

# ALTSEAN

## BURMA

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA  
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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### **BURMA: TIME FOR ASEAN TO BITE THE BULLET**

- **ASEAN and its dialogue partners must adopt a common position to ensure that the Burmese military regime delivers genuine reforms within a clearly-stated timeframe to strengthen and complement UN efforts.**
- **The common position must guarantee an inclusive process that allows key stakeholders such as the National League for Democracy (NLD) and ethnic nationality leadership to work freely as genuine partners with the military regime.**
- **ASEAN and its dialogue partners must publicly support the solutions proposed by the democracy movement that focus on a transitional power-sharing formula, and encourage the Burmese junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), to be part of the solution.**
- **The Burmese regime's oppressive roadmap should be abandoned in its current state - it has intensified the problems besieging Burma, which in turn threaten regional human and economic security.**
- **The roadmap has been a disaster for Burma. Since its introduction in 2003:**
  - **Military offensives against civilians in Eastern Burma have intensified and increased crackdowns on ethnic groups have threatened resurgence of warfare in other areas.**
  - **Economic mismanagement and rampant corruption have worsened, driving a possible 50% of the population below the poverty line.**
  - **Decaying morale, diversion of resources to the army and oppressive interference has gravely damaged public institutions and the rule of law.**
- **The most compelling evidence of public rejection of the SPDC and its roadmap was the September nationwide uprising that coincided with the conclusion of the regime's National Convention to draft a new constitution.**
- **ASEAN should no longer allow the military junta to use its roadmap as a smokescreen and justification to intensify abuse of its citizens, particularly ethnic groups. It is the junta's irresponsible actions that have become the greatest threat to national integrity and stability.**
- **It is in the interests of ASEAN and its dialogue partners to halt the deterioration in Burma, which has already seriously affected neighboring countries in the context of drugs, disease control, and displacement.**
- **ASEAN and its partners should be prepared to make short-term sacrifices to secure genuine reforms in Burma for the sake of regional stability and cohesion. This should include strategic use of economic and political leverage and other non-military options.**
- **Meanwhile, alliances between diverse pro-democracy parties, ethnic groups and other stakeholders continue to strengthen. Ongoing solutions-oriented initiatives and capacity-building programs continue to boost these groups as viable alternatives to the regime.**

## **Regurgitation is not reform!**

The Burmese junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is currently trying to weather the storm of international condemnation over its brutal crackdown on nationwide peaceful protests regurgitating its roadmap as a solution. The SPDC has strongly rebuked UN attempts to broker discussions between the SPDC and the NLD. It is not in the interests of regional security and economic stability to support the SPDC unilateral process that will serve only to entrench the junta's power and is misrule.

ASEAN has a key role to play in applying and maintaining pressure on the junta to open dialogue with all political parties and ethnic leaders so that a process for democratic reform can begin. ASEAN must follow the lead of Ibrahim Gambari, the UN's Special Envoy to Burma, who recently said that the return to the *status quo* would not be sustainable.<sup>1</sup>

ASEAN should not allow itself to be hoodwinked by the SPDC's appointment of a liaison officer for detained leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Bitter experience from similar "secret talks" in 2002 should teach ASEAN that sustained pressure and monitoring is needed to secure genuine progress.

## **National Convention: the farce ends**

On 18 July, the SPDC opened the 11<sup>th</sup> and final session of the National Convention.<sup>2</sup> The session concluded on 3 September in the midst of nationwide protests over the junta's overnight price hikes on fuel.<sup>3</sup> As with the previous sessions, the junta ignored the amendments tabled by ethnic groups, including the 19-point proposal submitted by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, it appeared that the junta had already unilaterally drafted the final version of the constitution, devoting much of the session to time-wasting syntactic corrections.<sup>5</sup> "Actually we could have wrapped all of it up in a day, but there's a need to make it look good, isn't there?" Lt-Gen Thein Sein, Chairman of the National Convention Convening Commission, was quoted as saying.<sup>6</sup> Lt-Gen Thein Sein was later rewarded with the post of Prime Minister.

