

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

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- The SPDC puts Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on trial on trumped up charges of having violated the conditions of her house arrest. The show trial of Daw Suu Kyi is the regime's latest ploy to ensure that the most viable pro-democracy candidates will be unable to run in the elections.
- The trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sparks unprecedented outrage and concern among the international community.
- The SPDC's detention and trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi represents the latest embarrassment for ASEAN. The bloc reacts by repeatedly urging the SPDC to release Daw Suu and all other political prisoners.
- ASEAN legislators call for the suspension of Burma from ASEAN and show solidarity with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- UN Security Council issues a press statement expressing concern over Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon plans to go to Burma to urge the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners.
- Ethnic ceasefire groups reject the SPDC ultimatum to integrate their armed forces into SPDC-controlled Border Guard Force prior to the 2010 elections.
- One year after cyclone Nargis, farmers in the Irrawaddy delta are being crushed under escalating debt without SPDC assistance; 700,000 Nargis survivors still live in temporary shelters; 21 activists remain in jail for their relief activities in the delta.
- A new report on SPDC's atrocities in Burma calls for the UN Security Council to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma. Others express support for UN Security Council and International Criminal Court involvement regarding the situation of Burma.
- US renews sanctions on the SPDC while the EU considers imposing more after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's detention and trial.
- IMF confirms that while natural gas exports swell SPDC foreign exchange reserves to a record high of US\$3.6 billion, social spending in Burma remains the lowest in Asia.

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KEY STORY

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's show trial

On 18 May, the SPDC put Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on trial on trumped up charges of having violated the conditions of her house arrest following the intrusion of an American man into her compound.¹ [See below *Timeline*] If convicted, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi faces a maximum of five years in prison.²

The show trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the regime's latest ploy to ensure that the most viable pro-democracy candidates will be unable to run in the elections. The SPDC-drafted constitution prohibits individuals who are serving prison sentences for any offense from standing for election to Parliament.³

Despite the SPDC's outrageous claim that Daw Suu's trial "was strictly related to the rule of law,"⁴ the regime's one-sided court proceedings held in Insein prison totally disregarded international legal standards:

- The regime revoked the license of Aung Thein, one of Daw Suu's lawyers.⁵
- The court failed to provide adequate time for the defense to prepare the case and consult with Daw Suu.⁶
- The court heard the testimony of 14 prosecution witness but allowed only one defense witness to testify.⁷
- The SPDC excluded the public from the trial and severely restricted the ability of the press to attend the hearings and cover the proceedings.⁸ [See below *Freedom of information*]

Timeline

- 1 May** SPDC PM's office rejected an appeal for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi saying that the "grounds for her appeal were not strong enough."⁹
- 6 May** SPDC arrested John William Yettaw, a 53-year-old American man, while he was swimming in Rangoon's Inya Lake. The SPDC alleged that the man was returning from a visit to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lakeside residence. The junta also said that the man had spent two nights at Daw Suu's home before leaving late on 5 May.¹⁰
- 7 May** Twenty police officers entered Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's residence.¹¹ SPDC authorities detained Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's doctor Tin Myo Win after they had denied him access to her as part of the routine monthly check-up.¹²

¹ NYT (18 May 09) Pro-Democracy leader goes on trial in Myanmar; NLM (19 May 09) American citizen Mr John William Yettaw, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Daw Khin Khin Win, Ma Win Ma Ma brought to trial

² BBC (14 May 09) Burma's Suu Kyi taken to prison; Irrawaddy (14 May 09) Suu Kyi 'Looking Good, Mentally Strong': Lawyer; Irrawaddy (14 May 09) Confusion Reigns over Suu Kyi's Fate; Irrawaddy (14 May 09) Suu Kyi to Face Trial Following Unauthorized Visit

³ Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Articles 121

⁴ AP (28 May 09) Suu Kyi Trial Nears End; Bernama (28 May 09) Trial Against Aung San Suu Kyi Has No Political Impact

⁵ Reuters (17 May 09) Myanmar bars lawyer for Suu Kyi; DVB (18 May 09) Two lawyers representing Suu Kyi dismissed; Irrawaddy (16 May 09) Two Suu Kyi Lawyers Dismissed from Bar; Asia-Pacific News (16 May 09) Myanmar junta rejects prominent lawyer for Aung San Suu Kyi

⁶ Guardian (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi tells Burmese court she did not break terms of house arrest; DVB (28 May 09) Suu Kyi defence reduced to one witness; Mizzima News (26 May 09) Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's cross-examination; Mizzima News (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest lifted

⁷ Straits Times (28 May 09) One defence witness only; FT (28 May 09) Burmese court rejects Suu Kyi witnesses; Reuters (27 May 09) Myanmar: Nobel Laureate's Witnesses Are Blocked; Mizzima News (27 May 09) Court rejects three witnesses in Suu Kyi's trial; Washington Post (27 May 09) Burma's opposition grimly protests military government; Irrawaddy (28 May 09) Last Witness Speaks at Suu Kyi's Trial

⁸ DVB (21 May 09) Court access for diplomats merely 'a gesture'

⁹ AP (05 May 09) Myanmar rejects appeal for Suu Kyi release; Mizzima News (05 May 09) Junta rejects appeal for Aung San Suu Kyi's release; Irrawaddy (06 May 09) Regime Ignores Own Laws to Hold Suu Kyi: Rights Groups

¹⁰ Bangkok Post (05 May 09) US man swims to Suu Kyi's home

¹¹ BBC (07 May 09) Burma police enter Suu Kyi house; AP (07 May 09) US Man Arrested for Entering Suu Kyi Home; Reuters (09 May 09) Suu Kyi has low blood pressure, dehydration – party; DVB (08 May 09) Opposition party concerned for Suu Kyi's safety

¹² Reuters (09 May 09) Suu Kyi has low blood pressure, dehydration – party; AFP (09 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi 'not in good health': party; AP (09 May 09) Doctor of Myanmar's Suu Kyi questioned by police; Mizzima News (09 May 09) Suu Kyi in poor health, her doctor detained: NLD; Irrawaddy (09 May 09) Mystery Deepens around 'Swimmer's' Arrest

- 8 May** SPDC authorities replaced existing security guard personnel at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's compound.¹³ SPDC allowed Dr Tin Myo Win's assistant Pyone Moe Ei to visit Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Pyone Moe Ei gave her an intravenous drip.¹⁴
- 9 May** NLD spokesman Nyan Win said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was "not in good health" as she was suffering from low blood pressure, dehydration, and had not eaten for several days.¹⁵ SPDC denied permission to Pyone Moe Ei to visit Daw Suu again.¹⁶
- 10 May** NLD urged the SPDC to allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to receive medical attention, saying it was concerned about her health.¹⁷
- 11 May** SPDC allowed Pyone Moe Ei to make a follow-up visit to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁸
- 12 May** NLD spokesman Nyan Win said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's health had improved.¹⁹ SPDC authorities tightened security in the back of Daw Aung Suu Kyi's home. Workers rolled barbed wire and erected a tall wooden fence.²⁰
- 14 May** SPDC authorities took Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from her residence and detained her in Insein prison in connection with Yettaw's intrusion into her house compound. SPDC authorities also detained Daw Suu's maids Khin Khin Win and Win Ma Ma.²¹
- 15 May** The SPDC barred lawyer Aung Thein, 62, from defending Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.²²
- 16 May** The SPDC released Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's doctor, Tin Myo Win.²³
- 18 May** The closed-door trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's began inside Insein prison.²⁴ The regime charged Daw Suu with violating Article 22 of the 1975 State Protection Law. The regime argued that Daw Suu violated the conditions of her house arrest by allowing Yettaw to stay at her compound.²⁵ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi initially refused to enter the court room or to acknowledge her case when the court abbreviated her name to "Suu Kyi," leaving out "Aung San." "If you cannot call me by my right name, I will not move," she told the court. When court officials relented and used her full name, she entered the court room.²⁶
- 19 May** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her lawyers that she was "ready to face anything."²⁷
- 20 May** SPDC allowed 29 diplomats and 10 Burmese journalists to attend the 45-minute hearing.²⁸ When the hearing ended, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi turned to the diplomats and journalists seated behind her and said, "Thank you for coming and for your support. I'm sorry I can't meet you one by one. I hope to meet you in better days."²⁹ After the hearing, the SPDC allowed the Ambassador of Singapore, and senior Russian and Thai diplomats to meet with Daw Suu inside the prison compound.³⁰ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told the three diplomats that she "did not wish to use the intrusion into her home as a way to get at

