

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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- ASEAN uses new US policy on Burma as an excuse to ease pressure on the SPDC.
- ASEAN stifles dialogue with civil society for the second time this year.
- ASEAN inaugurates 'symbolic' human rights commission.
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's recent overture to the regime on the issue of international sanctions triggers a flurry of meetings in Rangoon. Daw Suu meets twice with SPDC Liaison Minister Aung Kyi and holds talks with foreign diplomats.
- SPDC detains 11 activists and hands down prison terms to 12 dissidents, one Buddhist monk and 12 farmers.
- US State Department's latest report on global religious freedom lists Burma among the worst offenders.
- Reporters Sans Frontières releases its annual press freedom index. Burma ranks 171 out of the 175 countries surveyed.
- More pro-democracy and ethnic nationality organizations voice their opposition to the SPDC's planned 2010 election and its 2008 constitution.
- Wa and Mongla ceasefire groups resist the SPDC's ultimatum to transform into Border Guard Forces as the deadline expires.
- A new report reveals the SPDC's offensive in Eastern Burma has destroyed or forcibly relocated 120 villages and displaced 75,000 people between August 2008 and July 2009.
- Rat and mice plagues cause food security problems in Kachin and Arakan States.
- SPDC uses forced labor to continue building the Bangladesh border fence.
- Burma and Bangladesh renew hostilities over border fence and maritime territorial dispute in the Bay of Bangladesh
- UNODC report shows that opium and heroin produced in Burma are still a threat to the region.

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KEY STORY

ASEAN backs off on Burma

ASEAN took last month's announcement that the United States had revised its policy toward the SPDC as a vindication of its "constructive engagement" policy, which produced no tangible results since the SPDC joined ASEAN in 1997.

ASEAN was quick to misconstrue the new US policy as being the same as ASEAN's traditional approach toward the SPDC. On 25 October, Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva said, "ASEAN has always argued that engagement is the right approach and we feel that if everyone takes this engagement approach we would be encouraging Myanmar in the successful implementation of her road map."¹

This sense of complacency among ASEAN members further emboldened the SPDC to make more empty promises at the 15th ASEAN Summit on 23-25 October in Cha-am, Thailand. At the Summit, SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win reiterated the junta's promise that the 2010 elections would be "inclusive, free, and fair."² SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein said that the junta would reconsider Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest if she "maintains a good attitude."³

ASEAN's willingness to take the pressure off the regime was evident in its final statement. ASEAN leaders devoted just three lines to the Burma's political situation in their final declaration. While the statement called for elections promised by the junta in 2010 to be "fair, free, inclusive and transparent," it made no mention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴

ASEAN's false sense of pride of being able to effectively deal with the SPDC through engagement was predicated on its misrepresentation of Washington's new policy toward the SPDC. Contrary to ASEAN's interpretation of the new US policy on Burma, on 21 October US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell reiterated that dialogue with the junta would "supplement rather than replace" sanctions on the regime. Campbell also said that the US will not judge the success of its effort at pragmatic engagement by the results of a handful of meetings. Campbell added that engagement, for its own sake, is not a goal of US policy.⁵

ASEAN: No civil rights for civil society

Similar to the events that unfolded at the ASEAN Summit in February of this year [See *February 2009 Burma Bulletin*], ASEAN leaders shuttered dialogue with civil society organizations. Burma, Laos, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines rejected their respective country representatives who were chosen at the ASEAN Peoples' Forum (APF) that met from 18-21 October in Cha-am, Thailand.⁶

On 23 October, APF representatives from Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand walked out of the interface meeting with ASEAN leaders to protest government-imposed substitutes for delegates and to show solidarity with their banned colleagues.⁷ The SPDC replaced the APF-Burma delegate with a former high-ranking police officer representing Burma's Anti-Narcotics Association.⁸

¹ IANS (25 Oct 09) ASEAN welcomes US engagement with Myanmar

² Irrawaddy (24 Oct 09) Burmese PM: Electoral Law Coming Very Soon

³ AFP (24 Oct 09) Myanmar could ease Suu Kyi detention; VOA (24 Oct 09) Japan: Burma Could Ease Aung San Suu Kyi's Detention; BBC (26 Oct 09) Burma: Suu Kyi 'can play a role'; FT (24 Oct 09) Burma generals signal flexibility on Suu Kyi; Irrawaddy (24 Oct 09) Suu Kyi's House Arrest could be Relaxed: Burmese PM

⁴ AFP (25 Oct 09) Asia lets Myanmar off hook over Suu Kyi again: analysts

⁵ AFP (22 Oct 09) US warns of 'slow' talks with Myanmar ahead of visit

⁶ DVB (23 Oct 09) Activists rejected from ASEAN summit

⁷ Nation (24 Oct 09) Civil-society leaders slam Asean govts over snub; Mizzima News (23 Oct 09) Civil society representatives barred from ASEAN summit

⁸ Mizzima News (23 Oct 09) Civil society representatives barred from ASEAN summit

Human Rights Commission inaugurated

Juxtaposed with the exclusion of civil society representatives from the interface meeting, on 23 October ASEAN leaders opened the summit with the inauguration of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).⁹ However, activists in the region claimed that the Commission has little, if no, power to address and curb human rights abuses in ASEAN. The AICHR lacks any method to sanction member states for human rights abuses. [See, February 2009 *Burma Bulletin*] In addition, of the 10 commissioners who will comprise the AICHR, eight are government appointees. Only Indonesia and Thailand allowed their national human rights bodies to nominate representatives to the new commission.¹⁰

INSIDE BURMA

Daw Suu's appeal rejected

On 2 October, the Rangoon Divisional Court rejected Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal on her conviction which resulted in a sentence of 18 months under house arrest.¹¹ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's two housekeepers also lost their appeals.¹² On 16 October, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her attorney agreed to appeal to Burma's Supreme Court.¹³

Sanctions talks

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's recent overture to the regime on the issue of international sanctions triggered a flurry of meetings in Rangoon.

