



LAST MONTH IN BURMA

News from and about Burma

MARCH
2010

UK Government supports referring Burma to International Criminal Court

On 24th March the British government announced that it would support the United Nations Security Council referring Burma to the International Criminal Court. Britain's Ambassador to the United Nations made the announcement after a meeting of the United Nations Security Council about the situation in Burma.

The Burma Campaign UK has been campaigning for the British government to support a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma, with the aim of referring Burma to the International Criminal Court. Almost 200 MPs have backed the campaign.

On 5 March the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, in his report to the UN Human Rights Council, recommended that the UN consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. The Special Rapporteur report stated that the 'gross and systematic' nature of the abuses and the lack of action to stop them indicated; 'a state policy that involves authorities in the executive, military and judiciary at all levels.'

Australia became the first country to publicly announce its support for a UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses in Burma earlier in the month. In a statement at the UN Human Rights Council, Australia's representative to the council, Angela Robinson, said: "Australia would support investigating possible options for a United Nations commission of inquiry".

Burma's dictatorship has been deliberately targeting civilians in its war against ethnic minorities in Burma. More than 3,500 villages have been destroyed by the Burmese Army in the past 15 years, and the use of rape is widespread and systematic, even against girls as young five.

NLD reject Burma Elections

On 29 March, the National League for Democracy (NLD) announced that the regime's elections laws are so unjust that it will not register as a party to contest the upcoming elections.

A statement by the NLD said: the electoral laws issued by the State Peace and Development Council are unjust and therefore the Committee decided not to re-register the party unanimously without objection."

According to the regime's election laws, published on 9 March, prisoners are banned from being



Mublaw and her children were used as slave labour by the military dictatorship

members of political parties. The law effectively excludes more than 2,100 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Any party wishing to register to take part in the elections must expel members currently serving prison terms. A party that fails to do so will be unable to contest the elections. This forced the National League for Democracy to choose between expelling Aung San Suu Kyi or being banned in the upcoming election.

Writing in the Washington Post, U Win Tin, a founder of the NLD and a former political prisoner, said "I hope the international community will stand with us. The governments of the world should

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declare that they reject the regime's election and prearranged outcome, and pressure the regime to make substantive and positive change for Burma, beginning with the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and the cessation of the regime's military campaign against ethnic minorities. The regime should negotiate with Burma's democracy forces, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnic representatives for a peaceful solution toward national reconciliation and true democracy."

Burma Campaign UK called on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to renew efforts to force Burma's generals to enter into dialogue with the NLD and genuine ethnic representatives. "With Burma's main political party not taking part in the elections, it is time to move on from the debate about reforming the regime's fake elections, and get back to pressuring the generals to enter into genuine dialogue," said Anna Roberts, Executive Director at Burma Campaign UK.

Regime increases pressure on ethnic ceasefire groups

The regime's deadline for ethnic ceasefire groups to transform their armies into Border Guard Forces (BGF) has now been extended to 28 April.

On 1 March, SPDC Army Military Affairs Security Chief Lt Gen Ye Myint sent a letter to the United Wa State Army (UWSA) leaders saying that the group had until 10 March to unconditionally accept the junta's BGF proposal or become an unlawful organisation. However, on 10 March the deadline expired with neither the UWSA nor the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) accepting the junta's terms.

The regime has been intensifying its pressure on ethnic ceasefire groups the KIO and UWSA to transform their armies into Border Guard Forces under the control of the Burma Army.

Counter-proposals to the regime's ultimatum from the KIO and the UWSA have been rejected by the regime, who have instead responded with increased military troops. According to reports in The Irrawaddy, more than 70,000 regime troops have been sent to areas of North Eastern Burma, near bases of the KIO and the UWSA.

Stateless and Starving: Persecuted Rohingya flee Burma and starve in Bangladesh

A new report from Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) documents how Bangladeshi authorities have waged an unprecedented campaign of arbitrary

arrest, illegal expulsion, and forced internment against stateless Rohingya refugees from Burma. Rohingya refugees from Burma face death from starvation and disease in makeshift camps because the government of Bangladesh denies them access to humanitarian aid.

The report documents the dire conditions for these persecuted Rohingya refugees and warns that critical levels of acute malnutrition and a surging camp population without access to food aid will cause more deaths from starvation and disease if the humanitarian crisis is not addressed.

"It is unconscionable to leave this vulnerable population stateless and starving," says Richard Sollom, PHR's Director of Research and Investigations. "Immediate steps are needed to prevent further malnutrition, disease, and death."

Sollom described camp conditions as among the worst they had ever seen, with people housed in ramshackle huts made of twigs and plastic sheeting, denied food aid, and living beside open sewers.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority, have crossed into Bangladesh since 1991 to escape persecution in Burma, where they have been subjected to systematic and widespread human rights violations, including summary executions, torture, state-sanctioned rape, arbitrary arrest, and forced labour.



Read the report here: <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/reports/title/stateless-and-starving>

Crimes against women in Burma

Although Burma is a signatory country of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the junta continues to commit violence against women, particularly in ethnic areas. On 2 March, 12 Burmese women

presented testimonies of use of rape, torture and other crimes as a weapon of war used by the military junta at a tribunal organised by the Nobel Women's Initiative in New York. On March 8, International Women's Day, the Women's League of Burma called upon the international community to urge the UN Security Council to investigate crimes against women in Burma.

The junta has consistently suppressed women political activists, arresting them and transferring them to remote prisons. There are currently 177 women political prisoners in Burma, as young as 21 and as old as 68, with serious lack of access to health care.

American activist released



Nyi Nyi Aung arriving in Bangkok airport

Nyi Nyi Aung, Burmese democracy activist and US citizen, was released on 18 March, only five weeks after being sentenced to three years for forgery and immigration offences.

He had been detained since last September, while attempting to visit his sick mother, and was subjected to torture.

Nyi Nyi Aung, who took part in the 1988 protests, fled to the United States in 1993 and was granted citizenship in 2002.

The announcement of Nyi Nyi Aung's release came one week after the generals published election laws which blatantly ensure the elections will be rigged to ensure the generals control the whole process, and which bar Aung San Suu Kyi from taking part.

Before his release, Zoya Phan, International Coordinator of Burma Campaign UK, had predicted the release of a high profile political prisoner as part of the game the generals play to divert international attention from election laws. "The generals are playing the same old game, knowing the international community is likely to fall for it once again and give the release a political significance which does not exist."

Burmese Army shoots 5 month old baby in attack on Karen village

On 22nd March a 5 month old baby boy, a 5 year old girl, and a 37 year old woman were killed in an attack by the Burmese Army on Khaw Hta village, Kler Lwe Htoo District, Karen State.

According to a local villager, Burmese Army Battalion 369 entered the village and opened fire without warning, shooting at any villager in sight and firing into villagers' homes. Nine houses were also destroyed. The people of the village are now hiding in the jungle, and the Burmese Army remains active in the area.

Attacks on Karen villagers have been increasing since 17th January this year. More than 2,500 people were forced to flee their homes after attacks in two areas in Karen State. In one attack a child was killed and two others injured when the Burmese Army fired a mortar bomb at a school.

**Published by The Burma Campaign UK, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
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**for Human Rights, Democracy
& Development in Burma**