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- One year after the “Saffron Revolution”, monks across Burma continue to oppose the regime by boycotting members of the military and their families and carrying out peaceful protests against the junta.
- SPDC authorities intensify surveillance of monasteries, monks’ activities, and impose travel restrictions. Nine monks are arrested.
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi accepts food rations for the first time in a month and gets a health check-up. She also obtains small concessions from the SPDC.
- The regime arrests 66 dissidents, including 23 NLD members and one journalist. The junta also jails 13 activists.
- SPDC releases 9,002 prisoners, mostly criminals and army deserters, in an attempt to defuse international pressure at the UN General Assembly. Only ten of those released are political prisoners. Burma’s longest serving political prisoner Win Tin is among those released. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s personal assistant Win Htein is re-arrested 17 hours after his release.
- Desertions continue to hit the SPDC Army. The regime forcibly recruits troops and extorts money from villagers to buy arms.
- US report says that the SPDC has failed to combat illegal drugs and opium poppy productions.
- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon expresses frustration over the lack of political progress in Burma.
- ASEAN and UN say that the SPDC’s planned 2010 elections lack legitimacy.

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KEY STORY

“Saffron Revolution” one year on

One year after the “Saffron Revolution”, the spirit of the monk-led demonstrations that moved hundreds of thousands of people to hold protests throughout Burma and inspired hundreds of solidarity events around the globe lives on. Monks across Burma continued to oppose the regime by boycotting members of the military and their families and carrying out peaceful protests against the junta.

- **Early September:** Monks in Pakokku and Chauk, Magwe Division, said they would continue to refuse alms from SPDC officials.¹

¹ DVB (07 Sep 08) Pakokku monk vows to continue regime boycott; DVB (05 Sep 08) Directive orders monks to avoid political activity

- **16 September:** A 52-year-old monk from Ye Township, Mon State, attempted suicide at Rangoon's Shwedagon Pagoda. He was rushed to Rangoon General Hospital, where his condition remained stable.²
- **18 September:** About 60 monks gathered in three different locations in Akyab, Arakan State, to mark the first anniversary of the alms boycott against members of the military regime.³
- **24 September:** About 20 young monks from Ngaga monastery marched on the streets of Kyaukpri, Arakan State.⁴
- **25 September:** About 20 monks marched on the streets of Taunggoat, Arakan State.⁵
- **26 September:** About a dozen monks from Kaunn monastery in Rambree, Arakan State, peacefully marched to the local Township office.⁶
- **27 September:** Over 50 monks led a crowd of about 150 people in a silent march on the streets of Akyab to mark the first anniversary of the "Saffron Revolution."⁷

In the days leading up to the "Saffron Revolution" anniversary, the regime stepped up its presence in and around monasteries across Burma.⁸ SPDC authorities intensified surveillance of monks' activities and imposed travel restrictions.⁹ The SPDC imposed a curfew on several monasteries in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, and in Akyab, Arakan State.¹⁰ The state-run Sangha forced monks at 70 monasteries in Chauk Township, Magwe Division, to sign statements pledging that they would not get involved in political activities.¹¹

In September, the regime arrested nine monks. The regime also arrested two family members of detained monk leader U Gambira [See below *Arrests intensify*]

- **1 September:** Police in Rangoon's Taungnyunt Township arrested monk U Candima for allegedly planning anti-junta protests.¹²
- **1 September:** SPDC authorities in Pegu arrested three monks who were visiting Shwe Maw Daw pagoda.¹³
- **27 September:** SPDC authorities in Akyab arrested five monks in connection with the silent march that marked the first anniversary of the "Saffron Revolution."¹⁴ [See above]
- **Early September:** Police in Labutta Township, Irrawaddy Division, briefly detained for questioning a monk who joined villagers of Yway in a signature campaign to protest against their forcible relocation.¹⁵

On 19 September, the US State Department released its 10th Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, which once again named Burma as one of the eight "Countries of Particular Concern." The

² AP (18 Sep 08) Myanmar monk attempts suicide at famous temple; Mizzima News (18 Sep 08) Monk who attempted suicide in stable condition

³ DVB (19 Sep 08) Monks gather in Sittwe to mark anniversary of boycott

⁴ Kaladan News (29 Sep 08) Peaceful protest to mark 1st anniversary of saffron revolution in Arakan

⁵ Kaladan News (29 Sep 08) Peaceful protest to mark 1st anniversary of saffron revolution in Arakan

⁶ Kaladan News (29 Sep 08) Peaceful protest to mark 1st anniversary of saffron revolution in Arakan

⁷ AP (27 Sep 08) Monks in Myanmar mark crackdown anniversary; Narinjara News (28 Sep 08) Sittwe Monks Commemorate Saffron Revolution with Peaceful Demonstration; Mizzima News (27 Sep 08) Monks protest in Sittwe, western Burma

⁸ IMNA (01 Sep 08) Monks under restriction a year after protests against junta; Mizzima News (05 Sep 08) Junta warns monks to stay away from politics and protests; Irrawaddy (09 Sep 08) Commemoration of monk's death muted in Arakan State; Irrawaddy (17 Sep 08) Fourteen activists arrested; Irrawaddy (24 Sep 08) Burmese monks, dissidents targeted by junta; IMNA (25 Sep 08) Monks travelling to Rangoon subjected to rigorous checks; Kachin News Group (27 Sep 08) Police guard monasteries in Myitkyina