- **3 and 7 October:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with SPDC Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi to discuss Daw Suu's September letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe.¹⁴ [See *September 2009 Burma Bulletin*] Daw Suu and Aung Kyi had previously met five times between October 2007 and January 2008.
- **9 October:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the UK ambassador and the deputy heads of the Australian and US missions to discuss the nature and the impact of Western sanctions on Burma.¹⁵ Following the meeting, the diplomats from the three countries met a group of NLD leaders and briefed them on their talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁶

⁹ DVB (23 Oct 09) Activists rejected from ASEAN summit

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (23 Oct 09) Asean Human Rights Body Launched Amid Controversy

¹¹ AP (02 Oct 09) Myanmar court rejects Suu Kyi's appeal vs. arrest; Reuters (02 Oct 09) Myanmar court upholds Suu Kyi guilty verdict; DVB (02 Oct 09) Suu Kyi appeal rejected by court; Mizzima News (02 Oct 09) Court rejects Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal; VOA (02 Oct 09) Burma Rejects Appeal from Aung San Suu Kyi; Guardian (02 Oct 09) Burmese court rejects appeal against Aung San Suu Kyi house arrest

¹² AFP (02 Oct 09) Myanmar judges reject Suu Kyi's appeal: lawyers

¹³ DPA (16 Oct 09) Myanmar opposition leader to appeal sentence at Supreme Court; Irrawaddy (16 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Meets Lawyers to Discuss Appeal; Mizzima News (16 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi meets lawyers

¹⁴ AFP (03 Oct 09) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi meets with junta minister; AP (03 Oct 09) Myanmar junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; UPI (05 Oct 09) Suu Kyi in offer to help lift sanctions; VOA (03 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi Meets With Burmese Official; Irrawaddy (03 Oct 09) Suu Kyi, Junta Liaison Officer Hold Meeting; BBC (03 Oct 09) Suu Kyi in Burma government talks; NLM (03 Oct 09) Relations Minister U Aung Kyi meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (03 Oct 09) Junta's Liaison Minister meets Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (07 Oct 09) Myanmar official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; AFP (07 Oct 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi meets junta minister: official; Reuters (07 Oct 09) Myanmar minister meets detained democracy icon Suu Kyi; DPA (07 Oct 09) Myanmar opposition leader meets junta liaison for more talks; VOA (07 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi Meets With Burmese Government Minister; Xinhua (07 Oct 09) Myanmar gov't arranges meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi: official; DVB (08 Oct 09) Suu Kyi meets again with junta official; Mizzima News (07 Oct 09) Juntas Liaison Minister meets Aung San Suu Kyi again; Irrawaddy (07 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Meets Junta Liaison Again; IANS (07 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi meets Myanmar junta representative; Irrawaddy (08 Oct 09) Suu Kyi, Than Shwe meeting rumors increase

¹⁵ AP (09 Oct 09) Myanmar democracy leader Suu Kyi meets diplomats; AFP (09 Oct 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi, diplomats discuss sanctions: US; DPA (09 Oct 09) Myanmar opposition leader holds rare talks with diplomats – Summary; DPA (09 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi on 'remarkable form,' says British envoy; CNN (09 Oct 09) Myanmar allows Suu Kyi to meet diplomats; BBC (09 Oct 09) Burma's Suu Kyi in diplomat talks; ABC (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi meets Western diplomats; Guardian (09 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi meets western diplomats; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi, Western Diplomats Hold Meeting; DVB (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi meets with Western diplomats; DVB (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi led 'fact-finding' meeting with diplomats; Belfast Telegraph (10 Oct 09) Burma's generals allow envoys to meet Suu Kyi; NYT (09 Oct 09) Burmese dissident leader meets Western diplomats

¹⁶ Mizzima News (09 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi discusses sanctions with diplomats; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Discusses Sanctions with Diplomats; Chinland Guardian (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Prepared to Reassess Impacts of Sanctions; Mizzima News (09 Oct 09) Senior NLD leaders to meet foreign diplomats

- **14 October:** A delegation of about 20 European diplomats met with six NLD Central Executive Committee members to discuss the party's position on sanctions and the SPDC's planned 2010 elections.¹⁷
- **20 October:** US Charge d'Affaires Larry Dinger and two other officials from the US Embassy met with a group of NLD Central Executive Committee members to discuss the new US Burma policy as well as the NLD position on sanctions and the 2010 elections.¹⁸

More ethnic groups oppose 2010 elections

In October, more pro-democracy and ethnic nationality organizations voiced their opposition to the SPDC's planned 2010 elections and the 2008 constitution.