¹³ Irrawaddy (08 May 09) Story of 'Suu Kyi' Swimmer Widely Questioned

¹⁴ Reuters (09 May 09) Suu Kyi has low blood pressure, dehydration – party; AP (09 May 09) Doctor of Myanmar's Suu Kyi questioned by police; AFP (09 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi 'not in good health': party; Irrawaddy (09 May 09) Mystery Deepens around 'Swimmer's' Arrest; Mizzima News (09 May 09) Suu Kyi in poor health, her doctor detained: NLD

¹⁵ Reuters (09 May 09) Suu Kyi has low blood pressure, dehydration – party; AFP (09 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi 'not in good health': party; BBC (09 May 09) Burma's Suu Kyi 'in poor health'

¹⁶ AFP (10 May 09) Myanmar opposition calls for Suu Kyi medical care; CNN (10 May 09) Report: Suu Kyi's doctor prevented from visiting

¹⁷ AFP (10 May 09) Myanmar opposition calls for Suu Kyi medical care; AFP (11 May 09) Suu Kyi's party calls for her treatment

¹⁸ AP (11 May 09) Doctor visits Myanmar's ailing Aung San Suu Kyi; AFP (11 May 09) Myanmar allows medic to see Suu Kyi; Reuters (11 May 09) Myanmar junta allows doctor to see ailing Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (11 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi's health deteriorates: party official

¹⁹ AP (12 May 09) Suu Kyi health improving, party says; AFP (12 May 09) Suu Kyi better after Rangoon relents on visits

²⁰ AP (12 May 09) Detained American visited Suu Kyi before

²¹ AP (14 May 09) Suu Kyi to Be Tried; Reuters (13 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi to be charged over U.S. swimmer: party; Mizzima News (14 May 09) Suu Kyi produced in prison court

²² Reuters (17 May 09) Myanmar bars lawyer for Suu Kyi; DVB (18 May 09) Two lawyers representing Suu Kyi dismissed; Irrawaddy (16 May 09) Two Suu Kyi Lawyers Dismissed from Bar; Asia-Pacific News (16 May 09) Myanmar junta rejects prominent lawyer for Aung San Suu Kyi

²³ AP (18 May 09) Security tight at Suu Kyi trial; DVB (17 May 09) Suu Kyi's doctor released; Irrawaddy (18 May 09) Hundreds Gather as Suu Kyi Trial Starts

²⁴ NYT (18 May 09) Pro-Democracy leader goes on trial in Myanmar

²⁵ NYT (18 May 09) Pro-Democracy leader goes on trial in Myanmar; NLM (19 May 09) American citizen Mr John William Yettaw, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Daw Khin Khin Win, Ma Win Ma Ma brought to trial

²⁶ Asia-Pacific News (18 May 09) Defiant democracy icon on trial for detention breach

²⁷ PTI (19 May 09) Suu Kyi's "ready to face anything"; trial enters 2nd day

²⁸ NLM (21 May 09) Hearing continues into the case of American citizen who entered house compound of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; Reuters (20 May 09) Suu Kyi stands trial in infamous Myanmar court; AFP (20 May 09) Burma will let Suu Kyi meet ambassadors, says diplomat; Irrawaddy (20 May 09) Thirty diplomats, ten reporters attend Suu Kyi Trial; DVB (20 May 09) Journalists and diplomats allowed inside Suu Kyi trial

²⁹ Reuters (20 May 09) Suu Kyi stands trial in infamous Myanmar court; AFP (20 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi wishes for 'better days'; Bangkok Post (20 May 09) Diplomats granted access to Suu Kyi

³⁰ Irrawaddy (20 May 09) Thirty diplomats, ten reporters attend Suu Kyi Trial; DVB (20 May 09) Diplomats meet with Suu Kyi

the Myanmar authorities” and expressed hope for “national reconciliation if all parties so wished.”³¹ She also said that “it was not too late for something good to come out of this unfortunate incident.”³²

21 May SPDC authorities removed the last of the barriers that were used to maintain roadblocks on either end on the street where Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s house is located.³³

22 May The court formally indicted Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on charges of violating the conditions of her house arrest.³⁴ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded not guilty to those charges.³⁵ “I am not guilty. I said I am not guilty because I have not broken any law,” she told the court.³⁶ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her lawyers she was responsible for allowing Yettaw to stay at her home on humanitarian grounds. She had asked him to leave, but Yettaw said he was too exhausted.³⁷ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also told her lawyers that she did not want him or the security personnel in charge of her house to get into trouble because of her.³⁸ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the incident occurred because of lax security at her house compound.³⁹ SPDC consul general in Hong Kong Ye Myint Aung posted a denigrating message on the consulate’s website suggesting that John Yettaw might have been Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s “boyfriend.”⁴⁰

25 May The prosecution dropped its nine remaining witnesses from the original list of 23.⁴¹

26 May Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took the witness stand. In her testimony, she denied any wrongdoing in giving temporary shelter to Yettaw.⁴² The SPDC allowed about 40 diplomats and 35 Burmese in the courtroom.⁴³ After the hearing, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi greeted a few foreign diplomats and said, “Thank you for your concern and support. It is always good to see people from the outside world.”⁴⁴ The SPDC formally ended Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s six-year house arrest – but she remained in Insein prison to face charges of violating the terms of her house arrest.⁴⁵ Police Brig Gen Myint Thein told diplomats and reporters that SPDC authorities had considered releasing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on “humanitarian grounds and because she is the daughter of the country’s founder Aung San,” but that the situation had “regretfully” changed following the incident involving Yettaw.⁴⁶

27 May The court rejected three of four defense witnesses for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴⁷ The court called their testimony an attempt at “vexation or delay or for defeating the ends of justice.”⁴⁸ The court heard the testimony of Yettaw and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s maids Khin Khin Win and Win Ma Ma.⁴⁹ Yettaw testified that God had sent him to Burma to protect Daw Aung San Suu Kyi because he had a dream that a terrorist group would assassinate her.⁵⁰ Yettaw also said that during his 3 May visit to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s house he met five armed security personnel but they only threw stones at him and did nothing to prevent him from entering Daw Suu’s compound.⁵¹

³¹ AFP (20 May 09) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi wishes for ‘better days’; CNA (20 May 09) Singapore’s envoy to Myanmar among 3 ambassadors to meet Aung San Suu Kyi

