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ALTERNATIVE A S E A N N E T W O R K O N B U R M A
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **Nearly six months after cyclone Nargis, survivors are still without water, food or shelter. The SPDC continues to use the situation to extort money and exploit survivors for their labor. Activists criticize the UN/ASEAN/SPDC joint PONJA report for ignoring misappropriation of aid and human rights violations.**
- **UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon's voices dissatisfaction over the SPDC's failure to heed UN recommendations. He conditions his next Burma trip on the SPDC making tangible progress on democratic reform and the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.**
- **On 24 October, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi marks 13 years under house arrest. UN, EU, and US renew calls for her release.**
- **The number of political prisoners continues to increase. There are 2,123 political prisoners, up 78% from the UN figure of 1,192 in June 2007.**
- **In October, the regime arrests 13 dissidents and sentences 27 to prison terms. Since January, the SPDC has arrested 420 opponents and jailed 85.**
- **The SPDC crackdown on monks continues. The SPDC deploys armed guards at pagodas, raids monasteries, and detains devotees.**
- **Reporters Sans Frontiers releases its annual report on press freedom worldwide. Burma ranks 170th out of 173 countries.**
- **A new report reveals the SPDC's offensive in Eastern Burma has displaced 66,000 more people in the past year.**
- **Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, India, and Bangladesh sign new trade and energy deals with the regime.**

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KEY STORY

Cyclone Nargis cleanup

Nearly six months after cyclone Nargis, survivors continue to suffer shortages of basic necessities and suffer human rights abuses by SPDC authorities.

Water is becoming scarce with the onset of the dry season. Despite clean-up efforts, water in collection ponds is still undrinkable due to salt contaminated soil.¹

¹ Times (UK) (01 Oct 08) Aid and water dry up in cyclone fear zone

Housing: The emergency housing provided by aid agencies is largely tarpaulin with a lifespan of six to 12 months. Some of the plastic sheeting is already deteriorating and tearing. UN Habitat estimated 112,500 vulnerable households immediately need raw materials to rebuild their homes.² The SPDC has continued to prevent local aid donors from visiting displaced survivors living in the camps outside Labutta.³ They have also begun demolishing shelters built along the main road.⁴ On 23 October, the SPDC appealed for more funds for rebuilding schools in the delta. Despite earlier claims that all children returned to school in July, the SPDC admitted that 1,091 schools were still closed.⁵

Food: The World Food Program (WFP) has reduced food distribution and survivors are concerned that food aid will soon be discontinued.⁶ While the regime claims that 97% of rice paddies in the delta were replanted, scientists from the International Rice Research Institute reported rice cultivation was down 25% in the worst-damaged areas. This was due to shortages of labor, infrastructure, equipment, and draft animals.⁷ A successful harvest in those areas that were replanted is threatened by rising costs, especially fertilizer, which is 40% more expensive in the delta.⁸

Unmet funding: The UN's first emergency appeal for cyclone aid was generously supported. However, a second call for \$481 million in aid has been only half met.⁹ Many donors have been discouraged by reports of SPDC's corrupt practices in the distribution of aid and the diversion of aid funds for personal benefit.¹⁰ In October, the SPDC arrested the chairman of the NLD Cyclone Relief Committee. [See below, *Arrests*]

Corruption: Reports continue of local SPDC officials extorting money from villages in Kachin and Shan States on the pretext of "cyclone relief donations".¹¹

Forced labor: SPDC Army units demanded that cyclone survivors perform work on construction projects as a condition for receiving aid. Such projects included a road construction project in Labutta Township.¹² In Bogale, SPDC officials forced residents to work on reconstruction projects or pay daily fines of up to 5,000 kyat.¹³ In Shwe Paukan Township, Rangoon Division, the SPDC ordered each household to provide one worker for cyclone reconstruction, which forced families to abandon their own recovery efforts.¹⁴

On 16 October, regional advocacy network Burma Partnership released a report that provided an assessment of the response to cyclone Nargis. Burma Partnership found that the UN/SPDC/ASEAN's earlier Post Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) ignored issues such as the blocking and misappropriation of aid and mistreatment of cyclone survivors in relief camps. In addition, Burma Partnership stated that the PONJA report failed to mention numerous cases of human rights violations including incidents where the SPDC recruited orphan children as soldiers, forced survivors to do reconstruction work, and confiscated farmland.¹⁵ ASEAN Sec Gen Surin Pitsuwan was scheduled to attend the launch of the Burma Partnership report in Jakarta but cancelled at the last minute.¹⁶

While many international and local agencies continue to struggle to deliver aid, other international experts appear to be out of touch with the situation on the ground. On 28 October, at a meeting of UN agencies, ASEAN disaster experts and members of the SPDC in Bangkok concluded that the next step in cyclone Nargis recovery was to improve early warning systems and disaster preparedness.¹⁷ The

² IRIN (20 Oct 08) Temporary shelters need permanent upgrade

³ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 08) Cyclone survivors fear food aid is set to end soon

⁴ DVB (02 Oct 08) Cyclone victims still struggling five months on

⁵ Xinhua (04 Jul 08) All schools in Myanmar cyclone-hard-hit delta region reopened; Xinhua (23 Oct 08) Myanmar appeals for more donations for schools in cyclone-hit region

⁶ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 08) Cyclone survivors fear food aid is set to end soon