- **5 October:**
 - The Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) issued a statement saying that it did not support the SPDC's planned 2010 elections. The statement clarified a previous unauthorized statement from the ENC that appeared to endorse the elections.¹⁹
 - The National Democratic Front (NDF) released a statement that reaffirmed its opposition to the 2010 elections.²⁰
 - The Karen National Union (KNU) issued a statement that denounced the 2010 elections, saying that the polls will only escalate repression and instability.²¹
- **10 October:** Exiled pro-democracy groups National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB), Women's League of Burma (WLB), Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB), and the Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF) announced their boycott of the 2010 elections.²²
- **12 October:** The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) issued a statement that rejected the 2010 elections. The statement said that the new government elected out of the 2010 elections would not act in the interests of the people.²³
- **13 October:** The Kachin National Organization (KNO) released a statement that opposed the 2010 elections because the 2008 constitution does not protect the rights of ethnic nationalities.²⁴
- **24 October:** The Zomi National Congress (ZNC) issued a statement that said it would not participate in the 2010 elections unless the SPDC fully reviews the 2008 constitution.²⁵

Ceasefire groups resist BGF ultimatum

On 31 October, the deadline passed for ethnic ceasefire groups to respond to the SPDC ultimatum to ceasefire groups that they transform their militaries into SPDC Army-controlled Border Guard Forces (BGFs). The SPDC stepped up its psychological war against the ceasefire groups in Shan State in October spreading rumors that it had concluded separate deals with the United Wa State Army (UWSA), and the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) aka Mongla.²⁶

On 28 October, representatives from the UWSA and NDAA met with SPDC officials in Lashio and Kengtung respectively. While the NDAA reportedly agreed in principle to the BGF ultimatum, they said that compromises from the SPDC were necessary. The UWSA said that negotiations would proceed only after the SPDC Army withdrew all battalions from Wa-controlled areas.²⁷

¹⁷ Mizzima News (14 Oct 09) EU diplomats meet NLD leaders; DVB (15 Oct 09) Opposition party meets with Western envoys; Chinland Guardian (14 Oct 09) EU Envoys Meet with NLD leaders

¹⁸ Mizzima News (20 Oct 09) US Charge d'Affaires meets with opposition leaders; DPA (21 Oct 09) US assistant secretary of state to visit Myanmar, says opposition; Irrawaddy (21 Oct 09) NLD Hosts US Chargé d'affaires; Mizzima News (21 Oct 09) US Assistant Secretary of State to visit Burma; DVB (21 Oct 09) US deputy secretary of state to visit Burma

¹⁹ Mizzima News (06 Oct 09) Ethnic Nationalities Council chair clarifies groups' position

²⁰ Irrawaddy (06 Oct 09) ENC Calls on US to Back 2010 Election; Mizzima News (06 Oct 09) Ethnic Nationalities Council chair clarifies groups' position

²¹ Mizzima News (06 Oct 09) Ethnic Nationalities Council chair clarifies groups' position; Irrawaddy (06 Oct 09) ENC Calls on US to Back 2010 Election; DVB (06 Oct 09) Karen group clarifies election stance

²² Chinland Guardian (10 Oct 09) Exile Opposition Alliances to Boycott Burma's 2010 Election

²³ Mizzima News (15 Oct 09) Ethnic groups grapple with election strategy

²⁴ Kachin National Organization (13 Oct 09) Kachin National Organization Political Pronouncement

²⁵ Khonumthung News (27 Oct 09) ZNC demands review of constitution before contesting polls

²⁶ SHAN (19 Oct 09) The ceasefire armies: Once bitten, once shy?; SHAN (03 Oct 09) Junta waging war of nerves

²⁷ SHAN (28 Oct 09) Wa, Mongla meet junta; Irrawaddy (29 Oct 09) Wa and Mongla Stand Firm on Border Guard Question

On 9 October, a senior official in Thailand's National Security Council (NSC) warned that as many as 200,000 refugees from Burma could flood into northern Thailand if fighting breaks out between the SPDC and UWSA.²⁸

Pro-junta ceasefire groups incorporated into BGF

While the larger ceasefire groups continue to resist the SPDC, the regime began incorporating smaller ethnic armed forces into BGFs and militias.

- **Early October:** The New Democratic Army - Kachin (NDA-K) began converting its forces into three BGF battalions of around 900 NDA-K soldiers and 81 SPDC Army personnel.²⁹
- **11 October:** It was reported that the newly installed SPDC-proxy Kokang leadership had already formed its first BGF unit.³⁰
- **16 October:** Lasang Awng Wa Peace Group, a Kachin Independence Army splinter group officially transformed into a SPDC Army-controlled local militia group. The new militia comprises of two units with 30 personnel each.³¹

ASEAN, US, and EU pledge new aid

In October, ASEAN, US and EU launched new aid initiatives to address post-Nargis recovery and human security.

