiantly face any kind of arrest and torture, and move forward, alongside monks, students, workers, peasants, and the entire nation, to overthrow the military dictatorship in Burma.

'The 88 Generation Students'

Annex. 2

Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB)

88 student leader denounces government abuse of power

Sep 10, 2007 (DVB)—High-level 88 generation student leader Ko Htay Kywe yesterday denounced the government for abuse of power and for failing to take sensible action to resolve political issues.

Ko Htay Kywe is the last remaining leader of the 88 generation student group to have avoided arrest by the ruling junta in last month's detentions of high-profile activists in relation of public protests against fuel price hikes. Ko Htay Kywe said in yesterday's interview with DVB that the government has failed to offer any solutions to public dissatisfaction and is instead misusing its power in aggressive crackdowns on activists.

"We think the government is now trying to tell lies to people in order to put 88 generation students behind bars. . . They are so caught up in their abuse of power that they don't even realize what is going on with people in the country," said Ko Htay Kywe, who refused to disclose his location due to fear of being arrested by the government.

"Our country could have been in so much better shape if the government had taken a look into the future and resolved political issues."

An announcement made by Burma's ruling State Peace and Development Council yesterday in the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper accused the 88 generation students of plotting to sabotage the newly-completed Nation Convention and claimed that 15 people had been taken into custody, mostly members of the 88 generation student group, including Min Ko Naing.

"[Those arrested] were sabotaging the National Convention and trying to create the dialogue they wanted and to contact foreign-based terrorist organizations in order to carry out terrorist destructive acts," said the SPDC announcement.

The announcement also held that Htay Kywe had avoided arrest because he had been "hidden at a secure place by an embassy of a powerful country".

Htay Kywe denied all the accusations made in the New Light of Myanmar and said the student group had always tried to seek peaceful solutions to political problems, but these efforts had been met with "open aggression" from the SPDC.

"We cannot find a solution when the government is going around pointing fingers and putting the blame on random people. We have tried to forget what has happened in the past and concentrate on how to shape our country's future," said Htay Kywe.

"Neither the people of Burma nor the international community believes what [the SPDC] says. Now I'm being accused of accepting refuge from a foreign embassy. It is not true because I am still with the people."
