

# BURMA BULLETIN

XXXXXXXX A month-in-review of events in Burma XXXXXXXX

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA  
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

Issue 20

August 2008

- **Fearing a wave of demonstrations commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nationwide uprising, the SPDC embarks on a massive crackdown on political activists. The regime arrests 71 activists, including eight NLD members, two elected MPs, and three Buddhist monks.**
- **Despite the regime's crackdown, students, workers, and ordinary citizens across Burma carry out peaceful demonstrations, activities, and acts of defiance against the SPDC to commemorate 8-8-88.**
- **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed to meet with her lawyer for the first time in five years. She also receives a visit from her doctor. Daw Suu is rumored to have started a hunger strike.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana makes his first visit to the country. The SPDC controls his meeting agenda and restricts his freedom of movement.**
- **UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari makes his sixth visit to the country. He fails to make any progress in facilitating dialogue between the junta and pro-democracy forces. The NLD calls Gambari's visit "a waste of time".**
- **The SPDC continues to frustrate aid recovery efforts.**
- **The UN downplays the SPDC's currency conversion windfall from aid funds.**
- **SPDC admits inflation of 33%, local markets reveal rice prices have increased 225% in the past year.**
- **Acute food shortages continue in Chin State. The famine has affected approximately 100,000 people.**

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## KEY STORY

### August crackdown

August marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nationwide uprising in Burma. Fearing a wave of demonstrations commemorating the event, the SPDC embarked on a massive crackdown on political activists. The regime arrested 71 activists, including eight National League for Democracy (NLD) members, two elected MPs, and three Buddhist monks. The junta also sentenced 12 NLD members to prison terms.

## Activists arrested

- **6 August:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Kyimyindine Township arrested Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) member Myo Myint.<sup>1</sup>
- **7 August:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrested All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) members Than Naing, Aung Kyaw, Htain Lin, and Chit Tun Lwin, and 88 Generation Students Mar Mar Oo and Myo Thant.<sup>2</sup>
- **8 August:** Police in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State, arrested 48 activists for peacefully demonstrating to mark the anniversary of the 8-8-88 uprising.<sup>3</sup> [See below *8-8-8 Demonstrations*] Forty-three were released on the same day.<sup>4</sup>
- **8 August:** Police in Rangoon arrested HRDP member Myint Aye.<sup>5</sup>
- **8 August:** SPDC authorities in Rambree, Arakan State, detained teacher Maung Aye Thein.<sup>6</sup>
- **11 August:** SPDC authorities arrested NLD elected MPs Nyi Pu and Tin Min Htut. Both men were among those who signed a letter sent to United Nations Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon at the end of July. The letter declared opposition to the SPDC's planned 2010 elections.<sup>7</sup>
- **13 August:** Police in Akyab, Arakan State, arrested activist Saw Hla Aung.<sup>8</sup>
- **14 August:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Kyimyindine Township arrested NLD youth member Yan Naing Tun. He was released the next day.<sup>9</sup>
- **15 August:** Police in Taunggoat, Arakan State, arrested protester Tun Myint Chay for calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners in Burma.<sup>10</sup> Police also arrested Tun Myint Chay's wife in connection with the protest.<sup>11</sup> Both were released on bail on 20 August.<sup>12</sup>
- **27 August:** Police in Rangoon's Hlaingtharyar Township arrested NLD members Tin Yu, Kyaw San, Soe Min, Hla Hla Maw, and Yan Naing Tun for calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 15 May.<sup>13</sup>

## Prison sentences

- **15 August:** A court in Sandoway Township, Arakan State, sentenced five NLD youth members to two-and-a-half years in jail.<sup>14</sup> The activists were among the 48 activists arrested on 8 August in Taunggoat for marking the anniversary of the 8-8-88 uprising.
- **28 August:** A court in Rangoon's Hmawbi Township sentenced NLD member Aung Aung to three years in prison for taking photographs at polling stations during the May constitutional referendum.<sup>15</sup>
- **28 August:** A court in Pyapon Township, Irrawaddy Division, sentenced six Bogale Township NLD members and four activists from Hinthada Township to two-and-a-half years in jail for their involvement in the anti-junta protests in September 2007.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mizzima News (12 Aug 08) Junta arrests two more dissidents