³² BBC (20 May 09) Suu Kyi ‘composed’ at Burma trial; CNA (20 May 09) Singapore’s envoy to Myanmar among 3 ambassadors to meet Aung San Suu Kyi

³³ AP (22 May 09) Burma Court Accepts Case Against Suu Kyi

³⁴ NLM (23 May 09) Trial against American Citizen Mr John William Yettaw, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Daw Khin Khin Win and Ma Win Ma Ma continues for fifth day; Reuters (22 May 09) Suu Kyi pleads not guilty in U.S. intruder case; AP (22 May 09) Burma Court Accepts Case Against Suu Kyi

³⁵ Reuters (24 May 09) Few doubt outcome as Suu Kyi trial grinds on

³⁶ AP (22 May 09) Burma Court Accepts Case Against Suu Kyi; AFP (22 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi proclaims her innocence: lawyer; Reuters (24 May 09) Few doubt outcome as Suu Kyi trial grinds on; CNN (22 May 09) Myanmar: Suu Kyi pleads not guilty at trial, party says; AP (22 May 09) Burma Court Accepts Case Against Suu Kyi

³⁷ Reuters (22 May 09) Suu Kyi pleads not guilty in U.S. intruder case

³⁸ AP (23 May 09) Books, letter to be used in case against Suu Kyi; Straits Times (22 May 09) Suu Kyi has ‘no guilt’

³⁹ AP (23 May 09) Books, letter to be used in case against Suu Kyi; Reuters (24 May 09) Few doubt outcome as Suu Kyi trial grinds on; Reuters (22 May 09) Suu Kyi pleads not guilty in U.S. intruder case

⁴⁰ AFP (22 May 09) Secret agent or boyfriend?; Mizzima News (22 May 09) Burmese Consul posts denigrating comment on Suu Kyi

⁴¹ Mizzima News (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi to testify in court on Tuesday; Irrawaddy (25 May 09) Suu Kyi lawyer questions gov’t witnesses; Straits Times (28 May 09) One defence witness only; Irrawaddy (28 May 09) Last Witness Speaks at Suu Kyi’s Trial

⁴² AFP (26 May 09) Burma’s Suu Kyi denies charges at trial; Times (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi ‘composed and upfront’ in witness box at trial

⁴³ AFP (26 May 09) Burma’s Suu Kyi denies charges at trial

⁴⁴ Guardian (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi tells Burmese court she did not break terms of house arrest

⁴⁵ AFP (26 May 09) Myanmar ends Suu Kyi house arrest, keeps her detained: party

⁴⁶ AP (26 May 09) Official: Burma Had Planned to Release Suu Kyi; AFP (26 May 09) Burma’s Suu Kyi denies charges at trial; DPA (26 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi testifies in Myanmar court – Update; DVB (26 May 09) Junta ‘had considered’ freeing Suu Kyi

⁴⁷ Reuters (27 May 09) Myanmar: Nobel Laureate’s Witnesses Are Blocked; Mizzima News (27 May 09) Court rejects three witnesses in Suu Kyi’s trial

⁴⁸ Washington Post: (27 May 09) Burma’s opposition grimly protests military government

⁴⁹ Mizzima News (28 May 09) Court rejects three witnesses in Suu Kyi’s trial

⁵⁰ CNN (28 May 09) Court in Myanmar activist’s trial hears 1 defense witness, adjourns; Irish Examiner (28 May 09) Burma: Suu Kyi trial won’t halt elections

⁵¹ Mizzima News (28 May 09) Yettaw’s testimony disturbs judges; DVB (28 May 09) Security ‘didn’t stop’ Yettaw visit

28 May The court heard the testimony of one of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyer Kyi Win.⁵² Kyi Win was the only defense witness that the court allowed to take the stand.⁵³ Kyi Win argued there was no legal basis to charge Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with violating the terms of her house arrest.⁵⁴

29 May The court extended the date for lawyers to make closing arguments to 5 June.⁵⁵ The NLD expressed "grave concern" over the health of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The party said that Daw Suu could not sleep well because she suffered from leg cramps.⁵⁶

30 May Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with her lawyers to prepare closing arguments.⁵⁷ One of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers, Nyan Win, said that her health was improving.⁵⁸

Solidarity with Daw Suu – inside and outside Burma

Throughout the trial, dozens of supporters of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, including 80-year-old NLD member Win Tin, defied armed SPDC security forces outside Rangoon's Insein prison to show their solidarity with her.⁵⁹ In addition to soldiers and riot police, the SPDC deployed hundreds of USDA members and Swan Arr Shin thugs - reportedly recruited for 2,000 kyat (US\$2) and a meal per day - to monitor Daw Suu's supporters.⁶⁰

On 18 May, police arrested an NLD youth member from Rangoon's Shwepyithar Township who was distributing black ribbons near Insein bazaar.⁶¹

On 28 May, plainclothes policemen stationed outside Insein prison arrested retired air force officer Zaw Nyunt, 56, for holding a banner demanding the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁶²

Demonstrations of solidarity with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were also held in Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, France, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Canada and United States.⁶³

Trial sparks international outrage

"I think the Burmese regime has miscalculated and has been somewhat taken aback by the force of international reaction." - Bill Rammell, Minister of State at the UK Foreign Office¹

The trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sparked unprecedented outrage and concern among the international community.

⁵² CNN (28 May 09) Court in Myanmar activist's trial hears 1 defense witness, adjourns

⁵³ FT (28 May 09) Burmese court rejects Suu Kyi witnesses

⁵⁴ Irrawaddy (28 May 09) Last Witness Speaks at Suu Kyi's Trial

⁵⁵ Reuters (29 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi ill, court delays trial; AFP (29 May 09) Party 'very concerned' for health of Myanmar's Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (29 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi's court date postponed to June 5; DVB (30 May 09) Suu Kyi trial adjourned further

⁵⁶ Reuters (29 May 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi ill, court delays trial; AFP (29 May 09) Party 'very concerned' for health of Myanmar's Suu Kyi; AP (30 May 09) Suu Kyi reported ill in Myanmar prison

⁵⁷ AP (30 May 09) Suu Kyi bears no grudge against American intruder; VOA (30 May 09) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Allowed to Meet with Lawyers; DPA (30 May 09) Suu Kyi meets with lawyers, discuss closing arguments in trial

⁵⁸ AP (30 May 09) Suu Kyi bears no grudge against American intruder; Reuters (30 May 09) Suu Kyi's health improves, ready for verdict; VOA (30 May 09) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Allowed to Meet with Lawyers

⁵⁹ AFP (18 May 09) Myanmar democracy icon Suu Kyi goes on trial; AFP (18 May 09) Tight security for trial of Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi; Independent (18 May 09) Brave Suu Kyi supporters keep vigil for trial; Irrawaddy (18 May 09) Police officer testifies in Suu Kyi trial; Asia-Pacific News (18 May 09) Defiant democracy icon on trial for detention breach; Mizzima News (19 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi's trial continues at brisk pace; AP (19 May 09) Lawyer: Myanmar may rush democracy leader's trial; AFP (19 May 09) Burma Possibly Rushing Suu Kyi's Trial; Mizzima News (26 May 09) Situation outside Insein prison; Mizzima News (26 May 09) In the court room

⁶⁰ DVB (18 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi trial update: 14.50pm; DVB (19 May 09) Surveillance stepped up outside Insein; AFP (19 May 09) Burma Possibly Rushing Suu Kyi's Trial; Irrawaddy (28 May 09) Paramilitary Forces Beef Up Insein Prison Security

