

BURMA BULLETIN

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

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
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- **SPDC Army burns more than 68 homes and displaces 2,100 Karen villagers in Eastern Pegu Division.**
- **Thailand's push to repatriate some 3,000 Karen refugees and Bangladesh's intensified crackdown on Rohingya - including the pushback of more than 100 refugees - draw criticism from rights groups and governments.**
- **The Bangladesh crackdown results in the deaths of 104 refugees - mainly women and children - from malnutrition, starvation, and disease in the first seven weeks of 2010.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana makes his third visit to the country. During his visit the junta jails four women activists and a Buddhist monk.**
- **SPDC releases 82-year-old NLD Vice-Chairman Tin Oo after almost seven years in detention. Tin Oo vows to continue his political activities and urges the SPDC to engage the NLD in dialogue before the elections.**
- **Burma's Supreme Court rejects Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal on her conviction which resulted in a sentence of 18 months under house arrest.**
- **The international community renews calls for free and fair elections and the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.**
- **UN and rights groups call on Thailand to change its migrant nationality verification process, warning that next month hundreds of thousands of migrants will be threatened with arrest and deportation if the current process continues.**
- **Thousands of garment workers go on strike in Rangoon demanding higher wages and better working conditions.**

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KEY STORY

In February, the regime's attacks on Karen villagers in Eastern Burma continued [See *January 2010 Burma Bulletin*] as the SPDC Army drove another 2,100 people from their homes. The situation for Burmese refugees was not much better. Both Bangladesh and Thailand cracked down on refugees in fear that even more will flee Burma in the coming months as the SPDC intensifies its crackdown on ethnic groups.

SPDC Army drives 2,100 into the jungle

On 5 February, seven SPDC Army battalions burned more than 68 homes and a mobile health clinic in Toe Hta and Ka Di Mu Der in Kyaukkyi Township, Eastern Pegu Division.¹ As a result, 2,100 Karen villagers fled into the jungle.² On the same day, SPDC Army soldiers shot villager Saw Law Ray Htoo near the Salween River. He later died at a hospital in Mae La Oo refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.³

On 19 February, SPDC Army soldiers fired a mortar into a school in an IDP camp in Ta U Plaw, Papun District, Northern Karen State. The attack killed a 15 year old boy and injured two other students.⁴

Despite pressure, Thailand repatriates Karen refugees

Thailand drew criticism from rights groups and the US Congress for its plan to repatriate, by 15 February, some 3,000 Karen refugees that had fled SPDC Army and DKBA attacks in June 2009⁵ [See *June 2009 Burma Bulletin*] Critics warned that returned refugees would suffer severe human rights violations in Burma including torture, executions, extortion, forced recruitment as soldiers, and forced labor."⁶ Rights groups pointed out that refugees could not safely return to Burma due to the presence of landmines on the Burmese side of the border.⁷

Despite the protests, by the end of February, Thailand repatriated about half of the 3,000 refugees from camps in Tha Song Yang, Tak Province. The Thai Army insisted that the Karen refugees would not be forcibly repatriated, but it reportedly pressured refugees to return and warned them not to speak with the media.⁸

Bangladesh intensifies crackdown on Rohingya

In Bangladesh, the crackdown on Rohingya worsened, as rights groups and the European Parliament urged Dhaka to safeguard the rights of Rohingya. In February, authorities in Eastern Bangladesh arrested more than 250 Rohingya and pushed more than 100 back to Burma.⁹ On 17 February,

¹ Free Burma Rangers (12 Feb 10) 2,100 Displaced, Villages Burned, Schools Abandoned as Seven Burma Army Battalions Attack; Irrawaddy (11 Feb 10) Karen Villagers Flee as Burma Army Escalates Attacks; Mizzima News (12 Feb 10) Army sets ablaze Karen villages, 1,000 villagers flee

² Free Burma Rangers (12 Feb 10) 2,100 Displaced, Villages Burned, Schools Abandoned as Seven Burma Army Battalions Attack; Irrawaddy (11 Feb 10) Karen Villagers Flee as Burma Army Escalates Attacks; Mizzima News (12 Feb 10) Army sets ablaze Karen villages, 1,000 villagers flee

³ Irrawaddy (11 Feb 10) Karen Villagers Flee as Burma Army Escalates Attacks; Free Burma Rangers (12 Feb 10) 2,100 Displaced, Villages Burned, Schools Abandoned as Seven Burma Army Battalions Attack

⁴ KHRG (24 Feb 10) SPDC mortar attack on school in Papun District

⁵ US Congress (04 Feb 10) U.S. Congress Letter to Prime Minister Abhisit re: repatriation of Karen Refugees; Irrawaddy (04 Feb 10) US Legislators Urge Thai PM to Halt Karen Refugee Repatriation; Irrawaddy (08 Feb 10) Karen Refugees Warned Not To Talk; ANN (08 Feb 10) Thailand suspends Burma refugee repatriation; AP (04 Feb 10) Thai plan to return Karen to Myanmar draws protest; Bangkok Post (06 Feb 10) Karen deportations put on hold; Independent (05 Feb 10) Thailand to kick out Burmese refugees; Irrawaddy (02 Feb 10) Karens Unhappy About Repatriation; DVB (03 Feb 10) Landmines and food crisis await Karen refugees; Irrawaddy (04 Feb 10) Forced Repatriation of Karen Refugees to Start; Bloomberg (05 Feb 10) Thailand Halts Myanmar Refugee Return After Outcry; Bangkok Post (06 Feb 10) Karen deportations put on hold; DPA (05 Feb 10) Thailand says Karens to be returned to Myanmar on voluntary basis; DVB (05 Feb 10) Thailand suspends Karen refugee return; Mizzima News (06 Feb 10) Some refugees repatriated by Thailand; Irrawaddy (05 Feb 10) Thailand Begins Forced Repatriation of Karen Refugee; ANN (08 Feb 10) Thailand suspends Burma refugee repatriation