<sup>2</sup> DVB (08 Aug 08) Authorities arrest rights activist and ABFSU members; Irrawaddy (18 Aug 08) Activists Decry Arrests as UN Envoy Returns to Burma

<sup>3</sup> Reuters (08 Aug 08) Myanmar arrests "8-8-88" anniversary marchers

<sup>4</sup> AP (10 Aug 08) Myanmar anniversary demonstrators freed; Narinjara News (13 Aug 08) Five Detainees Missing in Arakan

<sup>5</sup> AP (09 Aug 08) Prominent Myanmar human rights activist arrested; Mizzima News (12 Aug 08) Junta arrests two more dissidents

<sup>6</sup> Kaladan News (11 Aug 08) Peaceful demonstrations in Arakan

<sup>7</sup> DVB (12 Aug 08) Two NLD representatives arrested

<sup>8</sup> DVB (14 Aug 08) Sittwe activists remember Arakan rice massacre

<sup>9</sup> Mizzima News (15 Aug 08) Junta officials release opposition youth arrested by mistake

<sup>10</sup> Mizzima News (15 Aug 08) Solo protestor arrested in Arakan state

<sup>11</sup> Narinjara News (17 Aug 08) Wife of Solo Protester Arrested in Arakan

<sup>12</sup> Narinjara News (21 Aug 08) Solo Protestor and Wife Released

<sup>13</sup> DVB (28 Aug 08) Five NLD members arrested for peaceful protest

<sup>14</sup> AFP (17 Aug 08) Myanmar jails five activists for '88 memorial march: opposition; AP (17 Aug 08) 5 Myanmar activists sentenced for marking uprising; Narinjara News (17 Aug 08) Five NLD Youths Sentenced to Prison; DVB (18 Aug 08) Five Taunggok activists jailed for 8 August march

<sup>15</sup> DVB (28 Aug 08) NLD member jailed after photographing polling stations

<sup>16</sup> DVB (29 Aug 08) Ten jailed for September 2007 protests

## Monks still targeted

Eleven months after the Saffron Revolution, the SPDC continued to harass, intimidate, and detain Buddhist monks. On 27 August, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said that 196 monks remained detained in Burma's prisons.<sup>17</sup>

- **8 August:** SPDC authorities in Rambree, Arakan State, detained Taung Kyaunn monastery's abbot U Thumana.<sup>18</sup>
- **8 August:** SPDC police and local authorities raided Kyin Thi Nat Kong and Say Gri monasteries in Akyab, Arakan State. According to an abbot, the police were searching for monk leaders planning an 8-8-88 commemoration demonstration.<sup>19</sup>
- **Mid-August:** It was reported that Insein prison authorities suspended visitation rights for about 15 monks and nuns imprisoned in connection with the September 2007 anti-junta demonstrations.<sup>20</sup>
- **Mid-August:** SPDC authorities reportedly deployed soldiers and police near Addi Htan monastery on the outskirts of Akyab.<sup>21</sup>
- **17 August:** SPDC authorities in Akyab, Arakan State, screened a video related to the Saffron Revolution to senior monks at Lawkananda temple. The video portrayed monks who took part in the anti-junta protests as impostors.<sup>22</sup> The next day, an SPDC official urged abbots in Akyab to take action against "bogus monks." Some local residents admitted to wearing monks' robes and begging for food due to Burma's deepening economic crisis.<sup>23</sup>
- **18 and 20 August:** A court in Insein prison charged All-Burmese Monks Alliance (ABMA) leader U Gambira with illegal gathering, violation of immigration laws, illegal contacts with foreign organizations, inciting public riot, causing public alarm, resisting orders of authorities to disperse, and religious defamation.<sup>24</sup>
- **23 August:** SPDC authorities arrested two young monks from Thardu monastery in Rangoon's Kyimyindaing Township.<sup>25</sup>

## INSIDE BURMA

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### 8-8-8 Demonstrations

Despite the regime's crackdown, activists, students, workers, and ordinary citizens across Burma carried out peaceful demonstrations, activities, and acts of defiance against the SPDC to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nationwide uprising on 8 August.