⁶¹ Mizzima News (18 May 09) Court rejects appeal for public presence at Suu Kyi trial

⁶² DVB (28 May 09) Solo protestor arrested outside Insein; Mizzima News (28 May 09) Solo protestor outside Insein prison demands Suu Kyi's release; Mizzima News (28 May 09) Protester is a retired army man

⁶³ BCUK (18 May 2009) 200 Join Aung San Suu Kyi Protest in London; Initiatives for International Dialogue (20 May 2009) Philippine Activists join Global Action for release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (16 May 2009) Burmese in exile demonstrate against Suu Kyi's arrest; BBC (18 May 2009) In Pictures: Anger over Suu Kyi trial; VOA (27 May 2009) Burmese Protest at Phnom Penh Embassy; Mizzima News (18 May 2009) Singapore activists protest orchid named after Burmese PM; Irrawaddy (28 May 09) Indian Human Rights Activists Support Suu Kyi

Indonesia	“The charges against her are not appropriate.” ⁶⁴ - Indonesia Foreign Ministry’s spokesman Teuku Faizasyah, 15 May
Malaysia	“Malaysia is of the view that the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi will undermine the process of national reconciliation and the Road map to Democracy.” ⁶⁵ - Malaysia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 May
Singapore	“Singapore is dismayed by this latest development. This is a setback for the national reconciliation process.” ⁶⁶ - Singapore Foreign Ministry, 15 May
Philippines	“The Philippine government is deeply troubled and outraged over the filing of trumped-up charges against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.” ⁶⁷ - Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, 17 May
Thailand	“The trial to extend her detention would not be a good thing for the region.” ⁶⁸ - Thai FM Kasit Piromya, 26 May
ASEAN	“Thailand, as the ASEAN Chair, expresses grave concern about recent developments relating to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [...] the honour and the credibility of the Government of the Union of Myanmar are at stake.” ⁶⁹ - Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 May
UN	“I call on the Government of Myanmar to release Aung San Suu Kyi and her aides unconditionally.” ⁷⁰ - UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana, 14 May
UN	“This is an unacceptable situation.” ⁷¹ UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon, 21 May
UN	“I deplore Ms Suu Kyi’s ongoing persecution, and call for her immediate and unconditional release.” ⁷² - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, 15 May
Japan	“The Government of Japan observes the situation with deep concern.” ⁷³ - Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 May
China	“As a neighbor of Myanmar, we hope that relevant parties in Myanmar can realize reconciliation, stability and development through dialogue.” ⁷⁴ China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu, 19 May
Pakistan	“Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi has described the trial of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi as an unfortunate development.” ⁷⁵ - Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 May
Australia	“We hope that these spurious charges are not taken any further, but our very grave concern is that this will be used as a device for her further imprisonment or detention.” ⁷⁶ - Australia FM Stephen Smith, 27 May
New Zealand	“This is totally unacceptable.” ⁷⁷ - New Zealand FM Murray McCully, 15 May
South Africa	“The South African Government joins the international community in expressing grave concern about the arrest of the Leader of the National League for Democracy, Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.” ⁷⁸ - South Africa Department of Foreign Affairs, 22 May
Israel	“Israel is deeply concerned about the new charges raised against Aung San Suu Kyi.” ⁷⁹ - Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 May

⁶⁴ Bangkok Post (15 May 09) Asian nations under fire for Suu Kyi inaction

⁶⁵ Malaysia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (18 May 09) Press Release by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia pertaining to the recent detention of Aung San Suu Kyi

⁶⁶ CNA (15 May 09) Singapore calls for Aung San Suu Kyi’s release

⁶⁷ Manila Bulletin (18 May 09) Free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, RP asks Myanmar

⁶⁸ Nation (27 May 09) Jailing Suu Kyi again ‘not good for region’: Thai FM

⁶⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand (19 May 09) ASEAN Chairman’s Statement on Myanmar

⁷⁰ UN (14 May 09) UN expert on Myanmar calls for release of Aung San Suu Kyi

⁷¹ Reuters (21 May 09) U.N.’s Ban to go to Myanmar “as soon as possible”

⁷² Al Jazeera (15 May 09) UN: Suu Kyi detention ‘illegal’

⁷³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (15 May 09) Statement by the Press Secretary/Director-General for Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, on the situation in Myanmar (lawsuit against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi)

⁷⁴ Bloomberg (20 May 09) EU May Press China to Turn Up Heat on Myanmar to Free Suu Kyi

⁷⁵ Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (19 May 09) Foreign Minister Qureshi describes the trial of ms. Aung San Suu Kyi as unfortunate

⁷⁶ Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (27 May 09) Ministerial Statement: Aung San Suu Kyi

⁷⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs (15 May 09) McCully condemns detention of Aung San Suu Kyi

⁷⁸ South Africa Department of Foreign Affairs (22 May 09) Statement on the arrest of the Leader of the National League for Democracy in Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi

⁷⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (20 May 09) Israel calls on Myanmar government to release Suu Kyi

EU	"I deeply regret that Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi has been arrested by the authorities of Myanmar." ⁸⁰ - European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, 15 May
France	"France utterly condemns the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and her transfer to Insein prison." ⁸¹ - France FM Bernard Kouchner and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Rama Yade, 14 May
Ireland	"I utterly deplore the arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi." - Ireland FM Micheál Martin, 14 May
Spain	"The Spanish Government wishes to express its solidarity with the Burmese leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi." ⁸² - Spain Foreign Ministry
Norway	"The imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi is a step in the wrong direction." ⁸³ - Norwegian FM Jonas Gahr Store, 14 May
UK	"I am deeply disturbed that Aung San Suu Kyi may be charged with breaching the terms of her detention." ⁸⁴ - UK PM Gordon Brown, 14 May
UK	"This charade must be brought to an end." ⁸⁵ - UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband, 21 May
Canada	"Our government is alarmed by the charges laid against Aung San Suu Kyi." ⁸⁶ - Canada Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Peter Kent, 14 May
US	"I am deeply troubled by the Burmese Government's decision to charge Ms Suu Kyi for a baseless crime." ⁸⁷ - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 14 May
US	"I strongly condemn her house arrest and detention." ⁸⁸ - US President Barack Obama, 26 May

ASEAN turns up the heat

The SPDC's detention and trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi represented the latest embarrassment for ASEAN. The regional bloc reacted by repeatedly urging the SPDC to release Daw Suu and all other political prisoners.