⁹ IMNA (01 Sep 08) Monks under restriction a year after protests against junta; DVB (05 Sep 08) Abbot detained in monastery raid; Mizzima News (05 Sep 08) Junta warns monks to stay away from politics and protests; Religious Intelligence (05 Sep 08) Burmese jail over 700 monks; Irrawaddy (17 Sep 08) Fourteen activists arrested; IMNA (22 Sep 08) Monks under close scrutiny during traditional festival; IMNA (25 Sep 08) Monks travelling to Rangoon subjected to rigorous checks

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (17 Sep 08) Fourteen activists arrested; Kachin News Group (27 Sep 08) Police guard monasteries in Myitkyina

¹¹ Mizzima News (05 Sep 08) Junta warns monks to stay away from politics and protests; DVB (05 Sep 08) Directive orders monks to avoid political activity; Irrawaddy (05 Sep 08) Junta Cracks Down on Monks, Activists

¹² IHT (07 Sep 08) Myanmar police: ringleaders of bomb plot arrested; NLM (08 Sep 08) According to ground information, bomb was planted by communication in-charge of Htantabin Township NLD Yan Shwe and group

¹³ IMNA (01 Sep 08) Monks under restriction a year after protests against junta

¹⁴ Kaladan News (29 Sep 08) Peaceful protest to mark 1st anniversary of saffron revolution in Arakan

¹⁵ DVB (10 Sep 08) Cyclone refugee charged after submitting petition

report said that the junta was systematically restricting efforts by the Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom.¹⁶

Military documents recently discovered revealed that during the “Saffron Revolution” SPDC Army troops were explicitly ordered to shoot those at the head of any demonstrations as well as anyone carrying cameras, video cameras or tape recorders.¹⁷

INSIDE BURMA

Daw Suu appeals detention

Speculation was rife in August and September over whether Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, now approaching her 13th year of detention, was on a hunger strike. It appeared that Daw Suu had refused food deliveries and reduced her food intake as part of a “low grade hunger strike” in order to secure greater freedom for her housekeeper and housekeeper’s daughter who were subjected to the same strict conditions of house arrest as she was.

- **1 September:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with her lawyer Kyi Win for the third time since early August to prepare an appeal against her detention.¹⁸ Kyi Win said Daw Suu was well but had lost some weight.¹⁹
- **3 September:** Kyi Win denied reports that Daw Suu had declined a visit from her personal physician and refused to meet with Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi.²⁰
- **7 September:** SPDC police chief Maj Gen Khin Yi denied Daw Suu was on a hunger strike.²¹
- **11 September:** Daw Suu met Kyi Win again to finalize the appeal against her detention.²²
- **12 September:** Kyi Win said Daw Suu obtained small concessions from the SPDC. The junta will now allow letters from her family, international news magazines, and will lift restrictions on the movement of her housekeeper Khin Khin Win and daughter.²³
- **14 September:** Daw Suu received a health check-up from her physician, Dr Tin Myo.²⁴
- **15 September:** Daw Suu accepted food rations for the first time in a month.²⁵

Anti-junta protests and campaigns

- **2 September:** Activists sprayed red paint on the walls of various buildings in Rangoon to commemorate the SPDC’s September 2007 repression of peaceful protests.²⁶
- **18 September:** Students with the All Kachin Students Union marked the 20th anniversary of the military coup by pasting over 400 posters in various public places in Myitkyina, Kachin State. The posters called for the immediate release of all political prisoners and the resumption of tripartite dialogue.²⁷

¹⁶ Mizzima News (22 Sep 08) Religious freedom hanging in the balance in Burma

¹⁷ Mainichi Daily News (29 Sep 08) Myanmar troops who killed Japanese journalist were following government orders

¹⁸ AP (01 Sep 08) Suu Kyi Continues to Shun Food Deliveries; Reuters (01 Sep 08) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi “well” after refusing food; Mizzima News (01 Sep 08) Aung San Suu Kyi is thin but well: lawyer; Mizzima News (02 Sep 08) Aung San Suu Kyi allowed rare meeting with lawyer; Irrawaddy (02 Sep 08) Suu Kyi continues legal battle

¹⁹ Mizzima News (01 Sep 08) Aung San Suu Kyi is thin but well: lawyer; DVB (01 Sep 08) Daw Suu holds third meeting with lawyer

²⁰ AFP (03 Sep 08) Suu Kyi rejects junta meeting: report; AP (04 Sep 08) Suu Kyi wants to meet Myanmar rep, says lawyer; Irrawaddy (03 Sep 08) Suu Kyi’s lawyer denies she won’t meet regime minister

²¹ AP (07 Sep 08) Myanmar says no sign of Suu Kyi hunger strike; Nation (07 Sep 08) Burma’s police chief clueless about Suu Kyi hunger strike; Mizzima News (08 Sep 08) Junta denies knowledge of Suu Kyi’s hunger strike

²² AFP (11 Sep 08) Suu Kyi meets again with lawyer: witnesses; AFP (11 Sep 08) Lawyer says Suu Kyi in good health; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 08) Suu Kyi meets her lawyer again; Mizzima News (11 Sep 08) Aung San Suu Kyi meets her lawyer again