- Generation Wave activists launched the "Red Campaign" by spraying red paint on the walls of schools and other public places in Rangoon.<sup>26</sup>
- Many Rangoon residents wore black clothing and made offerings at local monasteries.<sup>27</sup> About 300 University students in Moulmein, Mon State, also wore black clothes at the campus.<sup>28</sup>
- University students in Rangoon launched an anti-junta leaflet and poster campaign.<sup>29</sup>
- Forty-eight activists rallied in the streets of Taunggoat, Arakan State, wearing t-shirts bearing the numbers 8-8-88.<sup>30</sup> [See above *Activists arrested*] Protest marches also took place in Akyab, Kyaukyu, and Rambree, Arakan State.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Irrawaddy (27 Aug 08) Arrested monks held in Rangoon detention center

<sup>18</sup> Kaladan News (11 Aug 08) Peaceful demonstrations in Arakan

<sup>19</sup> Narinjara News (09 Aug 08) Police Raid Two Monasteries in Sittwe

<sup>20</sup> DVB (13 Aug 08) Monks and nuns banned from receiving visitors

<sup>21</sup> Narinjara News (18 Aug 08) Army and Police Deploy at Sittwe Monastery

<sup>22</sup> Narinjara News (20 Aug 08) Authorities claim monks in Saffron Revolution were impostors

<sup>23</sup> DVB (21 Aug 08) Official urges action against 'bogus monks'

<sup>24</sup> DVB (19 Aug 08) U Gambira charged with 10 offences; DVB (21 Aug 08) Trials open for U Gambira and Htin Kyaw; Irrawaddy (21 Aug 08) Junta disrobes, charges leading monk; Mizzima News (21 Aug 08) Court charges monk on 10 counts

<sup>25</sup> Irrawaddy (27 Aug 08) Arrested monks held in Rangoon detention center

<sup>26</sup> Irrawaddy (04 Aug 08) Security Tightens as 8.8.88 Anniversary Campaign Begins

<sup>27</sup> Irrawaddy (08 Aug 08) Many in Rangoon wear black on 8.8.88 anniversary

<sup>28</sup> IMNA (09 Aug 08) Moulmein students mark 20th anniversary of 8888 uprising

<sup>29</sup> Irrawaddy (05 Aug 08) Rangoon Students Launch 8.8.88 Pamphlet Campaign

<sup>30</sup> Reuters (08 Aug 08) Myanmar arrests "8-8-88" anniversary marchers

<sup>31</sup> Kaladan News (11 Aug 08) Peaceful demonstrations in Arakan

- About 35 workers and 20 student activists gave offerings to monks at the monastery in Kyeikpon pagoda in Pegu.<sup>32</sup>
- NLD members in Yenangaung Township, Magwe Division, held a rally and made food offerings at various local monasteries.<sup>33</sup>

Anti-junta protests and events commemorating the 8-8-88 anniversary were also held in Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, India, Singapore, Philippines, US, Canada, Australia, UK, Italy, Switzerland, and Czech Republic.<sup>34</sup>

### **Daw Suu on hunger strike?**

For the first time in five years, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with her lawyer Kyi Win on 8 August.<sup>35</sup> On 17 August, Daw Suu met with Kyi Win again and was also visited by her physician Dr Tin Myo Win.<sup>36</sup> The doctor had last seen her in May.<sup>37</sup> Daw Suu has reportedly refused to accept food deliveries since mid-August. It was not clear however if she had started a hunger strike.<sup>38</sup>

### **Cyclone aid – SPDC stymies replanting efforts**

The SPDC continued to frustrate agricultural recovery efforts. The SPDC imposed new fees for fishing licenses and issued orders to farmers to destroy newly planted rice fields and replant them with an SPDC-preferred rice seed.<sup>39</sup> Farmers in the delta have gone into debt attempting to replant their paddy fields.<sup>40</sup> The UNDP provided some farmers with interest-free loans of up to 200,000 kyat (US\$170) to facilitate recovery efforts.<sup>41</sup> Despite the assistance, many farmers were unable to replant because of seed shortages. Others face the prospect of crop failure due to poor seed stock, fertilizer shortages, and salt-contaminated land.<sup>42</sup>

Unsurprisingly, cyclone Nargis survivors continued to migrate to urban areas in search of aid and employment.<sup>43</sup> On 15 August, the WFP reiterated that the emergency phase of aid efforts was not over. Survivors still needed huge supplies of emergency food and equipment to rebuild their lives.<sup>44</sup> The UN identified food security as a priority and estimated that rehabilitating rice fields for replanting would require an additional \$51 million.<sup>45</sup>