- **19 May:** Thailand, the current ASEAN Chair, issued a statement on the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The statement expressed "grave concern" about to the situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and added that "the honor and the credibility" of Burma were at stake".⁸⁹
- **26 May:** Thai FM Kasit Piromya said, "It is worrisome that the trial to extend her detention would not be a good thing for the region."⁹⁰ "We are not interfering in domestic affairs, but showing our concern," Kasit added.⁹¹
- **27 May:** ASEAN ministers confronted the SPDC on its treatment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in an informal meeting. "The discussion in the room [...] was that it affects ASEAN's image and ASEAN's collective interests," ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan said.⁹²
- **28 May:** Thailand's FM Kasit Piromya noted that Burma, as a member of ASEAN, has an obligation to comply with ASEAN Charter which guides the regional grouping to a people caring community. "It is very rare the international community from the United Nations Security Council, the United States, the European Union, ASEAN and countries in East Asia took the same stance on the Burma," he said.⁹³

⁸⁰ Reuters (15 May 09) EU criticizes Myanmar over new Suu Kyi charges

⁸¹ France Ministry of Foreign Affairs (14 May 09) Arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi

⁸² MAEC (15 May 09) Declaration on Burma

⁸³ DPA (14 May 09) Norway criticizes Myanmar over treatment of opposition leader

⁸⁴ AP (14 May 09) Brown 'disturbed' at Suu Kyi charge

⁸⁵ AFP (21 May 09) UK Government: Myanmar Must "Stop Charade" Over Aung San Suu Kyi

⁸⁶ AFP (14 May 09) Canada renews calls for Aung San Suu Kyi release

⁸⁷ AP (14 May 09) Clinton: Myanmar should release opposition leader

⁸⁸ CNN (26 May 09) Obama urges Myanmar to release Aung Sang Suu Kyi

⁸⁹ DVB (19 May 09) Thailand 'concerned' but will not pressure Burma junta

⁹⁰ Nation (27 May 09) Jailing Suu Kyi again 'not good for region': Thai FM

⁹¹ Mizzima News (26 May 09) E.U. backs Thailand over Suu Kyi's trial

⁹² AFP (28 May 09) ASEAN press Myanmar on Suu Kyi

⁹³ Nation (29 May 09) Burma should listen to the world: FM

ASEM and ASEAN-EU meetings call for Daw Suu's release

- **26 May:** At the ASEM meeting in Hanoi, the EU called for the "immediate release" of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁹⁴ On the same day, FMs from Asia and Europe at the ASEM meeting issued a statement that called on the SPDC to release all political prisoners.⁹⁵
- **28 May:** A meeting of ASEAN and EU FMs issued a statement calling on the SPDC to release all political prisoners and lift restrictions on political parties.⁹⁶

UNSG and UNSC join calls for Daw Suu's release

- **21 May:** UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon said that he planned to visit Myanmar as soon as possible to urge the SPDC to release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.⁹⁷
- **22 May:** The UN Security Council expressed its concern over the political impact in Burma of the detention and trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In a press statement, the Council reiterated "the importance of the release of all political prisoners," and repeated the need for the SPDC to "create the necessary conditions for a genuine dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation."⁹⁸

ASEAN MPs slam SPDC

ASEAN MPs confronted the SPDC over Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trial and continued detention.

On 26 May, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) called on ASEAN to suspend Burma's membership from ASEAN as long the SPDC continued to detain Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁹⁹ Singaporean MPs Charles Chong and Inderjit Singh called for the suspension of Burma from ASEAN because of the SPDC's disregard for ASEAN's concerns over Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁰⁰

Regional legislators also acted to show solidarity with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

- **15 May:** The President of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus Kraisak Choonhavan said that the charges faced by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi are "just ridiculous" and urged fellow ASEAN governments not to fall for the "fallacy" of the SPDC's elections next year.¹⁰¹
- **20 May:** Female Democrat Party MPs in Thailand called for the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and stated that Daw Suu's detention was "non-democratic and lacked human rights."¹⁰²
- **21 May:** Thirty-two Philippines MPs called for a Philippines' government resolution denouncing the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and demanding her release.¹⁰³
- **25 May:** Anwar Ibrahim, leader of the Malaysian opposition, said that there had been an "utter abdication of responsibility in the region [regarding Burma]," and added that the policy of constructive engagement in Asia had become a mockery."¹⁰⁴
- **26 May:** Thirty Malaysian MPs joined half a million other signatories on a petition organized by an umbrella group called "Free Burma's Political Prisoners Now!"¹⁰⁵
- **27 May:** Twenty-nine Cambodian MPs voiced their concern over the situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by sending a letter of protest to the ASEAN-EU meeting which was held in Phnom Penh.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁴ Bangkok Post (26 May 09) Kasit rejects junta charge

⁹⁵ Irrawaddy (26 May 09) Asem Foreign Ministers Issue Statement on Suu Kyi

⁹⁶ AFP (28 May 09) ASEAN press Myanmar on Suu Kyi

⁹⁷ Reuters (21 May 09) U.N.'s Ban to go to Myanmar "as soon as possible"

⁹⁸ UN News Center (22 May 09) Myanmar: Security Council voices concern over detention of pro-democracy leader

⁹⁹ AIPMC Statement (26 May 09) ASEAN MPs call on tougher ASEAN actions on Myanmar including Suspension

¹⁰⁰ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) More Asean MPs Call for Suu Kyi's Release

¹⁰¹ DVB (15 May 09) ASEAN member urges governments not to fall for Burma 'fallacy'

¹⁰² NNT (21 May 09) Democrat female MPs demand Myanmar Govt to release Suu Kyi

¹⁰³ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) More Asean MPs Call for Suu Kyi's Release

¹⁰⁴ Telegraph (25 May 09) Asia has abdicated responsibility over Burma, says Anwar Ibrahim

¹⁰⁵ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) More Asean MPs Call for Suu Kyi's Release

¹⁰⁶ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) More Asean MPs Call for Suu Kyi's Release

- **28 May:** Thirty Thai senators submitted a petition that urged the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to create political stability in Burma. The senators submitted the petition to the SPDC Prime Minister through the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok.¹⁰⁷
- **29 May:** One-hundred MPs from Southeast Asian countries added their voices to the growing international calls for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁰⁸

INSIDE BURMA

Between a rock and a hard place

In late April, senior SPDC Army officials held meetings with representatives from various armed ethnic ceasefire groups. In the meetings, the SPDC presented an ultimatum to the groups to incorporate their armed forces into a new Border Guard Force prior to the 2010 elections.¹⁰⁹ The plan would essentially absorb the ethnic armies into the SPDC Army, placing operational and logistical control into SPDC hands.¹¹⁰

Key ethnic ceasefire groups rejected the SPDC proposal:

- **12 May:** The National Democratic Front rejected the junta's proposal.¹¹¹
- **18-19 May:** During a KIA meeting in Laiza, Kachin State, KIA's Chief of Staff Maj Gen Gunhtang Gam Shawng told participants that the KIA will try to maintain peace with the SPDC, but forces should prepare for a defensive war.¹¹²
- **19 May:** Following internal discussions, the UWSA rejected the junta's proposal.¹¹³
- **27 May:** The National Democratic Alliance Army-Eastern Shan State submitted a letter to SPDC Brig Gen Kyaw Phyoe that rejected the junta's proposal.¹¹⁴

Escalating violence

Over the past month a series of violent clashes took place across Eastern Burma:

- **3 May:** A joint Pa-O National Liberation Army - Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) force ambushed an SPDC Army patrol in Southern Shan State. Following the attack, SPDC forces detained 80 villagers from nearby Hsihseng Township, Shan State, and summarily executed two.¹¹⁵
- **11 May:** KNLA ambushed SPDC Army forces near Bawgaligy, Karen State, and killed the commander of No. 5 Military Operation Command Brig Gen Kaung Myat.¹¹⁶
- **21 May:** Shan State Army – South (SSA-S) attacked SPDC Army troops stationed between Panlong and Lai Kha Villages, Southern Shan State, leaving six soldiers dead.¹¹⁷
- **24 May:** SSA-S killed 15 SPDC security personnel in an ambush Hnam Zam Township, Southern Shan State.¹¹⁸

Nargis one year on

On 2 May, the SPDC passed by official remembrance ceremonies and ignored the one year anniversary of the cyclone that killed nearly 140,000 and affected 2.4 million people in Burma.¹¹⁹ One year on, conditions for Nargis survivors in the Irrawaddy delta are still dire.

