



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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Summary of current situation

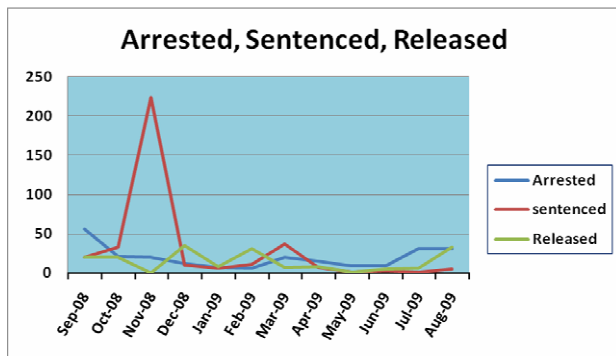
There are a total of **2,211** political prisoners in Burma. This is an overall increase of 21 in comparison to last month's figure of 2,190. The increase is due to retrospective information AAPP received in August, about the detention of 14 monks around the time of the Saffron Revolution, 4 members of the Burma National Integrity to Democracy group, and other individual activists. Although 31 people were arrested during the month of August, 33 were also released.

These include:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Monks	237
Members of Parliament	16
Students	286
Women	191
NLD members	479
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network	43
Ethnic nationalities	197
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	21
Teachers	26
Media activists	51
Lawyers	12
In poor health	137

Since the protests in August 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **1,122** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

Monthly Trend Analysis



During the month of August 2009, at least **31** activists were arrested, **5** were sentenced for the first time in their case¹, and **33** were released. At least **3** were transferred to remote prisons. At least **137** political prisoners are in poor health due to the harsh prison conditions, transfers to remote prisons where there are no doctors, and the denial of proper medical care.

News this month has continued to be dominated by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trial. On 11 August 2009 she was sentenced to three years with hard labour, commuted to 18 months house arrest by Senior General Than Shwe. Her two live-in party members Daw Khin Khin Win and Daw Win Ma Ma received the same sentence. American citizen John Yettaw was sentenced to seven years with hard labour. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – together with her two party members - was returned to house arrest shortly after the verdict was delivered. Following a visit by pro-engagement American Senator Jim Webb on 15 August, who met with both the head of the Burmese military junta Snr-Gen Than Shwe and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, John Yettaw was allowed to leave Burma on so-called 'humanitarian grounds'. Lawyers for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have said they will file an appeal in early September against the criminal conviction. According to Nyan Win, one of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers, her detention conditions have worsened since her conviction this month.

In the meantime, the crackdown on NLD members continued this month, with more arrests, and sentences handed down to at least thirteen NLD members. 87 year-old NLD MP U Kyaw Khaing was also transferred to a prison away from his family. In the run-up to the second anniversary of the Saffron Revolution in September, monks are also being subjected to increasingly tight security measures across the country, amidst reports that the Sangha may be planning a third boycott on receiving alms from military personnel and their families. Three monks have been arrested in Burma's Magwe division, and one in Rangoon. He told his family he was tortured under interrogation.

The international community's reaction to the verdict in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's case was overall highly critical, the strongest condemnation coming from UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who referred to it as 'monstrous'. However, China urged the international community to respect Burma's judicial sovereignty. ASEAN criticised Burma's ruling junta, expressing grave concern about recent developments relating to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, especially given her fragile health. The current Thai Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan also said that the issue of

¹ This figure relates to political prisoners sentenced for the first time in their case. Many political prisoners get two or three other prison terms in additional court hearings. For example this applies to 11 NLD members who were given additional sentences this month.

Aung San Suu Kyi and of all political prisoners in Burma affects ASEAN's image and collective interests. The body has since discussed the possibility of sending a letter appealing for an amnesty for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the junta, but have yet to make their position on this clear.

The UN failed to agree on a tough response to the verdict, and was only able to come up with a watered-down statement expressing "serious concern" at the extended detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after a tougher draft met opposition from China, Libya, Russia and Vietnam.

In response to the verdict, campaigners are now demanding a global arms embargo on Burma, and a Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in the country. A recent Harvard Law School report by the five of the world's top jurists has also charged the Burmese regime with committing massive human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Further, the Council of the European Union has adopted additional restrictive measures against Burma. Under the new measures, members of the judiciary responsible for the verdict in the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were added to the existing list of persons and entities subject to a travel ban and to an assets freeze.