⁷ Irrawaddy (20 Oct 08) Regime Still Impeding Relief Effort

⁸ IRIN (07 Oct 08) MYANMAR: High cost of fertiliser threatens harvest; DVB (24 Oct 08) Pyapon rice farmers expecting low yield

⁹ Times (UK) (01 Oct 08) Aid and water dry up in cyclone fear zone

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (20 Oct 08) Regime Still Impeding Relief Effort

¹¹ Kachin News Group (07 Oct 08) Junta issues motorcycle license in Loiye for the first time; SHAN (11 Oct 08) Junta raises funds for Cyclone Nargis victims

¹² Irrawaddy (20 Oct 08) Regime Still Impeding Relief Effort

¹³ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 08) Cyclone survivors fear food aid is set to end soon; DVB (21 Oct 08) Bogalay residents forced to work on reconstruction

¹⁴ DVB (10 Oct 08) Cyclone victims forced into reconstruction work

¹⁵ AFP (16 Oct 08) Aid groups blast ASEAN-led report on Myanmar relief effort

¹⁶ AFP (16 Oct 08) Aid groups blast ASEAN-led report on Myanmar relief effort

¹⁷ UN News Center (28 Oct 08) Myanmar's post-cyclone recovery efforts focus of UN-backed expert meeting; Mizzima News (29 Oct 08) Time to focus on long-term post-Nargis rehabilitation

International Crisis Group (ICG) also published a report in October. The ICG report suggested that “rather than shunning the authorities, the best way to help the people is to involve government officials at all levels and enlist their cooperation and support”. The report admits to problems in aid delivery, but minimizes these as “restrictions and intrusiveness” that exist “as in many developing countries.”¹⁸

INSIDE BURMA

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi: 13 years under house arrest

On 24 October, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi marked 13 years under house arrest.¹⁹ UN, EU, and US renewed calls for her release.

- **2 October:** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay called on the SPDC to end the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Daw Suu “has in fact served a sentence that far exceeds that served by many hardened criminals,” Pillay said.²⁰
- **23 October:** UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana called for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s immediate release. “She’s under arbitrary detention,” Ojea Quintana said.²¹
- **23 October:** US State Department called for Daw Aung Suu Kyi’s immediate and unconditional release.²²
- **24 October:** EU’s Special Envoy for Burma Piero Fassino called on the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.²³
- **24 October:** European MPs condemned the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and called for her immediate release.²⁴
- **25 October:** Asian and European leaders at the Asia-Europe meeting (ASEM) in Beijing urged the SPDC to release political prisoners and implement democratic reform.²⁵

DAW SUU WATCH

2 October: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was given a medical check-up by her physician Dr Tin Myo Win, his assistant, and eye specialist Dr Kan Nyunt.²⁶

8 October: Daw Suu’s legal representative Hla Myo Myint filed a legal challenge to the SPDC’s latest extension of her house arrest in Naypyidaw.²⁷

25 October: SPDC removed barricades outside Daw Suu’s residence.²⁸

Note: For more information, please refer to: [13 years is too long: Free Daw Suu now](#) and [Daw Aung San Suu Kyi: Needed now more than ever](#)

SPDC Army killings

Growing dissatisfaction among the SPDC Army’s rank-and-file resulted in two killings of superiors by private soldiers.

- **4 October:** Kyaw Shwe Maung, an SPDC Army soldier from Light Infantry Battalion 701 killed his commanding officer and then took his own life at Ayemya Tharyar in Oakpho Township, Pegu Division.²⁹

¹⁸ Washington Post (27 Oct 08) On Burma, a phony realism – Fred Hiatt

¹⁹ Bloomberg (24 Oct 08) Suu Kyi Marks 13th Year of House Arrest by Myanmar’s Military

²⁰ Bloomberg (03 Oct 08) Myanmar Should Free 2,000 Political Prisoners, Suu Kyi, UN Says

²¹ UN News Center (23 Oct 08) Full democracy in Myanmar will take generations to achieve – UN expert

²² Irrawaddy (24 Oct 08) US, EU Call for Release of Suu Kyi

²³ AFP (24 Oct 08) EU envoy urges lifting of Aung San Suu Kyi’s house arrest

²⁴ AFP (23 Oct 08) EU-Asia summit should seek release of Myanmar dissidents: MEPs

²⁵ AFP (26 Oct 08) Asia, Europe join calls for freedom in Myanmar

²⁶ AFP (03 Oct 08) Eye specialist examines Aung San Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (04 Oct 08) Aung San Suu Kyi visited by eye-specialist; VOA (03 Oct 08) Eye Doctor Examines Burmese Opposition Leader Aung San Suu Kyi; DVB (06 Oct 08) Daw Suu visited by eye specialist; Irrawaddy (03 Oct 08) Eye Specialist Calls on Suu Kyi

²⁷ AP (10 Oct 08) Lawyer appeals for freedom of Myanmar’s Suu Kyi; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 08) Appeal against Suu Kyi’s Detention Handed in at Naypyidaw; DPA (12 Oct 08) Aung San Suu Kyi submits appeal against prolonged detention; IANS (11 Oct 08) Suu Kyi appeals against prolonged detention

²⁸ DPA (26 Oct 08) Junta removes barricades from Suu Kyi home

- **21 October:** SPDC Army soldier San Hlaing killed a Corporal from Light Infantry Battalion 550 in Chin Let Wa village, Paletwa Township, Chin State. The Corporal had earlier beaten San Hlaing for sleeping on duty.³⁰