²³ Reuters (12 Sep 08) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi to get family letters, news mags; AP (12 Sep 08) Myanmar’s junta grants Suu Kyi new rights; Guardian (12 Sep 08) Burma regime allows Suu Kyi to receive mail; DVB (12 Sep 08) Lawyer U Kyi Win ‘positive’ after Daw Suu visit; Irrawaddy (12 Sep 08) Suu Kyi Wins Concessions from the Regime; IHT (14 Sep 08) Myanmar loosens some strictures on Aung San Suu Kyi

²⁴ AFP (14 Sep 08) Aung San Suu Kyi meets doctor amid health worries; BBC Burmese Service (14 Sep 08) Doctor visits Aung San Suu Kyi; AFP (17 Sep 08) Ailing Suu Kyi accepts food

²⁵ AFP (16 Sep 08) Suu Kyi accepts food rations: Myanmar official

²⁶ DVB (04 Sep 08) Red paint campaign commemorates protests

²⁷ Kachin News Group (18 Sep 08) Anti-Regime Posters Mark 20th Anniversary Of Coup; Mizzima News (18 Sep 08) Burmese activists protest on 20th anniversary of coup

- **21-22 September:** Activists in Zeegone and Gyobingauk, Pegu Division, distributed real banknotes stamped with “Free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi”. Activists also distributed banknotes and leaflets bearing anti-junta slogans.²⁸

SPDC Army: Underpaid, understaffed, insecure

SPDC Army units in Arakan State continued to be hit by desertions due to low salaries and poor living conditions of soldiers. According to a report from the SPDC Army’s Military Operations Command No. 15 based in Buthidaung, over 100 soldiers deserted from the headquarters in the first six months of 2008.²⁹ On 24 September, six soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 270 and Artillery Battalion 373 deserted.³⁰ The desertions and the army’s failure to meet the annual recruitment quotas resulted in SPDC authorities in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, to force members of the local people’s militia to join the SPDC Army.³¹

In Mon State, lack of funds forced the SPDC Army Infantry Battalion No. 31 based in Khaw-za Sub Township, to extort money from local villagers to buy arms.³²

In an effort to prevent soldiers from supporting protesters, the SPDC Army Command in Rangoon warned all members of the armed forces and their families not to become involved in anti-junta demonstrations.³³

The regime continued its strategy of replacing civil servants with military officers. In September, it was reported that the SPDC dismissed at least 10 civil servants with the Ministry of Industry and 10 civil servants with the Department of Transport and replaced them with army officers.³⁴

Explosive September

- **6 September:** A bomb blast in Mebaung village, Hpa-an Township, Karen State, destroyed a hydropower generator and slightly injured a worker.³⁵
- **9 September:** An explosion on a bus driving through Rangoon’s Kamayut Township injured three people. It was not clear what caused the blast.³⁶
- **11 September:** Two bomb blasts in a video lounge in Kyaukkyi Township, Pegu Division, killed two people and injured nine.³⁷
- **25 September:** A bomb explosion outside Rangoon’s City Hall injured four people.³⁸ According to the state-run newspaper Myanma Ahlin, police defused a second bomb that was set to explode near the site of the earlier explosion.³⁹

On 7 September, SPDC police chief Brig Gen Khin Yi said authorities had arrested NLD members Yan Shwe and Zaw Zaw Aung and Human Rights Defenders and Promoters member Myint Aye in connection with the 1 July bomb blast outside a USDA office in Rangoon’s Shwepyithar Township.⁴⁰ [See *July 2008 Burma Bulletin*] On 8 September, the NLD rejected the SPDC’s accusation that members of the party were responsible for the bomb blast.⁴¹

²⁸ Mizzima News (22 Sep 08) Burmese currency notes used to demand Suu Kyi's freedom; DVB (23 Sep 08) Bago activists launch banknote campaign

²⁹ Narinjara News (09 Sep 08) People's militia forced to join Army

³⁰ Narinjara News (29 Sep 08) Six Deserters Surrender to Nasaka on Western Border

³¹ Narinjara News (09 Sep 08) People's militia forced to join Army

³² IMNA (16 Sep 08) Burmese battalion collects money to buy arms

³³ Irrawaddy (16 Sep 08) Junta Warns Soldiers against Demonstrations

³⁴ IMNA (20 Sep 08) Civil servants replaced by inexperienced army officers

³⁵ Xinhua (07 Sep 08) Official: Bomb blast destroys hydropower generator in Myanmar

³⁶ AFP (10 Sep 08) Three injured in a bus explosion in Myanmar: report; IHT (10 Sep 08) Report: Myanmar explosion injures 3; Irrawaddy (09 Sep 08) Three Injured in Rangoon Bus Blast

³⁷ AP (14 Sep 08) Newspaper: 2 bomb blasts in central Myanmar kill 2; Mizzima News (12 Sep 08) Two killed nine injured in explosion in Burma's Pegu division

³⁸ Reuters (25 Sep 08) Yangon bomb wounds 4 as protest anniversary looms; Mizzima News (25 Sep 08) Rangoon General Hospital confirms receiving four injured from bomb blast