The WFP has provided emergency food assistance to over 730,000 people. The SPDC initially agreed to allow the WFP to procure 20,000 tons of rice for the delta on the domestic market but later reduced the amount to 10,000 tons. The reduction forced the WFP to import rice at a time of record-high rice prices.<sup>46</sup> With respect to ongoing aid requirements, the UN has estimated that nearly one million people will need basic food aid for another nine months and another 1.8 million will need a continued supply of safe water.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>32</sup> DVB (07 Aug 08) Activists commemorate 8888 despite restrictions

<sup>33</sup> Irrawaddy (08 Aug 08) Many in Rangoon wear black on 8.8.88 anniversary

<sup>34</sup> Reuters (08 Aug 08) Myanmar arrests "8-8-88" anniversary marchers, Mizzima News (08 Aug 08) Burmese activists and supporters remember '8.8.88' protests

<sup>35</sup> AP (10 Aug 08) Myanmar's Suu Kyi allowed rare visit by lawyer; AP (17 Aug 08) Myanmar opposition hopes UN envoy's visit will spur talks

<sup>36</sup> AFP (19 Aug 08) Suu Kyi meets lawyer as UN envoy arrives in Myanmar: spokesman

<sup>37</sup> AP (10 Aug 08) Myanmar's Suu Kyi allowed rare visit by lawyer

<sup>38</sup> Associated Press (26 Aug 08) Opposition leader in Myanmar refuses food aid

<sup>39</sup> DVB (14 Aug 08) Villagers' livelihoods threatened by fishing permit scheme; IMNA (18 Aug 08) TPDC orders planting good yielding variety of paddy

<sup>40</sup> IRIN (18 Aug 08) Myanmar: Cyclone-hit farmers switch to fishing

<sup>41</sup> Mizzima News (19 Aug 08) Not enough cash grant for cyclone victims

<sup>42</sup> Mizzima News (19 Aug 08) Not enough cash grant for cyclone victims

<sup>43</sup> Irrawaddy (22 Aug 08) UN ends its relief flights from Bangkok to Burma

<sup>44</sup> AFP (05 Aug 08) UN says 51 mln dlrs needed for Myanmar's rice paddies

<sup>45</sup> AFP (05 Aug 08) UN says 51 mln dlrs needed for Myanmar's rice paddies

<sup>46</sup> Wall Street Journal (09 Aug 08) Myanmar Faces More Food Shortages

<sup>47</sup> AFP (05 Aug 08) UN says 51 mln dlrs needed for Myanmar's rice paddies

## Last cyclone camps close

On 10 August, the SPDC ordered the closure of the two remaining cyclone survivor camps in Labutta. The 1,015 families were told to return to their villages. Residents said that they didn't want to leave because they couldn't survive in their villages without housing or jobs. The UNICEF office in Labutta Township reportedly stopped issuing relief supplies to the two camps.<sup>48</sup>

## SPDC aid windfall - US\$1.56 million?

In July, the UN admitted to a loss of \$10 million in aid funds due to the SPDC's currency conversion rules. [See *July 2008 Burma Bulletin*] On 14 August, a UN spokesperson claimed the loss only amounted to US\$1.56 million. The spokesperson said that the amount represented 4.5% of local expenditures, or 1% of total contributions to the relief effort.<sup>49</sup> He said that this was the "maximum" lost.<sup>50</sup>

Despite claims by the UN and the SPDC that they had addressed the currency conversion differences,<sup>51</sup> on 14 August an unnamed official from the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank said that they were continuing to use FECs for these exchanges and that the bank continued to deduct a 10% tax from all foreign transfers.<sup>52</sup> Besides the 10% tax, a substantial difference remains between the FEC exchange rate for US dollars and that of the black market rate for kyat and the US dollar.

## Floods

In mid-August, torrential rain again flooded paddy fields in Sagaing, Pegu, Mandalay, Rangoon and Irrawaddy Divisions, and Karen, Mon, and Shan States. Local residents evacuated and schools temporarily closed. Damaged roads caused the suspension of border trade at Mae Sai – Tachilek. In Mogok, Mandalay Division, a landslide killed six people.<sup>53</sup>

## More trucks from China

On 26 August, it was reported that over 200 Chinese military trucks 'First Automobile Works' (FAW) had arrived in Ruili on the China-Burma border. The delivery was the latest consignment of 3,500 purchased by the SPDC.<sup>54</sup> [See *January 2008 Burma Bulletin*]

## HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Ojea Quintana goes to Burma

On 3 August, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana began a five-day visit to the country, his first since taking up the post in May.<sup>55</sup> As with previous visits by UN envoys, the SPDC tightly controlled Ojea Quintana's schedule. The Special Rapporteur's visit included meetings with various regime officials, pro-junta political parties, SPDC-backed organizations, diplomats, UN officials, and the Tripartite Core Group (TCG).<sup>56</sup> The regime allowed Ojea Quintana to travel to some areas hit by cyclone Nargis but turned down the envoy's request to travel to Arakan and Karen States.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Irrawaddy (06 Aug 08) Labutta's last two refugee camps to close

<sup>49</sup> Irrawaddy (15 Aug 08) UN claims only \$1.5 Million lost in Cyclone relief effort

<sup>50</sup> AFP (14 Aug 08) UN says 1.5 mln dlrs of cyclone aid lost in Myanmar forex rules

<sup>51</sup> Mizzima News (14 Aug 08) UN admits loss of about 1.56 million dollars of cyclone aid in Burma; Asia Times (19 Aug 08) Myanmar exchange scam fleeces UN

<sup>52</sup> Mizzima News (14 Aug 08) UN admits loss of about 1.56 million dollars of cyclone aid in Burma

<sup>53</sup> People Daily (20 Aug 08) Cultivation resumes in some Myanmar flood-hit areas

<sup>54</sup> DVB (26 Aug 08) 200 more military trucks delivered from China

<sup>55</sup> UN News Center (07 Aug 08) UN rights expert wraps up visit to Myanmar

<sup>56</sup> UN News Center (07 Aug 08) UN rights expert wraps up visit to Myanmar

<sup>57</sup> UNOG (03 Aug 08) First mission of Special Rapporteur on situation of human rights in Myanmar

On 5 August, Ojea Quintana held private meetings with political prisoners Win Tin, Thurein Aung, Kyaw Kyaw, Su Su Nway, and U Gambira in Rangoon's Insein prison<sup>58</sup> On 6 August, the envoy met with NLD leaders but failed to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>59</sup>

## Rape of ethnic women continues

On 12 August, two Nobel peace laureates, Jody Williams and Wangari Maathai, warned that rape was increasingly being used as a tool of war in ethnic conflicts, especially in Burma and Sudan<sup>60</sup> SPDC soldiers continued to rape ethnic women in Burma with impunity. On 27 July, three SPDC Army soldiers raped and killed a 15-year-old Kachin girl in Bhamo Township, Kachin State. Her naked, mutilated body was found three days later buried near an SPDC army checkpoint.<sup>61</sup> SPDC police initially told her family that they could not take any action due to lack of evidence.<sup>62</sup> However, after the incident was reported in the international media, SPDC soldiers visited her family's home and attempted to placate the family with a meager bribe.<sup>63</sup> One soldier was punished but activists believed the action was intended to deflect calls for investigation of more senior officers.<sup>64</sup>

## DISPLACEMENT

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### Trafficking report

On 5 August, the Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) released a new report entitled "Eastward Bound" that documented trafficking of young women from Kachin State to China. The report found that for women trafficked to China:

- Most are sold for around 13,000 yuan (US\$2,000).
- Most were under 18 when they were trafficked.
- More than a third were sold as "wives".
- The location of 64% of women trafficked was unknown, while about 17% had escaped and found their way home.
- Some sought assistance from the embassy in Beijing, only to be turned away or accused of trafficking themselves.<sup>65</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### Gambari's latest visit a non-starter

On 18 August, UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari began his latest visit to Burma. As with his previous visits, nothing was accomplished. The only development of any significance was that Gambari announced that UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon planned to visit Burma in December.<sup>66</sup>

During Gambari's visit, the only high-level SPDC officials he met with were PM Gen Thein Sein, FM Nyan Win, Labor Minister Aung Kyi, and Information Minister Kyaw Hsan.<sup>67</sup> As for meeting with pro-democracy groups, Gambari managed to squeeze in two meetings with NLD Central Executive Committee members. The first meeting on 20 August lasted only 20 minutes<sup>68</sup> while the second

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<sup>58</sup> AFP (05 Aug 08) UN envoy meets top Myanmar political prisoners: spokesman

<sup>59</sup> Mizzima News (06 Aug 08) UN envoy in Burma meets opposition parties