- **2 October:** The ASEAN Tripartite Core Group announced that it will hold a Post-Nargis Assistance Conference (PONAC) to raise more funds to address critical needs of cyclone Nargis survivors. The PONAC scheduled for 25 November in Bangkok, aims to mobilize US\$ 103 million to tackle critical gaps in the post-Nargis relief effort.³²
- **8 October:** The US pledged US\$10 million to Burma through international NGOs for post-Nargis recovery programs.³³
- **Late October:** The EU pledged 35 million Euros (US\$51.5 million) towards the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust (LIFT) Fund.³⁴ Intended to run for five years, LIFT is aimed at improving human security in Arakan, Shan, Kachin, and Chin States.³⁵

Rat rampage reaches Kachin and Arakan States

Recent reports indicated that the ongoing rat infestation that has plagued Chin State and caused widespread crop destruction and food shortages also spread to Kachin and Arakan States. During October, the following incidents were noted:

- **16 October:** It was reported that mice infestation has destroyed paddy fields in villages in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State. The crop destruction has affected about 300 households since July.³⁶
- **19 October:** The Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC) reported that there are currently about 20,000 people from over 69 Kachin villages in Sumprabum Township were contending with problems of food shortages because rats had destroyed their rice and other crops.³⁷

²⁸ Irrawaddy (09 Oct 09) Defeating the Wa would Win Wide Applause

²⁹ NMG (23 Oct 09) Army camps for NDA-K demarcated; Kachin News Group (22 Oct 09) Burmese Army imparts training to NDA-K soldiers; DVB (20 Oct 09) Kachin group sends troops for border guard training; Kachin News Group (28 Oct 09) Retired communist soldiers inducted by NDA-K for BGF

³⁰ SHAN (12 Oct 09) SSA patron passes away

³¹ Kachin News Group (19 Oct 09) Split KIO/KIA faction officially transforms to militia group; Mizzima News (20 Oct 09) Kachin splinter group converted to people's militia

³² Mizzima News (02 Oct 09) ASEAN to raise US\$ 103 million for post-Nargis activities; ReliefWeb (28 Oct 09) ASEAN foreign ministers call for more funds for post-Nargis activities

³³ Xinhua (09 Oct 09) U.S. to provide more fund for post-Nargis recovery in Myanmar

³⁴ FT (20 Oct 09) €35m EU aid signals fresh approach to Burma

³⁵ FT (20 Oct 09) €35m EU aid signals fresh approach to Burma; Bangkok Post (22 Oct 09) EU launches Burma aid fund

³⁶ Mizzima News (16 Oct 09) Mice menace causes food scarcity in Arakan State

³⁷ Kachin News Group (19 Oct 09) No relief for famine hit Kachin hills yet

Burmese heroin still a threat to the region

On 21 October, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released a new report titled “Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: the Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium.”³⁸ Although the focus of the report was on opium and heroin production in Afghanistan, the report included the following information on the regional impact of Burma’s opium and heroin production:

- Heroin users in China (2.2 million) and India (0.81 million) use heroin produced mainly in Burma.
- Most heroin in China continues to be produced in and trafficked from Burma and the Laos. According to the 2008 report of China’s National Narcotics Control Commission, Burma and Laos are the primary sources of foreign-produced drugs in China.
- Chinese heroin wholesalers pay around US\$98,000 to Chinese/Burma traffickers for a kilogram of heroin at the China/Burma border and sell it to retailers in China for around US\$130,000 per kilogram.³⁹

In addition, the increased flow of heroin from Burma into Thailand is evidenced by a marked increase in heroin seizures. Heroin seizures by Thai police in Northern Thailand have increased more than 2,100% from last year. In the 10 months to August, the authorities seized 1,268 kilograms up from 57 kilograms a year earlier.⁴⁰

Region/country		Heroin users	Opium users	Heroin consumption (tons)	Opium consumption (tons)	Total opiate consumption (tons of opium equivalent)
Major distribution destinations of Myanmar and Laos heroin production	Myanmar	66,000	67,000	1.3	7.0	20.1
	China	2,254,000	119,000	45.0	12.0	458.2
	India	871,000	674,000	17.0	67.0	239.8
	Oceania	32,500	52,000	2.0	5.0	23.4
	Asia (except India, China, Myanmar)	852,000	1,118,500	17.0	75.0	245.0
	Sub total	4,075,500	2,030,500	82	166	986.6

Source: UNODC (October 2009) Addiction, Crime and Insurgency - The transnational threat of Afghan opium

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights situation “alarming”

On 22 October, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that the human rights situation in the country remained “alarming.” Ojea Quintana said there was a pattern of widespread and systematic human rights violations in Burma and noted that the regime’s prevailing impunity allowed for the continuation of abuses.⁴¹ The Special Rapporteur asked the SPDC to release all political prisoners and guarantee freedom of speech, movement, and association in order to ensure “fair and transparent” elections in 2010.⁴² Ojea Quintana also said he would make his third visit to Burma from 22 to 27 November.⁴³

Arrests

- **3 October:** Special Branch police in Rangoon arrested women activists Naw Ohn Hla, Myint Myint San, Cho Cho Lwin, and Ma Cho after they returned from a prayer vigil for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Magwe Monastery in Rangoon’s South Dagon Township.⁴⁴
- **26 October:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon’s Dagon Township arrested Ka Gyi, Zaw Gyi, Lai Ron, Shwe Moe, Aung Myat Kyaw Thu, and Thant Zin Soe. All six are members of the cyclone Nargis

³⁸ CNN (21 Oct 09) World failing to dent heroin trade, U.N. warns

³⁹ UNODC (October 2009) Addiction, Crime and Insurgency - The transnational threat of Afghan opium

⁴⁰ Irrawaddy (26 Oct 09) Will the Junta and Wa Compromise?