³⁹ AP (26 Sep 08) Report: Myanmar police defused 2nd bomb in Yangon

⁴⁰ AFP (07 Sep 08) Myanmar Junta Accuses Suu Kyi's Party Over Bombing; Mizzima News (08 Sep 08) Opposition denies junta's accusation of terrorism

⁴¹ Mizzima News (08 Sep 08) Opposition denies junta's accusation of terrorism

Cyclone recovery

Corruption: Private donors continued to distribute food and shelter materials to cyclone-affected areas of the Irrawaddy delta.⁴² At the same time, SPDC officials continued to profit from stolen aid. SPDC Army soldiers resold donated fertilizer intended for the delta to farmers in Mon State.⁴³ In Labutta, relief workers reportedly shopped for supplies at a market stocked with confiscated shelter materials and food items.⁴⁴

Farmers: Farmers in cyclone-affected areas are in debt and still struggle with poor rice harvests, caused by late planting, bad seed stock, and salt-damaged land.⁴⁵ SPDC local authorities informed farmers that their land would be confiscated if they did not succeed in growing rice this year.⁴⁶ Despite predictions that Burma's total rice production this year could be down anywhere from 20% to 70%, the SPDC continued to export rice to Bangladesh.⁴⁷

Health: Four months after the cyclone hit, UNICEF warned that the inability to clean water storage facilities before the onset of the dry season posed a major health risk, particularly to children.⁴⁸

IDPs: Cyclone survivors are still sheltered in makeshift huts and rely on food and other assistance from humanitarian workers.⁴⁹ Survivors at Three-Mile and Five-Mile camps in Labutta Township were resettled in bamboo shelters in new sites at Panae Tong and Mingone Tong.⁵⁰ Aid workers complained that the relocation sites were isolated. In addition, the new sites were under military guard and INGOs had to receive permission from SPDC Army officials to provide aid and assistance.⁵¹

SPDC fails to control illegal drug production

On 16 September, and for the seventh straight year, the US said that Burma had "failed demonstrably" in its efforts to combat illicit narcotics. The US Department of State said that Burma continued to be the country of origin for the majority of methamphetamine pills in Asia. In addition, there was an upward trend in poppy cultivation.⁵²

HUMAN RIGHTS

In September, the SPDC intensified the repression of political dissent. The regime arrested 66 dissidents, including 23 NLD members and one journalist. The junta also jailed 13 activists.

Arrests intensify

- **3 September:** Plainclothes police in Rangoon's Kamayut Township arrested Generation Wave member Tin Myo Htut aka Kyaw Oo and an unidentified activist.⁵³
- **5 September:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's in Hlaing Thayar Township arrested activists Zin Min Shein, Tay Zar, Baw Lay, Doh Lay, Zaw Latt, and Tin Min Htut aka Kyaw Kyaw.⁵⁴

⁴² DVB (01 Sep 08) Mandalay puppeteers raise funds for cyclone victims; Xinhua (01 Sep 08) Different walks of life raise relief fund for Myanmar cyclone survivors

⁴³ IMNA (26 Sep 08) Army resells fertilizers meant for cyclone hit farmers

⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (05 Sep 08) Corruption rampant in the Delta

⁴⁵ LA Times (26 Sep 08) In Myanmar, cyclone continues to take a toll

⁴⁶ DVB (02 Sep 08) Rice farmers struggling with lack of fertilizer

⁴⁷ LA Times (26 Sep 08) In Myanmar, cyclone continues to take a toll; Narinjara News (18 Sep 08) Burmese Rice and Peas Exported to Bangladesh; Narinjara News (03 Sep 08) Bangladesh Imports Rice from Burma for Ramadan

⁴⁸ WHO (4 Sep 08) Health cluster situation report 42; Xinhua (01 Sep 08) UNICEF stresses addressing issue of water shortage in Myanmar

⁴⁹ WHO (4 Sep 08) Health cluster situation report 42

⁵⁰ IRIN (05 Sep 08) MYANMAR: Cyclone-displaced ponder relocation

⁵¹ Irrawaddy (15 Sep 08) Cyclone Refugees Forced to Leave Camps

⁵² Mizzima News (17 Sep 08) Burma again singled out for anti-narcotics negligence

⁵³ Mizzima News (04 Sep 08) Junta arrests two more activists

⁵⁴ Irrawaddy (08 Sep 08) Dissidents Dismiss Junta's Allegations; Irrawaddy (09 Sep 08) More dissidents in Central Burma arrested