## **MPs offer alternative roadmap**

On 1 August, while the National Convention was in session, 92 Burmese MPs who were elected in 1990 outlined their alternative roadmap to democracy.<sup>7</sup> In a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the MPs called for tripartite dialogue on unresolved issues and:

- The formation of a constitution drafting committee comprising equal number of representatives from the SPDC, the NLD, ethnic political parties, and ceasefire groups.
- Convening the parliament elected in 1990 for final approval of the draft constitution.
- Holding free and fair elections.

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1 DVB (08 Nov 07) Gambari concludes Burma mission

2 AFP (15 Jul 07) Myanmar to resume charter talks; Irrawaddy (18 Jul 07) Final NC Session Urged to Stick to Guidelines

3 AFP (31 Aug 07) Myanmar completes charter talks: delegates; AP (31 Aug 07) Delegate says Myanmar convention for constitutional guidelines has completed its work; DPA (31 Aug 07) Delegates wrap Myanmar's constitution drafting process; Xinhua (31 Aug 07) Myanmar to complete years-long constitutional national convention next week; SHAN (22 Aug 07) Convention to conclude on September 3; Nation (29 Aug 07) Burma's National Convention writing final draft of constitution; Irrawaddy (27 Aug 07) National Convention to wrap final session in September

4 Irrawaddy (27 Aug 07) National Convention to wrap final session in September

5 SHAN (22 Aug 07) Convention to conclude on September 3; Nation (29 Aug 07) Burma's National Convention writing final draft of constitution; Irrawaddy (27 Aug 07) National Convention to wrap final session in September

6 SHAN (22 Aug 07) Convention to conclude on September 3

7 VOA (03 Aug 07) Elected Burmese Lawmakers Send Letter to UN Secretary-General; Mizzima News (03 Aug 07) Alternative road map by Burmese MPs; urge UN chief to mediate; IHT (04 Aug 07) Opposition Leaders Threaten Rallies Against Myanmar's 'Sham' Constitution

- Convening the new elected parliament and formation of the government according to the constitution.
- Dissolution of the SPDC.

As with previous attempts to legitimize the National Convention process, the junta ignored the MPs' proposal and through the controlled press dismissed the group as "ridiculous" and their demands as "unrealistic".<sup>8</sup>

### **NLD's Power-Sharing Proposal**

The absence of sustained and united pressure by the international community has allowed the junta to reject calls for compromise and dialogue on reform.

On 12 February 2006, the NLD offered to recognize the military regime as the country's legitimate transitional government if the junta freed its leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and convened the parliament in accordance with the 1990 election results.<sup>9</sup> The NLD proposal received unanimous support from other opposition political parties, ethnic groups, activists inside Burma, as well as Burmese in exile, ASEAN legislators, and abroad.<sup>10</sup> The SPDC did not officially respond to the NLD's offer by a 17 April deadline.<sup>11</sup> However, articles and commentaries in the state-run media repeatedly described the proposal as "wrong", "impractical", "unrealistic", and "contradictory".<sup>12</sup>

The NLD renewed its offer on 21 April 2006, urging the SPDC to respond by 27 May.<sup>13</sup> On 26 April, the junta issued a statement that formally rejected the offer. The SPDC's Information Minister Brig Gen Kyaw Hsan termed the NLD proposals for dialogue as "above-ground attacks" on the military regime and said the proposals were "mere fantasy" and "not logical."<sup>14</sup>

### **SPDC resurrects the roadmap**

On 18 October 2007, in an attempt to ease international pressure and show progress on its so-called "roadmap to democracy", the SPDC announced the formation of a 54-member committee tasked with drafting Burma's new constitution. The announcement did not say when the committee would start drafting the constitution or how long the task will take.<sup>15</sup> The committee is composed of regime officials, retired doctors, and professors. Pro-democracy organizations, ethnic groups, and women are not represented on the committee.<sup>16</sup> The news was promptly dismissed by several ethnic groups, including the Mon Unity League, the Karen National Union, and the New Mon State Party.<sup>17</sup>