⁶ US Congress (04 Feb 10) U.S. Congress Letter to Prime Minister Abhisit re: repatriation of Karen Refugees; Irrawaddy (04 Feb 10) US Legislators Urge Thai PM to Halt Karen Refugee Repatriation; Irrawaddy (08 Feb 10) Karen Refugees Warned Not To Talk; ANN (08 Feb 10) Thailand suspends Burma refugee repatriation; AP (04 Feb 10) Thai plan to return Karen to Myanmar draws protest; Bangkok Post (06 Feb 10) Karen deportations put on hold; Independent (05 Feb 10) Thailand to kick out Burmese refugees; Irrawaddy (02 Feb 10) Karens Unhappy About Repatriation; DVB (03 Feb 10) Landmines and food crisis await Karen refugees; Irrawaddy (04 Feb 10) Forced Repatriation of Karen Refugees to Start

⁷ Irrawaddy (15 Feb 10) ICBL Warn Against Karen Repatriation; Irrawaddy (09 Feb 10) Returning Karen Refugees Fear Landmines; DVB (11 Feb 10) Landmine death in Karen 'safe zone'

⁸ Irrawaddy (08 Feb 10) Karen Refugees Warned Not To Talk; DVB (08 Feb 10) Karen refugees threatened on media contact

⁹ Kaladan News (02 Feb 10) Over 25 Arakanese Rohingya pushed back to Burma; Kaladan News (04 Feb 10) Arakanese Rohingya on border harassed by Bangladeshi officials; Kaladan News (05 Feb 10) Five Arakanese Rohingya refugees jailed; Kaladan News (09 Feb 10) Unregistered Arakanese refugees die of starvation in makeshift camp; Kaladan News (25 Feb 10) Arakanese Refugees under pressure from police and villagers

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) reported that the current levels of violence against Rohingya were “unprecedented.”¹⁰

The crackdown has caused more than 2,000 Rohingya to seek shelter in the settlement near the Kutupalong camp since January, which has put severe pressure on the camp’s resources.¹¹ On 16 February, the Arakan Project released a report titled “Unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: Crackdown, forced displacement and hunger.” The report said that the crackdown on Rohingya was creating a grave humanitarian crisis for tens of thousands in the settlement who were without adequate food, water, and sanitation.¹² On 24 February, settlement leaders said that from 1 January to 17 February, 104 Rohingya refugees, including 52 children and 30 women, had died from malnutrition, starvation, and disease.¹³

On 11 February, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on Bangladesh to provide Rohingya with adequate protection and basic services.¹⁴ On 15 February, a 12-member European Parliament delegation visited the Kutupalong camp and settlement.¹⁵ The Bangladeshi authorities eased off on the crackdown while the delegation visited, however they quickly resumed arresting and pushing back Rohingya once the Europeans left.¹⁶

INSIDE BURMA

SPDC releases Tin Oo

On 13 February, the SPDC released NLD Vice-Chairman Tin Oo, 82, after almost seven years in detention.¹⁷ Despite the fact that the SPDC warned him not to resume political activities, Tin Oo vowed to continue to actively participate in Burma’s political life.¹⁸ On 14 February, he urged the SPDC to engage the NLD in dialogue before the elections.¹⁹ On 15 February, he went back to work at the NLD headquarters in Rangoon.²⁰

Daw Suu appeal rejected

On 26 February, Burma’s Supreme Court rejected Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s appeal on her conviction which resulted in a sentence of 18 months under house arrest. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s two housekeepers also had their appeals rejected. The court gave no reason for rejecting the appeals.²¹

¹⁰ MSF (17 Feb 10) Bangladesh: Violent Crackdown Fuels Humanitarian Crisis for Unrecognized Rohingya Refugees; BBC (18 Feb 10) Bangladesh accused of ‘crackdown’ on Rohingya refugees; AFP (18 Feb 10) Bangladesh launches ‘violent crack down’ on Rohingyas; MSF; NYT (20 Feb 10) Burmese Refugees Persecuted in Bangladesh; Time (20 Feb 10) For Rohingya in Bangladesh, No Place is Home; Irrawaddy (18 Feb 10) Rohingya Can Only Starve in Bangladesh; MSF; National Post (17 Feb 10) Burmese Muslims in crisis, relief group says; Mizzima News (21 Feb 10) Bangladesh cracks down on Burmese Muslim refugees;

¹¹ NYT (20 Feb 10) Burmese Refugees Persecuted in Bangladesh; Time (20 Feb 10) For Rohingya in Bangladesh, No Place is Home; National Post (17 Feb 10) Burmese Muslims in crisis, relief group says; Mizzima News (21 Feb 10) Bangladesh cracks down on Burmese Muslim refugees; DVB (22 Feb 10) ‘Machete victims’ among fleeing Rohingya

¹² Arakan Project (16 Feb 10) Unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: Crackdown, forced displacement and hunger; AFP (16 Feb 10) Bangladesh cracking down on Myanmar migrants: lobby group; NYT (18 Feb 10) No refuge for Myanmar’s forgotten people

¹³ Right Vision News (24 Feb 10) Bangladesh: Rohingyas living in sub-human condition at Kutupalong

¹⁴ European Parliament (11 Feb 10) European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2010 on Burma

¹⁵ Kaladan News (16 Feb 10) European Parliament delegation visits Burmese refugee camp; Narinjara News (15 Feb 10) European Parliament Delegation Visits Burmese Refugee Camp in Bangladesh