- **6 September:** Police in Salin Township, Magwe Division, arrested NLD members Thein Aung and Nyein Maung.⁵⁵ Police in Pwinbyu Township, Magwe Division, arrested 10 NLD members.⁵⁶
- **8 September:** SPDC authorities in Yenanchaung Township, Magwe Division, arrested eight dissidents, including NLD members Tint Lwin, Myint Lwin, Aw Gyi aka Win Naing, and Nang Win.⁵⁷
- **9 September:** Police in Rangoon's Dagon Township arrested five people including detained monk leader U Gambira's brother in law Moe Htet Lian.⁵⁸
- **9 September:** It was reported that SPDC authorities in Naypyidaw, Mandalay Division, arrested activist Nyan Win for attempting to lodge a petition signed by 200 cyclone Nargis survivors. The petition opposed the forced relocation of cyclone survivors from makeshift camps in Labutta Township, Irrawaddy Division.⁵⁹
- **10 September:** Police in Akyab, Arakan State, arrested four youths for refusing to take off t-shirts bearing the image of revered monk U Ottama.⁶⁰
- **10 September:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Yankin Township arrested 88 Generation Student Nilar Thein.⁶¹
- **11 September:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Yankin Township arrested Tin Tin Win, the 70-year-old mother of detained 88 Generation Students leader Aunt Phwe Kyaw.⁶² She was released on 15 September.⁶³
- **11 September:** SPDC authorities in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division, arrested at least eight people including Aung Ko Ko Lwin, the younger brother of U Gambira.⁶⁴
- **27 September:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrested nine NLD members near the party's headquarters before a ceremony to mark the party's foundation.⁶⁵ They were released on the same day.⁶⁶

Prison sentences

- **4 September:** A court in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State, sentenced NLD youth member Sithu to one year in jail.⁶⁷
- **11 September:** A court in Thayet prison, Magwe Division, sentenced four NLD members from Yenanchaung, Chauk, and Magwe Townships, Magwe Division, and seven activists from Pakokku to prison terms ranging from two to nine years for their involvement in the September 2007 protests.⁶⁸
- **16 September:** A court in Rangoon's Pabedan Township sentenced the Sanchaung Township NLD Chairman Thet Wei to two years in prison with hard labor for trying to lodge a complaint with the ILO on the use of child soldiers by the SPDC Army.⁶⁹

Mass release: 8 dissidents freed

On 23 September, the SPDC released 9,002 prisoners from jails across Burma.⁷⁰ The latest mass release of prisoners was aimed at defusing international pressure at the UN General Assembly.⁷¹ The

⁵⁵ DVB (09 Sep 08) NLD members accused of medical offences

⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (09 Sep 08) More dissidents in Central Burma arrested

⁵⁷ Irrawaddy (09 Sep 08) More dissidents in Central Burma arrested; DVB (10 Sep 08) NLD members questioned over bombing

⁵⁸ DVB (15 Sep 08) Authorities arrest relatives of activists; Irrawaddy (17 Sep 08) Fourteen activists arrested; Mizzima News (16 Sep 08) 70-year-old woman arrested and missing

⁵⁹ DVB (10 Sep 08) Cyclone refugee charged after submitting petition

⁶⁰ Narinjara News (11 Sep 08) T-Shirts seized, wearers arrested in Sittwe

⁶¹ Mizzima News (11 Sep 08) 88 generation activist Nilar Thein arrested; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 08) Nilar Thein Arrested, Sources Say; DVB (11 Sep 08) 88 Generation leader Nilar Thein arrested

⁶² Mizzima News (16 Sep 08) 70-year-old woman arrested and missing

⁶³ Mizzima News (16 Sep 08) Junta releases 70 year old Tin Tin Win

⁶⁴ DVB (15 Sep 08) Authorities arrest relatives of activists; Mizzima News (16 Sep 08) 70-year-old woman arrested and missing; Irrawaddy (17 Sep 08) Fourteen activists arrested

⁶⁵ DPA (27 Sep 08) Burma arrests three on NLD anniversary

⁶⁶ DVB (30 Sep 08) NLD confirms further prisoner releases

⁶⁷ DVB (08 Sep 08) Taunggok NLD member jailed after family dispute

⁶⁸ Mizzima News (12 Sep 08) Magwe Division activists sentenced to long prison terms

⁶⁹ Mizzima News (17 Sep 08) NLD leader sentenced for trying to complain to ILO on use of child soldiers; DVB (18 Sep 08) NLD chairman sentenced to two years' hard labour

⁷⁰ NYT (23 Sep 08) Myanmar Frees Thousands, Including Political Prisoner; Guardian (23 Sep 08) Leading Burmese activist released after 19 years in prison

⁷¹ Guardian (23 Sep 08) Leading Burmese activist released after 19 years in prison

overwhelming majority of those released were drug dealers and petty criminals as well as SPDC Army and police deserters.⁷² Only ten of the 9,002 released were political prisoners.

Burma's longest serving political prisoner, 79-year-old journalist and NLD member Win Tin, was among those released. He had been detained for over 19 years. Shortly after his release Win Tin vowed to continue to fight for democracy in Burma. "I will keep fighting until the emergence of democracy in this country," he said.⁷³

Most recent mass releases		
Date	Prisoners released	Political prisoners
18 November 2004	3,937	28
29 November 2004	5,311	12
13 December 2004	5,070	21
3 January 2005	5,588	26
6 July 2005	334	253
3 January 2007	2,831	50
Total	23,071	390

The other freed political prisoners included elected MPs Dr May Win Myint, Aung Soe Myint, Khin Maung Swe, Dr Than Nyein, NLD members Thein Naing and Win Htein, former army Major Myint Lwin, and Thiha.⁷⁴

On 24 September, police re-arrested Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's personal assistant Win Htein, 17 hours after his release from Katha prison, Sagaing Division.⁷⁵

On 26 September, the regime released political prisoners Aung Khin and Maung Kyaw.⁷⁶