⁴¹ UN News Center (22 Oct 09) Myanmar: UN expert urges release of all political prisoners before elections; Reuters (22 Oct 09) UN Slams Myanmar, N.Korea, Palestinian Rights Ills; Irrawaddy (23 Oct 09) Release Political Prisoners before Elections: UN Official

⁴² UN News Center (22 Oct 09) Myanmar: UN expert urges release of all political prisoners before elections; Irrawaddy (23 Oct 09) Release Political Prisoners before Elections: UN Official; ZeeNews (24 Oct 09) UN envoy asks Myanmar’s junta to release political prisoners

⁴³ Irrawaddy (23 Oct 09) Release Political Prisoners before Elections: UN Official

⁴⁴ Mizzima News (05 Oct 09) Four women activists arrested by special branch

relief group Lin Let Kye [Shining Star]. Thant Zin Soe is also the editor of the Foreign Affairs weekly journal.⁴⁵

- **27 October:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Dagon Township arrested 23-year-old freelance journalist and Lin Let Kye member Pai Soe Oo.⁴⁶

Prison sentences

- **Early October:** An SPDC court sentenced 12 farmers from Allen Township, Magwe Division, to prison terms with hard labor which ranged from nine months to four years and nine months. The farmers were convicted of trespassing because they worked on land that had been confiscated by regime.⁴⁷
- **6 October:** An SPDC court sentenced Generation Wave member Nyein Chan to 10 years in prison for violation of the Electronics Act. The sentence was in addition to an eight-year sentence imposed in February for distributing leaflets to mark the one-year anniversary of the founding of the Generation Wave.⁴⁸
- **13 October:** A court in Insein prison sentenced 10 political activists and one Buddhist monk to prison terms for participating in the September 2007 anti-junta protests. The court sentenced monk U Sandimar and political activists Kyaw Zin Min aka Zaw Moe, Wunna Nwe, and Zin Min Shein to 10 years and activists Saw Maung, Aung Moe Lwin, Moe Htet Nay, Tun Lin Aung, Zaw Latt, Naing Win, and Tun Lin Oo to five years.⁴⁹ U Sandimar, Wunna Nwe, and Tun Lin Aung will now serve a total of 18 years each, while Saw Maung and Zin Min Shein will serve a total of 13 and 23 years respectively.⁵⁰
- **26 October:** A court in Rangoon sentenced activist Tin Htut Paing to 15 years in prison for putting up a poster that called for the release of political prisoners in Burma.⁵¹

Custodial death

On 8 October, a police officer and a former SPDC local official in Rangoon's North Okkalapa Township beat 56-year-old Kyawt Maung to death. Kyawt Maung had gone to the local police station to inquire about his son, pro-democracy activist Thet Oo Maung, who had been detained a day earlier.⁵²

Freedom of information

On 20 October, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) released its annual press freedom index. Burma ranked 171 out of the 175 countries surveyed - one place lower than last year. RSF said that journalists in Burma were still facing intimidation, imprisonment, and censorship.⁵³

Religious freedom

On 26 October, the latest US State Department report on global religious freedom listed Burma among the worst offenders.⁵⁴ The report's findings included:⁵⁵

- The SPDC arrested and imprisoned Buddhist monks who opposed the military regime.
- The SPDC restricted worship for non-Buddhist groups and continued to prohibit the building and repairing of churches and mosques.
- The SPDC subjected religious activities and organizations to restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

⁴⁵ Mizzima News (28 Oct 09) Nargis volunteers, including reporter arrested

⁴⁶ Mizzima News (28 Oct 09) Nargis volunteers, including reporter arrested

⁴⁷ DVB (19 Oct 09) Twelve farmers sentenced with hard labour

⁴⁸ DVB (07 Oct 09) Youth activist's sentence extended by 10 years

⁴⁹ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 09) 11 Political Activists Sentenced at Insein Prison; DVB (15 Oct 09) Monk among 11 activists sentenced

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 09) 11 Political Activists Sentenced at Insein Prison; DVB (15 Oct 09) Monk among 11 activists sentenced

⁵¹ DVB (28 Oct 09) 15-year sentence for displaying a poster

⁵² Mizzima News (13 Oct 09) Police beats man to death; Mizzima News (15 Oct 09) Police brutality case under investigation

⁵³ RSF (20 Oct 09) Press Freedom Index 2009; DVB (20 Oct 09) Burma drops in press freedom index; Mizzima News (20 Oct 09)

No signs of improvement for Burma's media community

⁵⁴ Reuters (26 Oct 09) U.S. sees "mixed picture" on world religious liberty

⁵⁵ US Department of State (26 Oct 09) 2009 Report on International Religious Freedom

- The regime severely restricted the movements of Muslims across Burma. SPDC authorities generally did not grant travel permission to Rohingya or Muslims in Arakan State for any purpose.
- Rohingya and Muslims in Arakan State continued to experience the most severe forms of legal, economic, educational, and social discrimination at the hands of the regime.
- Non-Buddhists continued to experience employment discrimination at the upper levels of civil service and the military.