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8 NLM (27 Aug 07) It is time they rose up from whirl of confrontation

9 Reuters (14 Feb 06) Myanmar opposition offers to recognize military rule

10 DVB (13 Feb 06) Exiled pro-democracy Burmese groups welcome NLD proposals; DVB (14 Feb 06) Renowned Burmese students express full support for NLD statement; DVB (14 Feb 06) Unofficial translation of 88 Generation students' statement in support of the NLD special statement; DVB (14 Feb 06) More support for NLD's special statement on Burma's Union Day; Irrawaddy (14 Feb 06) Activists Back NLD Proposal

11 DVB (17 Apr 06) Still no response from Burma junta over NLD offer

12 DVB (29 Mar 06) Propaganda war: Junta's paper hints NLD proposals not likely to be accepted; Irrawaddy (30 Mar 06) Junta indicates it may not accept NLD compromise; AP (06 Apr 06) State newspaper urges Myanmar opposition to abandon claim to power; Mizzima News (07 Apr 06) Burma's state press accuses NLD of delaying democracy; Irrawaddy (07 Apr 06) State media slams NLD reconciliation offer.

13 Irrawaddy (21 Apr 06) Never Say Never

14 Kyodo News (26 Apr 06) Myanmar junta says no dialogue with Suu Kyi's NLD; Mizzima News (28 Apr 06) Palpable tension in Rangoon as military slams NLD offer

15 AP (18 Oct 07) Myanmar junta forms committee to draft new constitution; Mizzima News (19 Oct 07) Junta rebuffs int'l efforts, sets up constitution drafting commission; AFP (19 Oct 07) Myanmar vows to go ahead with 'road map' to democracy

16 BBC (18 Oct 07) Burma junta in constitution move

17 IMNA (19 Oct 07) Constitution drafting commission has to toe junta line: MUL; Irrawaddy (19 Oct 07) Junta presses on with "Exclusive" constitution drafting

## **SPDC rejects dialogue, lectures UN envoy**

On 3 November, the UN Special Advisor on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, returned to Burma for his second effort to reconcile the military regime and the pro-democracy movement.<sup>18</sup> In his discussions with SPDC officials, Gambari proposed a three-way meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, an SPDC member, and himself to promote political reform and reconciliation.<sup>19</sup> The SPDC flatly rejected the offer. Kyaw Hsan, in a stern rebuke to the UN's efforts to promote dialogue between the SPDC and NLD, told Gambari, "If you bring along the instructions of the leaders of a big power and demands of internal and external anti-government groups, it will in no way contribute towards the seeking of solution to Myanmar's affairs."<sup>20</sup>

Following the discussions with Gambari, the SPDC stubbornly stuck to its roadmap. On 8 November, through a controlled television broadcast, the SPDC claimed that it would continue to implement the "democratic reform" following the seven-step roadmap.<sup>21</sup>

## **Daw Suu/NLD remain committed to constructive dialogue**

On 8 November, Gambari met with Aung San Suu Kyi. After the meeting, Gambari released a statement made by Daw Suu. In the statement she said, "In the interest of the nation, I stand ready to cooperate with the Government in order to make this process of dialogue a success and welcome the necessary good offices role of the United Nations to help facilitate our efforts in this regard."

The democracy leader reiterated "...it is my duty to give constant and serious considerations to the interests and opinions of as broad a range of political organizations and forces as possible, in particular those of our ethnic nationality races. To that end, I am committed to pursue the path of dialogue constructively and invite the Government and all relevant parties to join me in this spirit."<sup>22</sup>

## **Balkanization – the phantom menace?**

For decades, the SPDC has been justifying its brutal misrule and economic mismanagement by claiming that it is the only force that could prevent the disintegration of Burma along ethnic lines. The SPDC Army has perpetrated armed aggression against unarmed civilians in ethnic areas. It has committed widespread and systematic human rights abuses that have resulted in massive displacement within Burma and across its borders, and fractured national integrity [See below *Military violations: the biggest threat*].