Detention conditions

- **13 September:** Five political prisoners were moved from Thandwe prison to Akyab prison, Arakan State, in response to a hunger strike they had been staging since 9 September to protest their prison sentence.⁷⁷
- **24 September:** The sister of detained human rights activist Su Su Nway said that Insein prison authorities had barred her from visiting her sister for two months because she had visited the ILO office.⁷⁸

Freedom of information

- **1 September:** Police in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township arrested Flower News Journal chief reporter Saw Myint Than for reporting on the 19 August double murder in Thingangyun Township. Saw Myint Than was accused of contacting foreign media organizations and "inciting disaffection towards the State."⁷⁹ Following Saw Myint Than's arrest, SPDC authorities warned editors of six other Rangoon journals not to contact Burmese media in exile and international news organizations.⁸⁰

⁷² Guardian (23 Sep 08) Leading Burmese activist released after 19 years in prison; Narinjara News (25 Sep 08) Over 200 Prisoners released in Sittwe, mostly army deserters

⁷³ Reuters (23 Sep 08) Myanmar frees longest-serving political prisoner; Reuters (23 Sep 08) Myanmar's Win Tin vows to continue democracy fight; Guardian (23 Sep 08) Leading Burmese activist released after 19 years in prison

⁷⁴ AFP (24 Sep 08) Myanmar opposition vows to continue fight for Aung San Suu Kyi; Guardian (23 Sep 08) Leading Burmese activist released after 19 years in prison; DVB (23 Sep 08) MP-elect released in government amnesty; Mizzima News (23 Sep 08) Junta frees veteran journalist & longest serving political prisoner, Win Tin; DVB (24 Sep 08) U Win Tin says he was 'evicted, not released'; DVB (23 Sep 08) U Win Tin released from Insein prison; Mizzima News (23 Sep 08) Junta frees veteran journalist & longest serving political prisoner, Win Tin; Irrawaddy (24 Sep 08) Freed Political Prisoners Call for Others' Release; DVB (29 Sep 08) Three more political prisoners released; DVB (30 Sep 08) NLD confirms further prisoner releases

⁷⁵ AP (26 Sep 08) Myanmar dissident enjoys just 17 hours of freedom; DVB (24 Sep 08) U Win Htein re-arrested after release; Mizzima News (24 Sep 08) Freedom short lived for released political prisoner

⁷⁶ DVB (29 Sep 08) Three more political prisoners released

⁷⁷ Narinjara News (14 Sep 08) Five Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike Moved

⁷⁸ Irrawaddy (25 Sep 08) Su Su Nway's sister banned from visiting

⁷⁹ Irrawaddy (03 Sep 08) Reporter Arrested over Murder Story; Mizzima News (20 Sep 08) Detained Rangoon-based journalist transferred to Insein prison

⁸⁰ Irrawaddy (04 Sep 08) Journalist's Arrest Triggers Regime Warning to Editors

- **17 September:** The websites of Burmese media in exile Irrawaddy, Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), and New Era Journal suffered massive cyber attacks and were inaccessible for several days.⁸¹
- **Between 17 and 22 September:** Internet speed in Rangoon slowed, forcing several Internet cafes to close.⁸² It was also reported that the regime tightened surveillance at Rangoon's Internet cafes.⁸³

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya

The World Food Program (WFP) warned that while humanitarian efforts were focused in cyclone-hit areas, the needs of Rohingya in Northern Arakan State remained critical. According to the WFP, 44% of households in the area had insufficient food and 27% of children under five suffered from “moderate to acute” malnutrition.⁸⁴

Desperate Rohingya began preparations for the dry season exodus to Malaysia by boats. On 27 September, about 40 Rohingya from Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships crossed the Burma-Bangladesh border to seek transport by boat to Malaysia.⁸⁵

The situation for Rohingya across the border in Bangladesh remained dire. Residents of the “Leda” unregistered refugee camp complained that the new site, established in July, cut them off from their access to informal work. They also complained that the health clinic provided inadequate services.⁸⁶ Since July, 17 adults and 11 children died in the camp.⁸⁷ The deaths were caused by pneumonia, malaria, fever, edema, asthma, starvation, and complications during childbirth.⁸⁸

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SPDC credentials challenged

On 9 September, a letter from Burmese MPs aligned with the Members of Parliament Union (MPU) challenged the legitimacy of the SPDC's representatives at the UN.⁸⁹ MPU Vice President Daw San San said that the organization had set up a permanent mission to the UN and had appointed elected MP from Mandalay Thein Oo as its permanent representative to the UN.⁹⁰ On 26 September, the UN General Assembly rejected the MPU's request to replace representatives of the SPDC at the UN. According to the UNGA Rules of Procedure, credentials must be issued by a country's head of state or government, or by the minister for foreign affairs.⁹¹

Gambari reports on his Burma mission

On 3 September, the UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari briefed UN General Assembly President Srgan Kerim on his 18-23 August trip to Burma. After meeting with Gambari, Kerim said that

⁸¹ AP (19 Sep 08) Cyber attacks cripple opposition Myanmar media; Reuters (19 Sep 08) Burma junta launches cyber attack; Mizzima News (17 Sep 08) Websites of three Burmese news agencies in exile under attack; Irrawaddy (22 Sep 08) Web Sites Back Online, but Fears of Further Attacks Remain