Meanwhile, the regime continued to keep monasteries under close scrutiny following the All Burma Monks' Alliance's (ABMA's) 3 October deadline for the SPDC to apologize for its brutal crackdown on monks in September 2007. The ABMA said it would start another boycott of alms offered by military personnel if the regime refused to apologize.⁵⁶ SPDC authorities threatened monks who joined the boycott with arrest and prohibited them to leave the monasteries after 9 pm.⁵⁷ In Rangoon, the regime stepped up surveillance in and around monasteries.⁵⁸

Forced labor builds border fence with Bangladesh

The SPDC's abuse of Rohingya in Arakan State intensified with the resumption of the building of the Burma-Bangladesh border fence in early October. [See below *Burma-Bangladesh crisis*] On 28 October it was reported that the SPDC Army ordered 200 Rohingya in Northern Arakan State to perform forced labor for the border fence construction each day.⁵⁹ Other forced labor incidents included:

- **Since the beginning of October:** The SPDC Army has been using Khami villagers from Burma's Western border area to perform forced labor in the construction of army outposts along the Burma-Bangladesh border.⁶⁰
- **17 October:** Na Sa Ka Area 7 forces forced villagers in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, to build a pagoda.⁶¹

DISPLACEMENT

Number of IDPs rising

On 29 October, the Thailand Burma Border Consortium released its annual survey on IDPs titled "Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma." According to the report, between August 2008 and July 2009 the SPDC destroyed or forcibly relocated 120 villages and forced at least 75,000 people to leave their homes, up from 66,000 in the last reporting period (up 13.6%).⁶² The total number of IDPs in Eastern Burma increased to 470,000 from 451,000.⁶³

SPDC and Bangladesh use Rohingya as pawns

Territorial disputes between the SPDC and Bangladesh caught Rohingya in the crossfire. On 10 October, Bangladeshi authorities warned that Na Sa Ka had gathered about 10,000 Rohingya along the border, threatening to force them into Bangladesh.⁶⁴ On the other side of the border, Bangladesh forced more than 200 Rohingya back into Burma in October.⁶⁵ So far this year, Bangladesh has pushed at least 1,200 Rohingya back to Burma.⁶⁶

⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (02 Oct 09) Rangoon under Tight Security Again; Irrawaddy (03 Oct 09) Suu Kyi, Junta Liaison Officer Hold Meeting; Mizzima News (05 Oct 09) Four women activists arrested by special branch

⁵⁷ DVB (02 Oct 09) Monks demand US policy 'timeline' as threats continue

⁵⁸ Irrawaddy (03 Oct 09) Suu Kyi, Junta Liaison Officer Hold Meeting

⁵⁹ Irrawaddy (28 Oct 09) Rohingyas Forced to Work on Border Fence

⁶⁰ Narinjara News (11 Oct 09) Forced Labor Used for Military Outpost Construction

⁶¹ Kachin News Group (19 Oct 09) No relief for famine hit Kachin hills yet

⁶² TBBC (29 Oct 09) Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma – 2009 Survey

⁶³ TBBC (29 Oct 09) Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma – 2009 Survey

⁶⁴ Daily Star (11 Oct 09) Troops all alert on Myanmar front; IANS (11 Oct 09) Dhaka deploys more troops as tension mounts at Myanmar border; IANS (16 Oct 09) Hundreds being tossed across Bangladesh-Myanmar border: Report

⁶⁵ Kaladan News (02 Oct 09) Forty four Arakanese Rohingya Muslims pushed back into Burma; Daily Star (13 Oct 09) 18 Myanmar citizens arrested in Bandarban; Kaladan News (15 Oct 09) Over 80 Rohingya pushed back to Burma; Narinjara News (15 Oct 09) Forty four Burmese nationals held in Bangladesh; Kaladan News (16 Oct 09) Over 27 unregistered Arakanese Rohingya refugees pushed back;

Burmese migrants in Thailand

Thailand's new policy of requiring migrant workers to verify their nationality before registering for legal status with the Labor Ministry has run into trouble since being introduced in July. Of the 3 million Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, only 2,000 have gone through the process because they fear harassment and arrest from the SPDC.⁶⁷ The Labor Ministry set the deadline for nationality verification for 28 February 2010. After that date, those who are unverified are subject to arrest and deportation.⁶⁸

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Burma-Bangladesh crisis

In events that mirror a confrontation between the SPDC and Bangladesh over the resource rich Bay of Bengal in November of 2008, tensions began to heighten between the two countries when SPDC Army soldiers resumed construction of a fence along the Burma-Bangladesh border on 2 October.⁶⁹ [See *November 2008 Burma Bulletin*]

On 8 October, Bangladeshi officials inflamed the situation when it notified both India and Burma of their intent to resolve longstanding disputes over the maritime boundaries with the two countries in the Bay of Bengal through compulsory arbitration under the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.⁷⁰ On 9 October, the SPDC responded by sending nine SPDC Army battalions to the border with Bangladesh.⁷¹ The SPDC also sent: fighter aircraft to Akyab; artillery and tanks to the border; and 12 warships; and a frigate to the Bay of Bengal.⁷² Bangladesh reacted to the SPDC's provocations by deploying three army battalions to the border and increased its naval presence in the Bay of Bengal.⁷³

Despite the remarks by Bangladeshi FM Dipu Moni that downplayed SPDC Army troop movements along the border as a routine movement of security personnel, Bangladeshi Rifles (BDR) Director-General Maj Gen Mainul Islam and intelligence agencies said that the border situation remained tense.⁷⁴ On 12 and 13 October, the SPDC and Bangladesh navies dispatched more warships in the Bay of Bengal.⁷⁵

Switzerland and East Timor join calls for arms embargo

On 5 October, Switzerland said it supported a global arms embargo against the SPDC and called on all nations to stop exporting armaments to the regime.⁷⁶ On 12 October, East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta called for a UN Security Council-mandated arms embargo on the SPDC. Ramos-Horta said that there can be no justification for selling arms to a regime which has no external threats and uses those arms simply to suppress its own people.⁷⁷