<sup>60</sup> AFP (13 Aug 08) Rape wrecking communities in Darfur, Myanmar: Nobelists

<sup>61</sup> Kachin News Group (11 Aug 08) Teenaged Kachin schoolgirl gang raped and killed by sadistic Burmese soldiers; Mizzima News (15 Aug 08) Ethnic Kachin teenage girl raped and murdered

<sup>62</sup> Kachin News Group (11 Aug 08) Teenaged Kachin schoolgirl gang raped and killed by sadistic Burmese soldiers

<sup>63</sup> Mizzima News (25 Aug 08) Compensation for rape and murder of Kachin girl not enough: Campaigner

<sup>64</sup> Mizzima News (25 Aug 08) Compensation for rape and murder of Kachin girl not enough: Campaigner

<sup>65</sup> Mizzima News (05 Aug 08) KWAT: Women enslaved due to economic hardships

<sup>66</sup> AP (20 Aug 08) UN chief expected to visit Myanmar in December

<sup>67</sup> Irrawaddy (19 Aug 08) Gambari has Big agenda during visit; Bangkok Post (24 Aug 08) Burma visit flops; Mizzima News (21 Aug 08) Dead-end in Burma for UN envoy by Larry Jagan; Mizzima News (22 Aug 08) NLD 'Please' with second round meeting with UN envoy

<sup>68</sup> Mizzima (20 Aug 08) Gambari's mission to Burma 'disappointing': opposition;

meeting on 22 August lasted for approximately an hour.<sup>69</sup> The rest of Gambari's meeting agenda was occupied with meeting junta-backed groups.<sup>70</sup> The NLD called Gambari's latest visit a "waste of time".<sup>71</sup>

Gambari left Burma on 23 August without meeting with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe or Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>72</sup> Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reportedly failed to attend a meeting with Gambari scheduled on 20 August.<sup>73</sup> Gambari allegedly attempted to meet with Daw Suu again on 22 March.<sup>74</sup> Many Burma analysts believe that Daw Suu refused to meet with Gambari due to his inability to get the SPDC to commit to time-bound tripartite dialogue on democratic reform and national reconciliation.

After departing Burma, Gambari stopped in Thailand and Indonesia. On 25 August, Thai PM Samak told Gambari that his talks with the SPDC would be more successful if he left Daw Aung San Suu Kyi off the agenda. Samak also said that western countries needed to focus on the SPDC's planned elections for bringing democracy to Burma.<sup>75</sup> In contrast to Samak's blanket endorsement of the junta's dubious roadmap, on 26 August Indonesia FM Hassan Wirajuda told Gambari that Indonesia wants Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to be part of the 2010 election process.<sup>76</sup>

### Bush meets Burma pro-democracy activists

On 7 August, US President George W Bush met with nine Burmese activists during his official visit to Bangkok.<sup>77</sup> Bush expressed his support for the Burmese democracy movement and dismissed the SPDC's new constitution as a "sham".<sup>78</sup> Bush also called for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.<sup>79</sup> On the same day, US First Lady Laura Bush visited Mae La refugee camp and Mae Tao Clinic near Mae Sot, Thailand.<sup>80</sup>

## ECONOMY

### Price increases

On 6 August, the SPDC reported that Burma's Consumer Price Index rose nearly 33% over the last fiscal year.<sup>82</sup>

After the cyclone, rice prices skyrocketed and are now 20% higher than before the disaster.<sup>83</sup> Prices continued to rise in August, particularly in Arakan State where transport costs were affected by landslides and flooding. In Rangoon, the price of good quality rice has risen 225% from 752 to 1,692 kyat per kilo in the past year.<sup>84</sup>

Recent price increases (Kyat) <sup>81</sup>	July	August
Diesel/gallon (Black market - Southern Burma)	5,000	6,500
Gas/gallon (Black market - Southern Burma)	5,000	5,500
Peanut cooking oil (Akyab)	2,454	2,638
Sugar (Akyab)	521	552
Kerosene/gallon (Akyab)	6,500	6,700

<sup>69</sup> Mizzima News (22 Aug 08) NLD 'Please' with second round meeting with UN envoy

<sup>70</sup> IMNA (21 Aug 08) Ethnic Opposition Leaders not Allowed to Meet UN Envoy;

<sup>71</sup> AFP (24 Aug 08) Suu Kyi's party says UN Myanmar visit was a 'waste of time'