⁸² Reuters (19 Sep 08) Burma junta launches cyber attack; AP (19 Sep 08) Cyber attacks cripple opposition Myanmar media; Mizzima News (18 Sep 08) SEAPA Alert: On eve of Saffron Revolution anniversary, Burma's exiled news sites attacked

⁸³ Reuters (19 Sep 08) Burma junta launches cyber attack; AP (19 Sep 08) Cyber attacks cripple opposition Myanmar media; Mizzima News (18 Sep 08) SEAPA Alert: On eve of Saffron Revolution anniversary, Burma's exiled news sites attacked

⁸⁴ DPA (16 Sep 08) WFP faces 11.2-million-dollar shortfall in Myanmar

⁸⁵ Kaladan Press (29 Sep 08) Boat people ready to go to Malaysia from Bangladesh

⁸⁶ Kaladan News (08 Sep 08) Refugees block clinic and staff

⁸⁷ Kaladan News (08 Sep 08) Refugees block clinic and staff

⁸⁸ Kaladan News (05 Sep 08) 29 unregistered refugees die in Leda camp in two months

⁸⁹ IHT (26 Sep 08) UN rejects request for Myanmar junta's seat; Mizzima News (09 Sep 08) Opposition in exile launches campaign against Burmese junta's legitimacy in UN

⁹⁰ AP (10 Sep 08) Myanmar 1990 election winners want junta's UN seat; AP (10 Sep 08) UN to consider request for Myanmar junta's seat

⁹¹ IHT (26 Sep 08) UN rejects request for Myanmar junta's seat; Mizzima News (27 Sep 08) UN rejects appeal to unseat junta

the UN General Assembly remained committed to its mandate to promote national reconciliation, democracy, and respect for human rights in Burma.⁹²

On 11 September, Gambari briefed members of the UN Security Council. Following the briefing, the US and UK called for more pressure on the SPDC to end its defiance of demands for democratic progress and the release of political prisoners.⁹³ Gambari admitted that results of his last Burma visit fell below expectations. Gambari said that it was imperative for the SPDC to deliver substantive results regarding the release of political prisoners and the resumption of dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁹⁴ After Gambari's briefing, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon said that he was frustrated with the lack political progress in Burma. Ban said that he wanted the SPDC to take tangible steps towards establishing a credible and inclusive political process which must include progress on human rights.⁹⁵

Meeting of the "Group of Friends"

On 27 September, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon convened the first high level meeting of the informal "Group of friends on Burma."⁹⁶ At the meeting, members of the group discussed future engagement with the regime in Burma including Ban's planned visit to Burma in December. Singapore FM Yeo expressed reservations about Ban's visit and said that the UN Sec-Gen shouldn't go unless there were clear signs of progress.⁹⁷

ASEAN and UN: 2010 elections have no legitimacy

On 18 September, UN Special Advisor on Burma said that he didn't support the SPDC's planned 2010 election. Gambari added that between now and 2010, there should be dialogue between the SPDC and the NLD to ensure the credibility of the process.⁹⁸ On 27 September, Singapore FM George Yeo said that the SPDC's planned 2010 elections have "no international legitimacy."⁹⁹

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN SEPTEMBER

1	Ethnic Nationalities Council issues a statement that says it cannot endorse the SPDC's 2010 elections.
2	Burma Lawyers' Council releases a statement calling for the SPDC to immediately cease bringing Buddhist monks before military courts.
3	Dundee City Council, UK, awards Daw Aung San Suu Kyi the "Dundee freedom award."
3	British foreign office issues a warning against Myanmar Airways because of the airline's failure to meet international safety standards.
3	Generation Wave group calls on the SPDC to immediately release their members.
4	U Gambira appears in Rangoon's Insein prison court.
4	AIPMC sends letters to ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan and UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon which asks them to make a personal assessment of Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi's health condition.
5	NLD urges the SPDC to ensure Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's well-being.
5	Japanese court grants refugee status to a pro-democracy musician from Burma.
5	SPDC Army officer attempts to rape a doctor in Labutta, Irrawaddy Division.
6	Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Russia's Nobel Oil sign a production contract for onshore exploration in Hukawn and Uru, Kachin State.
8	United Nationalities Alliance and the Veteran Politician Colleagues of Myanmar urge the UN to take stronger initiatives to resolve Burma's political crisis.
8	A group of five Burmese pro-democracy activists begin a 72-hour hunger strike in front of the UN office in Tokyo, demanding the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
9	Twenty-year-old man rapes a 14-year-old refugee girl from Burma in Umpiem Mai refugee camp, Thailand.