Fears of possible "Balkanization" in the wake of the regime's demise must be moderated by the cold, hard realization that the greatest source of ethnic division in Burma is the regime itself. Ethnic armed groups in Burma are fighting against the SPDC, not each other. They have repeatedly called for a cessation of attacks on civilian communities and expressed their desire to be part of a united and democratic Burma. These groups have strengthened their alliances with other groups to produce viable solutions for Burma's future [See below *Key Unity Statements* and *Key Alliances*].

The SPDC has deployed a strategy of divide-and-rule throughout the country. The junta has incited tension by confiscating land from one ethnic group and awarding it to another, and has engaged in numerous acts to create discord among ethnic resistance groups. The junta's own National Convention has suppressed and/or excluded the participation of genuine ethnic

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18 AP (03 Nov 07) Gambari Returns to Burma

19 AP (07 Nov 07) UN envoy to meet detained Myanmar democracy leader Suu Kyi at end of mission

20 DVB (07 Nov 07) Junta refuses UN mediation

21 AFP (08 Nov 07) Myanmar's Suu Kyi to meet party members after key UN visit

22 AP (08 Nov 07) Text of Aung San Suu Kyi's statement released by U.N. envoy

representatives. Under a democratic system, ethnic, religious and other groups would be able to negotiate and resolve tensions or conflicts of interest through dialogue and other peaceful political means.

### **Fundamentally flawed: the SPDC's roadmap & National Convention**

Originally devised by the military regime as a tactic to avoid convening Parliament after it lost the 1990 elections, the National Convention was mothballed in March 1996, and then revived in 2004 as part of the “7-point roadmap to democracy”. The roadmap was a response to heightened regional and international pressure following the Depayin Massacre – a botched attempt by the SPDC to assassinate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Since its inception in 1990, the National Convention process has been inherently undemocratic and oppressive:

- Nine pro-democracy political parties representing 90.9% of parliamentary seats were excluded from the National Convention.
- The MPs elected in 1990 represented a meager 1.11% of the total number of delegates, drastically stripped down from 14% at the first meeting in 1993.
- Stacked with hand-picked delegates - the notorious Union Solidarity and Development Association made up more than 50%.
- Tightly controlled and gagged by military-orchestrated committees.
- The regime-imposed “104 basic principles” guarantee military domination of government, and dictate the content of proceedings.
- Many ethnic groups boycotted or opposed the convention. Ethnic groups that made alternative proposals were expelled from proceedings or targeted for persecution.
- Political debate and free discussion of constitutional proposals were banned at the National Convention. Delegates could speak only from pre-approved scripts.
- Questioning or criticizing the National Convention, as well as communication with the foreign press, are acts criminalized by the junta through order 5/96 which imposes a maximum term of 20 years in jail.

### **Economic chaos**

The advent of the roadmap has not stopped the serious decline in business confidence or eased economic woes:

- **Irresponsible priorities:** Massive spending on the military, 40% of the national budget, is diverting much needed funds away from deteriorating infrastructure and essential services.
- **Dual exchange rate:** The SPDC perpetuates an illogical dual exchange rate, with 6.23 kyat to US\$1 at the official rate, and a black market rate that fluctuates between 1,250-1,350 kyat to US\$1.
- **Inflation** was in double digits in 2005 and 2006. It first soared in October 2005 after a SPDC decision to increase fuel prices by more than 900%. In April 2006, basic commodity prices rocketed even higher when the SPDC gave civil servants a 10-fold salary increase to counter rampant dissatisfaction with the capital move to Naypyidaw. The situation worsened with another fuel price hike in August 2007 that doubled rice prices overnight in Rangoon (about 100% for petrol and diesel, and 500% for compressed natural gas).