¹⁰⁷ Mizzima News (29 May 09) Thai senators call for Suu Kyi's release

¹⁰⁸ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) More Asean MPs Call for Suu Kyi's Release

¹⁰⁹ Mizzima News (28 Apr 09) Junta meets leaders of ethnic ceasefire groups; Irrawaddy (28 Apr 09) Junta Commanders Court Ceasefire Groups; Kachin News Group (04 May 09) KIA told to change to border force by junta; DVB (04 May 09) Intelligence chief meets with ceasefire groups; SHAN (04 May 09) Junta tells Wa ceasefire days are over

¹¹⁰ Irrawaddy (04 May 09) Armed Ceasefire Groups to be 'Border Guard Force';

¹¹¹ Kantarawaddy Times (12 May 09) NDF against transformation of ceasefire groups into border force

¹¹² Kachin News Group (23 May 09) KIA gearing up for defensive war with Burmese junta

¹¹³ Mizzima News (22 May 09) UWSA turns down junta's 'Border Guard' proposal

¹¹⁴ SHAN (28 May 09) Mongla follows Wa and rejects border force proposal

¹¹⁵ SHAN (8 May 09) Over 80 villagers arrested, 2 killed after clash with rebels

¹¹⁶ Irrawaddy (13 May 09) Senior Burmese Commander Killed by KNLA Soldiers; Mizzima News (13 May 09) KNU claims Burmese army Brigadier General killed

¹¹⁷ Mizzima News (26 May 09) Shan Army ambushed junta soldiers, killed two officers

¹¹⁸ Mizzima News (26 May 09) Shan Army ambushed junta soldiers, killed two officers

¹¹⁹ AFP (03 May 09) Myanmar survivors mark cyclone anniversary; Al Jazeera (02 May 09) Rulers silent on Nargis anniversary

- **No farming:** Cyclone Nargis hit farmers in the final stages of the 2007 dry season harvest, resulting in wide-scale crop loss across the Irrawaddy delta. As a result, farmers were unable to repay loans taken against that harvest.¹²⁰ At present, Irrawaddy delta farmers are burdened by debt, averaging kyat 70,000 to 100,000 per acre of land, with monthly interest rates reaching up to 20%.¹²¹ Sean Turnell, professor of economics of Australia's Macquarie University, noted that in the absence of a proper economic policy to uplift Burma's rural economy, the rural credit system is "completely dried up" and in desperate need of cash assistance.¹²²
- **No housing:** One year after Nargis struck, over 500,000 people, including 200,000 children, continued to live in temporary shelters too frail to withstand seasonal monsoons.¹²³ A further 100,000 families whose homes were destroyed by the cyclone continued to live under temporary tarpaulin tents.¹²⁴ Bickering and turf-wars among the various SPDC ministries and departments further delayed reconstruction efforts. SPDC Basic Education Department officials' rejected a construction scheme put forth by other SPDC ministries. The rejection halted construction agreements to rebuild additional schools destroyed by Nargis.¹²⁵ According to one construction company manager who oversaw the rebuilding of schools in the cyclone-affected areas, only 38% of the 4,000 primary schools destroyed by Nargis have been rebuilt in the year since.¹²⁶
- **Still detained:** One year after cyclone Nargis, 21 people remained in jail in connection with the relief effort in the Irrawaddy delta. The SPDC sentenced the 21 activists to prison terms ranging from two to 35 years for delivering aid to the victims, reporting on the cyclone, and burying the dead.¹²⁷
- **Still exposed:** On 25 May, cyclone Aila hit Arakan State damaging or destroying hundreds of homes, fish ponds, coastal shrimp farms, and agricultural crops. Local residents complained that SPDC authorities made little or no preparation for this year's cyclone season following cyclone Nargis.¹²⁸

War on children

On 6 May, the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a global coalition of human rights advocacy groups, released a 60-page study, "No More Denial: Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Myanmar (Burma)." The report documents killing and maiming of children, use of child soldiers, rape, abduction, forced displacement, attacks on schools, denial of humanitarian access, and other violations against children in Eastern Burma.¹²⁹

HUMAN RIGHTS

ICC campaign gains endorsements

On 21 May, the Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic released "Crimes in Burma", a report that describes the SPDC's widespread and systematic human rights violations as "part of state policy." The report, commissioned by five of the world's leading international jurists, urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma. It said those crimes included "systematic sexual violence, torture, and summary

¹²⁰ Reuters (04 Jun 08) Burmese stock up on rice; Irrawaddy (04 Jul 08) Delta Farmers' Woes Continue

¹²¹ ASEAN (Nov 08) Post Nargis Social Impacts Monitoring Report ; IMNA (28 Apr 09) Military destroys plantations to upgrade coastal road

¹²² Mizzima News (11 May 09) Burma's rural economy on verge of collapse: economist

¹²³ Mizzima News (04 May 09) Cyclone Nargis victims still homeless

¹²⁴ British Red Cross Society (01 May 09) Enormous challenges to recovery remain in Myanmar

¹²⁵ Mizzima News (30 Apr 09) Differences halt school reconstruction in Nargis-hit regions

¹²⁶ Irrawaddy (01 May 09) Learning the Hard Way

¹²⁷ Amnesty International (01 May 09) Cyclone Nargis: One year on, 21 people imprisoned for helping the victims; AFP (01 May 09) Burma urged to release aid workers; AP (01 May 09) Myanmar's detention of cyclone volunteers decried; DVB (05 May 09) Calls for release of imprisoned cyclone aid workers

¹²⁸ Irrawaddy (29 May 09) New Cyclone Hits Fishing, Rice Industries

¹²⁹ Irrawaddy (06 May 09) Rights groups focus on Burmese children; Mizzima News (06 May 09) Child soldiers a reality in Burma: Rights Group; VOA (07 May 09) Human rights groups urge UN Security Council to protect Burmese children; Irish Sun (07 May 09) Children being abducted and raped in military Myanmar

execution of innocent civilians.” The Commission of Inquiry's findings would determine whether the situation in Burma should be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or a special tribunal.¹³⁰

In addition to the International Human Rights Clinic, several other voices expressed support for UNSC and ICC involvement in the situation of Burma:

- **5 May:** The exiled group Burma Lawyers’ Council said it was gathering evidence on crimes against humanity committed by the SPDC in Burma as a preliminary step to push the UN Security Council to refer the situation of Burma to the ICC.¹³¹
- **15 May:** East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta said he would call on the ICC to investigate the SPDC generals if they did not free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹³²
- **20 May:** It was reported that the Women’s League of Burma expressed its support for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity in Burma.¹³³
- **25 May:** Thai MP and AIPMC President Kraissak Choonhavan said that Sr Gen Than Shwe and his cronies should face ICC prosecution.¹³⁴
- **27 May:** In a New York Times editorial, former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Paulo Sergio Pinheiro urged the UN Security Council to establish a Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in Burma.¹³⁵

Freedom of information

On 11 May, Freedom House released “Freedom of the Press”, its annual global survey on media freedom. Freedom House ranked Burma second to last among the 195 countries surveyed.¹³⁶ The US-based media watchdog has ranked Burma’s press as “not free” for the past 27 years.

In May several incidents illustrated the reason why Burma has such a poor ranking with regard to freedom of information:

- The regime imposed severe restrictions on media reporting of the latest arrest and trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹³⁷ No foreign reporter was allowed in the courtroom.¹³⁸ The regime ordered local journalists to use official reports published in the state-run newspapers for their coverage of the trial.¹³⁹ Internet cafés in the vicinity of Insein prison were shut down and many telephone lines in the neighborhood were cut off. The Special Branch police photographed journalists who were around Insein prison.¹⁴⁰
- The SPDC censorship board restricted reporting on the anniversary of cyclone Nargis. The censorship barred local journals from publishing reports that criticized the regime’s Nargis recovery effort.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the censorship board suppressed stories that covered the relief efforts carried out by international and local NGOs. The censorship board also rejected stories and pictures that showed the severity of the destruction caused by Nargis and the people’s ongoing struggle for recovery.¹⁴²
- On 1 May, a District Court in Maungdaw, Arakan State, sentenced retired police officer Mrat Tun, 60, to five years in prison for providing information to a Burmese media group in Bangladesh.¹⁴³

¹³⁰ DPA (21 May 09) Harvard study blames UN Security Council for inaction in Myanmar; Boston Globe (21 May 09) Harvard report calls for Burma inquiry; Irrawaddy (22 May 09) UN Fails to Investigate War Crimes in Burma: Harvard Report

¹³¹ Mizzima News (05 May 09) Burmese lawyers says junta should be taken to ICC

¹³² BBC (15 May 09) Suu Kyi insists she is innocent

¹³³ Irrawaddy (20 May 09) Is it Time to Take Than Shwe to International Criminal Court?

¹³⁴ DVB (25 May 09) Burma ‘necessitates’ foreign intervention; DVB (28 May 09) Burma presence concerns ASEAN head

¹³⁵ NYT (27 May 09) End Burma’s system of impunity – Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

¹³⁶ Freedom House (01 May 09) Freedom of the Press 2009

¹³⁷ RSF (28 May 09) Junta allows only one-sided coverage of Aung San Suu Kyi’s trial; AFP (29 May 09) Myanmar should end media curbs on Suu Kyi trial

¹³⁸ RSF (28 May 09) Junta allows only one-sided coverage of Aung San Suu Kyi’s trial

¹³⁹ Irrawaddy (15 May 09) Rangoon media silent on Suu Kyi; DVB (22 May 09) Sales of state-run newspapers surge during trial; DVB (22 May 09) Burmese journalists restricted in trial reporting

¹⁴⁰ DVB (14 May 09) Suu Kyi and US citizen charged; DVB (18 May 09) Aung San Suu Kyi trial update: 14.50pm

¹⁴¹ Irrawaddy (04 May 09) Junta censors Nargis anniversary reports

¹⁴² Mizzima News (07 May 09) Restrictions on Nargis anniversary coverage

¹⁴³ Narinjara News (04 May 09) Five years in prison for ex-police officer

- On 6 May, SPDC authorities in Mandalay arrested American journalists Jerry Redfern and Karen Coates and deported them to Bangkok the following day. The two journalists had been teaching Burmese students in Mandalay non-fiction feature writing and photography.¹⁴⁴
- In mid-May, it was reported that Internet users in Burma were finding it more difficult to register new Gmail accounts. SPDC authorities reportedly warned Internet café owners in Rangoon not to assist customers in opening new email accounts or face closure.¹⁴⁵
- In late May, the SPDC censorship board suspended for one week the publishing license of the entertainment journal Phoenix for publishing a story that had been suppressed by the regime.¹⁴⁶

Detention conditions

On 1 May, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported that at least 127 political prisoners were in poor health in prisons across Burma, with 19 in urgent need of proper medical treatment.¹⁴⁷

AAPP also said that since November 2008, at least 228 political prisoners had been transferred to remote prisons.¹⁴⁸ In late May, it was reported that SPDC authorities had transferred Buddhist monk U Gambira to Kale prison from Khamti prison, Sagaing Division, after he held a protest demanding a meeting with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe.¹⁴⁹

ILO: SPDC's use of forced labor concerns

On 12 May, the International Labor Organization (ILO) issued a report titled "The Cost of Coercion." The report stated that a major concern in Asia is the persistent use of forced labor exacted directly by the State and official institutions, notably by the SPDC in Burma.¹⁵⁰

DISPLACEMENT

Chasing the tail

On 30 April, Thai police arrested around 340 Burmese migrants workers during crackdowns in Bangkok and at the Thai-Burma border town of Mae Sot.¹⁵¹ However, contrary to efforts to curb foreign migrant labor, the Thai Labor Ministry revealed plans to register another 700,000 migrant workers from Burma, Laos, and Cambodia.¹⁵²

Bangladesh Rifles push back

In May, the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) forces arrested 267 Rohingya in separate incidents, and pushed them back to Burma without prosecution or trial after illegally entering the country.

- **3 May:** BDR forces detain and pushed back 12 Rohingya Burmese nationals.¹⁵³
- **5 May:** BDR forces detain and pushed back 53 Rohingya Burmese nationals.¹⁵⁴
- **17 May:** BDR forces detained and pushed back seven Rohingya men.¹⁵⁵
- **20 May:** BDR forces detained and pushed back 49 Burmese nationals.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁴ Mizzima News (12 May 09) Burma expels two American journalists; Irrawaddy (12 May 09) Journalists Say They Don't Know Why They Were Deported; RSF (15 May 09) Growing restrictions on free flow of information

¹⁴⁵ Irrawaddy (12 May 09) Internet users face more restrictions; RSF (15 May 09) Growing restrictions on free flow of information

¹⁴⁶ Mizzima News (28 May 09) PHOENIX entertainment journal suspended this week

¹⁴⁷ AAPP (11 May 09) Burma's prisons and labour camps: Silent killing fields

¹⁴⁸ AAPP (11 May 09) Burma's prisons and labour camps: Silent killing fields

¹⁴⁹ Mizzima News (27 May 09) U Gambira transferred to Kalay prison

¹⁵⁰ ILO (12 May 09) Report of the Director-General: The cost of coercion - International Labour Conference 98th Session 2009

¹⁵¹ DVB (04 May 09) Mass Burmese migrant arrest 'due to high crime rate'

¹⁵² SHAN (04 May 09) Thai labor ministry to issue new registration for migrants; IMNA (28 May 09) Thai Government to Issue New Work Permits for Migrant Workers

¹⁵³ Mizzima News (06 May 09) Rohingya sent back by Bangladesh

¹⁵⁴ Mizzima News (06 May 09) Rohingya sent back by Bangladesh

¹⁵⁵ Kaladan News (19 May 09) BDR pushes back seven Rohingya men; Kaladan News (22 May 09) Entering Bangladesh illegally becomes risky for Rohingya

- **21 May:** BDR forces detained and pushed back 93 Burmese nationals.¹⁵⁷
- **30 May:** BDR forces detained and pushed back 53 Burmese nationals.¹⁵⁸

Death in Malaysian camps

On 12 and 17 May, detained Burmese migrant workers Thang Hoih Ping, 21, and Sa La Hin, 26, died of leptospirosis in Juru Detention Camp in Malaysia. Twenty-six other detainees from the camp were admitted to Malaysian hospitals with leptospirosis symptoms.¹⁵⁹

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US renews sanctions; EU considers more