¹⁶ Irrawaddy (22 Feb 10) Bangladesh Pressures Rohingya after EU Visit

¹⁷ Reuters (13 Feb 10) Suu Kyi official freed from house arrest in Myanmar; AP (13 Feb 10) Myanmar Frees Opposition Party’s Deputy Leader; AFP (13 Feb 10) Junta frees Suu Kyi deputy; BBC (13 Feb 10) Burma frees NLD leader Tin Oo; VOA (13 Feb 10) Burma Frees Opposition’s Deputy Chairman; DVB (14 Feb 10) NLD vice-chairman Tin Oo released; Irrawaddy (13 Feb 10) Tin Oo Released

¹⁸ Reuters (13 Feb 10) Suu Kyi official freed from house arrest in Myanmar; AFP (13 Feb 10) Junta frees Suu Kyi deputy; Irrawaddy (15 Feb 10) Tin Oo Back at Work; VOA (13 Feb 10) Burma Frees Opposition’s Deputy Chairman

¹⁹ AFP (14 Feb 10) Freed Suu Kyi deputy calls for Myanmar talks

²⁰ Irrawaddy (15 Feb 10) Tin Oo Back at Work

²¹ AP (26 Feb 10) Myanmar court rejects Suu Kyi’s appeal for release; AFP (26 Feb 10) Suu Kyi appeal rejected by Burma court; Guardian (26 Feb 10) Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi loses appeal; Irrawaddy (26 Feb 10) High Court Rejects Suu Kyi’s Appeal

International reactions to the court's ruling ranged from the condemnation by the US to the "disappointment" of UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon, Canada, and Singapore.²² UK PM Gordon Brown said he was "appalled and saddened."²³

NLD activities

On 12 February, the NLD held Union Day celebrations at the party headquarters in Rangoon. About 1,500 people, including party members, veteran politicians, ethnic representatives, and foreign diplomats attended the event while plain clothes policemen monitored the ceremony. The NLD called for national reconciliation, the release of all political prisoners, and the reopening of party offices across Burma.²⁴

On 25 February, the NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) approved a list of 100 party members for the party's reconstituted Central Committee (CC).²⁵ The CEC selected the CC members from the list of candidates submitted by NLD organizing committees from each State and Division.²⁶

2010 election news

- **7 February:** The Mandalay Division Chamber of Commerce and Industry amended its bylaws in order to allow its members to contest the 2010 elections.²⁷
- **9 February:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her legal team that it was too early for the NLD to decide whether to participate in the 2010 election, as the SPDC hadn't issued the election and party registration laws. Daw Suu also pointed out that without freedom of information the election would be neither free nor fair.²⁸
- **12 February:** In a speech commemorating the 63rd anniversary of Union Day in Naypyidaw, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe reiterated that the junta would hold a "free and fair general election" this year but failed to indicate a date for the polls.²⁹
- **13 February:** NLD Vice-Chairman Tin Oo said that the NLD would not participate in the election unless the regime meets the conditions stated in the party's "Shwegondaing Declaration."³⁰ [See *April 2009 Burma Bulletin*]
- **Mid-February:** It was reported that in order to gain support for the election, the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in Northern Arakan State had begun a membership recruitment drive targeting local Rohingya and Muslims.³¹ The USDA also began issuing temporary identity cards to Rohingya and Muslims in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships, Arakan State.³²
- **16 February:** In a move aimed at improving the image of the USDA ahead of the polls, Rangoon Mayor Brig Gen Aung Thein Lin announced that the junta-backed organization would spend more than 12 billion kyat (about US\$12 million) this year to improve public utilities, services, and infrastructure in Rangoon.³³

²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs (26 Feb 10) Canada Condemns Burmese Decision on Aung San Suu Kyi Appeal; CNA (26 Feb 10) S'pore disappointed over Myanmar court ruling on Suu Kyi; AFP (27 Feb 10) Myanmar disappoints UN; AFP (26 Feb 10) US lawmaker seeks to punish Myanmar on Suu Kyi

²³ Independent (26 Feb 10) Brown 'appalled' as Burma deny Suu Kyi freedom

²⁴ DPA (12 Feb 10) Myanmar junta chief confirms election to be held this year; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 10) Than Shwe Says Election will be 'Free and Fair'

²⁵ Irrawaddy (25 Feb 10) US Chargé d'Affaires Meets NLD; Mizzima News (26 Feb 10) NLD CEC approves 100 CC members

²⁶ Mizzima News (23 Feb 10) NLD commences Central Committee selection process

²⁷ Mizzima News (15 Feb 10) Burma's chambers of commerce members free to be in politics

²⁸ AFP (09 Feb 10) Too early for decision on Burma election, says Suu Kyi; AP (10 Feb 10) Myanmar's Suu Kyi undecided on junta's elections; Mizzima News (10 Feb 10) No decision on polls till electoral process is announced: Suu Kyi; Irrawaddy (10 Feb 10) Opposition Parties Face Election Uncertainty

²⁹ DPA (12 Feb 10) Myanmar junta chief confirms election to be held this year; Hindu (12 Feb 10) Myanmar junta promises early polls; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 10) Than Shwe Says Election will be 'Free and Fair'; Xinhua (12 Feb 10) All Myanmar nationalities urged to strive for govt's roadmap

³⁰ VOA (13 Feb 10) Burma Frees Opposition's Deputy Chairman

³¹ Narinjara News (15 Feb 10) Authorities Organize Muslim Community for 2010 Election with USDA

³² Irrawaddy (17 Feb 10) Junta Woos Rohingyas

³³ Irrawaddy (22 Feb 10) USDA Promises Big Spending in Rangoon

Border Guard Force talks at an impasse

On 6 February, the SPDC set the end of February as the new deadline for ethnic ceasefire groups to comply with its ultimatum to transform their militias into Border Guard Forces (BGF) under SPDC Army control.³⁴ On 6 and 14 February, United Wa State Army (UWSA) leader Bao Yuxiang twice refused to meet with SPDC Army Military Affairs Security Chief Lt Gen Ye Myint in Lashio, Shan State to discuss the BGF issue.³⁵ On 15 February, senior SPDC officials issued an order to all SPDC Army divisions and battalions in Shan State and Kachin State to prepare for possible combat.³⁶

On 26 February, UWSA leader Bao Yuxiang finally met with Ye Myint in Tangyan, Shan State, after Chinese military officials pushed Bao to accept the invitation and guaranteed his safety.³⁷ The meeting however did not lead to a breakthrough as the SPDC rejected the Wa proposal that they would transform into a BGF as long as the junta did not install its officers at the battalion level.³⁸

Post-Nargis update: 500,000 still homeless

On 9 February, the Tripartite Core Group released the third Periodic Review of the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA). The review said that more is needed to be done to address livelihood and shelter needs in the Irrawaddy delta and warned that a delayed recovery could lead to more crises.³⁹ On 16 February, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that about 500,000 people were still without shelter.⁴⁰

HUMAN RIGHTS

Junta snubs Ojea Quintana

On 15-19 February, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana made his third visit to the country since his appointment in May 2008.⁴¹ During his visit, the junta ignored his request to meet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi;⁴² did not grant him access to Than Shwe; failed to give him any indication on the timing of the general election and the promulgation of the election law;⁴³ and told him that there were no political prisoners in Burma.⁴⁴

- **15 February:** Ojea Quintana arrived in Rangoon.⁴⁵ He met with Thaug Nyunt and Nyi Nyi Soe - the two judges who presided over Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trial.⁴⁶ He also met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers to discuss Burma's legal system and Daw Suu's trial and detention.⁴⁷

³⁴ Irrawaddy (09 Feb 10) End of February Deadline for BGF; Irrawaddy (10 Feb 10) Burma's Burning Ring of Cease-fires

³⁵ Mizzima News (09 Feb 10) Wa leader again refuses to meet MAS Chief; Irrawaddy (09 Feb 10) End of February Deadline for BGF; DVB (15 Feb 10) Wa chief still refuses to meet Burma army; SHAN (19 Feb 10) Wa leader once more declines meeting with junta

³⁶ Kachin News Group (19 Feb 10) Burmese Army in north told to be ready for combat

³⁷ SHAN (27 Feb 10) Unhappy conclusion at Junta-Wa meet; Kachin News Group (27 Feb 10) Chinese presence in USWA-junta meet

³⁸ Irrawaddy (26 Feb 10) Junta Highlights Beijing Ties, as Talks with Armed Groups Continue; SHAN (27 Feb 10) Unhappy conclusion at Junta-Wa meet; Kachin News Group (27 Feb 10) Chinese presence in USWA-junta meet

³⁹ TCG (9 Feb 10) Periodic Review III; I Reuters (09 Feb 10) Myanmar cyclone survivors haunted by lack of work and shelter; Irrawaddy (10 Feb 10) Challenges Remain in Cyclone Area: TCG; IRIN (09 Feb 10) Livelihoods crucial to cyclone recovery; VOA (09 Feb 10) UN report on Burma's recovery from 2008 Cyclone points to progress in key areas

⁴⁰ AP (16 Feb 10) Half a Million Still Homeless in Delta: IOM

⁴¹ AFP (11 Feb 10) UN rights envoy en route to Burma; AFP (11 Feb 10) UN human rights envoy to visit Myanmar next week; AP (15 Feb 10) UN Rights Envoy Visits Burma; AP (14 Feb 10) UN envoy to probe human rights in Myanmar; AP (16 Feb 10) UN envoy arrives Myanmar to evaluate reform; NLM (17 Feb 10) Special Rapporteur's ASEAN delegates wave s Myanmar trip; VOA (15 Feb 10) UN Envoy Arrives in Burma; Xinhua (15 Feb 10) UN human rights envoy visits Myanmar; Mizzima News (15 Feb 10) UN Special Envoy Quintana arrives in Burma

⁴² OHCHR (12 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur hopes to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi during third visit to Myanmar; Reuters (12 Feb 10) U.N. rights envoy asks Myanmar to allow Suu Kyi visit; VOA (11 Feb 10) UN Human Rights Official to Visit Burma Next Week; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 10) UN Special Repporteur Seeks Meeting with Suu Kyi

⁴³ AP (19 Feb 10) Myanmar denies UN envoy a meeting with Suu Kyi; AFP (21 Feb 10) UN empty-handed again from Myanmar visit: Analysts; AP (20 Feb 10) Myanmar gives monk 7 years in jail as envoy visits; VOA (19 Feb 10) UN Envoy Denied Meeting with Burma's Suu Kyi; Christian Science Monitor (21 Feb 10) UN envoy leaves Burma with very modest gains

⁴⁴ AP (19 Feb 10) Myanmar denies UN envoy a meeting with Suu Kyi; AP (20 Feb 10) Myanmar gives monk 7 years in jail as envoy visits; AFP (20 Feb 10) UN envoy slams Myanmar for refusing Suu Kyi visit; VOA (19 Feb 10) UN Envoy Denied Meeting with Burma's Suu Kyi

