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### **Nobel Laureates Call for Action on Burma: A UN Security Council Commission of Inquiry**

(Ottawa). The UN Security Council must take strong action on Burma and issue an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Burmese military regime. This was the message sent by 14 Nobel Laureates—including The Dalai Lama, Shirin Ebadi, Jody Williams, Mairead Maguire, Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Kim Dae-jung and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in an open letter to the Security Council. The letter was released today in response to the guilty verdict of Burma's democratically elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

“This illegal verdict is just one more instance of the junta's contempt for justice, security, and democracy for the Burmese people,” said Nobel Laureate Jody Williams. “The brutality and lawlessness of this regime can no longer be ignored. It is within the realm of the Security Council to address the crimes against the people of Burma, and the time to act is now.”

Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was convicted today by the Burmese military junta, and sentenced to 18 more months of house arrest. The junta says Suu Kyi violated her house arrest in May when she offered temporary shelter to an American man, John William Yettaw, who swam to her lakeside home. Her supporters say the move is meant to keep her confined so she cannot participate in the general elections scheduled for 2010.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions (UNWGAD), an arm of the UN Human Rights Council, has ruled the arrest and detention of Suu Kyi illegal, stating that, “The latest renewal (2008) of the order to place Ms. Suu Kyi under house arrest not solely violates international law but also national domestic laws of Myanmar.”

While she is the country's most prominent political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi is not alone. Over 2100 democracy activists are presently in Burmese prisons. In the meantime, the Burmese military continues its attacks on the people of Burma. In June, the Burmese military dropped mortar shells onto an internally displaced persons camp, causing over 5,000 villagers to flee for their lives. Experts have documented hundreds of cases of crimes against humanity in Burma over the last 15 years, including the rape of hundreds of women. The Laureates' open letter states that the crimes against the Burmese people and the full extent of the brutality of the regime must be investigated and must not be tolerated any longer. It calls on the UN Security Council to pass a resolution creating a Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma, and to end the impunity of the Burmese military.

“The people of Burma have suffered unimaginable human rights abuses at the hands of dictators. Aung San Suu Kyi’s latest conviction is the final straw,” says Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire. “The time has come for the international community to unite, and stand together in peaceful opposition to the actions of the military junta. The UN Security Council needs to act immediately to send the message that this kind of brutal oppression will not be tolerated, and hold the regime accountable.”

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