An SPDC Army source claimed the rate of killing of superiors by private soldiers had increased and many army officials expressed concern over their security.³¹ SPDC Army privates earn around 22,000 kyat (less than US \$20) per month.³²

Military offensive in Karen State

As the rainy season came to an end, the regime and its allies intensified military operations in Eastern Burma. From 1-11 October, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) troops from battalions 907, 906, and 333 attacked several villages in Karen State's Dooplaya District. DKBA troops burned homes, destroyed food, and laid landmines. More than 200 villagers were displaced as a result of the attacks. On 3 October, DKBA troops killed Saw Daw Naw Poe, a villager from the Meh Klaw Khee area.³³

Schools and clinics in villages of Kawkareik Township, Karen State, were also forced to close following joint operations launched by the SPDC Army and the DKBA in late September.³⁴

Bombs

- **18 October:** A small bomb exploded in Rangoon's Yankin Township. No casualties were reported. Police said they defused a second bomb on the same day.³⁵
- **18 October:** A bomb exploded at a police station in Tachilek, Southern Shan State. No one was injured.³⁶
- **19 October:** One man was killed in a small bomb blast in Rangoon's Shwepyithar Township.³⁷ On 21 October, the state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar identified the victim as Thet Oo Win, a former monk who participated in the Saffron Revolution. The junta's mouthpiece alleged that Thet Oo Win died while trying to make the bomb.³⁸

At the monasteries

Following marches commemorating the Saffron Revolution [See *September 2008 Burma Bulletin*], security remained tight around monasteries, especially in Akyab, Arakan State.³⁹ SPDC officials in Akyab deployed additional armed personnel around pagodas, prevented outsiders from staying overnight at monasteries, and monitored devotees.⁴⁰ SPDC intelligence officers on motorcycles followed monks carrying out morning food collection.⁴¹ Security officers conducted numerous raids on monasteries in Akyab and Maungdaw.⁴² Relatives of monks in hiding were detained for questioning and remained under surveillance.⁴³

²⁹ Mizzima News (07 Oct 08) Soldier commits suicide after allegedly killing commander: Eyewitness; DVB (07 Oct 08) Infantry commander shot dead by sergeant; DVB (09 Oct 08) Army private killed after shooting officer

³⁰ Narinjara News (24 Oct 08) Burmese soldier kills Corporal

³¹ Narinjara News (24 Oct 08) Burmese soldier kills Corporal

³² Irrawaddy (09 Oct 08) Desertions, Assassinations Plague Burmese Armed Forces

³³ Free Burma Rangers (14 Oct 08) Villager Killed and More than 200 Displaced by New Attacks in Central Karen State.

³⁴ Mizzima News (23 Oct 08) Army operations force closure of schools, clinics

³⁵ AFP (18 Oct 08) Small bomb explodes near football field in Yangon: police; AP (19 Oct 08) Bomb blast in Yangon, second device defused; AFP (20 Oct 08) Man killed in second Yangon blast in 24 hours: Myanmar police; Irrawaddy (20 Oct 08) Two Bombs Explode in Rangoon; One in Border Town

³⁶ Irrawaddy (20 Oct 08) Two Bombs Explode in Rangoon; One in Border Town

³⁷ AFP (20 Oct 08) Man killed in second Yangon blast in 24 hours: Myanmar police; Reuters (20 Oct 08) Man dies in bomb blast north of Myanmar capital

³⁸ AFP (21 Oct 08) Myanmar blast victim was ex-monk turned bombmaker: state media; DPA (21 Oct 08) Myanmar bomb victim was former Buddhist monk, claims state media; Xinhua (21 Oct 08) Yangon bomb blast victim identified as perpetrator himself

³⁹ Narinjara News (22 Oct 08) Sittwe Monks in Hiding After Raids

⁴⁰ Narinjara News (15 Oct 08) Monks Banned from Religious Festival; Kaladan News (23 Oct 08) Raid on monasteries in Akyab

⁴¹ Narinjara News (23 Oct 08) Monks in Sittwe Lose Freedom

⁴² Narinjara News (22 Oct 08) Sittwe Monks in Hiding After Raids; Kaladan News (23 Oct 08) Raid on monasteries in Akyab; Kaladan News (23 Oct 08) Raid on monasteries in Akyab; Narinjara News (28 Oct 08) Nasaka Searches for Monks on Western Border

⁴³ Narinjara News (22 Oct 08) Sittwe Monks in Hiding After Raids

Akyab's annual Thadingyut festival on 14 October was observed amid an atmosphere of oppression.⁴⁴ SPDC authorities restricted attendance by one third and refused to allow normal festivities.⁴⁵ The SPDC also collected the personal details of every monk invited to the festival.⁴⁶ The following day, SPDC local authorities deployed 400 uniformed soldiers and army trucks at monasteries and public places.⁴⁷

Chin food crisis

Food shortages caused by the rat plague in Chin State have reportedly led to 100 deaths, mostly children and the elderly.⁴⁸ Local SPDC authorities banned food supplies from foreign countries from being transported to Chin State.⁴⁹ On 13 October, SPDC authorities refused permission for the local NGO Country Agency for Rural Development (CAD) to deliver emergency food aid to 1,000 starving villagers around Haka Township.⁵⁰