- **Banks collapse:** In February 2003, rumors that bank notes would be demonetized led to a rush to withdraw savings.<sup>23</sup> More than a dozen deposit-taking companies collapsed. The three largest banks, the Asia Wealth Bank, Yoma Bank and Kanbawza Bank suspended withdrawals and payments.<sup>24</sup> The SPDC imposed a news black-out, and capped withdrawals at 50,000 kyat (US\$54) per week.<sup>25</sup> The Central Bank forcibly recalled loans, and authorities intimidated people who hadn't paid off at least 20% of their loans.<sup>26</sup>
- **50% under the poverty line:** In 2005 the UN suggested that the percentage of Burmese living below the poverty line could be more than 30%, and higher in Chin State (around 70%) and Eastern Shan State (approximately 52%). The UN estimated that if food prices increased by 15 to 20%, more than half the population would live under the poverty line.<sup>27</sup> This is assumed to have happened following the August 2007 fuel price hikes.
- **Ostentatious spending:** Public outrage over worsening conditions while SPDC leaders live in luxury was heightened when people found out about the US\$50 million gifts for junta leader Senior General Than Shwe's daughter's July 2006 wedding.
- **Development?** The UNDP ranks Burma 129 of 177 nations for human development, just above Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Disastrous health:** In conflict areas of eastern Burma, war, poverty and the collapse of infrastructure has led to a situation where basic health indicators mirror those of the worlds worst disaster zones of Niger, Sierra Leone, Angola, and Congo.<sup>28</sup>

### Disintegrating administration

- **Failed State:** For the third consecutive year, Burma's position on the annual Failed States Index worsened, indicating declining conditions inside the country. In the 2007 rankings, Burma's cumulative score worsened by 2.6 percent, boosting its ranking from 18 to 14, just one position behind North Korea.
- **48 hours to move the capital:** After spending vast sums of money, the junta started moving the capital from Rangoon to Naypyidaw in November of 2005 giving just 48 hours' notice. Civil servants were forced to move there under threat of imprisonment.<sup>29</sup> The forced relocation split families and forced high-ranking civil servants to abandon their main sources of income – their sideline businesses. In an effort to curb their dissatisfaction, the SPDC announced a 10-fold salary increase.<sup>30</sup> This further triggered inflation. Petrol, diesel, and gold increased in price between 30-50%, and the black-market kyat depreciated 20%.<sup>31</sup> The new capital has also been blamed for diverting already erratic energy supplies away from the commercial center Rangoon. Residents and businesses face regular blackouts despite huge outlays.
- **Military Purge:** In October 2004, Gen Khin Nyunt was “permitted to retire” from his post as Prime Minister, “put under protective custody” and replaced with staunch hard-liner Lt Gen Soe Win. 15 Brigadier Generals were seconded to the foreign ministry to replace at least 12 foreign ambassadors. Approximately 2,500 intelligence agents were transferred to infantry units. Agents from the abolished Intelligence Bureau were arrested, “retired”, transferred to combat duty or disappeared. Most of those ranked below the position of sergeant were reinstated to their original jobs. Agents with the rank of captain

23 The currency has been devalued before, notably in 1987 when the Ne Win regime demonetized 25, 35 and 75 kyat notes, wiping out 70% of the country's savings.

24 Age (20 Mar 07) Burma's banking meltdown goes unnoticed beyond its borders

25 Burma Economic Watch (6 Mar 03) Burma's Banking Crisis: a Commentary

26 Irrawaddy (06 May 03) Bank Crisis Rolls On

27 International Crisis Group (08 Dec 06) Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid

28 Back Pack Health Worker Team (Sep 06) Chronic Emergency – Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma

29 Reuters (06 Nov 05) Myanmar junta moves key ministries from capital

30 EIU (2006) Myanmar Country Review

31 Mizzima (11 Apr 05) Foreign Trade Office in Imphal to boost Indo-Burma trade; Bernama (15 Mar 05) Malaysian minister urges businesses to explore opportunities in Burma; Japanese Economic Newswire (01 Mar 2006)

Indonesian president meets Myanmar leader; Time Asia (23 Jan 06) Burma - Going nowhere

were forced to sign daily confessional pledges at the office of new Intelligence head Maj Gen Myint Swe. All police officers with 'standard education' were ordered to take on intelligence duties.