<sup>72</sup> Mizzima News (21 Aug 08) Dead-end in Burma for UN envoy by Larry Jagan

<sup>73</sup> Irrawaddy (20 Aug 08) Gambari Fails to Meet with Suu Kyi

<sup>74</sup> Bangkok Post (24 Aug 08) Burma visit flops

<sup>75</sup> AFP (25 Aug 08) Thai PM says West uses Myanmar's Suu Kyi as political tool

<sup>76</sup> Mizzima News (27 Aug 08) Gambari meets Indonesian President – ASEAN divided

<sup>77</sup> Irrawaddy (07 Aug 08) Bush warm, knowledgeable on Burma, say activists

<sup>78</sup> DVB (07 Aug 08) US president affirms commitment to Burma

<sup>79</sup> AP (07 Aug 08) Bush spotlights Myanmar repression

<sup>80</sup> AP (07 Aug 08) Bush spotlights Myanmar repression

<sup>81</sup> IMNA (06 Aug 08) Fuel price soars 30 percent in Southern Burma; Narinjara News (05 Aug 08) Commodity prices soar with shipping costs

<sup>82</sup> AP (06 Aug 08) Myanmar CPI up 33% for past year

<sup>83</sup> Wall Street Journal (09 Aug 08) Myanmar Faces More Food Shortages

<sup>84</sup> DVB (15 Aug 08) Steep rise in food prices continues

## Natural gas

According to SPDC statistics made available in August, Burma's natural gas sales increased nearly 25% to US\$2.5 billion in the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The junta said natural gas sales constituted 40% of export revenue with Thailand being the primary market.<sup>85</sup>

## Food shortages

Acute food shortages continued in Chin State. According to the Chin Famine Emergency Relief Committee (CFERC), the famine has affected approximately 100,000 people.<sup>86</sup> Forty-four children died of malnutrition and diarrhea in Thangtlang Township.<sup>87</sup> In Paletwa Township, 2,000 Khami people were forced to leave and find assistance in Mizoram, India.<sup>88</sup> The CFERC claimed that the warning signs could be seen in late 2006 but the SPDC offered no assistance and instead confiscated and prohibited relief aid.<sup>89</sup>

## OTHER BURMA NEWS IN AUGUST

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1	Thirty-year-old local man rapes a 12-year-old Burmese girl in Aizawl, India.
2	Singapore refuses to renew the visas of three Burmese activists.
2	Burmese migrant worker dies in Mizoram, India, after being pushed off a building.
2	SPDC police in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest two drug smugglers and confiscate 4,000 amphetamine tablets.
2	SPDC attends SAARC summit as an observer.
2	SPDC authorities in Mrauk U Township, Arakan State, seize about 100 acres of forests from Khami communities.
2	Na Sa Ka forces in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest and detain 12 Bangladeshi fishermen for fishing in Burmese territorial waters in the Naff River.
3	Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization surrenders its arms to the SPDC Army.
3	Amnesty International says that the SPDC has detained at least 900 activists and dissidents in the past 10 months.
4	SPDC announces that PM Gen Thein Sein will attend the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on 8 August.
5	Vietnam's Deputy PM Pham Gia Khiem says that Vietnam supports the SPDC's bid towards national reconciliation and its cooperation with the international community.
6	Mizoram officials arrest two Burmese nationals on charges of drug trafficking in Mizoram State, India, and seize around 60 grams of opium during the arrest.
6	WFP hosts meeting in Rangoon to address acute food shortages in Chin State.
6	Kuwait's PM Sheik Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits Burma.
6	SPDC and Thai Army officials convene Regional Border Meeting in Chiang Rai, Thailand.
8	88 Generation Students issue a statement urging the SPDC to release all political prisoners.
8	Three Na Sa Ka officers arrive in Bangladesh after deserting from Na Sa Ka headquarters in Kyi Kan Byint in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.
9	SPDC and Kuwait commerce authorities sign an agreement to increase trade cooperation.
9	SPDC and Bangladesh officials meet at Maungdaw, Arakan State, to discuss border issues.
12	Sultan of Brunei meets with SPDC FM Nyan Win.
13	MPU Secretary Khun Myint Tun testifies before the Phillipines Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives.
13	State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reports that in June SPDC officials seized 105 kilograms of opium, 1.6 kilograms of heroin, 138,550 amphetamine tablets.
14	Rangoon's West District court levels new criminal charges against detained comedian Zarganar.
15	A five-member delegation from the Members of Parliament Union attends an Indonesian parliamentary function to mark the 63 <sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Indonesian independence.