Kaladan News (20 Oct 09) Over 51 Arakanese Rohingya arrested on Bangladesh-Burma border; Kaladan News (24 Oct 09) Push back of Rohingya continues

⁶⁶ Irrawaddy (16 Oct 09) Bangladesh Expels Rohingyas

⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 09) Burmese Minister Tells Migrant Workers Not to Fear Harassment; Mizzima News (15 Oct 09) Only 2,000 Burmese migrant workers verify nationality

⁶⁸ Bangkok Post (18 Oct 09) Despite a new nationality verification programme

⁶⁹ Daily Star (04 Oct 09) Myanmar border tense again

⁷⁰ AHN (08 Oct 09) Bangladesh goes for U.N. tribunal to settle maritime dispute with India, Myanmar

⁷¹ Narinjara News (08 Oct 09) Burma Reinforces Troops Along Border; Daily Star (11 Oct 09) Troops all alert on Myanmar front

⁷² Daily Star (12 Oct 09) Myanmar brings in everything

⁷³ Reuters (11 Oct 09) Myanmar builds troops on border, says Bangladesh; Irrawaddy (12 Oct 09) Burma, Bangladesh in Warship Standoff

⁷⁴ Daily Star (12 Oct 09) Myanmar brings in everything

⁷⁵ Mizzima News (15 Oct 09) Burma, Bangladesh warships swarm over disputed zone

⁷⁶ Mizzima News (07 Oct 09) Campaigners demand global arms embargo against Burma

⁷⁷ DVB (13 Oct 09) East Timor calls for Burma arms embargo

ECONOMY

Burmese timber exports to China

On 21 October, environmental watchdog Global Witness issued a report titled “A Disharmonious Trade.” The report stated that while imports of timber into China have dropped in the past three years, 90% of the timber imported into China’s Yunnan Province in 2008 was from illegal sources, the vast majority of which came from Burma.⁷⁸ The report said that smuggling from Burma, which has 60% of the world’s teak, continued to pose a threat to one of the world’s last virgin forests.⁷⁹

Mobile phones allowed in Naypyidaw, but few can afford them

On 22 October, the SPDC for the first time permitted the use of mobile phones in Naypyidaw. The SPDC had previously banned the use of mobile phones for security reasons.⁸⁰ Despite the easing of restrictions, few Burmese are likely to be able to afford the 1.55 million kyat (US\$1,500) for a phone number.⁸¹

SPDC gem sales

On 2 October, the regime announced that a September pearl auction in Naypyidaw fetched 798 million kyat (US\$760,000) in revenue for the SPDC, the highest ever.⁸² On 25 October, the two-week gem auction opened in Rangoon, putting on sale gems, jade, pearl, and jewelry.⁸³

SPDC trade deepens with Bangladesh, Thailand, and Sudan

In October, the SPDC deepened economic relations with its neighbors and beyond.

- **6 October:** The SPDC and Bangladesh agreed to establish a direct banking system between the two countries in a bid to facilitate bilateral trade.⁸⁴
- **6 October:** The Thai cabinet approved the construction of a second Thai-Burma Friendship Bridge over the Moei River as the first stage in developing a border economic zone in Mae Sot.⁸⁵
- **12 October:** The SPDC and Sudan agreed to boost bilateral relations, including cooperation on investment and energy sectors during meetings between SPDC Deputy Foreign Minister Maung Myint and his Sudanese counterpart Ali Ahmad Karti in Naypyidaw.⁸⁶

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN OCTOBER

2	Dr Tin Myo Win conducts a medical check up on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her lakeside home.
3	Six SPDC Army soldiers from IB 105 shoot dead one of their commanding officers near Loiye in Southern Kachin State.
3	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s lawyers Nyan Win and Kyi Win agree to defend Burma-born American citizen Nyi Nyi Aung.
3	SPDC authorities order Rohingya villagers to vacate 92 homes in Akyab Township, Arakan State, within

⁷⁸ Global Witness (21 Oct 09) A Disharmonious Trade; AP (21 Oct 09) : Myanmar timber still smuggled to China

⁷⁹ Global Witness (21 Oct 09) A Disharmonious Trade; Guardian (22 Oct 09) Decline in Burmese timber smuggling across Chinese border, figures show

⁸⁰ DVB (23 Oct 09) Mobile phones allowed in Burma’s secretive capital; DPA (22 Oct 09) Mobile phones allowed in Myanmar’s capital

⁸¹ AFP (22 Oct 09) Myanmar allows first mobile phones in remote capital

⁸² Bernama (02 Sep 09) Myanmar Pearl Auction Registers New Record Of Proceed

⁸³ Xinhua (25 Oct 09) Mid-year gems emporium opens in Yangon

⁸⁴ Mizzima News (07 Oct 09) Burma urged to open LCs with Bangladeshi banks directly; Mizzima News (06 Oct 09) Burmese team in Bangladesh for direct banking facilities; Kaladan News (06 Oct 09) Meeting to improve bilateral trade between Bangladesh-Burma in Dhaka; AHN (03 Oct 09) Myanmar’s Team Heads To Bangladesh For Bilateral Trade Expansion; Kaladan News (07 Oct 09) Meeting to improve bilateral trade between Bangladesh-Burma in Dhaka; AHN (07 Oct 09) Bangladesh urges Myanmar to establish direct banking link for trade