- **Military desertions:** Despite increases in the salaries for military personnel, the SPDC Army is plagued by widespread desertion and low morale. The SPDC's ability to recruit new troops continues to decline, while discontent over the harsh conditions of service is mounting. During the four-month period proceeding September 2006, 9,497 troops were lost from service. This is up 8% from the same period in 2005. The trend is explained by increasing rate of desertions.<sup>32</sup>
- **Child Soldiers:** Children as young as 10 are being forcibly recruited into the SPDC army, and bought and sold by military recruiters, according to a new report from Human Rights Watch released on 31 October 2007. Those interviewed for the report estimated that at least 30 percent of their fellow new trainees were children.<sup>33</sup>

### **Military violations: the biggest threat**

The SPDC's increased aggression and pressure on Burma's ethnic groups represents the biggest threat to internal stability.

### **Shan State**

- **A century in jail:** In February 2005, the SPDC arrested about 30 Shan leaders and activists. At least ten prominent leaders stood trial, including Hkun Htun Oo and General Hso Ten.<sup>34</sup> They were sentenced to long prison terms of up to 106 years on 3 November 2005.<sup>35</sup>
- **Shan State National Army (SSNA) ends ceasefire:** Sustained pressure on the SSNA eventually led it to join arms with the SSA-S, effectively terminating a 1995 ceasefire agreement with the junta in May 2005.<sup>36</sup>
- **SSNPLO ends ceasefire too:** On 3 July 2007, a splinter group of the Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization (SSNPLO) terminated their ceasefire agreement with the SPDC because of mounting pressure from the regime to disarm<sup>37</sup> and reportedly entered into merger talks with the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).<sup>38</sup> On 26 July, the remaining 137 SSNPLO members led by Chairman Chit Maung, unconditionally disarmed to the SPDC.<sup>39</sup>
- **UWSA defies SPDC relocation order:** In August 2007 United Wa State Army (UWSA) commanded its battalions to train for simulated battles and artillery firing, in defiance of SPDC orders to withdraw from their bases along the Thai-Burma border.<sup>40</sup>

### **Mon State**

- **NMSP chooses not to disarm despite harassment:** In 2005, the SPDC cut off economic support for the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and increased restrictions on business operations in Mon State to "persuade" the ceasefire group to surrender its arms.<sup>41</sup> In

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32 Jane's Defence Weekly (04 Apr 07) Myanmar army document spotlights low morale

33 HRW (31 Oct 07) Burma: Children bought and sold by army recruiters

34 AFP (10 Mar 05) Ten Shan activists arrested in Myanmar for conspiracy: minister

35 DVB (4 Nov 05) Shan leaders sentenced in Rangoon Insein Jail

36 AP (23 May 05) Two Ethnic Rebel Groups Announce Merger to Fight Junta; DVB (23 May 05) Anxieties for Burmese people as Shan fighters join forces

37 Mizzima News (03 Jul 07) SNPLO terminates ceasefire and returns to jungle

38 DVB (16 Jul 07) Shan rebels discuss possible merger

39 Xinhua (27 Jul 07) Myanmar ethnic peace group surrenders weapons to government

40 SHAN (06 Aug 07) 'Wa' headquarters orders battalions to take military preparation

41 Irrawaddy (9 Sep 05) Burmese junta cuts support for NMSP

September 2005, the SPDC only partially resumed payments, providing 1/10 of the promised amount, while continuing to limit certain industries.<sup>42</sup>

- **Persistent Abuses:** Mon State villagers have been subject to an extensive array of human rights abuses at the hands of the SPDC Army including forced labor, portering, conscription, extortion, use of villagers as mine sweepers, and property destruction.<sup>43</sup> In response, the NMSP called for UN intervention.<sup>44</sup> Despite growing frustration with the SPDC's actions, the NMSP has so far refused to surrender its arms.<sup>45</sup>
- **Cultural groups targeted:** On 6 June 2007, the SPDC refused to renew permits for five local cultural organizations.<sup>46</sup>