<sup>85</sup> AP (19 Aug 08) Myanmar natural gas sales up 25 percent

<sup>86</sup> Khonumthung News (05 Aug 08) CFERC faces shortage of funds for relief work

<sup>87</sup> Khonumthung News (21 Aug 08) 44 children die of starvation; 2,000 flee to India; Mizzima News (26 Aug 08) 'Emergency relief' for food crisis in Burma's Chin state

<sup>88</sup> DVB (19 Aug 08) 2000 Khami Chin flee to India due to food crisis

<sup>89</sup> Khonumthung News (05 Aug 08) Meeting on food crisis in Chin state to be held in Rangoon; Khonumthung News (12 Aug 08) Rats devastate farms in Sagaing division

15	SPDC authorities in Falam Township, Chin State, force 50 villagers from Webula to work in road reconstruction.
16	SPDC authorities in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, arrest eight local villagers for alleged ties with the armed opposition group Monland Restoration Party. Five are released the next day.
18	SPDC suspends naval exercise off the Arakan coast after a ship's engine failure.
18	SPDC Army Triangle Region Commander Maj Gen Kyaw Phyo accuses Thailand of violating the territorial integrity of Burma.
19	Burmese elected MPs in exile call on the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly to allow them to become members of the group.
20	Three individuals claiming to be agents from the Criminal Investigation Department rob NLD member Maung Maung Lwin in Rangoon.
20	XL Insurance Company of Britain announces that it will no longer insure Burma companies.
20	Indonesia FM Hassan Wirajuda says that the UN Security Council is under "growing pressure" to act against the SPDC unless it takes more credible steps toward democracy.
22	UN ends aid air flights from Bangkok to Rangoon.
22	SPDC Army Cpl recruits two novices, ages 13 and 15, from Yadana Bone monastery, Moulmein Township, Mon State
22	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly rejects the request by the Members of Parliament Union to be allowed to take part in their annual meetings as members or special observers.
22	SPDC authorizes the purchase of subsidized fuel with FECs.
22	One SPDC riot police officer is killed and two are critically injured following an altercation with local youth in Akyab, Arakan State.
23	NLD in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State, urges the SPDC to release all political prisoners by 24 September.
23	Transnational Institute releases a report that concludes ASEAN's target to make the South East Asia region drug-free by 2015 is unattainable.
23	Thai FM Tej Bunnag goes to Burma for an official three-day visit.
24	Thai authorities detain three Padaung in Mae Hong Son, Thailand on charges of being involved in the trafficking of eight other Padaung.
25	WFP hosts meeting in Rangoon to address acute food shortages in Chin State.
25	Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie meets with SPDC Chief Of Industries Tin Aye.
25	General Secretary of Kachin State USDA Rawang Jung meets over 50 local church leaders in Putao to garner support for the junta in the 2010 elections.
26	UK Ambassador to the UN John Sawers describes UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari's latest visit to Burma as "disappointing".
27	Exiled Kachin hold demonstrations in Japan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, UK, and Denmark against the 27 July gang rape and murder of a Kachin schoolgirl by SPDC Army soldiers.
28	SPDC releases on bail three Muslim leaders from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.
28	US expresses disappointment over SPDC's failure to cooperate with UN Special Advisor on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari.
29	NLD says UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari's latest visit to Burma failed to produce positive developments.

## REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN AUGUST

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**"Rats and Kyats: Bamboo Flowering Causes a Hunger Belt in Chin State, Burma"**, Project Maje  
<http://www.projectmaje.org/mautam.htm>

**"Eastward Bound"**, Kachin Women Association Thailand (KWAT)  
<http://www.womenofburma.org/Report/EastwardBound.pdf>

**"Report on the global AIDS epidemic"**, UNAIDS  
[http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/2008/2008\\_Global\\_report.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/2008/2008_Global_report.asp)

**"Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games"**, All Kachin Students & Youth Union  
<http://www.8808forburma.com/specia/blood-jade>

**"Withdrawal Symptoms - Changes in the Southeast Asian drugs market"**, Transnational Institute  
<http://www.tni.org/reports/drugs/debate16.pdf>