The US is currently conducting a review of its policy on Burma, which has reignited the sanctions versus engagement debate on how best to deal with the ruling military regime.

In early August, Shan human rights groups documented that 500 houses were burned down and 10,000 people were forced to flee their homes in Eastern Shan State. In late August, the UNHCR estimated that around 30,000 refugees from the Kokang area in Northern Shan State fled into China, after fighting broke out between Burmese army troops and the Kokang ceasefire group. The ceasefire had held for 20 years. At the time of going to press, media reports indicated that the fighting had stopped and refugees were slowly returning to their homes.

Treatment of prisoners and their families

During the month of August, prominent labour activist Su Su Nway was placed in solitary confinement for three days after participating in a ceremony to mark the 62nd anniversary of Martyrs' Day on July 19 in Kale prison. Su Su Nway, 37, already suffers from hypertension and heart disease. She has recently been transferred to Hkamti prison in Sagaing division, which is 1200 miles from Rangoon, (Kale prison, also in Sagaing division, is 680 miles from Rangoon). National League for Democracy member Myo Kyaw Zin was also placed in solitary confinement, apparently because he wrote "Release Aung San Suu Kyi Now!" on his shirt. 87 year-old NLD MP U Kyaw Khaing was transferred to Thayet prison in Magwe division from Thandwe prison in Arakan State, further away from his family. And Generation Wave member Nyein Chan aka Khaing Ko Mon aka Khaing Gyi is currently being held in solitary confinement as a punishment for speaking out on behalf of criminal prisoners.

Prisoners Released

33 political prisoners were released. The majority of them were arrested on either 31 July or 11 August, the original date the verdict was due in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trial, and the date the verdict was finally handed down. They were held overnight and released the next day. Three prisoners were released because they had completed their sentences.

National League for Democracy

There are currently at least 479 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in detention. The crackdown on NLD members continued this month, with more arrests, and sentences handed down to at least thirteen NLD members. 87 year-old MP U Kyaw Khaing was also transferred to a prison away from his family. In late August, visiting US Congress staffers met with high-ranking members of the NLD, apparently as part of a research mission to inform a possible new US policy on Burma.

31 August 2009

US 'seriously considering' new Burma policy

The United States is seriously considering implementing new policy to Burma, according to US officials who visited Burma last week in what appeared to be a data-collecting mission. Three US Congress staff met with members of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party in Rangoon on Friday. "They came with concern about humanitarian aid. During the discussion with us, they also asked about the current political situation in Burma," said NLD spokesperson Nyan Win. NLD members were reportedly asked about the living conditions for the 2,100 political prisoners in Burma, as well as Aung San Suu Kyi's extended detention under house arrest. "We told them there was no proper medical assistance in the prison and that the inmates' basic human rights, such as [the right] to read a book or a newspaper were also denied," said Nyan Win. The US announced earlier this year that it would be reviewing its policy to Burma in light of the inefficacy of sanctions. Although an economic embargo has been in place since 1997, there have been apparently few concessions from the ruling junta, which now receives strong economic and political support from China. ([31 August 2009, DVB](#))

28 August 2009

US Congress staffers meet NLD

Three US Congress staffers met with representatives from the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) in Rangoon for talks about political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, and the US policy review on Burma, an NLD spokesman said. "We met with the Congress staffers at NLD headquarters at 4 p.m. On Friday. The main reason for their trip is to discuss humanitarian issues," NLD spokesman Nyan Win said. "We talked about Burmese politics—the first issue they raised concerned the political prisoners." The US Congress staffers also asked about Suu Kyi's detention, he said. During the meeting, the staffers told the NLD policymakers are still discussing a US policy shift in Washington. ([28 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Suu Kyi's right-hand man: extracts

Tom Parry: *What has kept you going for so long, considering all your years in prison?*

Win Tin: Well, my opinion is that when you have to face a military government, you need a little bit of courage, some sort of confrontation, because if you are always timid and afraid and intimidated, they will step on you. Sometimes you have to force yourself to be courageous and outspoken.

Parry: *Aren't you worried about your own security?*

Win Tin: People tell me I should keep a low profile because they are very anxious about my security. You can be snatched back to prison at any time, but you can't help it.