## Kachin State

- **KIO under threat of being “kicked to the mountains”:** During the week of 9 July 2007, SPDC Army Commander Maj Gen Ohn Myint banned the Kachin Independence Organization's main business of gold mining and teak logging in some areas of the State.<sup>47</sup> In early July, Maj Gen Ohn Myint threatened to “kick” the KIO “to the mountains” if they persist in their demand for an autonomous Kachin State at the ongoing session of the National Convention.<sup>48</sup>

## Karen State

- **Militarization continues:** In 2007, the regime's military presence in Karen State intensified with the SPDC Army setting up 33 new bases and building helicopter landing pads to facilitate the supply of weapons and ammunition to conflict areas.<sup>49</sup> Unlike previous offensives that ceased at the onset of the rainy season, the regime's military build-up in Eastern Burma continues. During the second week of June, two more SPDC Army battalions totaling nearly 300 soldiers moved from Chin and Arakan States to the frontline in Eastern Burma.<sup>50</sup> In Karen State, there are currently about 55 SPDC Army battalions.<sup>51</sup>
- **Starvation & Displacement:** The current offensive has displaced 76,000 people in the past year<sup>52</sup>, causing 25,000 people to face starvation.<sup>53</sup>

## Key unity statements

A range of statements and declarations made over time provide consistent solutions for the problems affecting Burma:

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42 DVB (12 Sep 05) Burma junta resumes support for Mon ceasefire group  
43 IMNA (26 Aug 05) Villagers' farm work restricted in Ye Township; KaoWao (27 Aug 05) Villagers Forced to Porter; KaoWao (27 Aug 05) Villagers Forced to Porter; DVB (12 Nov 05) Ceasefire groups unsure over the attendance of Burma Convention  
44 DVB (25 May 05) NMSP urges UN to help solve political problems in Burma; IMNA (4 Nov 05) Military Regime adds muscle for security reasons  
45 Irrawaddy (14 Oct 05) Ceasefire Groups Defiant  
46 IMNA (06 Jun 07) Junta embarks on fresh round of ethnic cleansing  
47 Kachin News Group (18 Jul 07) Political tension may exist between KIO and junta; Kachin News Group (17 Jul 07) Maj-Gen Ohn Myint bans gold mining, logging in Kachin  
48 Kachin News Group (23 Jul 07) Maj-Gen Ohn Myint threatens KIO  
49 DPA (25 Jun 07) "Militarization" of Karen State picks up pace, rights group warns  
50 Narinjara News (19 Jun 07) Two Western Battalions March East to Battle Karen  
51 Mizzima News (20 Jun 07) Military junta in Nay Pyi Taw bent on genocide  
52 TBBC (Oct 07) Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey  
53 Asian Tribune (26 Jun 07) 25,000 face starvation – appeal made for regional and international action of human rights abuses perpetrated in Burma

Title/Date	Signatories	Key points
Bo Aung Kyaw Street Declaration 1990	NLD and UNLD (representing ethnic pro-democracy parties that won the 1990 elections)	Committed to federalism. Called for a National Consultation Convention to establish the principles for a new constitution which would recognize the rights of all ethnic nationalities.
Mannerplaw Agreement July 31, 1992 <sup>54</sup>	National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), National League for Democracy, Liberated Area (NLD-LA), Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), and National Democratic Front (NDF).	Committed to a true Federal Union where equality, rights of self-determination, democracy and basic human rights are guaranteed.
Mae Tha Raw Tha Agreement January 14, 1997 <sup>55</sup>	Karen National Progressive Party, Pa-O People's Liberation Organization, Wa National Organization, United Wa State Party, Palaung State Liberation Front, Kachin Independent Organization, All Arakan Students and youth congress, Lahu Democratic Front, New Mon State Party, Arakan Liberation Party, Kayan New Land Party, Shan United Revolutionary Army, Chin National Front, Shan Democratic Union, Karen National Union and individual delegates	Agreed on common principles to establish a genuine, democratic federal union based on the equality and self-determination of nationalities. Rejected junta's National Convention. Called for Tripartite Dialogue to resolve problems by political means. Called for immediate cessation of military attacks against ethnic communities.
Thoo Mweh Klo Declaration 14 December, 1998 <sup>56</sup>	Elected MPs & ethnic groups: All Burma Muslim Union, All Burma Students' Democratic Front, All Burma Students' League, All Burma Young Monk's Union, Arakan League for Democracy, Arakan Liberation Party, Chin National Front, Chin National League for Democracy, Communist Party of Burma, Democratic Party for a New Society, Karen National Union, Lahu Democratic Front, Myeik-Dewai United Front, Muslim Liberation Organization, Members of Parliament Union, National League for Democracy-Liberated Area, People Defense Force, People's Liberation Front, Pa-O People's Liberation Organization, People's Patriotic Party, Palaung State Liberation Front, Shan Democratic Union, Wa National Organization	Unanimously declared that the conflict in Burma stems from junta's oppression of ethnic nationalities. Reiterated commitment to tripartite dialogue. Rejected the SPDC's National Convention. Reiterated commitment to a genuine federal union that recognized ethnics' right to self determination.