⁸⁵ DVB (08 Oct 09) Thailand approves border economic zone; Mizzima News (07 Oct 09) Thailand approves second friendship with Burma on Moei River

⁸⁶ Xinhua (12 Oct 09) Myanmar, Sudan to boost bilateral ties; Sudan Times (13 Oct 09) Sudan and Burma agree to boost relations

	a month because of border fence construction.
3	Japan's FM Katsuya Okada urges the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in the country before the general elections set for next year.
5	UNDP 2009 Human Development Report labels Burma an "extreme case" regarding internal migration, saying that over 500,000 people are beyond the reach of humanitarian assistance.
6	Bhornchart Bunnag, Director of Thailand's Bureau of Border Security Affairs and Defense at the National Security Council, says that Thailand will not forcibly repatriate Burmese refugees residing along the border provinces, even after the 2010 elections.
7	UN official says that more than half of the US\$2 million allocated to Burma in 2007 by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime was not monitored.
7	Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest a 68-year-old Rohingya villager on false charges of marrying a local woman.
9	SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe confirms that the SPDC will hold general elections in 2010 in a speech to the Myanmar War Veterans Organization.
9	SPDC Health Ministry says that a total of 56 swine flu cases have been confirmed in Burma since the worldwide outbreak of the disease in April.
12	Australia's Specialty Fashion Group halts trading with Burmese companies and sourcing products from Burma in response to a Burma Campaign Australia report criticizing Australian companies doing business in Burma.
12	The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry says it will open an office in China.
12	Indian Army Chief Gen Deepak Kapoor meets with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe and SPDC Vice-Chairman Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye in Naypyidaw.
13	SPDC Deputy FM Maung Myint insists that Burmese migrant workers in Thailand who have to return to Burma to obtain temporary passports will not be subject to harassment or the threat of arrest.
14	Nyi Nyi Aung appears before the Rangoon's Mingaladon court to face charges of fraud and forgery.
15	Lt Gen NK Singh, General Officer Commanding of the 3rd Corps based in Rangapahar Military Station in Nagaland, Northeast India, says that Indian rebels have camps in Burma.
16	KNU and DKBA Army representatives begin ceasefire talks in Duplaya District, Karen State.
17	An unknown assailant shoots dead a 45-year-old local SPDC village secretary in Namkham, Northern Shan State.
19	Burmese civil society groups with the Task Force on ASEAN and Burma call on ASEAN to address the SPDC's violations of the regional body's Charter.
19	Fifty-one human rights and environmental groups at the APF in Cha-am, Thailand, submit a petition to the Thai government calling for it to halt the construction of dams on the Salween River.
19	KNU General Secretary Naw Si Pho Ra Sein rules out a reunification with the DKBA after the conclusion of a meeting between KNU and DKBA representatives.
20	Na Sa Ka authorities in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, order 92 Rohingya families of Bakkagona Village to vacate their homes within a month.
21	US Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Congressman Dana Rohrabacher express opposition to the Obama administration's policy of engaging the SPDC.
22	NLD says it cannot call a general meeting due to the SPDC's restrictions on the party's political activities.
22	Unknown assailants in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, kill a 27-year-old local Na Sa Ka collaborator.
22	China puts up posters in Burma-China border cities to warn its citizens not to go to Burma and to refrain from investing or becoming involved in business ventures in Burma.
23	SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein assures Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva that Burma will not allow anyone opposing Thailand to use its soil to attack Thailand.
24	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi marks a total of 14 years in detention.
24	At least 10 bombs explode in the Laogai area in Northern Shan State's Kokang region. No casualties are reported.
24	Na Sa Ka authorities in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, order Rohingya families in Horitala village to vacate 28 houses.
24	Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao meets with SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein and tells him that he hopes Burma will achieve stability, national reconciliation, and development.
24	East Asia Summit chairman statement calls for free, fair and inclusive elections in 2010 in Burma.
25	Bangladeshi government announces measures to reduce the influx of Rohingya from Burma which include turning over any arrested Rohingya to BDR immediately.
26	Charge d'Affairs of the US embassy in Rangoon Larry Dinger meets with SPDC Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Maj Gen Htay Oo.

27	Over 300 Australian women, including the PM's wife, gather outside the Opera House in Sydney to express their solidarity with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
27	Thai security forces raid the homes of 10 KNU and KNLA leaders in the border town of Mae Sot.
27	Kachin Development Networking Group urges state-owned China Power Investment Corporation to halt the Myitsone dam project on the Irrawaddy River in Kachin State.
28	Hundreds of demonstrators protest in front of various Chinese embassies and consulates around the world the proposed oil and gas pipeline from the Akyab, Burma, to China's Yunnan Province
29	Kyaw Thi of the Free Funeral Services Society defies order to appear at Rangoon's South Dagon Township court to answer charges that the FFSS is continuing to operate without authorization.
29	Nobel Peace Laureates Jody Williams and Mairead Maguire call for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and say that there cannot be credible elections if she is not freed.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN OCTOBER

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“Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma- 2009 Survey”, Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)

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“Press Freedom Index 2009”, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)

<http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html>

“2009 Report on International Religious Freedom”, US Department of State

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127266.htm>

“A Disharmonious Trade”, Global Witness

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“Resisting the flood”, Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)

<http://www.burmariversnetwork.org/images/stories/publications/english/ResistingtheFlood-1.pdf>

“Addiction, Crime and Insurgency - The transnational threat of Afghan opium”, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf