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SPDC DEFILES ASEAN CHARTER

In the year following ASEAN's member states signing its Charter on 20 November 2007, the SPDC has openly trampled on the values and rights enumerated in the document. Designed to establish ASEAN as a legal entity to command greater legitimacy and facilitate its integration in the global economy, the Charter also institutes core principles and obligations of member states. Under the Charter, each member state is to "respect fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice". These provisions will allow ASEAN to be recognized as a cohesive group that promotes democracy and respects the rule of law. Article 20 of the Charter provides for enforcement of the Charter by referral of non-compliance to the ASEAN summit.

Yet, ASEAN has turned a blind eye to the SPDC's continued and blatant violations of fundamental human rights and democratic principles. This situation does not bode well for any meaningful enforcement of the Charter provisions. When the junta recently sentenced peaceful pro-democracy activists for jail terms of 65 years in kangaroo court proceedings, ASEAN members were conspicuous in their silence. ASEAN members proved themselves incapable of standing up to Burma's military regime in a resolution before the UN's General Assembly's Third Committee. On 21 November, the Committee approved a draft resolution critical of the human rights situation inside Burma. The resolution also condemned the SPDC for its unwillingness to combat rights violations. Brunei, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam voted against the resolution while Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand abstained.

The SPDC has used the "grace" period for the formal enactment of the Charter as a politically expedient way of engaging in further rights violations and oppression. By remaining silent, ASEAN has denigrated the very principles and obligations it wants to showcase to the international community. By failing to advocate and enforce the principles and rights contained in the Charter, ASEAN has done a disservice to Burma's people and itself.

ASEAN must be serious in safeguarding the Charter's credibility through its defense of human rights and democratic principles. ASEAN can illustrate this to the international community by bloc voting against the junta in the UN General Assembly. Not only will such an action redeem ASEAN in the eyes of freedom loving nations, it will also put the regime on notice that ASEAN intends for the Charter to be a substantive declaration that will be monitored and enforced.

Overview

- On 20 November 2007, the ASEAN Charter was put in final form and adopted, subject to ratification. The Charter established specific rights that each ASEAN government must respect, promote, and protect.
- The Charter provides for the creation of a Human Rights Body but ASEAN leaders failed to include any operating procedures and policies for the Body.
- On 21 July 2008, a high-level ASEAN panel started work to create the human rights body. The panel is tasked with determining the body's makeup, role, and powers, which was to be presented to the 14th ASEAN summit. Thailand was the last ASEAN country to ratify the Charter on 15 November. Therefore, the Charter will become effective on 15 December.

Key Charter provisions

- ASEAN, as an inter-governmental organization, is conferred legal status.
- Member states will adhere to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Member states will ensure that ASEAN peoples live in peace with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment;
- Member states will respect fundamental freedoms, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the promotion of social justice;
- Member states shall take all necessary measures, including the enactment of appropriate domestic legislation, to effectively implement the provisions of this Charter and to comply with all obligations of membership; and
- In conformity with the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter relating to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, ASEAN shall establish an ASEAN human rights body.

Issues

- Concerns remain over whether the Charter provisions that address human rights issues can be enforced through the creation of a human rights body.
- Non-interference in member states internal affairs remains a provision in the Charter from earlier stated principles of the organization.
- SPDC Foreign Minister Nyan Win told his counterparts that the human rights body should uphold ASEAN's bedrock principle of non-interference in each other's affairs.

ASEAN says, SPDC does

DURING THE LAST MONTHS OF 2007 ASEAN MEMBERS:

- Condemned the SPDC over the brutal crackdown on the Saffron Revolution.
- Asserted that the adoption of the ASEAN Charter hinged on the SPDC halting human rights abuses; holding a credible constitutional referendum; engaging in genuine dialogue for national reconciliation and democratic reform; and releasing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

BUT IN 2008, ASEAN:

- Turned condemnation to support after the SPDC announced its farcical constitutional referendum. Support became cooperation after cyclone Nargis.
- Defended the SPDC and suggested to the UN that it could accomplish more if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was left off the agenda.
- Remained silent after the SPDC sentenced nearly 200 pro-democracy activists to jail terms as long as 68 years in the same month.
- Failed to support a UNGA Third Committee resolution over Burma's human rights abuses.

MEANWHILE:

- About five million people, or around 10% of the population, were malnourished despite a rice production surplus in 2008.
- The regime's response to cyclone Nargis turned a natural disaster into a man-made tragedy. In the days and months following the cyclone, the SPDC blocked humanitarian assistance from reaching the areas where it was most needed. In the aftermath of the cyclone, the SPDC detained 17 activists for delivering aid to affected communities in the Irrawaddy delta.
- Between 100,000 to 150,000 children under-five died in the year, mostly from preventable diseases. Burma has the second worst child mortality rate in Asia, after Afghanistan.
- The SPDC adopted a new constitution aimed at institutionalizing military rule in Burma through a sham referendum that featured widespread irregularities, electoral fraud, harassment, and criminal intimidation. The regime detained 127 activists and ordinary citizens for questioning the constitution, while in a miraculous coincidence, exactly 92.4% "Yes" votes were lodged in two separate rounds of polling.
- The SPDC continued to use its draconian "security laws" and sham legal proceedings to charge, prosecute, and imprison its opponents.
- The regime arrested 423 dissidents and sentenced at least 294 dissidents to prison terms over the past year. The SPDC also extended the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy Tin Oo by another year. There are now over 2,150 political prisoners in Burma, up from 1,150 in July 2007.
- The SPDC Army continued its pervasive use of forced labor and its harassment, intimidation, and imprisonment of people who complained to the ILO.
- The SPDC Army stepped up its military offensive against civilians and armed opposition groups in Eastern Burma. The attacks resulted in the forced relocation or destruction of 142 villages and the displacement of 66,000 people.
- The regime continued to purchase arms and other military supplies from China, Russia, and India. At the same time it signed new deals selling off Burma's oil, gas, and hydro-electric resources while the majority of the people has no electricity.
- Tens of thousands more people, including army deserters, fled Burma.
- Illicit drug production and opium poppy cultivation in Burma increased. Burma remains the largest producer of amphetamine type stimulants in Southeast Asia and the world's second largest producer of opium.

Burma in numbers

423	Number of dissidents arrested over the past year.
294	Number of dissidents sentenced to prison terms over the past year.
17	Number of activists arrested for delivering aid to affected communities in the Irrawaddy delta.
127	Number of activists and ordinary citizens arrested for expressing their opposition to the SPDC's constitutional referendum.
15	Number of journalists arrested over the past year.
2,164	Number of political prisoners, up from 1,150 in July 2007.
46	Number of custodial deaths occurred over the past year.
142	Number of villages destroyed by the SPDC Army's offensive in Eastern Burma over the past year.
66,000	Number of people displaced by the SPDC Army's offensive in Eastern Burma over the past year.
2.8 million	Number of Burmese migrant workers in Asia.
5,980	Number of boat people known to have left via Bangladesh over the past year.
70,000	Number of child soldiers, the highest number in the world.
2	Ranking in the list of corrupt countries in the world.
3	Ranking in the list of most economically repressed countries in the world.
50%	Inflation rate at the end of 2007.
90%	Percentage of the population living on less than US\$1 per day.
5 million	Number of malnourished people.
100,000	Number of people affected by food shortages after a rat plague destroyed supplies in Chin and Arakan States.
270-400	Number of children that die every day, mostly from preventable conditions.
850	Amount of kyat (equivalent to US\$0.70) the regime spends per person on healthcare.
10 million	Estimated number of aid dollars that the regime appropriated from UN aid funds.

ASEAN still lacks political will on Burma

When the ASEAN Charter was in the process of being considered, some member states believed that the Charter's provisions could be used to pressure the SPDC to implement democratic reforms and stop its pervasive human rights violations. The Philippines was the most vocal of the group. In late 2007 and at the beginning of 2008, Philippines' President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that the Philippines was not likely to ratify the Charter as long as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remained under house arrest. Arroyo later changed her position to support the Charter even after the SPDC illegally extended Daw Suu's house arrest.

While ASEAN members showcased the Charter's human rights body as a mechanism that can address and resolve human rights issues in Burma, ASEAN could not summon the integrity or resolve to sanction the SPDC following the bloody crackdown during the Saffron Revolution or vote to censure the junta in a recent resolution before the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.

The following 2007-2008 timeline demonstrates that ASEAN's Jekyll-and-Hyde tendencies have not been cured or alleviated by the Charter process. It appears that ASEAN's actions over the last year can be described as indecisive, at best, or cynically unresponsive, at worst.

- 27 Sep ASEAN Foreign Ministers express their revulsion to SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win over reports that demonstrations in Burma are being suppressed by violence.
- 16 Oct Malaysia's FM Syed Hamid Albar says that ASEAN will not agree to sanctions or a suspension of Burma from ASEAN as a result of its violent crackdown on protesters.
- 20 Oct Singapore's FM George Yeo says that ASEAN plans to use its moral authority to get all political parties in Burma to engage in a genuine dialogue.
- 08 Nov Indonesia Presidential spokesman confirms that ASEAN countries will not impose sanctions against Burma.
- 15 Nov An Indonesian Presidential spokesman says that the SPDC will be expected to uphold commitments to democracy and human rights included in the ASEAN Charter. The spokesperson says that Indonesia's president has corresponded with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe, urging an "inclusive process" in Burma's bid for democracy to ensure stability.
- 16 Nov Philippines' Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo expresses hope that the signing of the ASEAN Charter will compel the SPDC to finally implement democratic reforms. Romulo points out that the ASEAN charter may lose its significance if the grouping is unable to bring errant members into line. "I think that is what the leaders of ASEAN should impress upon Myanmar," says Romulo. "It should no longer procrastinate or string along the organization with more promises, which in the last ten years they have been making. Strengthening democracy, deepening and enhancing governance and rule of law, adhering to human rights, there should be national reconciliation immediately [...] First step (is the) release of Aung Sung Suu Kyi without conditions." Romulo warns that further non-compliance by the SPDC could well erode the credibility of the entire grouping. "It's not only Myanmar's credibility, but ASEAN and the countries composing ASEAN. [...] And in particular, when we sign the charter without implementation of the reforms - good governance, rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the strengthening of the democratic process, then it is a hollow manifestation of these principles by ASEAN."
- 19 Nov ASEAN nations call on Burma to move towards democracy.
- 19 Nov Philippines' President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo warns that the Philippines is unlikely to ratify the ASEAN Charter unless the SPDC restores democracy and frees Suu Kyi. "The expectation of the Philippines is that if Myanmar signs the charter, it is committed to returning to the path of democracy and releasing Aung San Suu Kyi," Arroyo tells SPDC PM Thein Sein. "Until the Philippine Congress sees that happen, it would have extreme difficulty in ratifying the charter," she says.
- 20 Nov ASEAN abruptly withdraws an invitation to UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari to address ASEAN leaders after the SPDC objected. ASEAN also rejects calls to suspend Burma over the junta's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. "ASEAN Leaders will strive to prevent the Myanmar issue from obstructing our efforts to deepen integration and build an ASEAN Community," Singapore PM Lee Hsien Loong says. However, ASEAN leaders urge the SPDC to open a "meaningful dialogue" with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, release her from house arrest, free all political detainees, and work toward a "peaceful transition to democracy."
- 21 Nov According to confidential recommendations by ASEAN diplomats, the human rights body to be established in the ASEAN charter should not intervene in domestic human rights issues such as the current crisis in Burma, but instead protect ASEAN countries from foreign meddling.
- 22 Nov ASEAN and EU issue a joint declaration calling for the SPDC to continue its engagement with the international community and pro-democracy forces.
- 19 Dec Philippines' Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo says that the ratification of the ASEAN Charter hinges on proof that Burma is following its promised "roadmap to democracy."
- 21 Jan Singapore's Second Minister for Foreign Affairs Raymond Lim tells Singapore MPs that the Burma issue will not slow down the integration of ASEAN.
- 25 Jan Philippines' President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo calls for ASEAN leaders to unite for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 12 Feb ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan says that the SPDC should be given the benefit of the doubt if the junta is serious about moving Burma toward democracy.

- 19 Feb Singapore FM George Yeo says that ASEAN ministers note the need to ensure that the SPDC's outcomes in conducting a constitutional referendum remain credible.
- 19 Feb Singapore FM George Yeo says that the SPDC's decision to bar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in elections is odd and out of date.
- 25 Feb Thailand's FM Noppadon Pattama says that Thailand has no choice but to put national economic interests before human rights concerns in dealing with Burma.
- 16 Mar Thai PM Samak Sundaravej describes killings and suppression of civilians in Burma as "normal."
- 30 Apr Thailand PM Samak Sundaravej says that Thailand has no problem with the prolonged house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 03 Jun Malaysia PM Abdullah Badawi says that ASEAN can impose sanctions on member countries that flout its charter.
- 08 Jul ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan says that ASEAN has emerged stronger in the aftermath of cyclone Nargis.
- 20 Jul ASEAN nations express their "deep disappointment" over the SPDC's decision to extend the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 21 Jul SPDC ratifies ASEAN Charter.
- 21 Jul Singapore PM Lee Hsien Loong says that ASEAN intends to foster greater trust and cooperation between the international community and the SPDC.
- 21 Jul ASEAN urges the SPDC to take "bolder steps" to hold free and fair elections by 2010 and release all political detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 23 Aug Thai PM Samak Sundaravej tells UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari that efforts to engage the SPDC would be more productive if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was left off the agenda.
- 28 Aug Philippines' Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago says that the Philippines will ratify the ASEAN Charter.
- 11 Nov ASEAN fails to condemn the SPDC's imposition of lengthy jail terms on political activists.
- 21 Nov UN General Assembly's Third Committee approves a draft resolution critical of the human rights situation inside Burma. The resolution condemns the SPDC for its unwillingness to combat rights violations. Brunei, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam vote against the resolution while Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand abstain.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ASEAN from revulsion to rescue

In the space of less than five months, ASEAN went from using a firm hand to kid gloves in its relations with the SPDC. In September 2007, ASEAN expressed “revulsion” over the junta’s shooting of peaceful demonstrators. But in February, ASEAN supported and promoted the regime’s announcement to hold a constitutional referendum in May which was to be followed by elections in 2010.

With respect to the referendum, ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan said that the SPDC should be given the benefit of the doubt if the junta is serious about moving the country toward democracy. ASEAN FMs welcomed the news as well.¹ Thailand was especially ingratiating. Former Thai PM Samak Sundaravej praised Burma as a peaceful and orderly country with a military leader who is a good Buddhist who prays every morning.² Samak’s remarks went to unparalleled extremes when he said that Thailand had no problem with the prolonged house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.³ In August, Samak told UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari that efforts to engage the SPDC would be more productive if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was left off the agenda.⁴

Cyclone Nargis proved to be the “perfect storm” for the SPDC. Despite the damage and destruction inflicted on Burma’s people, the cyclone provided the SPDC with a smokescreen for continued oppression and a new source of revenue. The international outrage expressed over the junta’s initial refusal of aid and assistance put ASEAN in the unique position of not only being the conduit for humanitarian aid and relief into Burma but also allowed for ASEAN to promote itself and the good efforts of the SPDC in responding to the cyclone. Since cyclone Nargis, ASEAN has blithely ignored the deteriorating human rights situation in Burma.

On 19 May, at an emergency meeting in Singapore, ASEAN agreed to set up a coordinating mechanism to help Burma with emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan was designated to head the relief effort. The mechanism began on 25 May when the SPDC hosted an international pledging conference in Rangoon.⁵ After the pledging conference, Surin said he and others purposely left the matter of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi out of conversations with the SPDC. “We did not want to crowd the agenda. We did not want to complicate the proceeding. At least we accomplished one thing, and that is: there is an engagement. There is a space for engagement on humanitarian issues, Surin said.”⁶

In mid-June, Surin said that the cyclone Nargis disaster showed the world that a revitalized ASEAN could “rise to the occasion”.⁷ On 8 July, Surin said that ASEAN had emerged stronger in the aftermath of cyclone Nargis. Surin said that leading the international humanitarian effort to help millions of cyclone survivors gave ASEAN “a sense of community and confidence.” “The ASEAN was baptized by cyclone Nargis,” Surin said.⁸

In contrast to ASEAN patting itself on the back, on 16 October the regional advocacy network Burma Partnership released a report that provided its own assessment of ASEAN’s humanitarian response to cyclone Nargis. Burma Partnership found that the UN/SPDC/ASEAN’s Post Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) report ignored issues such as the SPDC’s blocking and misappropriation of aid and the mistreatment of cyclone survivors in relief camps. In addition, Burma Partnership stated that the

¹ CNA (19 Feb 08) ASEAN ministers say Myanmar democracy roadmap must be credible

² DPA (16 Mar 08) Thai premier praises Myanmar as peaceful and orderly - Summary

³ Reuters (30 Apr 08) Thai PM says Myanmar’s Suu Kyi detention is “OK”

⁴ AFP (25 Aug 08) Thai PM says West uses Myanmar’s Suu Kyi as political tool

⁵ Nation (20 May 08) Asean meeting agrees to coordinate relief aid to Burma

⁶ VOA (27 May 08) Burma Extends House Arrest for Aung San Suu Kyi, Arrests Opposition Supporters

⁷ DPA (18 Jun 08) ‘A new Asean’

⁸ Bangkok Post (08 July 08) Surin says Burma, food crises strengthen Asean

PONJA report failed to mention numerous cases of human rights violations including incidents where the SPDC recruited orphan children as soldiers, forced survivors to do reconstruction work, and confiscated farmland.⁹

SPDC puts ASEAN human rights body in a coma

Overview

- Despite initial objections by the SPDC, on 30 July 2007, ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed to form a regional human rights body as part of the ASEAN Charter.¹⁰
- On 20 November 2007, the ASEAN Charter was finally put in final form and adopted, subject to ratification. The Charter does not specify the procedures and enforcement powers for the human rights body.¹¹
- On 21 July, a high-level ASEAN panel started work to draft procedures for the human rights body. The panel will finalize its recommendations on the body's composition, role, and powers and present them to the 14th ASEAN summit.¹²

Issues

- Concerns remain over whether the Charter provisions that address human rights issues can be enforced through the creation of a human rights body.
- Non-interference in member states internal affairs remains a principle enshrined in the Charter.
- SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win told his counterparts that the rights body should uphold ASEAN's bedrock principle of non-interference in each other's affairs. Nyan Win made it clear to his counterparts that the SPDC is opposed to the idea of empowering the ASEAN human rights body with monitoring authority on rights violation.¹³
- The SPDC will undoubtedly attempt to undermine the adoption of rules and procedures for the human rights body at the ASEAN Summit.
- ASEAN may use consensus decision-making as an excuse to avoid controversy in addressing the adoption of a human rights enforcement mechanism.

Solutions

- ASEAN must reconcile the inherent contradictions in the Charter that enumerate fundamental rights and obligations *vis-a-vis* the principle of non-interference.
- The Charter must be amended to provide for an enforcement mechanism against countries that fail to abide by its principles and specify the penalties for non-compliance.
- ASEAN must abandon its consensus decision-making procedure on issues that involve core principles and rights.

What do people want?

- ASEAN peoples want a Charter that ensures fundamental rights and democratic principles in every member state.
- ASEAN peoples want a Charter that provides a meaningful enforcement mechanism and appropriate penalties for violations.

⁹ AFP (16 Oct 08) Aid groups blast ASEAN-led report on Myanmar relief effort

¹⁰ DPA (31 Jul 07) ASEAN sees tough times in setting up human rights body

¹¹ AP (20 Nov 07) ASEAN adopts landmark charter, with watered-down human rights body to appease Myanmar

¹² AP (22 Jul 07) Myanmar opposes investigative powers

¹³ Mizzima News (22 Jul 07) Burma pulls down ASEAN

UN frustration, more sanctions, and more condemnation

During the last year, three major events kept the SPDC under intense international scrutiny:

- The SPDC's brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters in September 2007;
- The constitutional referendum held in May; and
- The junta's blocking and obstruction of humanitarian aid and assistance following the devastation caused by cyclone Nargis.

In October 2007 and in May, the UN Security Council issued Presidential Statements on Burma. The October statement deplored the SPDC's use of violence against peaceful protesters during the Saffron Revolution and called on the SPDC to release all political prisoners.¹⁴ The May statement urged the junta to conduct a free and fair referendum process that would allow for the full participation of all political actors and respect fundamental political freedoms.¹⁵

The junta granted UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari frequent access to the country but nothing was accomplished during the visits. Instead of showing any willingness to cooperate with Gambari's mission, the junta was openly defiant in reacting to Gambari's proposals and UN involvement in the country. Gambari was the target of the SPDC's displeasure and derision on several occasions and was never granted an audience with SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe.

In November 2007, SPDC Information Minister Brig Gen Kyaw Hsan lectured Gambari about the UN's ties with "big power bullies". Kyaw Hsan also noted the SPDC's dissatisfaction with the outcome of Gambari's previous visit because it was followed by condemnation from the UN Security Council and sanctions imposed by US, Australia, and the EU. The tirade continued. In March, Kyaw Hsan accused Gambari of "bias" and "act[ing] outside [his] role as mediator" by releasing a statement from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in November.¹⁶ Kyaw San also expressed unhappiness with Gambari's trips to other countries in the region and warned that his role as an "impartial adviser" would be brought into question if he continued to listen to suggestions from Western nations.¹⁷

Gambari's last visit to Burma was in August. Once again, he was unable to engage the SPDC in any substantive discussions. In September, 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.¹⁸ Ban also said that he would forgo plans to visit to Burma unless the SPDC showed tangible progress in implementing democratic reforms including the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and other political prisoners.¹⁹

Over the past year, the US, the EU, Canada, and Australia all imposed additional sanctions on the SPDC. The new sanctions targeted financial transactions of junta cronies and also targeted Burma's timber, gems and mining industries.

- **Canada:** On 14 November 2007, Canada announced sweeping sanctions against the SPDC that included a ban on Canadian investment, trade, and transfer of technical data to Burma. In addition, the assets of Burmese nationals in Canada connected to the SPDC leaders were frozen and Burma-registered ships or aircraft were prohibited from docking or landing in Canada.²⁰

¹⁴ UN Security Council, Security Council Deplores Violence Used Against Myanmar Demonstrators, Stresses Importance Of Early Release For All Political Prisoners, 11 October 2007, UN Doc SC/9139

¹⁵ UN Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, 2 May 2008, UN Doc S/PRST/2008/13

¹⁶ AFP (08 Mar 08) Myanmar accuses UN envoy of favoring Aung San Suu Kyi

¹⁷ AP (07 Mar 08) Myanmar rejects reform calls from UN; RFA (07 Mar 08) U.N. rejects Burma's slap at special envoy

¹⁸ UN News Center (11 Sep 08) Secretary-General calls for tangible political progress in Myanmar

¹⁹ Reuters (07 Oct 08) U.N. chief Ban may drop plans for Myanmar visit; Mizzima News (08 Oct 08) Ban Ki-moon may cancel Burma

²⁰ AFP (15 Nov 07) Ottawa announces Myanmar sanctions

- **EU:** On 19 November 2007, EU FMs imposed tougher sanctions on Burma's military regime. The restrictions included a longer list of SPDC officials subject to a travel restrictions and frozen assets. An investment ban on SPDC-owned enterprises was also extended and broadened to include businesses owned or controlled by the regime or by persons and entities associated with the regime. The sanctions also prohibited exports of equipment to enterprises involving timber, metals, minerals, semi-precious and precious stones, as well as imports from these sectors.²¹
- **US:** On 5 February, the US Treasury Department tightened banking sanctions against family members of regime leaders as well as key individuals and businesses that are part of Tay Za's financial network. The Department's action froze any assets that they may have under US jurisdiction and barred Americans from conducting business with them.²² On 25 February, the US Treasury Department added Asia World Company along with its managing director Steven Law, his wife Cecilia Ng, and his father, reputed drug lord Lo Hsing Han, as additional individuals and companies covered by financial sanctions.²³ On 29 July, President George W. Bush signed the JADE Act.²⁴ The legislation blocked US companies from importing gemstones from Burma through "third party" countries and imposed financial sanctions on the SPDC, SPDC-controlled companies, and companies controlled by junta cronies.²⁵
- **Australia:** On 22 October, Australia announced that it expanded its targeted financial sanctions against Burma and added 45 new names to an earlier list of 418 people.²⁶

Cyclone Nargis

The SPDC's delay and outright refusal of humanitarian aid in the days following cyclone Nargis caused immense frustration in the international community. The chorus of condemnation came from the US, the EU, Canada, China, and the UN.

UK PM Gordon Brown summed up the international dissatisfaction with the junta when he said: "This is inhuman. We have an intolerable situation created by a natural disaster. It is being made into a man-made catastrophe by the negligence, the neglect and the inhuman treatment of the Burmese people by a regime that is failing to act and to allow the international community to do what it wants to do."²⁷

UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon made numerous attempts to contact SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe by telephone to no avail.²⁸ Ban resorted to having Thai PM Samak personally hand-deliver letters to Than Shwe on his behalf in an effort to open humanitarian aid channels.²⁹ As aggravation in the international community grew, Ban finally decided to go to Burma himself in an attempt to break the aid impasse. When Ban arrived in Burma, he was able to secure a promise from Than Shwe to allow humanitarian aid and aid personnel unfettered access to Burma. However, Than Shwe's promise was little more than window-dressing for the international aid community. Aid organizations still struggled with considerable obstacles in delivering humanitarian assistance that included bribes demanded by SPDC Army officials at roadblocks and new SPDC regulations on aid organizations.

²¹ Reuters (19 Nov 07) EU implements sanctions on Myanmar junta, firms

²² AFP (05 Feb 08) US expands sanctions on Myanmar regime family, tycoon

²³ Reuters (25 Feb 08) Treasury slaps more sanctions on Myanmar firms

²⁴ AFP (30 Jul 08) Bush signs sanctions against Myanmar into law

²⁵ Irrawaddy (23 Jul 08) US Senate Bans on Import of Burmese Gems

²⁶ AAP (22 Oct 08) Australia extends Burma sanction

²⁷ Telegraph (18 May 08) Myanmar cyclone: Burma junta is killing its own people, says West

²⁸ Irrawaddy (13 May 08) Junta Leader Won't Answer My Calls: Ban Ki-moon

²⁹ Irrawaddy (13 May 08) Thai PM to travel to Burma at UN Chief's request

DEMOCRACY

SPDC imposes constitution

Despite repeated calls from the UN, the international community, and pro-democracy forces for an inclusive and participatory constitution-drafting process, the SPDC refused to amend the constitution it unilaterally drafted during a process that lasted over 15 years.³⁰ The constitution has been widely criticized because it aims at institutionalizing military rule in Burma.³¹

On 9 February, the SPDC announced it would hold a referendum to adopt the constitution in May followed by “multi-party democratic elections” in 2010.³² Ten days later, the junta said that the drafting of the constitution had been completed.³³ However, the text of the constitution was not made public until 9 April, a month before the referendum. The SPDC printed only 465,000 copies of the constitution for a voting public of over 27 million.³⁴ The regime distributed copies of the constitution to bookshops to be sold for 1,000 kyat (US\$1) a copy.³⁵ In addition, the SPDC did not translate the constitution into any of the ethnic nationalities’ languages.

The SPDC’s Referendum Law criminalized campaigning against the referendum. Anyone who distributed leaflets or made speeches against the referendum faced a three-year prison term.³⁶ Between 29 February and 16 May, the regime detained 127 activists and ordinary citizens for expressing their opposition to the referendum. The regime also barred monks and nuns from voting.

The regime tightly controlled the referendum process. The SPDC appointed a 45-member Referendum Convening Commission to oversee the referendum. Most of the commission members were junta-handpicked individuals who served as delegates at the National Convention and in the Constitution Drafting Committee.³⁷ In Townships across Burma the regime set up sub-commissions staffed mainly with local SPDC officials and USDA members.³⁸ The junta also rejected the offer of UN technical assistance and observers for the referendum.³⁹

The regime carried out a massive “Yes” vote propoganda campaign in its controlled media, while barring media from publishing the views of supporters of a “No” vote.⁴⁰

On 10 May, the regime pushed ahead with its constitutional referendum, despite calls from pro-democracy forces and the international community - including UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon⁴¹ - to focus on relief operations in the areas hit by cyclone Nargis. The junta delayed the vote by two weeks in the 47 Townships (40 in Rangoon Division and seven in Irrawaddy Division) that were worst affected by the cyclone.⁴²

³⁰ AFP (03 Dec 07) Myanmar rejects calls to include Suu Kyi in reforms; AFP (08 Mar 08) Myanmar refuses to amend charter barring Suu Kyi from polls; AP (07 Mar 08) Myanmar rejects reform calls from UN; AP (28 Mar 08) UN body condemns systematic rights abuses by Myanmar government

³¹ For a complete analysis of the SPDC’s constitution, see: The SPDC constitutional referendum: A dead end for democracy in Burma

³² Reuters (09 Feb 08) Myanmar junta to hold elections in 2010; BBC (09 Feb 08) Burmese junta sets voting dates

³³ BBC (19 Feb 08) Burma confirms draft constitution

³⁴ NLM (17 Apr 08) Commission for Holding Referendum meets with sib-commissions at different levels in Sagaing, Magway, Bago, Bago (West), Ayeyawady Divisions

³⁵ AP (10 Apr 08) Myanmar publishes text of military-backed proposed constitution

³⁶ NLM (28 Feb 08) The Referendum Law for the Approval of the Draft Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008

³⁷ AP (26 Feb 08) Myanmar enacts law on constitution vote; AFP (27 Feb 08) Burma sets up referendum panel

³⁸ See March 2008 Burma Bulletin

³⁹ AFP (08 Mar 08) UN envoy meets Myanmar vote chief: officials

⁴⁰ Reuters (21 Apr 08) Myanmar arrests keep pressure on “no” campaign; New Straits Times (23 Apr 08) No room for No amid the junta’s Yes drive; AFP (24 Apr 08) No press freedom for Myanmar constitution vote

⁴¹ AP (09 May 08) UN officials criticize Myanmar’s response to cyclone

⁴² AFP (15 May 08) Myanmar says constitution approved by 92.4 percent

Ignoring a 2 May UN Security Council presidential statement that called on the regime to make the referendum “free and fair” and “inclusive and credible,”⁴³ the SPDC resorted to widespread fraud and a campaign of intimidation to ensure approval of the constitution.⁴⁴ Voting irregularities and fraud were reported in most of Burma’s States and Divisions.⁴⁵ The regime also evicted cyclone survivors out of schools, monasteries, and community centers so that they could be used as polling stations.⁴⁶

The referendum results provided conclusive evidence that the referendum process was a sham. On 26 May, the SPDC made the outrageous claim that 92.4% of voters had approved the constitution, with a turnout of 98.1%.⁴⁷

On 18 June, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that stated that the constitutional referendum was held in an atmosphere of intimidation and in disregard for international standards of free and fair elections.⁴⁸

⁴³ UN Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, 2 May 2008, UN Doc S/PRST/2008/13

⁴⁴ See March and April 2008 Burma Bulletin

⁴⁵ See April and May Burma Bulletins

⁴⁶ See May 2008 Burma Bulletin

⁴⁷ AP (26 May 08) Referendum approved in cyclone-hit areas

⁴⁸ UN News Center (18 Jun 08) Myanmar: UN Human Rights Council condemns ‘ongoing systematic violations’

HUMAN RIGHTS

Crackdown on dissidents

During the September-October 2007 crackdown on peaceful protesters, the SPDC detained 3,000 to 4,000 people and killed at least 31 peaceful protesters. At least 14 individuals died in custody due to poor detention conditions.⁴⁹ The SPDC also arrested 15 local journalists for covering the Saffron Revolution.

On 14 November 2007, SPDC Defense Minister Maj Gen Aye Myint said that “normalcy” had returned to Burma.⁵⁰ Despite assurances from the SPDC that no more arrests would be carried out, the relentless campaign of arrest, harassment, and intimidation of dissidents continued.⁵¹ Over the past year, the regime has arrested 423 dissidents, bringing to over 2,100 the total number of political prisoners.⁵²

The ongoing repression targeted particularly NLD members. SPDC authorities arrested 139 NLD members including four elected Members of Parliament.

The focus of the latest crackdown was on opponents to the SPDC’s constitutional referendum and individual efforts by Burmese citizens to deliver aid during cyclone Nargis relief operations.

Between 29 February and 16 May, the regime detained 127 activists and ordinary citizens for expressing their opposition to the SPDC’s constitutional referendum.

In the aftermath of cyclone Nargis, the SPDC detained 17 activists for delivering aid to affected communities in the Irrawaddy delta. On 10 June, SPDC authorities also arrested at least 16 cyclone survivors for protesting outside the UNDP headquarters in Rangoon about not receiving any help from the regime.⁵³

In the wake of the Saffron Revolution, the military regime continued to harass, intimidate, and detain Buddhist monks. Over the past year, the SPDC stepped up its presence in and around monasteries across Burma.⁵⁴ Surveillance of monks’ activities intensified and SPDC authorities carried out raids on various monasteries.⁵⁵ The regime arrested 28 monks and sentenced 31 to prison terms.

The SPDC continued to use its draconian “security laws” and sham legal proceedings to charge, prosecute, and imprison its opponents. Over the past year, the regime sentenced at least 294 dissidents to prison terms.

The SPDC also extended the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy Tin Oo by another year on 27 May and 13 February respectively.⁵⁶

In 2008, the UN Human Rights Council passed two resolutions that strongly condemned the SPDC’s systematic human rights violations.⁵⁷ The Geneva-based body has passed 18 resolutions against the military regime since 1992.

⁴⁹ HRC, 6th session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 7 December 2007, UN Doc A/HRC/6/14

⁵⁰ AFP (14 Nov 07) We are in control: Myanmar defence official

⁵¹ UN News Center (13 Nov 07) Dialogue only way forward in resolving Myanmar crisis, says UN envoy

⁵² Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), 24 November, <http://www.aappb.org>

⁵³ AFP (11 Jun 08) Official Says 16 Burma Cyclone Survivors Detained Outside UN Office; AP (11 Jun 08) International experts begin survey of needs in Myanmar

⁵⁴ See January 2008, February, March 2008, April 2008, August 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁵⁵ See November 2007, February 2008, April 2008, July 2008, August 2008, September, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁵⁶ Reuters (27 May 08) Myanmar extends Suu Kyi house arrest; Reuters (13 Feb 08) Myanmar gives top dissident another year in jail

⁵⁷ AP (28 Mar 08) UN body condemns systematic rights abuses by Myanmar government; UN News Center (18 Jun 08) Myanmar: UN Human Rights Council condemns ‘ongoing systematic violations’

Detention conditions

Detention conditions in prisons across Burma continue to be horrific. The situation is particularly serious in Rangoon's Insein Prison. The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana described its conditions as "appalling."⁵⁸

Inadequate medical treatment in places of detention has resulted in deteriorating health conditions for many political prisoners, including 88 Generation Students Min Ko Naing, Myo Yan Naung Thein, and Mie Mie; Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) leader Hkun Htun Oo; SNLD member Hla Aung; NLD elected MPs Dr Zaw Myint Maung and Than Lwin; and NLD members Nay Win and Thant Zin Myo.⁵⁹

Prison authorities punished political prisoners with solitary confinement for protesting prison conditions or demanding their basic rights. Political prisoners subjected to such measures include monk leader U Gambira; labor activist Su Su Nway, 88 Generation student Markee; Human Rights Defenders and Promoters members Myo Thant and Kyi Phyu; activists Htin Kyaw and Sithu Maung; protester Ohn Than; and NLD members Thet Wei, Aung Tun, Yan Naing Tun, and Pho Toke.⁶⁰

Torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners by prison authorities have again been reported.⁶¹ Reports have also surfaced of harassment of political prisoners by common criminals.⁶² The regime also continued to transfer political prisoners to jails located in the most remote areas of the country.⁶³

Over the past year, two political prisoners died in Burma's prisons.⁶⁴ Forty-six deaths in custody not involving political prisoners were also reported.⁶⁵ Thirty-six of the 46 were killed by SPDC Army soldiers and riot police in Insein prison on 3 May. Soldiers and police were brought in to restore order after some inmates started a fire to warm up after cyclone Nargis destroyed the roof in one section of the prison.⁶⁶

Forced labor practices – no end in sight

Burma's people continue to suffer under the SPDC's pervasive practices of forced labor. During the past year, there were numerous reports of the SPDC ordering villagers and cyclone Nargis survivors to perform forced labor on road construction and repair; construction of military bases; planting and/or cultivation of various agricultural crops; portering military supplies; and performing sentry duty. Cyclone Nargis survivors were particularly vulnerable and many were required to perform forced labor as a condition to receiving aid and relief.⁶⁷

In February 2007, the SPDC and the International Labor Organization (ILO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that formalized a procedure for the reporting, investigation, and resolution of forced labor complaints by Burma's citizens.⁶⁸ Despite the continued existence of the MoU between the ILO and the SPDC, the ILO has had no success in addressing and resolving forced labor issues. On 14 November 2007, the ILO Secretariat said that the mechanism remained out of reach for most.⁶⁹

⁵⁸ HRC, 8th session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 3 June 2008, UN Doc A/HRC/8/12

⁵⁹ See December 2007, January 2008, March 2008, April 2008, June 2008, and July 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁶⁰ See December 2007, February 2008, March 2008, July 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁶¹ See January 2008 and May 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁶² Narinjara News (16 Oct 08) Six Democracy Activists Placed with Criminals in Sittwe Prison; Mizzima News (27 Oct 08) Four NLD prisoners moved to Insein 'dog cell'

⁶³ Narinjara News (14 Sep 08) Five Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike Moved; See November 2008 Burma Bulletin

⁶⁴ See March 2008 and July 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁶⁵ See February 2008, April 2008, May 2008, and June 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁶⁶ Mizzima News (05 May 08) 36 dead, 70 injured in fire at notorious prison

⁶⁷ See February, March, May, June, and July 2008 Burma Bulletins and <http://www.altsean.org/Chronology/Chronology2008/HumanRightsChronology2008.htm>

⁶⁸ See March 2007 Burma Bulletin

⁶⁹ AFP (14 Nov 07) Myanmar under fire over forced labour at ILO

Even when citizens were able to file complaints with the ILO representative in Rangoon, complainants were threatened, intimidated, harassed, and jailed as a result.

- **9 January:** SPDC authorities arrested Sanchaung Township's NLD Chairman Thet Wei for possessing documents on SPDC-ordered forced labor incidents.⁷⁰ On 16 September, the SPDC sentenced Thet Wei to two years in prison with hard labor on charges of trying to lodge a complaint with the ILO on the use of child soldiers by the SPDC Army.⁷¹
- **31 January:** The ILO representative in Rangoon went to Taungdwingyi, Rangoon Division, to investigate a forced labor complaint. Before his arrival, local SPDC authorities threatened local residents not to disclose the truth about the forced labor incident. Despite assurances by the SPDC that the ILO representative could perform his investigation without any interference, USDA members and Swan Arr Shin thugs surrounded the house where the ILO official and the complainant met. The SPDC's intimidation effectively silenced the complainants.⁷²
- **5 March:** SPDC Military Affairs Security personnel and Labor Ministry officials questioned more than 70 residents in Arakan State after they reported incidents of forced labor to the ILO. More than 70 citizens of Taunggoat Township signed a petition that claimed local authorities had committed acts of forced labor and extortion. SPDC Military Affairs Security personnel reportedly forced the residents who had signed the petition to sign a counter document claiming that they had been coerced into petitioning the ILO.⁷³

On 13 June, the SPDC's pervasive practice of using forced labor was, once again, discussed by the ILO. The ILO Committee on the Application of Standards convened a Special Sitting on Burma. The Committee expressed its concern that forced labor in Burma, including the recruitment of children into the armed forces, remained as widespread as before.⁷⁴

Freedom of information

The pervasive atmosphere of censorship, threats, and arrests against media persons make Burma one of the world's most repressive media environments. Burma ranks 170th out of the 173 countries in Reporters Sans Frontiers' latest report on press freedom worldwide.⁷⁵ Over the past year the regime arrested 15 journalists.⁷⁶

The SPDC relentlessly censored news and suspended publications that reported on sensitive political and economic issues. The regime also suppressed all expressions of dissenting views.⁷⁷ On 22 January, SPDC security forces arrested poet Saw Wai for writing a Valentine's Day poem. The initial letters of each line of the poem published in the weekly Love journal, read: "General Than Shwe is crazy with power."⁷⁸ On 10 November, he was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of "inducing crimes against public tranquility."⁷⁹

The regime intensified restrictions on internet access. The junta targeted blogs, which had played a vital role in reporting events during the Saffron Revolution. On 29 January, police in Rangoon arrested blogger Nay Phone Latt.⁸⁰ On 10 November, he was sentenced to 20 years and six months in

⁷⁰ Irrawaddy (11 Jan 08) NLD Member Released in Human Rights Case; DVB (11 Jan 08) NLD chairperson in San Chaung arrested

⁷¹ 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

⁷² Mizzima News (06 Feb 08) Complainant threatened not to disclose truth to ILO

⁷³ Irrawaddy (06 Mar 08) Arakan residents petition ILO on forced labor issues

⁷⁴ International Labor Conference Provisional Record 97th Session (13 Jun 08) Special sitting to examine developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

⁷⁵ RSF (22 Oct 08) Only peace protects freedoms in post-9/11 world - Close-up on... Asia

⁷⁶ See January 2008, February 2008, May 2008, June 2008, September 2008, and November 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁷⁷ See January 2008, February 2008, March 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁷⁸ BBC (23 Jan 08) Burma poet held for secret insult

⁷⁹ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 08) Young Burmese Blogger Sentenced to more than 20 Years in Jail

⁸⁰ Mizzima News (29 Jan 08) Burmese bloggers hide from police

prison.⁸¹ SPDC authorities also stepped up monitoring and surveillance of internet cafes.⁸² In September and October, pro-regime hackers carried out repeated attacks on the websites of several Burmese media in exile.⁸³

The regime also banned the sale and distribution of “Rambo 4” DVDs. On 8 March, SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrested two NLD members for possession of “Rambo 4” DVDs.⁸⁴ SPDC authorities also banned the VCDs by U Nyanithara and U Kovida, two senior monks who criticized the junta’s crackdown. The two VCDs criticized the military regime using allegorical classic Buddhist stories.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Irrawaddy (10 Nov 08) Young Burmese Blogger Sentenced to more than 20 Years in Jail

⁸² See January 2008, March 2008, and September 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁸³ See September 2008 and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁸⁴ DVB (10 Mar 08) NLD members arrested over Rambo DVDs

⁸⁵ Irrawaddy (16 Nov 07) Dhamma VCDs by Two Well-known Monks Banned in Burma

MILITARY

SPDC offensive intensifies in Eastern Burma

Since November 2007, the SPDC Army has stepped up its military offensive against civilians and armed opposition groups in Eastern Burma.⁸⁶ The SPDC Army mobilized 249 Infantry and Light Infantry Battalions – 30% of the regime’s frontline troops nationwide – to carry out military operations.⁸⁷ The attacks resulted in the forced relocation or destruction of 142 villages and the displacement of 66,000 people.⁸⁸ The SPDC destroyed villagers’ farms and paddy fields in a bid to cut off the villagers’ food supplies.⁸⁹ The regime also forced villagers to clear roads, work as porters, and act as minesweepers.⁹⁰

Landmines laid by both the SPDC Army and armed opposition groups continued to kill and injure civilians in Eastern Burma.⁹¹

Cyclone survivors also arrived in Mae Sot, Thailand, from the Irrawaddy delta. The SPDC attempted to stem the flow by arresting individuals attempting to flee, and warning Buddhist monasteries in border areas to refuse shelter to any cyclone survivors. Military checkpoints were also strengthened.⁹²

Arms flow into Burma

The bloody repression of the Saffron Revolution and the ongoing military offensive against ethnic nationalities in Eastern Burma provided compelling evidence of how the military regime used its armed forces to oppress the Burmese people. Over the past year, the regime continued to purchase arms and other military supplies from China, Russia, and India.

Between December 2007 and August, the Chinese government delivered over 750 Chinese “First Automobile Works” (FAW) military trucks to the SPDC.⁹³ The vehicles were part of a 3,500 truck consignment purchased by the junta.⁹⁴ The FAW trucks are designed to tow artillery and transport military supplies.⁹⁵ In early March, about 40 FAW trucks were sent to the Kyaikkasan police grounds in Rangoon’s Bahan Township.⁹⁶

On 2 April, Japan’s public broadcaster NHK reported that North Korea had been selling the SPDC rocket launchers with a range of about 65 kilometers. The report said that exports of the weapons had been handled by an unnamed Singapore trading company.⁹⁷

In mid-April, trucks transporting military equipment including artillery ammunitions and guns entered Burma from Moreh in India’s Northeastern State of Manipur. Citing military sources, the India-based newspaper Sangai Express said that the equipment was delivered as part of the trade deals reached between Delhi and the SPDC.⁹⁸

⁸⁶ See December 2007 Burma Bulletin

⁸⁷ TBBC (Oct 08) Internal Displacement and International Law in Eastern Burma

⁸⁸ TBBC (Oct 08) Internal Displacement and International Law in Eastern Burma

⁸⁹ Irrawaddy (11 Dec 07) Military offensive targeting villagers’ food supplies

⁹⁰ See December 2007 and January 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁹¹ ICBL (21 Nov 08) Landmine Monitor Report 2008: Toward a Mine-Free World; ICBL (21 Nov 08) Press Release: 1997 Mine Ban Treaty Suffers First Serious Violations

⁹² See June 2008 Burma Bulletin

⁹³ See January 2008, April 2008, and August 2008 Burma Bulletins

⁹⁴ DVB (26 Aug 08) 200 more military trucks delivered from China

⁹⁵ Mizzima News (11 Apr 08) Chinese trucks to tow howitzer arrive on border

⁹⁶ DPA (04 Mar 08) China-made police trucks arrive in Rangoon

⁹⁷ AFP (02 Apr 08) N Korea exporting multiple-launch rockets to Myanmar; Reuters (03 Apr 08) N Korea sells Rocket Launchers to Burma

⁹⁸ Irrawaddy (19 Apr 08) Burma’s Trading Neighbors Offering Military Gifts

DISPLACEMENT

Migrant workers from Burma in the region

Economic hardship and human rights continued to push people out of Burma to seek work in neighboring countries where they are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. In 2008, there were more than 2.8 million Burmese migrant workers in Asia. Most of them were undocumented. Without even the limited rights of documented migrant workers, they were without access to healthcare and other services, and lived in constant fear of deportation.

The regime's restrictions on freedom of movement force those wanting to seek work abroad to rely on human smugglers. They frequently go into debt to pay for safe passage only to be sold by traffickers and forcibly assigned to unsafe work, including prostitution. On 9 April, 54 undocumented migrants including children from Mon State died in Thailand while being transported from Ranong to Phuket in a sealed freezer truck.⁹⁹ The incident focused attention on the problems associated with smuggling and trafficking of people from Burma. The adult survivors received two-month suspended sentences and a 1,000 baht fine for violating Thailand's immigration laws.¹⁰⁰

In Western Burma, the regime continued to deny Rohingya the basic right of citizenship. The SPDC also subjected them to travel restrictions, forced relocation, extortion, and arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. Rohingya fled to Bangladesh where they lived in appalling conditions in makeshift camps. In the "sailing season" (October to April), 5,570 Rohingya boarded unseaworthy vessels in Bangladesh and Burma that left for Thailand and Malaysia. Many boat departures were not documented, and many others never arrived. At least two boats sank and 250 to 500 people drowned. At least three boats were detained in Burma and at least 21 (carrying about 1,400 people) in Thailand. Another boat was rescued off the coast of Sri Lanka, but 20 of the 91 passengers were already dead of starvation.¹⁰¹

In Thailand, local authorities continued to raid factories and extort money from undocumented migrant workers.¹⁰² In the first half of 2008, 298,847 Burmese nationals crossed from Myawaddy into Mae Sot, Thailand, and 86,517 did not return. In the same period, Thai authorities deported 72,124 Burmese who entered Thailand without proper documents.¹⁰³

In Malaysia, migrant workers were also exploited and deported. In the lead up to the March elections in Malaysia, politicians made strong statements on immigration issues, keen to appear "tough on illegals."¹⁰⁴ Malaysia's vigilante thugs RELA increased the frequency of their attacks on migrant communities including registered refugees.¹⁰⁵ Hundreds of people were rounded up and detained, including pregnant women and children.¹⁰⁶ Many were deported. Many others went into hiding.

⁹⁹ Reuters (10 Apr 08) Myanmar migrant recalls container horror

¹⁰⁰ AFP (11 Apr 08) Thai court jails Myanmar container survivors for three days

¹⁰¹ Arakan Project. See April 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹⁰² See November 2007 Burma Bulletin

¹⁰³ Bangkok Post (07 Jul 08) Third of Burmese fail to return home

¹⁰⁴ AP (28 Apr 08) Malaysia Tightens Borders against Illegal Immigrants

¹⁰⁵ Project Maje (Jul 08) We Built This City: Workers from Burma at Risk in Malaysia

¹⁰⁶ Irrawaddy (24 Mar 08) Hundreds of Burmese Migrants Rounded Up in Malaysia

AID

Restrictions on humanitarian aid

In January the regime added new restrictions on humanitarian aid and increased limitations on international aid workers' access within the country.¹⁰⁷ The SPDC has a long history of obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid through restrictive policies, taxes, and visa restrictions.

The SPDC has frustrated humanitarian aid and assistance by preventing staff from traveling and operating freely within the country - especially in conflict areas.¹⁰⁸ Communities displaced by militarization rely on local initiatives and cross-border aid. In late September, schools and clinics in villages of Kawkareik Township, Karen State, were forced to close following joint operations launched by the SPDC Army and the DKBA.¹⁰⁹

The restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid have particularly targeted HIV/AIDS programs. Without adequate healthcare services, individuals have established private clinics and developed partnerships with monasteries and international aid agencies. However, the regime has closed these programs down and arrested people involved, including patients. In March, the SPDC ordered organizations working on HIV/AIDS in Mandalay, including Population Services International and Save the Children, to cease health, education, and counseling activities to local communities.¹¹⁰ Maggin Monastery in Rangoon Division, known for providing assistance to people with HIV, was raided four times during in the aftermath of the Saffron Revolution and closed down.¹¹¹ Monks were arrested and the abbot was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment.¹¹² Patients were transferred to public hospitals. Two later died.¹¹³

Cyclone Nargis

The regime's response to cyclone Nargis turned a natural disaster into a man-made tragedy. In the days and months following the cyclone, the SPDC prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching the areas where it was needed most. While appealing for cash assistance, the SPDC refused repeated requests from UN agencies and others to deliver aid directly to affected areas.¹¹⁴ Despite the urgent need for aid workers to quickly reach the disaster-affected areas, the SPDC obstructed the work of international humanitarian agencies, confiscated aid shipments, and profited from aid funds. The results were devastating. By 28 May, the World Food Program (WFP) estimated that only 485,000 people (or 20%) of the estimated 2.4 million affected by the cyclone had received their first ration of food.¹¹⁵ In areas where the SPDC had granted access, aid deliveries were limited and inconsistent.¹¹⁶ SPDC authorities at all levels attempted to profit, personally and politically, from donor generosity.¹¹⁷

- The SPDC set up roadblocks on the main roads to the Irrawaddy delta regions to block foreign aid workers from accessing the worst affected areas. Local NGOs and individuals had to negotiate and in some cases bribe their way into the area.
- The SPDC prevented the WFP from importing essential supplies and was forced to rely on local markets to purchase scarce supplies for distribution.

¹⁰⁷ January 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹⁰⁸ US Government Accountability Office (Apr 07) Assistance Programs Constrained in Burma

¹⁰⁹ Mizzima News (23 Oct 08) Army operations force closure of schools, clinics

¹¹⁰ March 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹¹¹ Irrawaddy (09 Oct 07) Monastery raided for fourth time in Rangoon

¹¹² DVB (07 Nov 08) Saffron revolution monks given lengthy jail terms

¹¹³ Australian (31 Mar 08) Burma stops aid for HIV victims

¹¹⁴ AP (24 May 08) Aid Agencies Cautiously Welcome Burma Pledge

¹¹⁵ DMHA (29 May 08) Cyclone Nargis Update

¹¹⁶ OCHA (30 Jun 08) Cyclone Nargis - Myanmar - OCHA Situation Report No. 36

¹¹⁷ See May 2008, June 2008, July 2008, and August 2008 Burma Bulletins

- On 28 July, the UN admitted that the SPDC had pocketed an estimated US\$10 million from UN aid funds intended for cyclone Nargis recovery because of the regime's manipulation of currency exchange rates.
- From mid-May, the US, France, and the UK had aid vessels anchored in international waters off the coast of Burma. The SPDC refused permission for the aid vessels to deliver humanitarian assistance that included enough food to feed at least 100,000 people for 15 days, shelter and water purification supplies.
- SPDC officials and soldiers confiscated supplies from survivors, substituted spoiled or poor-quality food in place of nutrition-rich biscuits sent by international donors, charged survivors for aid supplies, held raffles for relief items, and told survivors that they had to vote "Yes" in the constitutional referendum in order to receive aid.
- SPDC authorities extorted money from businesses and individuals under the pretence of collecting relief funds and agricultural supplies for cyclone survivors. Reports of extortion surfaced in Arakan, Kachin, and Mon States and in Pegu and Sagaing Divisions.

Disaster mismanagement

The SPDC's usual restrictions on the free flow of information had a devastating impact on millions of Burmese living in the areas hit by cyclone Nargis. Despite advanced knowledge that cyclone Nargis would hit Burma, the regime failed to adequately inform its own people about the impending catastrophe.

Beginning on 26 April, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issued 41 general warnings to SPDC authorities about cyclone Nargis.¹¹⁸ On 30 April, the IMD updated the SPDC every three hours about the cyclone, indicating its path, speed, severity, and the locations where the cyclone would hit land.¹¹⁹ The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Bangkok also issued a cyclone warning to SPDC authorities. State-run media finally issued a weather advisory on 2 May.¹²⁰ The state-run newspaper *New Light of Myanmar* described the impending cyclone as "widespread rain or thundershowers" with winds reaching 110 kilometers per hour.¹²¹ State television warnings failed to tell people how to prepare when the cyclone hit land.¹²² The SPDC also failed to issue an order to evacuate villagers in the disaster-prone zones.¹²³ "Looking at the number of deaths, it leads us to think that an early warning system had not been put in place," said a spokesperson for the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.¹²⁴

After the cyclone hit Burma, the SPDC's propaganda machine went into overdrive in order to keep people in the dark about the true magnitude of the tragedy unleashed by Nargis. The regime tightened its grip on the flow of information to hide the suffering of cyclone-affected communities and its mishandling of relief assistance. The junta portrayed itself as being fully in control of the relief effort in its own publications. Its censorship board prevented local media from traveling to the delta, covering the suffering of cyclone survivors or carrying unofficial death tolls.¹²⁵

On 19 May, SPDC Army soldiers from Light Infantry Division 66 arrested eight local journalists who had allegedly failed to inform authorities of their presence in Labutta Township.¹²⁶ On 10 June, SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Tamwe Township arrested Ein Khine Oo, a 24-year-old journalist of the weekly journal *Ecovision*. She had been covering stories related to aid delivery to cyclone survivors in the Irrawaddy delta. The police accused her of taking photographs with the intention of selling

¹¹⁸ Times (06 May 08) India says it warned Burma about cyclone

¹¹⁹ Times (06 May 08) India says it warned Burma about cyclone

¹²⁰ Mizzima News (06 May 08) Burma knew of cyclone nearly a week before it hit

¹²¹ NLM (02 May 08) "Storm News"

¹²² AP (03 May 08) Myanmar warns of strong winds, high tides as Cyclone Nargis heads toward coast

¹²³ Mizzima News (06 May 08) Burma knew of cyclone nearly a week before it hit

¹²⁴ AFP (06 May 08) Myanmar says cyclone death toll tops 15,000

¹²⁵ See May 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹²⁶ Irrawaddy (21 May 08) 8 Burmese journalists arrested in Laputta

them to foreign media organizations.¹²⁷ Police also detained a resident of Labutta who had filmed the devastation caused by cyclone Nargis.¹²⁸ On 14 November, Ein Khine Oo was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of “disturbing tranquility.”¹²⁹

The SPDC refused to issue entry visas to foreign journalist and deported two British correspondents.¹³⁰ SPDC military intelligence officials kept hotels popular with journalists in Rangoon under constant surveillance. The regime tapped journalists’ telephones and threatened others.¹³¹ SPDC authorities also banned the sale and distribution of privately-made VCDs of cyclone Nargis.¹³²

¹²⁷ Mizzima News (24 Jun 08) Reporter arrested for covering cyclone news

¹²⁸ Mizzima News (09 Jun 08) Junta blacks out media

¹²⁹ AP (17 Nov 08) Myanmar sentences journalist to 2 years in prison

¹³⁰ IPS (13 May 08) Foreigners, Cameras Banned in Cyclone-Hit Areas; CPJ (14 May 08) Burma: Authorities restrict Cyclone Nargis news coverage; RSF (06 May 08) Burma - Military government urged to issue press visas to foreign media; Mizzima News (06 May 08) BBC reporter deported from airport by junta; AP (26 May 08) Burma bans top Western journalist, deports another

¹³¹ Irrawaddy (13 May 08) Danger: Getting the Truth Out of Burma

¹³² Narinjara News (23 Jun 08) Authorities in Arakan prohibit watching Cyclone Nargis video

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Women – violence continues with impunity

The SPDC further entrenched discrimination against women by enshrining employment discrimination and disproportionate political representation in the new constitution. Under the constitution, special provisions exclude women from certain professions and working in particular areas of the country. Currently there are no women holding high political positions. The regime's allocation of 25% parliamentary seats for the military will further institutionalize this lack of representation.¹³³

In November, the CEDAW Committee condemned the high prevalence of violence against women and girls in Burma. The Committee also expressed concern that rape was accompanied by a culture of silence and impunity.¹³⁴ Incidents are under-reported, and those that do report face threats from authorities and are settled out of court.¹³⁵ Rights groups welcomed the Committee's report, and called for concrete action from other UN bodies.¹³⁶ The Women's League of Burma (WLB) called on the international community to help Burma in the democratization process as the only way to safe-guard the rights of women.¹³⁷ They also called on the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women to carry out an investigation into the state-sanctioned sexual violence against the women of Burma.¹³⁸

Women continue to rely on human traffickers to escape human rights abuses and desperate poverty and to find new lives in neighboring countries. Despite being a signatory to numerous agreements to combat trafficking, the SPDC has created the conditions for its proliferation. The Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) August report "Eastward Bound" found that women were trafficked to China and sold as wives for around 13,000 yuan (US\$2,000). Most were under 18. Some sought assistance from the embassy in Beijing, only to be turned away or accused of trafficking themselves.¹³⁹

Children – the most vulnerable

In 2008, the only Asian country with a child mortality rate worse than Burma was Afghanistan. Between 270 and 400 children died every day, mostly from preventable conditions.¹⁴⁰ In March, UN Special Rapporteur on Burma Paulo Sergio Pinheiro drew attention to the deteriorating education system, including the lack of a primary level education for over half of Burma's children.¹⁴¹

	Under 5 mortality rate*	Infant mortality rate*	Infant low birth weight %	Under 5 stunting %
Afghanistan	257	165		54
Burma	104	74	15	53
Singapore	3	2	8	2
Vietnam	17	15	7	30
Sudan	89	61	31	43

*per 1,000 live births

Burma has 70,000 child soldiers, the largest number in the world. In December 2007, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon called on the SPDC to discharge all child soldiers and allow UN officials to access conflict areas.¹⁴² The regime denied that there were child soldiers in its army.¹⁴³ Since then, the SPDC

¹³³ Mizzima News (06 Nov 08) Burma and the farce of women's rights

¹³⁴ USCB (18 Nov 08) Human rights activists laud United Nations' recognition of Burmese junta's systematic use of sexual violence against ethnic women, impunity

¹³⁵ See August 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹³⁶ USCB (18 Nov 08) Human rights activists laud United Nations' recognition of Burmese junta's systematic use of sexual violence against ethnic women, impunity

¹³⁷ Mizzima News (03 Nov 08) Burmese women's rights "intact": Junta's ambassador tells UN

¹³⁸ WLB (24 Nov 08) Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

¹³⁹ Mizzima News (05 Aug 08) KWAT: Women enslaved due to economic hardships

¹⁴⁰ AP (24 Jan 08) Burma has second highest child mortality rate in Asia

¹⁴¹ HRC, 7th Session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 5 March 2008, UN Doc A/HRC/7/18

¹⁴² UN Secretary General (21 Dec 07) Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General [A/62/609, S/2007/757]

Army has not only retained child soldiers but continued to abduct children for new recruits.¹⁴⁴ After cyclone Nargis, an SPDC Army official reportedly recruited 300 cyclone orphans in and around Labutta, Irrawaddy Division, with promises of food and shelter.¹⁴⁵

In cyclone Nargis' wake, children were extremely vulnerable. More than 40% of people killed in the storm were children. In the Irrawaddy delta, an estimated 30,000 children were acutely malnourished even before the cyclone.¹⁴⁶ Of the children that survived, many were orphaned or separated from family. Three thousand schools were destroyed or damaged affecting the education for 500,000 children.¹⁴⁷ The situation left them open to trafficking, sexual abuse, and recruitment as child soldiers.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ BBC (30 Jan 08) Burma 'acting on child soldiers'

¹⁴⁴ See <http://www.altsean.org/Chronology/Chronology2008/ChildrenChronology2008.htm>

¹⁴⁵ Mizzima News (22 May 08) Cyclone orphans could be trafficked: Human Right group

¹⁴⁶ AP (19 May 08) Save the Children warns of starvation in Burma

¹⁴⁷ OCHA (12 May 08) Cyclone Nargis - Myanmar - OCHA Situation Report No. 8

¹⁴⁸ See May 2008 Burma Bulletin

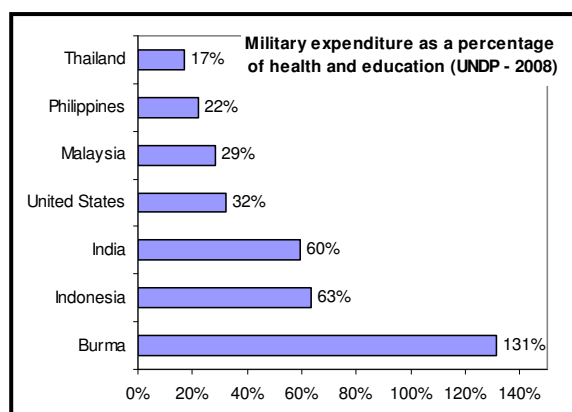
HEALTH

Curable diseases turn deadly

The SPDC has demanded large amounts of foreign aid for health programs. However it has refused to maintain the basic infrastructures that are essential prerequisites for delivering such programs. In 2007, the regime spent 850 kyat (US\$0.70) per person on healthcare.¹⁴⁹

Deadly outbreaks of treatable or preventable illnesses underscored the SPDC's impoverishment and obstruction of humanitarian assistance. Without preventative measures, previously eradicated diseases such as elephantiasis/filarisis, polio, and cholera are posing new threats. TB and malaria are mutating into new and deadlier strains.¹⁵⁰ In November and December 2007, there were further outbreaks of bird flu in Shan State and, for the first time, it was diagnosed in a human. 2,058 birds died and 1,500 were culled.¹⁵¹

Where public health clinics do exist, patients are charged exorbitant fees and drugs often run out or are expired.¹⁵² The growing trade in counterfeit medicines is leading to drug resistance in some conditions, notably multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.¹⁵³ Without adequate healthcare services, individuals have established private clinics and developed partnerships with monasteries and international aid agencies. However, the regime has closed programs down and arrested people involved, particular targeting HIV/AIDS programs.¹⁵⁴



The health hazards in the Irrawaddy delta following cyclone Nargis demonstrated the dire state of peoples' health and health services before the disaster. Already, the population was 30% chronically malnourished, and mosquito and water-borne viruses endemic in the area included dengue fever, cholera, and malaria. Of the existing health facilities, the cyclone destroyed at least 75%.¹⁵⁵ The remaining services were overcrowded, receiving up to 6,000 patients a day.¹⁵⁶ Cyclone survivors suffered acute respiratory infections, dysentery, dengue fever, malaria, cholera, diarrhea, and shock.¹⁵⁷ Despite clean-up efforts and massive donations of equipment, six months after cyclone Nargis, clean water remained in short supply.¹⁵⁸

Food security: hungrier than ever

While still producing a rice surplus in 2008, approximately five million people, or around 10% of the population, were malnourished.¹⁵⁹ The cost of feeding a family was beyond most wage earners. By the end of 2007, inflation reached a crippling 50%.¹⁶⁰ After cyclone Nargis in May, the price of rice more than doubled.¹⁶¹

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Health (2007) Health Statistics www.moh.gov.mm/file/Health_Statistics.pdf

¹⁵⁰ Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkely (Jul 07) The Gathering Storm

¹⁵¹ AP (24 Nov 07) Myanmar reports bird flu outbreak at chicken farm in northeast

¹⁵² IMNA (12 Jul 07) ARV drugs need to be priced lower in Burma IMNA

¹⁵³ Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkely (Jul 07) The Gathering Storm

¹⁵⁴ See October 2007 and March 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁵⁵ TCG (Jul 08) Post-Nargis Joint Assessment

¹⁵⁶ Globe and Mail (12 May 08) Myanmar toll likely to hit 216,000

¹⁵⁷ WHO (16 Jun 08) WHO releases first disease surveillance reports in Myanmar

¹⁵⁸ Mizzima News (26 Jun 08) MSF draws attention to need for clean drinking water for cyclone survivors

¹⁵⁹ VOA (09 Jan 08) Burma's control of the transportation system causes millions to go hungry; Irrawaddy (05 Aug 05) UN warns of humanitarian crisis in Burma

¹⁶⁰ EIU (Dec 07) Country Report: Myanmar (Burma)

¹⁶¹ May 2008 Burma Bulletin

In 2008, Burma ranked as the third most economically repressed country in the world and the second most corrupt.¹⁶² Farming communities in Burma bear the heaviest burden of arbitrary taxation and confiscation of harvest and land.¹⁶³ The regime increased forced cultivation of cash crops and jatropa for biofuel.¹⁶⁴ Forced labor for infrastructure projects continued to take farmers away from their fields at harvest time. In Eastern Burma, the SPDC Army’s occupation, burning, and land-mining of paddy fields put local communities under imminent threat of starvation.¹⁶⁵

The SPDC restricted domestic trade in essential commodities and the transport of food to areas affected by food shortages.¹⁶⁷ Even after cyclone Nargis destroyed much of the arable land in the most productive rice-producing of the country, the regime made fresh export commitments to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and India.¹⁶⁸ Farmers still faced basic problems including a lack of shelter for themselves, rice seeds, fertilizers, and plowing animals.¹⁶⁹

SPDC obstruction of the delivery of relief supplies and hindering humanitarian aid efforts has also threatened food security. A month after the cyclone, 34% of households reported having no food, and a further 45% reported having less a weeks’ supply of food.¹⁷⁰ The WFP continued its programs in Northern Arakan State and elsewhere. They said that 44% of households in the area had insufficient food and 27% of children under five suffered from “moderate to acute” malnutrition.¹⁷¹ SPDC obstruction of food delivery was not limited to cyclone-affected areas. In January, the WFP said that their main challenges in distributing food assistance were SPDC restrictions on travel.¹⁷²

Prices (in kyat, US\$1=1,100 kyat) ¹⁶⁶	Before Nargis	After Nargis
Rice/kg	500	1,500
Egg	300	400
Pork/kg	2,761	3,067
Shrimp/kg	3,750	8,125
Cooking oil/liter	1,840	8,000
Cooking charcoal	4,000	7,000
Cooking gas 25 liter	20,000	25,000
Pack of candles	500	1,000
Gas/gallon	4,200	10,000
Diesel/gallon	4,500	18,000
Bus fare	200	500
Water/liter	250	500
Zinc roofing	4,000	8,000
Iron nails/kg	940	3,125

In 2008, food shortages caused by a rat plague in Chin State reportedly led to 100 deaths, mostly children and the elderly.¹⁷³ SPDC authorities banned food supplies from foreign countries from being transported to affected areas, and confiscated donated items.¹⁷⁴ WFP sought funding to address the crisis, but acknowledged the difficulties they faced in negotiations with the regime. “They are almost as bad as the government in North Korea, with a bunch of old generals sitting high in their newly built capital,” said a WFP spokesperson.¹⁷⁵

SPDC – Still Asia’s chief supplier of amphetamines, world’s #2 source of heroin

Burma is still ASEAN’s main source of illicit drugs – especially heroin and amphetamine type stimulations. Thailand has borne the major burden of Burma’s illegal drug production and trafficking. Thailand’s major drug problem is the trafficking of large quantities of methamphetamine produced in Burma.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶² Heritage Foundation (Jan 06) Index of Economic Freedom; AP (20 Oct 04) 10 Best and Worst in Global Corruption Survey; Transparency International (Sep 08) Corruption Perceptions Index
¹⁶³ See November 2007, December 2007, January 2008, June 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins
¹⁶⁴ See July 2007 Burma Bulletin
¹⁶⁵ KHRG (01 Aug 08) Attacks, killings and the food crisis in Toungoo District
¹⁶⁶ See May 2008 Burma Bulletin
¹⁶⁷ See February 2008, April 2008, and July 2008 Burma Bulletins
¹⁶⁸ See May 2008 and October 2008 Burma Bulletins
¹⁶⁹ Reuters (04 Jun 08) Burmese stock up on rice
¹⁷⁰ Tripartite Core Group (Jul 08) Post-Nargis Joint Assessment
¹⁷¹ DPA (16 Sep 08) WFP faces 11.2-million-dollar shortfall in Myanmar
¹⁷² AP (10 Jan 08) UN Agency Says Myanmar Food Aid Hampered
¹⁷³ ABC (16 Oct 08) Super Rats Invade; Blamed for Myanmar Famine
¹⁷⁴ See June 2008, July 2008, August 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins
¹⁷⁵ ABC (16 Oct 08) Super Rats Invade; Blamed for Myanmar Famine
¹⁷⁶ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (March 08) Volume Vol. II Money Laundering and Financial Crimes

According to China's National Narcotics Control Commission, Burma remains the major source of opium entering China. Chinese authorities reported that the majority of heroin produced in Burma is trafficked through China to the international market. Heroin and methamphetamine continued to move from Burma across Thailand's Northern border for domestic consumption as well as being trafficked to regional and international markets.¹⁷⁷

Reports on drug cultivation and production reports issued during 2008 indicated that amphetamine production continued to increase and that opium poppy cultivation and opium production increased as well.

In June, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said that the alarming increase in opium production in Afghanistan and Burma in 2007 was posing a serious threat to the progress made in drug control over the past several years. The UNODC's 2008 World Drug Report noted that after six years of decline, opium poppy cultivation in Southeast Asia increased by 22% in 2007, mainly driven by a 29% increase in opium cultivation in Burma.¹⁷⁸ On 16 November, Deputy Sec-Gen of Thailand's Narcotics Control Board (NCB) Pitaya Jinawat echoed the findings and said that opium cultivation in Thailand, Laos, and Burma had increased over the past three years. UNODC also noted that the increase in opium poppy cultivation resulted in a 46% increase in opium production.¹⁷⁹

The US State Department said that Burma continued to be the country of origin for the majority of methamphetamine pills in Asia.¹⁸⁰ The US State Department also found that:

- The SPDC had not made consistent efforts against drug-related corruption;
- SPDC Army and police personnel are believed to be involved in facilitating the drug trade;
- Collusion between drug traffickers and the junta allowed organized crime groups to function with virtual impunity; and
- The SPDC has never prosecuted a SPDC Army officer over the rank of colonel for drug-related offenses or drug-related corruption.¹⁸¹
- On 16 September, and for the seventh straight year, the US said that Burma had "failed demonstrably" in its efforts to combat illicit narcotics.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (March 08) Volume I Drug and Chemical Control

¹⁷⁸ Irrawaddy (27 Jun 08) Burma and Afghanistan increase opium production: UNODC

¹⁷⁹ UNODC (Jun 08) 2008 World Drug Report

¹⁸⁰ Mizzima News (17 Sep 08) Burma again singled out for anti-narcotics negligence

¹⁸¹ International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (March 08) Volume I Drug and Chemical Control

¹⁸² Mizzima News (17 Sep 08) Burma again singled out for anti-narcotics negligence

ECONOMY

Trade and investment goes forward

Burma is ranked as the third most economically repressed country in the world and the second most corrupt.¹⁸³ The lack of monetary and fiscal stability has created conditions of rising inflation, fiscal deficits, multiple exchange rates, distorted interest rates, and fraudulent reporting. UNESCAP warned that Burma is so far behind its neighbors that it threatens to destabilize regional development.¹⁸⁴

Since ASEAN and the EU opened talks on a free trade agreement in May 2007, no progress has been made due to the SPDC's failure to make any progress in democratic reforms.¹⁸⁵

Burma's oil, gas and hydro-electric resources are being exported while the majority of people has no electricity. Growing anger against projects that have deepened poverty and increased abuses against the people has led to demonstrations. In 2008, the SPDC continued to sell off its oil and natural gas resources to maintain good relations with and obtain political protection from its neighbors – especially India, China, and Thailand.

Thailand: Thailand signed an agreement to develop a deep seaport in Tavoy, Tenasserim Division.¹⁸⁶ Private companies signed new contracts, and Thai state-owned energy company PTT Exploration and Production (PTTEP) and the SPDC signed new agreements on drilling in the Gulf of Martaban.¹⁸⁷

China: China's National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) signed new agreements for joint oil and gas exploration.¹⁸⁸ The Non-Ferrous Metal Group Company signed a production-sharing contract to produce nickel in Mandalay Division.¹⁸⁹

South Korea: Daewoo signed agreements for joint oil and gas exploration.¹⁹⁰

India: The SPDC signed economic aid and cooperation agreements with India.¹⁹¹ India agreed to spend US\$135 million developing transport links.¹⁹² The Exim Bank extended loans worth over US\$100 million for financing infrastructure development.¹⁹³

Russia: Russia's Victorious Glory International signed a gold exploration agreement along the Uru River between Phakant, Kachin State and Homalin, Sagaing Division, an area also known for uranium.¹⁹⁴

Vietnam: Vietnamese companies signed investment agreements in Burma for exploration, drilling, and production of oil and gas in the Gulf of Martaban.¹⁹⁵

Sanctions

Over the past year, the US, the EU, Canada, and Australia all strengthened sanctions on the regime.¹⁹⁶ New measures focused on individual members of the junta and their cronies, imposing visa bans and freezing assets.¹⁹⁷ Canada also banned all investment and trade, except for the export of humanitarian goods.¹⁹⁸ The US strengthened their gem trade ban.¹⁹⁹

There were some signs that sanctions and boycotts were having their intended effect.

¹⁸³ Transparency International (2007) 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index; Heritage Foundation (Jan 06) Index of Economic Freedom

¹⁸⁴ UNESCAP (Nov 07) Ten as One: Challenges and Opportunities for ASEAN Integration

¹⁸⁵ Irrawaddy (01 Sep 08) Brussels Balks at Asean FTA Deal Because of Burma

¹⁸⁶ TNA (19 May 08) Thailand, Myanmar to develop Tavoy deepsea port

¹⁸⁷ See June 2008 Burma Bulletin

¹⁸⁸ See May 2008 and June 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁸⁹ Xinhua (28 Jul 08) China, Myanmar sign nickel production sharing contract

¹⁹⁰ See May 2008 and June 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁹¹ April 2008, June 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁹² Reuters (03 Apr 08) India, Myanmar sign tax, transport pacts to boost trade

¹⁹³ See June 2008 and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁹⁴ Reuters (16 Feb 08) Russian firm seeks gold in army-ruled Myanmar

¹⁹⁵ AP (04 Oct 08) Vietnam signs oil, gas hunt deal with Myanmar

¹⁹⁶ See November 2007, July 2008, and October 2008 Burma Bulletins

¹⁹⁷ See November 2007 Burma Bulletin

¹⁹⁸ Globe and Mail (14 Nov 07) Ottawa imposes new sanctions on Myanmar

¹⁹⁹ See July 2008 Burma Bulletin

- In November 2007, Rangoon-based diplomats reported that the junta was rattled by financial sanctions imposed by the US, the EU, and Australia.²⁰⁰
- In November 2007, junta crony Tay Za was forced to ground planes and suspended Air Bagan flights to Singapore.²⁰¹
- In an effort to appease people and businesses named on the US sanctions lists, the SPDC secured agreements with Indian and Singapore banks to ensure that cross-border trade payments could circumvent US sanctions.²⁰²
- Foreign investment in Burma fell 77% in 2007-2008.²⁰³

Reconstruction

On 10 July, the UN/ASEAN/SPDC Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) put a price tag on many cyclone related losses – US\$1.7 billion in damage and \$2.3 billion in lost income. The report estimated Burma will need at least US\$1 billion over the next three years for recovery and rehabilitation.²⁰⁴ The SPDC was very enthusiastic about discussions over “reconstruction”, and put the damage bill at \$11.7 billion.²⁰⁵ Reconstruction efforts in the immediate aftermath of cyclone Nargis illustrated the SPDC’s and its cronies’ likeminded pursuit of personal profit over the well-being of Burma’s people.²⁰⁶ The SPDC gave them control of “reconstruction and relief” in critical townships.²⁰⁷

Dams

Burma ranks 104th out of 149 countries in Yale’s Environmental Performance Index.²⁰⁸ Existing environment laws in Burma are scarce and the ones that do exist are poorly enforced by the military regime. The situation is even more dismal where projects occur in areas inhabited by ethnic nationalities. The SPDC pushed forward with plans for the construction of a series of large dams along the course Burma’s rivers. Preparations for the dam construction have already caused pervasive human rights violations and massive population displacement. Increased militarization has led to an increase in reported incidents of torture, extrajudicial killings, and other human rights abuses.