- **15 May:** US President Barack Obama formally extended sanctions against the SPDC for another year, saying the actions and policies of the junta have not changed and continue to be hostile towards the US and its foreign policy.¹⁶⁰
- **18 May:** EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said that the EU should consider toughening sanctions on the SPDC over its trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. “It’s not the moment to lower sanctions, it’s the moment in any case to increase them,” he said.¹⁶¹

ECONOMY

Empty baskets

On 4 May, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe boasted that Burma enjoyed a food surplus despite the destruction of cyclone Nargis last year and a famine in Chin State. According to Sr Gen Than Shwe, Burma’s current annual rice production reached 52.8 million tons.¹⁶²

These audacious claims were greeted with skepticism by Sean Turnell, professor of economics at Australia’s Macquarie University. “Burma’s rice production is routinely, ludicrously exaggerated” said Turnell. “If Burma really had tripled its rice production, it would be one of the world’s largest rice exporters. However, Burma exports only a small amount of rice, much of it a broken and of poor quality.” he added.¹⁶³

A WFP official noted that most households in the Irrawaddy delta were worried about food shortages, stating that “even some farmers who own dozens of acres of paddy are unable to feed themselves.”¹⁶⁴

Full of gas

The IMF confirmed in an unpublished report that strong natural gas exports had swollen the SPDC’s foreign exchange reserves to a record high US\$3.6 billion. The report noted that the SPDC’s spending on extravagant showcase projects, such as the building of Naypyidaw, was financed by printing money, fuelling inflation of about 30%. Social spending, meanwhile, remains the lowest in Asia, according to the IMF.¹⁶⁵ The report concluded that Burma’s economic prospects “look bleak” unless it abandons failed policies - including the multiple exchange rate system and stifling economic controls, while improving the deteriorating business climate.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁶ Kaladan News (21 May 09) Forty nine Burmese nationals pushed back to Burma

¹⁵⁷ Kaladan News (22 May 09) Entering Bangladesh illegally becomes risky for Rohingya

¹⁵⁸ Narinjara News (31 May 09) Fifty two Burmese nationals pushed from Bangladesh

¹⁵⁹ Star (15 May 09) Leptospirosis kills Myanmar immigrant, 26 hospitalised; Mizzima News (19 May 09) Leptospirosis kills two Burmese in Malaysian detention camp

¹⁶⁰ Mizzima News (16 May 09) US renews Burma sanctions for another year

¹⁶¹ Reuters (18 May 09) EU says ready to toughen sanctions on Myanmar

¹⁶² DPA (05 May 09) Myanmar has food surplus, junta claims

¹⁶³ Irrawaddy (06 May 09) Experts challenge Than Shwe’s rice production claims

¹⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (06 May 09) Experts challenge Than Shwe’s rice production claims

¹⁶⁵ FT (10 May 09) Burma’s economic prospects ‘bleak’

¹⁶⁶ FT (11 May 09) Burma gas sales surge but little cash leaks out

Corporate social responsibility

In May it was reported that one of Australia's largest engineering companies Downer EDI, ordered its subsidiary consultancy arm, CPG Corporation, to end its involvement in the construction of a lavish new airport in Naypyidaw after its association with the project came to light in an investigation by journalists.¹⁶⁷

In sharp contrast, Chevron's top executives said that they will maintain operations in the Yadana offshore gas fields, despite shareholder concerns regarding continued operations in Burma.¹⁶⁸

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MAY

1	US says it is deeply "concerned" about the situation in Burma and is undertaking a "thorough review" of its policy in order to find the best to achieve democracy in the country.
3	Indian police claim that Burma has become the major source of arms for Northeast militant groups, mostly for those in Assam and Meghalaya States.
3	SPDC Triangle Region Command Commander Brig Gen Kyaw Phyo prohibits people in Mongton Township, Eastern Shan State, from selling land to Wa villagers.
4	EU and Japan say the SPDC's 2010 elections could be welcomed if it is based on an inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders in the country.
4	SPDC soldiers torture to death a Wa soldier in Mongton Township, Eastern Shan State.
4	Na Sa Ka personnel from Area 7 in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest six local villagers for possession of mobile phones.
6	Factory workers in Mae Sot, Tak Province, hold a protest in front of the Thai Labour Rights Protection office demanding full wages, improved working conditions, and healthcare in the workplace.
6	US and Australian ambassadors, accompanied by country representatives of UNHCR, visit Nayapara refugee camp in Bangladesh.
7	A Na Sa Ka official rapes a seven-year old girl from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.
7	Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest a group of local businessmen as they attempt to cross into Bangladesh.
8	Bangladeshi armed forces conduct military exercises in the Bay of Bengal near the maritime boundary with Burma. The SPDC Army closely monitors the exercises.
10	Police in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, detain a 75-year-old Rohingya for going to Bangladesh to seek medical treatment.
11	A Bangladesh government official says the country is planning to seek a UN settlement for its maritime demarcations with Burma in the Bay of Bengal.
11	A 15-member high-level EU delegation visits refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar District, Bangladesh.
13	SPDC and Laos sign a MoU establishing sister cities between Pagan and Luang Prabang.
14	Na Sa Ka personnel from Area 8 in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, kill two local Rohingya and arrest eight as they attempt to reach Bangladesh by crossing the Naff River by boat.
15	Bangladesh FM Dipu Moni holds talks with the SPDC to promote bilateral trade and cooperation between the two countries.
15	SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win proposes expanding a planned road project with Bangladesh to link with China in a tri-nation network.
16	Bangladeshi FM requests the SPDC's help in repatriating 22,000 Rohingya refugees in camps in Bangladesh.
16	Shweli-1 hydropower plant is inaugurated in Northern Shan State.
17	SPDC instructs small armed groups in Shan State that had surrendered to turn into police units by June 2009.
18	Twenty families cross the Burma-Bangladesh border seeking refuge in Bangladesh to avoid persecution by Nataka villagers and Na Sa Ka.
18	Six-hundred Burmese migrants held in poor conditions in the Malaysian Semenyih immigration center stage a three-day hunger strike in protest of continued denial of access to UNHCR officials.
18	SPDC police arrest two villagers in Seinwi Township, Northern Shan State, with 2,000 counterfeit kyat

¹⁶⁷ Asia Sentinel (11 May 09) An Australian Company's Hot Potato; DVB (13 May 09) Australian company pulls out of Burma; SMH (14 May 09) Aussie firm embarrassed by Burma link

¹⁶⁸ Dow Jones (27 May 09) Chevron CEO: Chevron Is 'Constructive Force' In Myanmar; Mizzima News (28 May 09) Chevron determined to retain investments in Burma

	notes.
19	SPDC Army arrests and tortures villagers in Hsi Hseng Township, Shan State, after accusing them of having connections with ethnic armed groups.
25	Aye Thar Aung, Secretary of the Arakan League for Democracy, Nai Ngwe Thein, Vice-President of the Mon National Democratic Front, Zipporah Sein, General-Secretary of the Karen National Union, and Lt Gen Gauri Zau Seng, Vice-President of the Kachin Independence Organization, condemn the SPDC's trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
26	Indonesian government spokesman announces that 114 of 391 Rohingya boat people detained in Sabang, Aceh, will be repatriated.
27	Tokyo High Court rules to allow a Burmese couple to remain in Japan as refugees.
29	The Italian government announces a joint initiative managed by the FAO to support 32,000 families in the Irrawaddy delta.
29	Bangladeshi FM Dipu Moni says that SPDC generals agreed to repatriate of some 22,000 Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh.

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