⁴⁵ AFP (15 Feb 10) UN human rights envoy arrives in Burma: Official

- **16 February:** Ojea Quintana flew to Akyab, Arakan State, where he met political prisoners Than Tin, Pyae Phylo Hlaing, Aung Tun Myint, and U Sandar Thiri in Akyab prison.⁴⁸
- **17 February:** Ojea Quintana traveled on a UNHCR speedboat from Akyab to Buthidaung, Arakan State.⁴⁹ He met with political prisoners Htay Khwe, Mrat Tun, Kyaw Min, Miha Ahmad, and Tun Nyo in Buthidaung prison.⁵⁰ He also met with a small group of villagers handpicked by local SPDC authorities from Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships to give him a rosy picture of the human rights situation in the area.⁵¹
- **18 February:** Ojea Quintana returned to Rangoon. He met NLD Vice-Chairman Tin Oo and other senior party members to discuss the 2010 election, the release of political prisoners, the regime's restrictions on the NLD activities, and the party's appeals for dialogue with the SPDC.⁵² He also met with political prisoners Naw Ohn Hla, Than Than Htay, Kyaw San, Kyi Than, Myo Win, and Khai Kyaw Moe in Insein prison.⁵³
- **19 February:** Ojea Quintana flew to Naypyidaw. He held meetings with several junta officials to press for a meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and discuss the human rights situation in Burma.⁵⁴ Before leaving Burma, Ojea Quintana held a press conference at Rangoon International Airport.⁵⁵ He "deeply regretted" that the SPDC denied him a meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and called for her immediate release.⁵⁶ Ojea Quintana said that election would not be credible unless the junta released all political prisoners.⁵⁷

Detention conditions

On 22 February, six political prisoners in Insein prison went on a hunger strike to protest the authorities' refusal to improve prison conditions. Their demands, which included better food and healthcare as well as access to writing and reading material, were contained in a letter that was made public on 17 February, a day before Ojea Quintana's visit to the prison.⁵⁸

In addition, 71 inmates in Buthidaung prison, Arakan State, mostly Bangladeshi nationals, went on a hunger strike to protest the insufficient amount of food provided by prison officials. On 17 February, SPDC prison authorities denied them a meeting with Ojea Quintana.⁵⁹

Prison sentences

- **10 February:** The Rangoon Southern District Court sentenced Burma-born US citizen Nyi Nyi Aung aka Kyaw Zaw Lwin, 40, to three years in prison on charges of forgery, possession of foreign currency, and violation of immigration laws.⁶⁰ On 11 February, the SPDC transferred Nyi Nyi Aung to Prome prison, in Pegu Division.⁶¹

⁴⁶ NLM (17 Feb 10) Special Rapporteur's ASEAN delegates wave s Myanmar trip; AFP (16 Feb 10) UN rights envoy holds talks on elections in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 10) UN Rights Envoy Meets Judges Who Jailed Activists

⁴⁷ AFP (16 Feb 10) UN rights envoy holds talks on elections in Myanmar; BBC (15 Feb 10) UN envoy meets lawyers for Burmese opposition NLD; DVB (15 Feb 10) UN rights envoy meets Suu Kyi's lawyers; Mizzima News (16 Feb 10) Quintana seeks details of Daw Suu's trial

⁴⁸ AP (17 Feb 10) UN envoy visits political prisoners in Myanmar; Narinjara News (17 Feb 10) UN Human Rights Envoy Meets Political Prisoners in Arakan; Mizzima News (19 Feb 10) NLD presents Aung San Suu Kyi case to UN rights envoy; Kaladan News (18 Feb 10) UN envoy visits north Arakan; NLM (20 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights concludes visit

⁴⁹ Narinjara News (17 Feb 10) UN Human Rights Envoy Meets Political Prisoners in Arakan

⁵⁰ AFP (17 Feb 10) UN envoy 'meets prisoners in Myanmar'; VOA (17 Feb 10) UN Rights Envoy Meets Prisoners in Burma; Narinjara News (17 Feb 10) UN Human Rights Envoy Meets Political Prisoners in Arakan; Kaladan News (18 Feb 10) UN envoy visits north Arakan; NLM (20 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights concludes visit

⁵¹ Kaladan News (18 Feb 10) UN envoy visits north Arakan; NLM (20 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights concludes visit

⁵² AFP (18 Feb 10) UN envoy meets freed Suu Kyi aide in Myanmar; AFP (19 Feb 10) UN envoy meets ministers but not Than Shwe; Mizzima News (19 Feb 10) NLD presents Aung San Suu Kyi case to UN rights envoy; Irrawaddy (18 Feb 10) UN Envoy Meets With Tin Oo

⁵³ AFP (18 Feb 10) UN envoy meets freed Suu Kyi aide in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (18 Feb 10) UN Envoy Visits Insein as Prisoners Demand Better Conditions; Irrawaddy (18 Feb 10) UN Envoy Meets With Tin Oo; Mizzima News (19 Feb 10) NLD presents Aung San Suu Kyi case to UN rights envoy; Irrawaddy (19 Feb 10) UN Envoy "Regrets" Not Meeting Suu Kyi; NLM (20 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights concludes visit

⁵⁴ AFP (19 Feb 10) UN envoy presses Myanmar ministers on Suu Kyi

⁵⁵ NLM (20 Feb 10) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights concludes visit

⁵⁶ AFP (21 Feb 10) UN empty-handed again from Myanmar visit: Analysts; VOA (19 Feb 10) UN Envoy Denied Meeting with Burma's Suu Kyi; Christian Science Monitor (21 Feb 10) UN envoy leaves Burma with very modest gains

⁵⁷ AP (19 Feb 10) Myanmar denies UN envoy a meeting with Suu Kyi

⁵⁸ DVB (23 Feb 10) Six on hunger strike in Insein prison; MNA (18 Feb 10) Political prisoners call for improved rights during UN human rights envoy trip; Irrawaddy (18 Feb 10) UN Envoy Visits Insein as Prisoners Demand Better Conditions

⁵⁹ Narinjara News (22 Feb 10) 71 Foreign Prisoners Stage Hunger Strike to Protest Lack of Food; DVB (23 Feb 10) Six on hunger strike in Insein prison

⁶⁰ AFP (10 Feb 10) Myanmar jails US man; AFP (10 Feb 10) Myanmar court jails US man for three years: lawyer; NYT (10 Feb 10) Myanmar sentences American to prison; BBC (10 Feb 10) Burma jails US citizen who was 1988 student activist; DVB (10 Feb 10) Myanmar sentences American to prison; BBC (10 Feb 10) Burma jails US citizen who was 1988 student activist; DVB (10 Feb 10) Myanmar sentences American to prison

- **15 February:** The Rangoon Eastern District Court sentenced women activists Naw Ohn Hla, Myint Myint San, Cho Cho Lwin, and Cho Cho Aye, aka Ma Cho, to two years in prison with hard labor for offering Buddhist monks alms, including religious literature.⁶²
- **17 February:** The Rangoon Western District Court sentenced Buddhist monk U Gaw Thita to seven years in prison for violation of immigration laws, possession of foreign currency, and unlawful association.⁶³

Releases

Following pressure by the International Labor Organization (ILO), on 17 February the Magwe Divisional Court reduced the initial jail terms, ranging up to five years, to four months for 11 local farmers who had complained to the ILO over land confiscation by the regime. As a result, the 11 farmers were released from Thayet prison, Magwe Division, as they had already served more than four months in pre-trial detention.⁶⁴

Torture and death

- **4 February:** SPDC Army soldiers from LIB 282 in Ale Sakhon Village in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, detained three local villagers who complained of extortion by the regime-backed militia to the local authorities. One of the villagers, Tun Lein, died shortly after being taken to the local military camp.⁶⁵
- **9 February:** Pyi Sone, a 28-year-old villager died at a local hospital from injuries inflicted eight days earlier by 20 policemen from Rogo police station near Moulmein, Mon State..⁶⁶

DISPLACEMENT

Migrants in Thailand still threatened with deportation

Despite the Thai government's January announcement to extend the deadline for migrant workers to complete the nationality verification process to February 2012 [See *January 2010 Burma Bulletin*], hundreds of thousands of migrants still faced the threat of arrest and deportation by the end of February.⁶⁷ Adding to the confusion, on 24 February the Thai Labor Ministry extended the deadline for the submission of the nationality verification forms to 31 March. However, authorities also announced that migrant workers still had to submit a signed statement by 2 March that they intend to go through with the process or face arrest and deportation.⁶⁸

On 18 February, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants Jorge Bustamante warned that if the Thai government follows through with its deportation plans, it will breach its "fundamental human rights obligations."⁶⁹ On 23 February, Human Rights Watch released a report titled "From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of Migrant Workers in Thailand." The report called for a review of the nationality verification process, and called on the Thai government to protect the fundamental human rights of migrants.⁷⁰

¹⁰) US citizen given 3 years' hard labour in Burma; Mizzima News (10 Feb 10) Burmese-American sentenced to three years in prison; Irrawaddy (10 Feb 10) Burmese-American Activist Gets Three Years in Prison

⁶¹ DVB (15 Feb 10) US Citizen transferred to Burma's Pyay prison; Mizzima News (14 Feb 10) Burmese-American activist transferred to Prome prison

⁶² AP (16 Feb 10) Myanmar sentences 4 activists as UN envoy visits; VOA (16 Feb 10) Burma sentences 4 activists to hard labor as UN Human Rights envoy visits; Mizzima News (16 Feb 10) Naw Ohn Hla, three others get two years in prison; DVB (16 Feb 10) 'Prayer' activists sentenced

⁶³ AP (20 Feb 10) Myanmar gives monk 7 years in jail as envoy visits; AFP (19 Feb 10) Burma jails Buddhist abbot: opposition; DVB (19 Feb 10) Charity Monk Jailed; VOA (20 Feb 10) Burma Imprisons Buddhist Monk; Mizzima News (18 Feb 10) Abbot sentenced to seven years in prison

⁶⁴ DVB (17 Feb 10) Magwe farmers' sentences reduced; DVB (23 Feb 10) Land dispute farmers get early release

⁶⁵ Kaowao News (11 Feb 10) Villager killed after challenging Burmese Militia

⁶⁶ DVB (10 Feb 10) Police mob beat drunk man to death

⁶⁷ Mizzima News (16 Feb 10) Thai deportation policy under fire

⁶⁸ Irrawaddy (23 Feb 10) Conflicting Signals on Migrant Verification Deadline; SHAN (25 Feb 10) Only 3 days remain for Burmese migrants; DVB (25 Feb 10) Thai migrant permit deadline extended; Irrawaddy (26 Feb 10) Migrant Registration in Chaos

⁶⁹ UN News Centre (18 Feb 10) Independent UN expert warns of threat of mass deportations from Thailand

⁷⁰ HRW (23 Feb 10) From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of migrant workers in Thailand

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International community calls for free and fair elections

“Without full participation, including the almost 2,200 prisoners of conscience, [...] the elections will not be credible.” – UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana Ojea Quintana.⁷¹

The SPDC’s planned 2010 election and the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remained crucial issues for the international community:

- **5 February:** Philippines Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said that the SPDC’s election would be a “farce” if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is unable to run.⁷²
- **6 February:** Indonesian Ambassador to Burma Sebastianus Sumarsono said that he hoped the SPDC would meet its promise to hold inclusive general elections.⁷³
- **9 February:** Malaysia FM Anifah Aman called on the SPDC to hold free, fair and an inclusive election and to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi so that the polls will be legitimate.⁷⁴
- **11 February:** The European Parliament passed a resolution that called for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and criticized the ban which prevents her from standing for election. The MEPs urged the SPDC to ensure a free, fair, transparent, and inclusive electoral process consistent with international standards.⁷⁵
- **13 February:** UK Foreign Office Minister Ivan Lewis urged the SPDC to allow all political groups to take part in the election.⁷⁶
- **13 February:** UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon urged the SPDC to free all political prisoners and to immediately lift restrictions on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁷⁷
- **14 February:** Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said that it was in the interests of ASEAN to help Burma hold fair, free, and transparent elections in order to restore democracy and peace to the country.⁷⁸
- **24 February:** ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan said that ASEAN expected a credible and transparent election but it could not interfere in the details of the polls.⁷⁹

ECONOMY

More “privatizations”

For the second straight month, the SPDC placed state-owned businesses into the hands of its cronies [See *January 2010 Burma Bulletin*].

- **1 February:** Rangoon-based weekly *The Voice* reported that the SPDC will hand over the operation of three Rangoon port terminals to private enterprises.⁸⁰ Rangoon’s ports account for about 90% of Burma’s imports and exports.⁸¹

⁷¹ AP (19 Feb 10) Myanmar denies UN envoy a meeting with Suu Kyi

⁷² AFP (07 Feb 09) Philippines sees ‘farce’ Burma elections

⁷³ Antara News (07 Feb 10) RI hopes Myanmar to hold inclusive elections

⁷⁴ AFP (09 Feb 10) Malaysia calls for Suu Kyi’s release ahead of polls

⁷⁵ European Parliament News Report (11 Feb 10) Human rights: Venezuela, Madagascar, Burma

⁷⁶ AFP (13 Feb 10) Britain hails release

⁷⁷ AFP (13 Feb 10) UN chief ‘welcomes’ release

⁷⁸ Jakarta Post (15 Feb 10) Thailand joins RI in promoting free, fair elections in Myanmar

⁷⁹ Irrawaddy (24 Feb 10) Burmese Election Expected to be Credible: Asean Secretary

⁸⁰ Reuters (08 Feb 10) Myanmar to privatise Yangon port facilities; WSJ (18 Feb 10) Myanmar Moves to Privatize Key State Enterprises; Irrawaddy (06 Feb 10) Burma Sell Off Echoes Russia’s Carve Up by the “Oligarchies”; DVB (09 Feb 10) Sweeping privatisation in Burma continues; Xinhua (01 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatize port terminals handling business

⁸¹ Reuters (08 Feb 10) Myanmar to privatise Yangon port facilities; Irrawaddy (06 Feb 10) Burma Sell Off Echoes Russia’s Carve Up by the “Oligarchies”; DVB (09 Feb 10) Sweeping privatisation in Burma continues

- **3 February:** Weekly journal 7 Days reported that Myanmar Airways International will sell 80% of its shares along with corporate control over management to Kanbawza Bank. Kanbawza Bank owner Aung Ko Win is on UK and EU sanctions lists and is close to SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye.⁸²

Strikes in Rangoon

While senior SPDC officials and their cronies divided the spoils, Burmese garment factory workers protested low wages and horrific working conditions.

On 8 February, over 2,000 workers from several foreign-owned garment factories in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone went on strike. The workers demanded a 10,000 kyat (US\$ 10) monthly pay raise, reduced hours and better working conditions.⁸³ SPDC authorities sent several hundred riot police.⁸⁴ The workers ended their strike on 10 February, after the factory management agreed to a 5,000 kyat (US\$5) monthly wage increase.⁸⁵

On 16 February, about 200 workers from the South Korean-owned Lion City garment factory in Rangoon's Insein Township went on strike calling for a salary increase and better working conditions.⁸⁶ In response, police deployed about 15 riot police trucks to the area around the factory.⁸⁷ On 17 February, the workers called off their strike after Lion City management agreed to a 5,000 kyat (US\$5) monthly pay hike and more favorable working conditions.⁸⁸

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN FEBRUARY

1	Malaysian Home Ministry Sec-Gen Mahmood Adam says that Malaysia will issue identification cards to UN-recognized refugees, which will allow them to legally stay in the country and avoid arrest.
1	Petrol Myanmar and Daewoo begin a survey for the construction of the Burma-China gas pipeline off the coast of Arakan State near Rambree Island and Kyaukpyu.
2	Asian Development Bank says that it has no plans to provide new assistance to Burma.
2	A court in Maungdaw, Arakan State, sentences 18 Rohingya who were pushed back by Bangladesh Rifles on 26 January to five years in prison for crossing into Bangladesh without the authorities' permission.
2	US President Barack Obama earmarks US\$34.8 million in his budget proposal for 2011 to support democracy and human rights in Burma.
4	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives a medical check up at her lakeside home in Rangoon.
4	SPDC signs agreement with China's Yunnan Power Grid Corporation and the State Development and Investment Corporation Huajing Power Holdings to develop seven hydro power projects in the Wa and Mongla areas of Shan State.
4	Thai police and army soldiers raid the Karen Information Centre in Mae Sot.
4	SPDC authorities force villagers from Htan Janu Village, Yebyu Sub-Township, Tenasserim Division, to participate in local militia training.
5	Pegu Township SPDC Chairman Aung Swe Myint orders internet cafe owners to record names and addresses of their customers.
7	William Sabandar, the head of cyclone Nargis relief operations for the ASEAN Humanitarian Taskforce, says that the SPDC continues to delay the processing of visas and permits for aid workers.
7	Weekly Myanmar Times reports that Ghana rejected 15,000 bags of Burmese rice in January because the rice was unfit for human consumption.
8	Australian FM Stephen Smith says that Australia will increase humanitarian aid to Burma by 40% to

⁸² WSJ (18 Feb 10) Myanmar Moves to Privatize Key State Enterprises; Mizzima News (03 Feb 10) Burma's national airline sold to private bank; Irrawaddy (03 Feb 10) Western-sanctioned Kanbawza Bank Buys Airline; Xinhua (03 Feb 10) Myanmar Airways International To Be Privatized; Flightglobal (10 Feb 10) Myanmar's MAI set for ownership change as Singaporeans exit

⁸³ AP (10 Feb 10) Security tight as Myanmar workers strike in Yangon; Reuters (09 Feb 10) Riot police deployed at Myanmar factory strike; Mizzima News (08 Feb 10) Work stoppage in Hlaing Tharyar yet again; Mizzima News (09 Feb 10) Workers strike spreads in industrial zone in Rangoon: Riot Police deployed; Irrawaddy (09 Feb 10) Authorities Threaten Violence at Rangoon Strike; DVB (10 Feb 10) Riot police deployed to Rangoon protest; Mizzima News (10 Feb 10) Fear of strikes leads to factories declaring holiday

⁸⁴ Mizzima News (09 Feb 10) Workers strike spreads in industrial zone in Rangoon: Riot Police deployed; Mizzima News (10 Feb 10) Fear of strikes leads to factories declaring holiday; DVB (10 Feb 10) Riot police deployed to Rangoon protest

⁸⁵ Irrawaddy (10 Feb 10) Rangoon Workers End Strike

⁸⁶ Irrawaddy (17 Feb 10) Another Strike in Rangoon, as Labor Unrest Continues; Mizzima News (17 Feb 10) Garment workers demonstrate for better wages; DVB (18 Feb 10) More workers protests in Rangoon

⁸⁷ Mizzima News (17 Feb 10) Garment workers demonstrate for better wages

⁸⁸ Mizzima News (18 Feb 10) Lion City strikers reach agreement with employers

	US\$43 million over the next three years but it will maintain its sanctions on the SPDC.
8	WHO acting country representative in Burma Leonard Ortega says that resistance to the most effective malaria prevention drug is on the rise in Burma.
10	Vietnam Airlines announces it will begin a new route from Hanoi to Rangoon on 2 March.
11	Hundreds of Kachin hold a prayer meeting at Tang Hpre Village near the Mytsone hydropower project site in Kachin State to demand a stop to the dam construction.
11	EU MPs urge China, India, and Russia to pressure the SPDC to improve human rights and call on them to stop supplying arms to the regime.
12	A fire destroys over 650 shops in Rangoon's Thingangyun market and causes hundreds of million of kyat in damage.
15	One hundred and seventy-nine Burman families from Rangoon Division arrive in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, to settle in two model villages on land seized from local farmers.
15	One person is killed and 11 injured when two bombs explode in Laogai in Northern Shan State's Kokang region.
16	DKBA soldiers torture and kill a Burmese migrant worker who was returned to Myawaddy Township, Karen State, by Thai immigration authorities.
16	A local militia comprised primarily of Lahu in Mongton Township Shan State, becomes an official SPDC BGF in a ceremony at the SPDC Army IB 65 command post.
17	SPDC authorities force villagers from Yar Phuu Village, Yebyu Sub-Township, Tenasserim Division, to participate in local militia training.
19	One person is killed and two injured when two bombs explode at a market in Kawkareik Township, Southern Karen State.
22	Three SPDC Army soldiers rape a 21-year-old Rohingya woman in Poenyoleak Village, Buthidaung Township, Arakan State.
24	US Chargé d'Affaires Larry Dinger meets with NLD CEC members at the party headquarters in Rangoon to discuss the NLD Central Committee reorganization and the party's stance on the 2010 election.
25	Three Burmese children are killed and five others are wounded when Thai soldiers in Ranong open fire on a truck that failed to stop as requested.
25	SPDC Ministry of Electric Power signs an agreement with China's Hanergy Holding Group and Goldwater Resources on the construction of the upper Salween hydropower project.
26	Four NLD CEC members meet with diplomats from the US, UK, France, Norway, and Italy embassies in Rangoon to discuss the NLD's position on the election.
27	The weekly journal Voice says that a total of 126 people have been infected with swine flu in Burma as of 20 February since the outbreak of the disease in the country in June 2009.
27	India's Home Secretary Gopal Krishna Pillai says that India and Burma will conduct a "coordinated operation" against anti-India groups with base camps in Burma.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN FEBRUARY

"The Repression of ethnic minority activists in Myanmar", Amnesty International (AI)
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA16/001/2010/en/0c727278-2993-4816-90bc-e86c658d05ce/asa160012010en.pdf>

"Walking amongst sharp knives", Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
<http://www.karenwomen.org/Reports/WalkingAmongstSharpKnives.pdf>

"Unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: Crackdown, forced displacement and hunger", Arakan Project
<http://refugeerightsasiapacific.org/wp-content/tmp/Arakan-Project-Bangladesh-Rohingya-11Feb10.pdf>

"From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of migrant workers in Thailand", Human Rights Watch (HRW)
<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/02/23/tiger-crocodile>

"Periodic Review III", Tripartite Core Group (TCG)
<http://www.asean.org/documents/CN/TCGPeriodicReview-Report3.pdf>

"Monthly Recovery Update February 2010", Tripartite Core Group Recovery Coordination Center
http://themimu.info/RCC/Post%20Nargis%20Recovery/Monthly%20Recovery%20Updates/MRU%20FEB_2010.pdf