	Site	Capacity	Cost (US\$)	Partners	Completion	Impact
Upper Paunglaung	Pyinmana, Mandalay Division.	140 MW	60 million	Ministry of Electric Power 1 Yunnan Machinery Export (China) FORCE Consulting Engineers (Germany)	2009	12 villages and 5,000 acres of farmland will be flooded
Myitsone Dam	Irrawaddy River, Kachin State	3,600 MW		Ministry of Electric Power 1 China Power Investment Corporation	Plans to build six more	47 villages (10,505 people) inundated, livelihoods of 3 million others who rely on the delta.
Tasang Dam	Central Shan State	7,110 MW	6 billion	Ministry of Electric Power MDX Group (Thailand) China Gezouba Group (CGGC)		Over 300,000 people have been forcibly relocated. Increased militarization. On completion, thousands more driven from their

²⁰⁰ FT (12 Nov 07) Singapore feels the heat of drive against Burma

²⁰¹ IHT (06 Nov 07) Myanmar tycoon blacklisted by US attacks sanctions

²⁰² Irrawaddy (27 Jun 08) Indian financial services thwart junta sanctions; Irrawaddy (08 Mar 08) Burma Authorizes Singapore Dollar Accounts at Banks

²⁰³ AFP (25 Jul 08) Foreign Investment In Myanmar Falls 77% On Year – Government

²⁰⁴ In May, the SPDC requested \$11.7 billion in reconstruction assistance

²⁰⁵ Burma Information Network (22 May 08) Chronology of the recent statements of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with respect to Burma

²⁰⁶ Washington Post (13 Jun 08) Burma gives ‘cronies’ slice of storm relief

²⁰⁷ Washington Post (13 Jun 08) Burma gives ‘cronies’ slice of storm relief

²⁰⁸ Yale (2008) Environmental Protection Index: Country Scores

						homes.
Upper (Wei Gyi) Salween Dam	Close to the Thai-Burma border	4,540 MW	3 billion	Electrical Authority of Thailand (EGAT)		Flooding between 700-1,000 square kilometers of forest, river and farmland, mostly in Karenni State
Lower (Dagwi) Salween Dams	Close to Thai-Burma border	between 500 to 900 MW	900 million	EGAT		Mainly serve to regulate large amounts of water released by the Wei Gyi dam.
Hat Gyi, Karen State (Salween River)	Near Myaing-yingu, Karen State	600 MW	1 billion	EGAT (Thailand) Sinohydro (China)	2013-2014	Destruction of more than 20 villages (5,000 people) and farmlands 3.82 billion kilowatt hours/yr partly exported to Thailand
Upper Salween	Shan State	2,400 MW		Farsighted Investment Group and Gold Water Resources (both China)		
Shweli Dams (3)		1: 600 MW 2: 460 MW 3: 360 MW	185 million+	Yunnan Joint Development		
Mone River (3)		60 MW+	20 million+	Guangdong New Technology Import and Export		
Kun Chaung	Pawn River	54 MW	20 million	China National Electric Equipment (CNEEC) Zhejiang Orient Holdings YMEC		
Thaphan Seik		30 MW	20 million	CITIC, Sinohydro Yunnan Machinery Import and Export		
Yenwe	Sittang River	25 MW		CNEEC China International Trust and Investment (CITIC)		
Yeywa	Dokhtawady River	790 MW	700 million	China Exim Bank, CITIC, CNEEC, Sinohydro, Gezhouba, China National Heavy Machinery (CHMC)		
<p>Palaung Youth Network Group (Dec 07) Under the Boot International Rivers, table of Chinese dam projects worldwide, accessible on www.internationalrivers.org Kayan Women's Union (2008) Drowning the Green Ghosts of Kayanland Kachin Development Networking Group (Oct 07) Damning the Irrawaddy</p>						

The year of shame in review

- 20 Nov UN General Assembly's Third Committee adopts a resolution that strongly condemns the SPDC's crackdown on peaceful demonstrators.
- 25 Nov A villager from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, dies as a result of torture inflicted by Na Sa Ka officers.
- 26 Nov SPDC authorities arrest Arakan State NLD Chairman San Shwe Tun.
- 27 Nov SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrest popular musician Win Maw.
- 29 Nov SPDC orders the closure of Maggin monastery in Rangoon.
- 2 Dec SPDC police arrest a 52-year-old man from Tha Yet Pyin village in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, for writing a letter to the BBC detailing SPDC human rights abuses against Rohingyas.
- 3 Dec SPDC Information Minister Kyaw Hsan says there is no role for the NLD in the drafting of Burma's new constitution.
- 4 Dec UN Resident Coordinator in Burma Charles Petrie leaves Rangoon after the SPDC refused to renew his visa.
- 5 Dec Win Maung, an SPDC village secretary from Manaung, Arakan State, is sentenced to two and a half years in prison for his involvement in the monk-led anti-junta protests.
- 30 Dec SPDC soldier rapes and kills a woman in Nawngmi village, Kachin State.
- 3 Jan Two SPDC police rape a 14-year-old Rohingya girl from Phone Nyo Hlake village, Buthidaung Township, Arakan State.
- 4 Jan SPDC authorities arrest three NLD youth members in Rangoon.
- 4 Jan World Food Program says that SPDC restrictions continue to hamper their efforts to provide assistance.
- 18 Jan UN Security Council issues statement that says it regrets the slow rate of progress by the SPDC to meet the objectives set forth by the Council in October 2007.
- 9 Feb SPDC announces it will hold a referendum on the proposed constitution in May followed by "multi-party democratic elections" in 2010.
- 13 Feb SPDC extends the house arrest of NLD Vice Chairman Tin Oo for another year.
- 14 Feb Two unidentified assailants shoot and kill KNU General Secretary Mahn Sha Lah Phan at his home in Mae Sot, Thailand. Sources close to the pro-junta Democratic Karen Buddhist Army say that the killing is carried out by members of DKBA Battalion 999.
- 15 Feb SPDC military intelligence officers raid the office of the Myanmar Nation weekly in Rangoon, arresting chief editor Thet Zin and office manager Sein Win Maung.
- 18 Feb SPDC Censorship Board orders the Myanmar Nation to suspend publication and to temporarily close its offices.
- 19 Feb SPDC announces the completion of its draft constitution.
- 21 Feb A 26-year-old Rohingya from Akyab, Arakan State, dies in police custody after being severely beaten by local policemen.
- 25 Feb Arakan State's Maungdaw High Court sentences 12 people from Thinn Baw Gwe Village to seven years in jail for renovation of a mosque.
- 28 Feb UN Special Advisor on Burma Ibrahim Gambari urges the SPDC to "reconsider" its draft constitution.
- 29 Feb In its annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for Congress, the US says that Burma is the largest source of methamphetamine pills in Asia.
- 29 Feb SPDC Special Branch police arrest three Rangoon residents for making comments about the referendum.
- 3 Mar SPDC Army soldiers from Infantry Battalion 31 shoot dead a 30-year-old woman who is tapping rubber sap in Ye Township, Mon State.
- 8 Mar SPDC authorities arrest two NLD members from Rangoon's Hlaing Township for possession of "Rambo 4" DVDs.
- 12 Mar SPDC authorities arrest nine members of the Generation Wave group.
- 16 Mar SPDC authorities arrest two All-Burmese Federation of Student Unions' leaders.

- 19 Mar SPDC Censorship Board suspends publication of the 7 Days News for a week for reporting on a multiple murder in Rangoon.
- 21 Mar An SPDC Army soldier from Light Infantry Battalion 515 rapes a 17-year-old girl in her home in Shan State.
- 28 Mar UN Human Rights Council unanimously condemns the SPDC's "systematic violations" of fundamental freedoms.
- 30 Mar SPDC authorities arrest six NLD members in connection with a 27 March anti-referendum demonstration in front of the party headquarters in Rangoon.
- 31 Mar MI and Special Branch police raid the Myanmar Muslim Council's office in Maungdaw, Arakan State, and arrest 10 members.
- 1 Apr Special Branch police in Rangoon arrest NLD youth coordinator Aung Htun and Thingangyun Township's NLD chairman Tin Myint.
- 1 Apr SPDC officials arrests four Township-level members of the Myanmar Muslim Council in raids of their homes in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.
- 6 Apr Police arrest an NLD member from Rambree Township, Arakan State, for possessing statements against the referendum.
- 15 Apr SPDC authorities arrest an NLD member for posting "No" signs on billboards during the Thingyan festival in Rangoon.
- 14 Apr UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Paulo Sergio Pinheiro dismisses the SPDC's constitutional referendum as "surreal".
- 15 Apr SPDC authorities arrest NLD youth member Myo Nyunt near Rangoon.
- 17 Apr SPDC authorities in Monywa, Sagaing Division, arrest rapper Yan Yan Chan.
- 22 Apr SPDC authorities arrest at least 23 people wearing "No" t-shirts in Akyab, Arakan State.
- 2 May UN Security Council issues presidential statement calling on the SPDC to create an atmosphere conducive to an "inclusive and credible" referendum process.
- 3 May SPDC Army soldiers and riot police open fire on a large group of inmates in Rangoon's Insein prison, killing 36 and injuring about 70.
- 4 May Na Sa Ka arrests two villagers from Rathidaung Township, Arakan State, for possession of anti-referendum posters.
- 6 May Police arrest three NLD members in Salin Township, Magwe Division, for distributing copies of the NLD instructions on the referendum voting procedures.
- 7 May SPDC Army soldiers arrest four villagers in Paletwa Township, Chin State, for distributing anti-referendum leaflets.
- 5 May SPDC Army demands that 270 villagers in Kyaukkyi Township, Pegu Division, perform forced labor as porters.
- 8 May SPDC expels Qatar aircraft carrying relief supplies.
- 9 May SPDC impounds two UN aid shipments at Rangoon airport.
- 9 May Na Sa Ka arrests 48 people in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, for distributing anti-referendum posters.
- 11 May SPDC authorities in Namkham, Shan State, arrest a former village headman for possession of "No" vote leaflets.
- 12 May UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon registers his "immense frustration" with the pace of relief efforts in Burma.
- 12 May SPDC Army soldiers force 62 villagers in Toungoo District, Pegu Division, to porter army rations.
- 13 May SPDC Army soldiers force 52 villagers in Toungoo District, Pegu Division to porter army rations.
- 13 May SPDC Army soldiers from Light Infantry Division 66 arrest eight local journalists who allegedly failed to inform authorities of their presence in Labutta Township, Irrawaddy Division.
- 15 May SPDC announces that 92.4% of the voters approved the constitution during the first phase of balloting with a turnout of more than 99%.
- 15 May Police arrest an NLD member from Rangoon's South Dagon Township for attempting to meet with UN officials in Rangoon.
- 16 May Police arrest two youths from Rambree Township, Arakan State, for telling their family members and village elders to cast "No" votes in the constitutional referendum.

- 19 May SPDC soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 289 order villagers in Paletwa Township, Chin State, to perform forced labor to construct and renovate army barracks and dig trenches.
- 20 May SPDC Army soldiers torture to death a 35-year old retired New Mon State Party medical worker during interrogation in Khawzar police station, Mon State.
- 22 May Police arrest 13 NLD members in Rangoon.
- 24 May SPDC soldiers gang rape a 21-year old woman in Kunhing, Shan State.
- 26 May SPDC announces that 92.4% of voters in the 47 cyclone-affected Townships approved the constitution, with a turnout of 98.1%.
- 26 May SPDC officials force residents in 500 households of Meepya village in Kyauktan Township, Rangoon Division, to work on a reconstruction project in order to receive aid materials.
- 27 May Police arrest at least 15 NLD members as they are marching from the party headquarters to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's residence in Rangoon.
- 27 May SPDC extends the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
- 3 Jun SPDC forces 128 prisoners to do physic nut cultivation in Ann Township, Arakan State.
- 3 Jun State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar says the SPDC's constitutional referendum has "washed away" the NLD's victory in the 1990 elections.
- 4 Jun Police arrest 16 Rohingya villagers from Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, for receiving money from relatives living abroad.
- 4 Jun Police in Rangoon arrest comedian Zarganar during a night raid on his home.
- 4 Jun SPDC Army troops from Infantry Battalion 240 attack Te Mu Der village in Papun District, Karen State. Soldiers burn rice stores, destroy homes, farms, and damage a church.
- 8 Jun SPDC Army major rapes two girls, aged 13 and 14, in Thangtlang, Chin State.
- 10 Jun SPDC authorities arrest at least cyclone 16 cyclone survivors for protesting outside the UNDP headquarters in Rangoon about not receiving any help from the regime.
- 10 Jun SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Tamwe Township arrest Ein Khine Oo, a 24-year-old journalist of the weekly journal Ecovision.
- 12 Jun Special Branch police arrest five activists for helping cyclone survivors in Bogale and Labutta Townships, Irrawaddy Division.
- 12 Jun Special Branch police in Rangoon detain three 88 Generation Students.
- 13 Jun SPDC authorities in Minbu Township, Magwe Division, arrest Zaw Thet Htwe, the former editor of First Eleven weekly sports journal.
- 14 Jun SPDC Army starts building seven new bases in Mon State using forced labor.
- 14 Jun SPDC authorities in Pyapon Township, Irrawaddy Division, arrest seven volunteer relief workers, including Myanmar Tribune journal chief editor Aung Kyaw San and two All Burma Federation of Students' Unions members.
- 14 Jun SPDC authorities evict monks and close Theikpan monastery in Rangoon's Bahan Township.
- 18 Jun UN Human Rights Council passes resolution that condemns the SPDC's "ongoing systematic violations of human rights" in Burma.
- 19 Jun More than 100 USDA members and Swan Arr Shin thugs arrest at least 10 NLD members and one Buddhist monk.
- 20 Jun SPDC requires hundreds of villagers in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, to perform forced labor to plant castor oil trees.
- 20 Jun SPDC authorities require 150 villagers to perform forced labor on the Rangoon-Akyab Highway in Kyauktaw Township, Arakan State.
- 21 Jun Six SPDC soldiers abduct and rape a 24-year-old woman in Kenglom, Shan State.
- 25 Jun Police arrest a woman calling for the release of political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, near Rangoon's City Hall.
- 26 Jun The UNODC's 2008 World Drug Report notes that after six years of decline, opium poppy cultivation in Burma increased by 29% in Burma during 2007.
- 1 Jul Police in Rangoon arrest Shwepyithar Township NLD member Khin Maung.
- 1 Jul SPDC officials require over 100 villagers from N'Jang Dung village, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, work at a physic nut plantation near the village.

- 1 Jul Five SPDC Army soldiers rape and kill two Palaung women in Maung Nawng village, Kehsi Township, Southern Shan State.
- 11 Jul ILO blasts the SPDC's Supreme Court for denying an appeal by six activists who received lengthy jail sentences for attending a Labor Day event.
- 15 Jul SPDC authorities arrest nine monks at Rangoon railway station and detain them in Insein prison.
- 17 Jul Special branch police in Rangoon arrest five NLD members.
- 18 Jul SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrest two NLD members.
- 24 Jul UN says that it has lost US\$10 million in aid funds to the SPDC because of the regime's manipulation of currency exchange rates.
- 27 Jul Three SPDC soldiers rape and kill a 15-year-old girl in Bhamo Township, Kachin State.
- 6 Aug SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Kyimyindine Township arrest Human Rights Defenders and Promoters member Myo Myint.
- 7 Aug Police in Rangoon's Hlaingtharyar Township arrest five NLD members for publicly calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 15 May.
- 8 Aug SPDC authorities in Rambree, Arakan State, detain Taung Kyaunn monastery's abbot U Thumana.
- 8 Aug Police in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State, arrest 48 activists for peacefully demonstrating to mark the anniversary of the 8-8-88 uprising.
- 8 Aug Police in Rangoon arrest Human Rights Defenders and Promoters member Myint Aye.
- 8 Aug SPDC authorities in Rambree, Arakan State, detain teacher Maung Aye Thein.
- 11 Aug SPDC authorities arrest NLD elected MPs Nyi Pu and Tin Min Htut.
- 13 Aug Police in Akyab, Arakan State, arrest activist Saw Hla Aung.
- 15 Aug A court in Sandoway Township, Arakan State, sentences five NLD youth members to two-and-a-half years in jail for marking the anniversary of the 8-8-88 uprising.
- 15 Aug Police in Taunggoat, Arakan State, arrest protester Tun Myint Chay for publicly calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners in Burma.
- 23 Aug SPDC authorities arrest two young monks from Thardu monastery in Rangoon's Kyimyindine Township.
- 28 Aug A court in Rangoon's Hmawbi Township sentences an NLD member to three years in prison for taking photographs at polling stations during the May constitutional referendum.
- 29 Aug SPDC court sentences protester Aye Win to two years in prison.
- 10 Sep SPDC Army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 420 abduct and forcibly recruit 19 people traveling on a train to Meikhtila, Mandalay Division.
- 12 Sep Police in Taungnyunt Township, Rangoon Division, arrest monk U Candima for allegedly planning anti-junta protests.
- 19 Sep SPDC sentences activist Thet Wei to two years in prison with hard labor.
- 21 Sep SPDC soldier abducts a 13-year-old boy from his home in Akyab, Arakan State, and forces him to join the army.
- 22 Sep SPDC sentences two NLD members to two-and-a-half years in prison on charges of "disturbing tranquility."
- 24 Sep Police re-arrest NLD member Win Htein, the day after his release.
- 30 Sep A court in Rangoon's North Dagon Township sentences 29-year-old former student Myo Lwin Oo to seven years in prison on charges aiding and abetting the distribution of an 88 Generation Students' statement.
- 1 Oct SPDC authorities in Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township arrest former journalist and Mandalay NLD elected MP Ohn Kyaing.
- 2 Oct A court in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township sentences NLD youth member Mya Than Htike to four years in prison with hard labor for participating in the September 2007 protests.
- 6 Oct SPDC sentences NLD members Soe Kywe, Khin Aye, Myint Thein and activist Soe Kywe to two-and-a-half years in prison on charges of "disturbing tranquility."
- 8 Oct Police arrest Ni Min Aung, a first-year student from Akyab University, Arakan State, for alleged ties with a student group in exile.

- 8 Oct The SPDC Censorship Board suspends publication of the Action Times and True News weekly journals for one and two months respectively.
- 9 Oct SPDC authorities in Rangoon's South Okkalapa Township arrest eight activists, including four Generation Wave members, for distributing anti-junta leaflets.
- 16 Oct A court in Insein prison sentences 88 Generation Students Khin Moe Aye and Kyaw Soe to three years in jail for illegally handling foreign currency.
- 20 Oct SPDC authorities force 200 villagers to work in a rubber plantation near Aung Mamgala model village in Arakan State.
- 20 Oct SPDC authorities force about 100 Rohingya in Kyakpru and Rambree Townships, Arakan State, to do construction work on the new Kyaukpru–Maayee road.
- 20 Oct UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon voices frustration that the SPDC has failed to take up proposals by the UN to bring democracy to Burma.
- 24 Oct A court in Mandalay sentences six NLD members, including elected MP Than Lwin, to prison terms ranging from two to 13 years for creating public alarm and promoting hatred.
- 29 Oct SPDC sentences nine 88 Generation Students to six months in prison for contempt of court.
- 30 Oct A court in Insein prison sentences three NLD members to six months in jail for contempt of court.
- 2 Nov DKBA attacks on KNLA Battalion 201 in Kawkareik Township, Karen State, displace 500 villagers.
- 4 Nov Maungdaw Court in Arakan State sentences 14 members of the Myanmar Muslim Organization to prison terms ranging from three months to 13 years.
- 6 Nov Kyauktada Township court sentences the abbot of Maggin monastery U Indaka to 16 and a half years in prison and monk U Eindriya to eight years.
- 7 Nov Supreme Court sentences lawyers Aung Thein and Khin Maung Shein to four month in prison for contempt of court.
- 9 Nov Unknown assailant rapes a primary-school-aged girl in Myitkyina, Kachin State.
- 10 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences blogger and NLD member Nay Phone Latt to 20 years and six months in prison.
- 10 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences Poet Saw Wei to two years in prison on charges of “inducing crime against public tranquility.”
- 11 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences 23 members of the 88 Generation Students group to 65 years in prison.
- 11 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences labor rights activist and NLD member Su Su Nway to 12 years and a half in prison.
- 11 Nov SPDC courts sentence 12 NLD members to prison terms ranging from eight to 24 years.
- 11 Nov SPDC courts sentence musician Win Maw and HIV/AIDS activist Than Naing to six years in prison.
- 11 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences five monks from Rangoon's Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery to six and a half years in prison.
- 11 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences three protesters to prison terms ranging from two to four and half years.
- 13 Nov SPDC courts sentence 11 NLD members to seven and a half years in prison.
- 13 Nov Kyauktada Township court sentences two monks two eight years in prison.
- 13 Nov Insein Township court sentences former political prisoner Thein Aye to two years in prison.
- 13 Nov SPDC court sentences All-Burma Federation of Student Unions member Honey Oo to nine and a half years in prison.
- 13 Nov SPDC court sentences three 88 Generation Students to prison terms ranging from two to 11 years.
- 13 Nov SPDC court sentences two NLD members to four and four and a half years in prison respectively.
- 14 Nov SPDC courts sentence eight NLD members to prison terms ranging from five to 16 years.
- 14 Nov Tamwe Township court sentences journalist Ein Khine Oo to two years in prison.
- 14 Nov SPDC courts sentence seven activists to prison terms ranging from two to four years.
- 14 Nov SPDC court sentences monk U Khaymar Wantha to 11 years in prison.
- 14 Nov Tamwe Township Court sentences protester Kyaw Kyaw Thant to seven years in prison.
- 16 Nov Deputy Sec-Gen of Thailand's Narcotics Control Board Pitaya Jinawat says that opium cultivation in Thailand, Laos, and Burma has increased over the past three years.

- 17 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences four All-Burma Federation of Student Unions members to prison terms ranging from six and a half years to 11 and a half years.
- 17 Nov SPDC court sentences two NLD members to six and a half years in prison.
- 17 Nov SPDC court sentences monk U Sandar Wara to eight and a half years in prison.
- 17 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences protester Htin Kyaw to 12 and a half years in prison.
- 18 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences three ethnic activists to prison terms ranging from eight to 33 years.
- 18 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences monk leader U Gambira to 12 years in prison.
- 18 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences monk U Kalatha to 35 years in prison.
- 19 Nov Sanchaung Township court sentences All-Burma Federation of Student Unions member Dee Nyein Lin to six years and a half in prison.
- 19 Nov SPDC court sentences two student activists to four and five years in prison.
- 20 Nov SPDC court sentences 14 NLD members to two and a half years in prison.
- 20 Nov Lanmadaw Township court sentences hip hop singer and Generation Wave member Zeyar Thaw to six years in prison.
- 20 Nov Lanmadaw Township court sentences five Generation Wave members to five years in prison.
- 21 Nov International Campaign to Ban Landmines says that in 2007 landmine casualties increased by 76% in Burma.
- 21 Nov The UN General Assembly's Third Committee approves a draft resolution critical of the human rights situation in Burma.
- 21 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences monk leader U Gambira to 56 more years in prison.
- 21 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences monk U Kalatha to four more years in prison.
- 21 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences three relief activists to prison terms ranging from 15 to 29 years.
- 21 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences comedian Zarganar to 45 years in prison.
- 21 Nov SPDC court sentences five activists to prison terms ranging from four to four and a half years.
- 21 Nov SPDC court sentences the abbot of Thu Mingala monastery to four years in prison.
- 24 Nov Kyimyindine Township court sentences three Generation Wave members to eight years in prison.
- 25 Nov Sanchaung Township court sentences three activists to 13 years in prison.
- 27 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences comedian Zarganar to 14 more years in prison.
- 28 Nov Thingangyun Township court sentences a Myanmar Nation journalist and his office manager to seven years in prison.
- 28 Nov A court in Insein prison sentences 13 members of the 88 Generation Students group to six years in prison.

ALTSEAN-BURMA

VISION

We are committed to a free and democratic Burma where all the people enjoy human rights in accordance with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We are dedicated to the creation of a society of empowered individuals and communities in charge of their own destiny.

This can be realized through genuine national reconciliation, regional cooperation and mutual respect.

MISSION

We are a regional network engaged in advocacy, campaigns and capacity-building to establish a free and democratic Burma.

We work with the democracy movement and its supporters to produce resources and create opportunities for:

- Building and strengthening strategic relationships among key networks and organisations from Burma, ASEAN and the international community.
- Implementing innovative strategies that are responsive to emerging needs and urgent developments.
- Inspiring and building confidence for empowerment among activists, particularly women and youth from the different ethnic groups of Burma.

VALUES

- Adherence to the fundamental principles of human rights guides all our actions. In striving for a free and democratic Burma we are committed to:
- Reform through non-violent means.
- Non-discrimination, particularly with regard to gender equality and ethnic diversity.
- Idealism in thought and realism in action.
- We believe in the importance of education for the purposes of empowerment, especially for women.
- We value creativity, innovation and adaptability in achieving our goals.

GOALS

- Contributing to efforts to achieve democratic transition in Burma.
- Advancing ASEAN reforms that will uphold democracy and human rights amongst members, particularly Burma.
- Contributing to a more effective regional Burma movement.
- Supporting meaningful participation of women and youth from Burma in the movement.
- Enhancing capacity-building programs to address the human resources and strategic needs of Burmese organizations.
- Promoting mutually reinforcing advocacy messages and strategies by the Burma movement.
- Consolidating and strengthening the effectiveness of the secretariat.

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