⁹² UN News Center (04 Sep 08) UN envoy briefs General Assembly President on Myanmar visit

⁹³ DPA (11 Sep 08) US, Britain demand more pressure on Myanmar for democratic progress

⁹⁴ AFP (12 Sep 08) Time for Myanmar regime to release political prisoners: UN envoy

⁹⁵ UN News Center (11 Sep 08) Secretary-General calls for tangible political progress in Myanmar

⁹⁶ Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General (27 Sep 08) Statement on the High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends on Myanmar

⁹⁷ Washington Times (28 Sep 08) Burma summit unable to agree on reform steps

⁹⁸ Mainichi Japan (22 Sep 08) UN envoy to Myanmar calls for more international pressure for release of political prisoners

⁹⁹ Reuters (27 Sep 08) U.N. group aims to keep world focus on Myanmar

9	The trial of 35 members of 88 Generation Students begins at Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township court.
9	US State Department issues a statement that expresses concern regarding the health of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
10	A villager from Kayinkya Village in Kyaukkyi Township, Pegu Division, suffers injuries after stepping on a landmine.
11	Arakan State's police chief orders hostel owners in Akyab to refuse accommodation to students involved in political activities.
12	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon's Group of Friends on Burma meets to review Ibrahim Gambari's recent visit.
13	SPDC authorities in Akyab, Arakan State, prevent about 50 monks from staging an anti-junta demonstration.
13	New Light of Myanmar reports that during August 2008 SPDC officials seized 151 kilos of opium, 7.5 kilos of heroin, 1,263 kilos of low-grade opium, and 142,955.5 amphetamine tablets.
15	EU donates US\$1.9 million in food supplies to WFP operations in Northern Arakan State.
15	US adopts legislation to prosecute foreign military commanders who recruit child soldiers abroad.
15	Two people in Hantalan Township, Chin State, die from starvation.
15	Human Rights Watch awards Burmese rights activist Bo Kyi its "Human Rights Defender Award."
16	Eleven Sakharov Prize winners call on the EU to push for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners in Burma.
16	NLD releases a statement denying that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is on a hunger strike.
16	Committee Representing the People's Parliament calls for dialogue between the SPDC and pro-democracy forces.
16	Four locals rape a 25-year-old refugee woman from Burma in front of her child at the entrance of Leda refugee camp, Bangladesh.
16	India's NHPC signs preliminary understanding with the SPDC for the construction of Tamanthi and Shwzaye hydro projects on the Chindwin river.
16	Chin National Army ambushes a SPDC Army patrol near Shwe Late Wa Village, Paletwa Township, Chin State.
16	SPDC authorities in South Dagon Township, Rangoon Division, arrest a former child soldier on his 18th birthday.
16	State-run media say that the SPDC arrested a KNU member over the 11 September bombing of a video lounge in Kyaukkyi Township, Pegu Division.
16	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon says that the SPDC should release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest.
17	International Burmese Monks Organization holds a silent protest prayer in New York to commemorate the first anniversary of the "Saffron Revolution."
17	Thai police raid a garment factory in Sankhlaburi and arrest 56 Burmese migrant workers.
18	SPDC officials in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, order villagers in Mayaka to repair the Maungdaw- Bawli Bazar Road.
18	French ambassador to the UN Jean Maurice Ripert says that UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon should put more pressure on the SPDC.
19	Thirty-nine-year-old man from Burma dies in a Bangladesh after three years in prison on migration law violations.
19	International Labor Organization expresses concern over the recent sentencing of labor activist Thet Wei to two years in prison with hard labor.
20	Weekly Voice Journal reports that SPDC health authorities will take "relevant actions" to address tainted milk from China.
21	SPDC soldier abducts a 13-year-old boy from his home in Akyab, Arakan State, and forces him to join the army.
22	NLD urges the SPDC to set up a committee to review the military-backed constitution.
23	Eight Nobel Peace Prize laureates release a joint-statement urging the SPDC to create a genuine process of national reconciliation and release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in Burma.
23	UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana welcomes the release of political prisoners.
23	Nobel Women's Initiative calls for the release of political prisoners in Burma.
23	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon tells UNGA that the challenge for the UN in Burma is to push for political progress, including credible steps on human rights and democracy.
24	NLD vows to continue pushing for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
25	SPDC police chief Maj Gen Khin Yi tells the NLD to withdraw its statement which calls for the establishment of a committee to review the military-backed constitution.
25	South Korea's supreme court upholds a decision to grant refugee status to eight NLD members.
25	US first lady Laura Bush urges the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political

	prisoners.
26	European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma calls on the SPDC to release Daw Aung Suu Kyi and all political prisoners.
26	Switzerland adds sanctions on SPDC to bring it in line with existing EU sanctions.
27	Hundreds of people march in Sydney and Perth, Australia, to mark the anniversary of the “Saffron Revolution”.
27	About 500 people attend the NLD’s 20 th anniversary celebration at the party’s headquarters in Rangoon.
27	UN Sec-Gen convenes the first ministerial meeting of his Group of Friends on Burma.
29	FAO reports that 97% of rice fields in the Irrawaddy delta have been replanted.
29	SPDC Foreign Minister Nyan Win calls for the lifting of “unwarranted” and “counter-productive” sanctions against the regime.
30	Burmese media issues first warning about the dangers of tainted Chinese milk.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER

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“Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2007”, NCGUB Human Rights Documentation Unit
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/HRDU2007.pdf>

“Blood at the Crossroads: Making the case for a global Arms Trade Treaty”, Amnesty International
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ACT30/011/2008/en/19ea0e74-8329-11dd-8e5e-43ea85d15a69/act300112008en.pdf>

“International Religious Freedom Report 2008”, US State Department
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108402.htm>

“Corruption Perceptions Index”. Transparency International
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 Burma rated second most corrupt country in the world after Somalia.

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