54 <http://www.ncub.org/PoliticalAgreement/MannerplawAgreement.pdf>

55 Ethnic Nationalities Seminar (Jan 1997) Mae Tha Raw Hta Agreement

[http://www.encburma.org/Agreements/Eng/Mae\\_Tha\\_Raw\\_Hta\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.encburma.org/Agreements/Eng/Mae_Tha_Raw_Hta_Eng.pdf)

56 Seminar on National Solidarity (14 Dec 98) Thoo Mweh klo Agreement

[http://www.encburma.org/Agreements/Eng/Thoo\\_Mweh\\_klo\\_Agreement\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.encburma.org/Agreements/Eng/Thoo_Mweh_klo_Agreement_Eng.pdf)

## Key alliances

Name	Members	Function/role
Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC)	National Democratic Front (ethnic alliance of 8 key armed groups) and the UNLD-LA (see below)	Entrusted with the task of fostering unity and cooperation between all ethnic nationalities in preparation for a Tripartite Dialogue, transition to democracy and the establishment of a genuine Federal Union of Burma.
National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB)	National Democratic Front, Democratic Alliance of Burma, National League for Democracy - Liberated and Members of Parliamentary Union - a total of 28 key organizations representing pro-democracy and ethnic nationality stakeholders.	Works on democratic principles to achieve a democratic federal system in Burma. Equality for all can be achieved only through transparent and inclusive participation. formed on September 22, 1992
National Reconciliation Program	Initiated by the UNLD and the NDF. Has the participation of seven state constitution drafting committees and a Burman study group.	Established in 1998 with the aim of the establishment of a Federal Union of Burma by assisting ethnic nationalities in preparing for a tripartite dialogue.
NCGUB	MPs-elect from the Party for National Democracy, National League for Democracy, Chin National League for Democracy, Democratic Organization for Kayan National Unity, Arakan League for Democracy, and Independents	Formed in December 1990 from MPs-elect who left Burma. Is the government-in-exile of the Union of Burma
United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD)	Alliance of 21 political parties representing non-Burman ethnic nationalities that contested the 1990 general elections under the slogan "democracy and equality".	Established in 1988. Won 35% of the popular vote and 16% of parliamentary seats (67 seats). The UNLD was banned and declared illegal in 1992. The UNLD in exile was officially re-established in the liberated areas on the Thai-Burma border in 1998 as UNLD-LA.
WLB	Burmese Women's Union, Kachin Women's Association-Thailand, Karen Women's Organization, Karenni National Women's Organization, Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization, Lahu Women's Organization, Palaung Women's Organization, Pa-O Women's Union, Rakhaing Women's Union, Shan Women's Action Network, Tavoy Women's Union, Women's Rights and Welfare Association of Burma	Umbrella organization comprising women's organizations of different ethnic backgrounds from Burma. Founded in December 1999 to work for women's empowerment and advancement of the status of women, and to work for the increased participation of women in all spheres of society in the democracy movement, and in peace and national reconciliation processes.