WFP sought funding for a work-for-food project, but acknowledged the difficulties they faced in negotiations with the regime. "They are almost as bad as the government in North Korea, with a bunch of old generals sitting high in their newly built capital," said WFP spokesperson Paul Risley.⁵¹

Melamine still on sale

Even though the World Health Organization advised countries to begin testing milk products for melamine on 22 September, the SPDC delayed issuing warnings to the public for eight days.⁵² Even then, it wasn't until 10 October that the SPDC banned the import and distribution of nine melamine-contaminated dairy products.⁵³ It took another four days for the SPDC to order the removal of the products from store shelves.⁵⁴ Discounted Chinese milk powder continued to be sold on street stalls in Rangoon.⁵⁵

HUMAN RIGHTS

The number of political prisoners in Burma continues to increase. On 5 October, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners and the US Campaign for Burma said that there were at least 2,123 political prisoners, up 78% from the UN figure of 1,192 in June 2007.⁵⁶

In October, the regime arrested 13 dissidents and sentenced 27 to prison terms. Since January, the SPDC has arrested 420 opponents and jailed 85.⁵⁷

Arrests

- **1 October:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township arrested former journalist and Mandalay NLD elected MP Ohn Kyaing.⁵⁸ Ohn Kyaing, 64, is also the chairman of the NLD Cyclone Relief Committee and actively participated in cyclone relief work.⁵⁹
- **4 October:** Police in Bhamo Township, Kachin State, arrested two abbots from Tagontai Monastery in Mandalay.⁶⁰

⁴⁴ Mizzima News (15 Oct 08) Security beefed up in Arakan State; DVB (13 Oct 08) Sittwe authorities restrict rice donation event

⁴⁵ Mizzima News (15 Oct 08) Security beefed up in Arakan State;

⁴⁶ DVB (13 Oct 08) Sittwe authorities restrict rice donation event

⁴⁷ Mizzima News (15 Oct 08) Security beefed up in Arakan State

⁴⁸ ABC (16 Oct 08) Super Rats Invade; Blamed for Myanmar Famine

⁴⁹ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 08) Local Authorities Deny Chin Villagers Food Aid

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 08) Local Authorities Deny Chin Villagers Food Aid

⁵¹ ABC (16 Oct 08) Super Rats Invade; Blamed for Myanmar Famine

⁵² Mizzima News (01 Oct 08) Breastfeeding, safest for infants

⁵³ AFP (10 Oct 08) Myanmar bans nine Chinese milk, dairy products

⁵⁴ AFP (14 Oct 08) Myanmar removes tainted milk products from shelves

⁵⁵ DVB (17 Oct 08) Consumers reject Chinese milk products

⁵⁶ AFP (06 Oct 08) Rights groups call for action over jailed Myanmar dissidents

⁵⁷ Altsean Burma Bulletins January 2008 – October 2008

⁵⁸ AP (02 Oct 08) Myanmar detains political ally of Aung San Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (02 Oct 08) Junta arrests another opposition MP, Ohn Kyaing

⁵⁹ Irrawaddy (02 Oct 08) Veteran NLD MP Arrested

- **8 October:** Police arrested Ni Min Aung, a first-year student from Akyab University, Arakan State, for alleged ties with a student group in exile.⁶¹
- **9-10 October:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township arrested eight activists, including Generation Wave members Khaing Mon aka Nyein Chan, Ye Thu Ko aka Nyi Nyi, Zin Min Aung, and Aung Paing, for distributing anti-junta leaflets.⁶²
- **28 October:** SPDC authorities arrested Nyi Nyi Htwe, a lawyer for 11 detained NLD youth members.⁶³

Prison sentences

- **2 October:** A court in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township sentenced NLD youth member Mya Than Htike to four years in prison with hard labor for participating in the September 2007 anti-junta protests.⁶⁴
- **6 October:** The SPDC sentenced NLD members Soe Kywe, Khin Aye, Myint Thein and activist Soe Kywe to two-and-a-half years in prison on a charge of "disturbing tranquility."⁶⁵
- **16 October:** A court in Rangoon's Insein prison sentenced 88 Generation Students Khin Moe Aye and Kyaw Soe to three years in jail for illegally handling foreign currency.⁶⁶
- **24 October:** A court in Mandalay sentenced six NLD members, including elected MP Than Lwin, to prison terms ranging from two to 13 years for creating public alarm and promoting hatred.⁶⁷
- **29 October:** The SPDC sentenced 88 Generation Students Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Hla Myo Naung, Htay Kywe, Mya Aye, Nyan Linn, Phyone Cho, Aung Thu, and Aung Naing to six months in prison for contempt of court.⁶⁸
- **30 October:** A court in Insein prison sentenced lawyer Nyi Nyi Htwe and NLD members Wai Lwin Myo, Aung Min Naing, and Yan Naing Tun to six months in jail for contempt of court. The court also sentenced political prisoner Aung Thein Lwin to 11 years imprisonment after finding him guilty on five charges.⁶⁹

Releases

- **3 October:** SPDC authorities released Maddaya Township NLD members Nyo Lay, Kyaw Swe, Thaug Naing, Nyi Nyi, and Zaw Min Lwin after they served their one-year prison terms.⁷⁰
- **20 October:** SPDC released the Flower News Journal chief reporter Saw Myint Than. He had been arrested on 1 September on charges of providing news to foreign media organizations.⁷¹ [See *September 2008 Burma Bulletin*]

Detention conditions

- **1 October:** U Gambira's lawyer Aung Thein resigned because the SPDC interfered with his ability to prepare a defense.⁷²
- **19 October:** SPDC authorities in Insein prison placed NLD members Thet Wei, Aung Tun, Yan Naing Tun, and Pho Toke in solitary confinement in the dog kennels following a quarrel with detained junta crony Maung Weik and his associates.⁷³

⁶⁰ Kachin News Group (09 Oct 08) Two monks arrested for smuggling heroin

⁶¹ Narinjara News (28 Oct 08) Sittwe University Student Detained

⁶² Mizzima News (13 Oct 08) Eight opposition youth arrested; DVB (14 Oct 08) Generation Wave members arrested

⁶³ AP (30 Oct 08) Myanmar court sentences 9 activists to prison

⁶⁴ DVB (03 Oct 08) NLD youth member given four-year jail term

⁶⁵ AP (08 Oct 08) Myanmar junta raises suppression, says opposition

⁶⁶ Irrawaddy (17 Oct 08) Woman activist jailed in Rangoon; DVB (20 Oct 08) Two 88 Generation Students jailed for three years

⁶⁷ AP (24 Oct 08) 6 Myanmar opposition members get jail terms

⁶⁸ Reuters (30 Oct 08) Myanmar jails activists for "court interruption"; AP (30 Oct 08) Myanmar court sentences 9 activists to prison Mizzima News (29 Oct 08) 88 generation student leaders sentenced to six months imprisonment

⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (30 Oct 08) Activists Get Six Months for Contempt

⁷⁰ DVB (06 Oct 08) Five jailed on USDA threat charges now released

⁷¹ AP (22 Oct 08) Myanmar police free local magazine journalist; VOA (22 Oct 08) Burma's Military Government Frees Journalist; Mizzima News (21 Oct 08) Saw Myint Than, chief correspondent of journal released

⁷² DVB (02 Oct 08) Lawyer Aung Thein withdraws representation; Irrawaddy (03 Oct 08) Lawyer for U Gambira Resigns

⁷³ Mizzima News (27 Oct 08) Four NLD prisoners moved to Insein 'dog cell'

- Detained activist Su Su Nway has refused medical care to protest the authorities' refusal to allow her to receive adequate treatment outside Insein prison.⁷⁴
- The health of 70-year-old Nyo Gyi, vice-chairman of Mandalay's Maddaya Township NLD, has deteriorated in Khamtee prison, Sagaing Division. Nyo Gyi suffers from heart disease, high blood pressure, and chest infections.⁷⁵
- Shan New Generation member Sai Myo Win Tun, 47, has been hospitalized due to deteriorating health conditions. He is serving a 79-year prison sentence in Myingyan prison, Mandalay Division.⁷⁶
- Six political prisoners have been detained alongside common criminals and harassed by prison authorities in Akyab prison, Arakan State.⁷⁷
- About 10 child prisoners are being detained in Inntainglay prison camp in Kale Township, Sagaing Division. Medical facilities in the camp are reported to be inadequate and SPDC authorities regularly confiscate food and money given to prisoners by their family members.⁷⁸

Freedom of information

On 22 October, Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) released its annual report on press freedom worldwide. Burma ranked 170th out of the 173 countries in the study. RSF said that over the past year the regime arrested or threatened dozens of journalists and that the SPDC's censorship activities had been "relentless."⁷⁹ In October, reports continued on the SPDC's restriction on media:

- **1 October:** The website of the exiled Burmese news agency Mizzima came under attack by pro-regime hackers.⁸⁰ On 9 October, the Mizzima website was again made inaccessible due to several hacking attempts.⁸¹
- **8 October:** The SPDC Censorship Board suspended publication of the Action Times and True News weekly journals for one and two months respectively. Action Times received the suspension for publishing the news of the release of Win Tin and referring to him as Sayagyi [Great Master]. True News was ordered to suspend publication for writing an unapproved caption alongside a photograph of a child working on a construction site in Thailand.⁸²
- **20 October:** It was reported that the SPDC Censorship Board suppressed several poems from the October issue of humor magazines Kalyar, Cherry, Myanmar Thit, and Mahaythi.⁸³

Ojea Quintana's report

On 8 October, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana presented his first report to the General Assembly. Quintana proposed four core human rights elements that the SPDC should implement before the 2010 elections:⁸⁴

- Amend domestic laws that limit freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.
- Release of more than 2,000 political prisoners.
- Review the authority and powers of the armed forces, including ending the recruitment of child soldiers and the use of landmines.
- Establish a fully independent and impartial judiciary that can guarantee due process of law and create a mechanism to investigate human rights abuses.

Ojea Quintana failed to recognize that over the past 18 years the regime has constantly ignored the recommendations made by his four predecessors. In a statement that defied reality, he described regime

⁷⁴ Irrawaddy (08 Oct 08) Labor Rights Activist Su Su Nway Stages Prison Protest

⁷⁵ DVB (16 Oct 08) NLD member's health suffers in detention

⁷⁶ DVB (03 Oct 08) Detained Shan leader hospitalised

⁷⁷ Narinjara News (16 Oct 08) Six Democracy Activists Placed with Criminals in Sittwe Prison

⁷⁸ Khonumthung News (22 Oct 08) Child prisoners in Burmese concentration camp

⁷⁹ RSF (22 Oct 08) Only peace protects freedoms in post-9/11 world - Close-up on... Asia

⁸⁰ Irrawaddy (01 Oct 08) Burmese Exile Media Web Site Again Under Attack

⁸¹ Mizzima News (10 Oct 08) Hack attempts suspend Mizzima websites

⁸² AFP (03 Oct 08) Myanmar junta suspends two journals for violating rules: media; Irrawaddy (01 Oct 08) Burma's censors suspend two publications; Mizzima News (01 Oct 08) Publishing license of two Burmese weekly journals' suspended

⁸³ Mizzima News (20 Oct 08) Humour magazine censored, publishing deferred

⁸⁴ UNGA, 63rd session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 5 September 2008, UN Doc A/63/341 Para 86-105

officials as “ready to learn and apply international human rights standards.” The Special Rapporteur also refused to carry out his mandate by “criticizing and not cooperating” with the junta.⁸⁵

DISPLACEMENT

66,000 new IDPs in 2008

According to the Thai Burma Border Consortium’s latest report, between July 2007 and June 2008, 66,000 civilians were forced to flee their homes in Eastern Burma due to widespread and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law.⁸⁶ The regime refused to give aid workers access to displaced persons and the humanitarian situation deteriorated.⁸⁷ The report also draws attention to the impact of development projects in Eastern Burma. These projects have led to increased troop presence, forced labor and political persecution.⁸⁸

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ban dissatisfied with SPDC

During his August trip to Burma, UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari told NLD leaders that UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon planned to visit Burma in December. [See *August 2008 Burma Bulletin*] However, on 7 October, Ban said he would drop plans to visit to Burma unless the SPDC showed tangible progress in implementing democratic reforms, which includes the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.⁸⁹

On 20 October, in a report to the UN General Assembly, Ban Ki-moon reiterated dissatisfaction that the SPDC had failed to take up UN proposals to democratize Burma.⁹⁰ Ban stressed that the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners would be key to the resumption of all-inclusive, substantive, and time-bound dialogue.⁹¹

ECONOMY

Energy deals

On 21 October, Arakan Oil Watch released a new report, “Blocking Freedom,” that documents the consequences of China National Oil Corporation (CNOOC)’s project on Rambree Island.⁹² The report found that the project has resulted in land confiscation and polluted waterways in the surrounding areas. CNOOC partners in the Rambree oil venture are two other state-owned Chinese oil-service firms, and junta crony Steven Law’s Golden Aaron and Asia World.⁹³

New energy deals signed in October included:

- **3 October:** Two Vietnamese companies, Petrovietnam Exploration Production and Vietsovpetro, Burmese privately-owned Eden Group, and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) signed a contract for exploration, drilling, and production of oil and gas in offshore block M2 in the Gulf of Martaban. It was the first such contract between Vietnam and Burma.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ UNGA, 63rd session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 5 September 2008, UN Doc A/63/341 Para 83-84

⁸⁶ TBBC (Oct 08) Internal displacement and international law in eastern Burma; AFP (22 Oct 08) 66,000 people displaced by army abuses in Burma

⁸⁷ Mizzima News (23 Oct 08) 66,000 civilians displaced in eastern Burma

⁸⁸ VOA (22 Oct 08) Aid Groups Say Burma Continues Rights Abuses in Eastern States

⁸⁹ Reuters (07 Oct 08) U.N. chief Ban may drop plans for Myanmar visit; Mizzima News (08 Oct 08) Ban Ki-moon may cancel Burma

⁹⁰ UNGA, 63rd Session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar-Report of the Secretary-General, 17 September 08, UN Doc A/63/356; UN News Center (20 Oct 08) Enhanced dialogue among all parties vital for Myanmar’s political future – Ban

⁹¹ UN News Center (20 Oct 08) Enhanced dialogue among all parties vital for Myanmar’s political future – Ban

⁹² Arakan Oil Watch (Oct 08) Blocking freedom: a case study of China’s oil and gas investment in Burma

⁹³ Irrawaddy (24 Oct 08) Chinese Oil Giant Accused of Human Rights Abuses in Burma

⁹⁴ AP (04 Oct 08) Vietnam signs oil, gas hunt deal with Myanmar

- **9 October:** The SPDC signed an agreement with Thai-based Italian-Thai Development and the Singapore-based Windfall Energy Services to provide electricity from a 600 megawatt hydro-power project in Tenasserim Division.⁹⁵

India deals

India has continued to pursue increased economic ties with Burma:

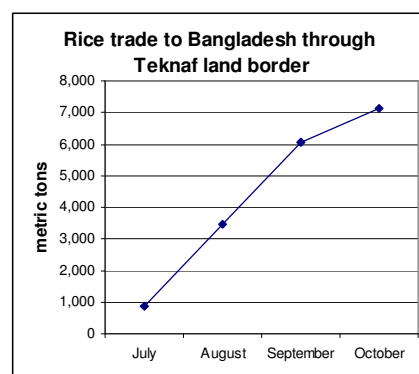
- Exim Bank of India revealed that it had agreed to extend a US\$82.07 million line of credit to finance transmission lines and an aluminum factory in Burma. Eighty-five percent of the goods and services will be supplied by India.⁹⁶
- On 16 October, India and the SPDC announced measures to enhance border trade, including the opening of a new border trading depot at Avakhung-Leshi, between India's Nagaland and Burma's Sagaing Division, and to increase the number of eligible trade goods from 22 to 40.⁹⁷
- India and the SPDC inaugurated a Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills established in Rangoon with US\$2 million funding from India.⁹⁸

Bangladesh trip

From 7 to 11 October, Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye led a 55-member delegation, including seven SPDC ministers, to Bangladesh.⁹⁹ Talks included the expansion of trade, maritime boundaries, energy cooperation, contract farming and military cooperation.¹⁰⁰ Junta crony Tay Za and his business team were also on the trip and participated in talks on improving trade relations.¹⁰¹

Rice trade and prices

As part of the deals signed in Bangladesh, the SPDC agreed to export 100,000 tons of rice from Burma, and signed a contract leasing 50,000 acres of paddy fields in Arakan State. The agreement sparked concern from communities affected, who believe that the lands will be confiscated from their owners, and fear rice scarcity in the coming season.¹⁰² Traders noted that land trade to Bangladesh is increasing after a temporary drop in trade after cyclone Nargis. [See Table]¹⁰³



Farmers in Arakan State and other rice producing areas are under pressure to produce high yields to make up for shortfalls in the Irrawaddy delta. In Pegu, the SPDC set the price of rice at 20% below last year.¹⁰⁴ In Kale Township, Sagaing Division, SPDC soldiers began inspection of farmland to calculate the amount they intended to confiscate for soldiers' rations after the harvest.¹⁰⁵

In Rangoon markets, the price of low quality rice has increased around 20%. Only about one-third of the normal rice stock was coming into the market following the export of low-quality rice to Bangladesh and China in September.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ AFP (12 Oct 08) Myanmar inks energy deal with Thailand, Singapore: report; Mizzima News (13 Oct 08) Thailand, Singapore further energy investments in Burma

⁹⁶ Asia Pulse (15 Oct 08) Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank inks loan deal with India's Exim Bank

⁹⁷ Mizzima News (17 Oct 08) India, Burma agree to expand border trade

⁹⁸ Hindu (13 Oct 08) India for expanding border trade with Myanmar

⁹⁹ DPA (07 Oct 08) Bangladesh proposes talks for link with China, Myanmar

¹⁰⁰ Xinhua (07 Oct 08) Bangladesh to procure 100,000 tons of rice from Myanmar

¹⁰¹ Irrawaddy (10 Oct 08) Tay Za joined Maung Aye on visit to Bangladesh

¹⁰² DVB (10 Oct 08) Junta leases 50,000 acres of farmland to Bangladesh

¹⁰³ Narinjara News (24 Oct 08) Burmese Rice Begins to Enter Bangladesh

¹⁰⁴ IMNA (27 Oct 08) Farmers in Pegu Division struggling after regime sets artificially low paddy prices

¹⁰⁵ Khonumthung News (22 Oct 08) Burmese Army lists cultivated farmlands in Kalay

¹⁰⁶ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 08) Rice Prices Rise in Rangoon Markets

Sanctions, boycotts, business closures

- **15 October:** Burma Campaign UK launched a consumer boycott campaign against UK-based clothing company Cotton Traders.¹⁰⁷ Two days later, Cotton Traders announced they would end their business in Burma.¹⁰⁸
- **22 October:** Australia announced it expanded its targeted financial sanctions against Burma's elites, adding 45 new names to an earlier list of 418 people.¹⁰⁹
- **26 October:** The US began its enforcement of the JADE Act. The Jade Act closed a loophole that allowed traders to import rubies and jadeite of Burmese origin into the US that had been transformed elsewhere.¹¹⁰
- "K" Line Singapore, the regional ship operator for Japanese shipping company Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha, announced it would stop its business operations in Burma on 2 November.¹¹¹

Gem sale

From 4 to 17 October, a gem auction generated a reported US\$175 million in sales. Most of items sold were jade, and most traders were Chinese.¹¹² A similar sale in November 2007 earned \$150 million.¹¹³

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN OCTOBER

2	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay calls on the SPDC to free the estimated 2,000 political prisoners "as soon as possible."
4	US President George Bush signs law to empower US courts to prosecute members of any nationality for recruitment of child soldiers anywhere in the world.
4	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army forces attack Thai villagers in Mae Klong Khee Village in Umphang District, Tak Province.
4	A landmine explosion injures a villager in Shwegyin Township, Pegu Division.
5	Eighteen undocumented migrant workers from Burma and Pakistan are killed in truck crash in Turkey.
7	Karenni National Progressive Party Secretary Khu Oo Reh denies rumors that it is negotiating a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC.
8	US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says that ASEAN should do more to help move the SPDC toward democracy.
8	SPDC ambassador to Cambodia Aung Naing dies of a stroke.
9	Generation Wave activists distribute leaflets around Rangoon to mark the one-year anniversary of the group's founding.
10	State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reports that during September SPDC authorities seized more than 400 kgs of opium, over seven kgs of heroin, approximately 290 kgs of low-grade opium, and nearly 90,000 amphetamine tablets.
10	SPDC authorities force residents of Mrauk U, Arakan State, to repair the Mrauk U-Minbya road.
11	Ngwe Tun, NLD elected MP from Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Division, dies at 79 at Rangoon's Shwebo hospital.
11	Mon National Democratic Front says it will not support the SPDC's planned elections in 2010.
12	Arakan League for Democracy says it will not participate in the 2010 election.
13	Arakan League for Democracy holds ceremony in Rangoon to mark the 20th anniversary of the party's foundation.
13	Khain Tun, a former member of the Arakan Communist Party, is released from Insein prison after completing a 22-year sentence.
14	NLD members pray for the release of political prisoners and give offerings to monks and nuns at the party headquarters in Rangoon. Similar activities occur at pagodas in Pegu, Meikhtila, and elsewhere in Burma.
14	SPDC authorities begin the demolition of a Christian cemetery in Dukathaung Ward, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.

¹⁰⁷ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 08) Burma Campaign UK Urges Cotton Traders to Stop Trade

¹⁰⁸ BCUK (19 Oct 08) Boycott Success: Cotton Traders Pull Out Of Burma

¹⁰⁹ AAP (22 Oct 08) Australia extends Burma sanction

¹¹⁰ JCK (06 Oct 08) Burma Ruby ban starts 26 October

¹¹¹ Mizzima News (24 Aug 08) "K" Line suspends shipping to Rangoon

¹¹² AP (17 Oct 08) Jade and gem sale earns Myanmar \$175 million

¹¹³ AFP (27 Nov 07) Myanmar sells \$150 mln of gems at auction: official; AP (17 Nov 07) Gem Dealers Push Ban On Myanmar Rubies

14	Labor activist Su Su Nway refuses to attend a hearing in Insein prison.
15	World Wildlife Fund reports that skins, claws, and bones from at least 1,158 tigers and other protected big cats have been spotted in open markets in Burma during surveys conducted over the last 18 years.
15	SPDC Army soldiers from the Military Affairs Security unit in Myitkyina, Kachin State, arrest three Kachin Independence Organization soldiers.
16	Pa-O National Liberation Organization forces attack SPDC Army troops at Naung Htaung in Southeastern Shan State.
17	Karen National Union elects and installs new leaders at its 14th annual conference. Zipporah Sein is elected General-Secretary of the Karen National Union, the first the first woman to serve in the position.
18	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army soldiers attack and wound three Thai security personnel on patrol in Mae Klong Khee border Village in Thailand's Umphang District, Tak Province.
20	SPDC authorities force 200 villagers to work in a rubber plantation near Aung Mamgala modern village in Arakan State.
20	SPDC authorities force about 100 Rohingya Muslims in Kyakpru and Rambree Townships, Arakan State, to do construction work on the new Kyaukpru–Maayee road.
20	SPDC Minister of Post, Communication, and Telegraph Brig Gen Thein Zaw meets Christian leaders in Waingmaw, Kachin State, to garner support for the 2010 elections.
21	Dissidents Tun Tun Oo, Htar Htar Thet, Aung Kyaw Moe, and Maung Maung Latt dismiss their attorney.
21	International Women's Media Foundation award Burmese journalist Aye Aye Win the "2008 Courage in Journalism Award."
21	Fearing arrest in Burma, Buddhist monk U Ein Thariya flees to Thailand.
21	Nine Muslim leaders appear before Maungdaw Township court in Arakan State on charges of forming an organization without permission.
21	Indonesia's Parliament ratifies the ASEAN Charter. Indonesia is the last ASEAN member to ratify the charter.
22	NLD spokesman U Lwin, 86, suffers a stroke.
22	SPDC Police in Maungdaw, Arakan State, arrest four persons on drug charges and seize 2,000 amphetamine tablets during the arrest.
22	PEN Canada awards detained comedian Zarganar the "2008 One Humanity Award."
24	SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrest a 41-year-old man for making a phone call threatening to blow up USDA and SPDC offices and a police station in Rangoon.
24	SPDC Secretary-1 Lt Gen Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo says the junta will spare no efforts to make the 2010 election free and fair.
27	SPDC FM Nyan Win arrives in Pyongyang, North Korea, and meets with his North Korean counterpart, Pak Ui Chun.
27	SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe and SPDC General Thura Shwe Mann meet with Vice Chief-of-Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army General Zhang Li in Naypyidaw.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN OCTOBER

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<http://h1.ripway.com/APPPB/Post-Nargis%20Analysis.pdf>

"Future in the dark: The Massive Increase in Burma's Political Prisoners", Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)
http://www.aapp.org/the_future_in_the_dark_AAPP_USCB.pdf

"Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the Secretary-General", Ban Ki-Moon
<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=a/63/356>

"Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar", Tomás Ojea Quintana
[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/YSAR-7K8RC2/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/YSAR-7K8RC2/$File/full_report.pdf)

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<http://arakanoilwatch.org/publications/Blocking%20Freedom.pdf>

"Gaining Ground: Earth Rights Abuses in Burma Exposed", EarthRights International (ERI)
<http://www.earthrights.org/files/Reports/Gaining%20Ground%20-%20ERSB%202008.pdf>

"Press Freedom Index 2008", Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)
http://www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/cl_en_2008.pdf

"Killing of Villagers, Deadly Landmines, and Women Forced to Work for the Burma Army", Free Burma Rangers (FBR)

<http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2008/20081002.html>

“Burma/Myanmar After Nargis: Time to Normalise Aid Relations”, International Crisis Group (ICG)
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/getfile.cfm?id=3648&tid=5734&type=pdf&l=1>

“Situation Report on International Migration in East and South-East Asia”, International Organization on Migration (IOM)
<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pbnAS/cache/offonce?entryId=19601>