Parry: *You have made some difficult decisions in your life. If you could do it again differently, would you?*

Win Tin: No, I wouldn't. You see, formerly I was a journalist and I had no such difficult dilemmas. I could write and meet people and so on. But when I became a politician in 1988, things became very difficult. I was not just joining a political party, I was joining an uprising—a people's uprising. I was one of them. I was one of the journalists who joined them—the whole country's uprising. Then, of course, I was dragged away from political life and sent to prison. I am now 80 and my health is not very good, but still I don't mind going back to prison. I don't want to be intimidated or reverse my way of thinking. ([28 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

NLD Youth member released from interrogation centre

Naing Ngan Lin, a member of NLD Central Youth who taught English to other NLD members has been released from Rangoon Aungthapyay interrogation centre where he has been held for the past two months, since his arrest on 26 June. ([28 August 2009 AAPP](#))

23 August 2009

Three NLD protesters released

Three NLD members from South Dagon Township in Rangoon who took part in a protest march calling for a reduction in fuel prices in 2007, were released from various prisons after completing their sentences. Soe Kywe was released from Myitkyina prison in Northern Kachin State, Daw Khin Aye was released from Thayet prison in Magwe Division and Daw Myint Thein was released from Myingyan Prison in Mandalay Division. ([24 August 2009 DVB](#))

21 August 2009

NLD members' families allowed to attend court hearing

NLD members' families were allowed to attend the court hearing of their loved ones, NLD members Kyaw Myo Naing, Aung Aung Oo and Bo Tun. They appeared at Bahan Township court in Rangoon, charged under Section 3 of the Explosives Act and section 505b of the Penal Code. They were arrested on 12 June, while they were distributing photos of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Tamwe township. ([21 August 2009 DVB](#))

Domestic journals can quote NLD spokesman

Burma's Censor Board has relaxed its stringent rules and allowed two Rangoon based weekly journals to quote the spokesman of the main opposition party the 'National League for

Democracy' (NLD). The latest issues of 'The Voice' and '7 Days' could cover the news of Burmese democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, who is serving a suspended one and-a-half year prison sentence at her home by quoting party spokesman Nyan Win. The '7 Days' weekly journal in its latest issue carried an interview by her lawyer and party spokesman Nyan Win after he visited her house a day after the special court pronounced the verdict on her trial. "I bought and gave two journal copies to her. We could give them to her now. She can also receive guests. So we talked with her today for about an hour, Suu Kyi's lawyer Nyan Win said," the journal reported. Similarly 'The Voice' covered the same news with the headline 'Despite of arriving back at her home, ongoing house renovation allowed' by quoting Nyan Win. ([21 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

18 August 2009

Nonagenarian protester sentenced to week in prison

A nonagenarian protester was sentenced to seven days in prison by the Taungup Township court on August 14 because he staged a solo protest against the court verdict pronounced on U Kyaw Khaing, said a townsperson. "He was sentenced to a week in prison. The authorities charged him under a section of Act 47, which is related to drinking with disarray," he said. The protester, U Chit Htwe, is a former tuition teacher, and a close associate of U Kyaw Khaing the NLD Township chairman. U Chit Htwe went to Taungup Township court on July 13 to hear the verdict of the court on U Kyaw Khaing, a defamation case against whom was filed by U Than Pee, former NLD Taungup Township member. When U Chit Htwe heard that the court had sentenced U Kyaw Khaing to two years in prison, he staged a protest before the judge. ([18 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

16 August 2009

NLD leader undergoes operation

Win Tin, 80, a senior National League for Democracy (NLD) leader, underwent an operation for a heart condition at a private clinic in Rangoon on Sunday. Family members said he is now in good condition. Win Tin was hospitalized on Saturday. An NLD spokesperson, Nyan Win, said he may remain in the clinic this week. A family member told *The Irrawaddy* on Monday, "He was operated on successfully in Asia Taw Win Clinic last night." Win Tin, a former editor, was released from prison in September 2008 after serving 19 years in Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison. He served as an adviser to pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and was sentenced to 21 years in prison in 1989 during a crackdown on government opponents. In 1996, he received an additional 7-year sentence for writing a testimonial on torture and the lack of medical treatment in Insein Prison, which he sent to the UN. As punishment, he was placed in solitary confinement in a room intended for dogs and was deprived of food and water. ([18 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#), [18 August DVB](#))

15 August 2009

White Campaign launched for Suu Kyi

A five-day public movement known as the White Campaign has been launched in Burma following the imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi and will be carried out across four of Burma's principle divisions. The campaign was organised by a group who have continually held prayer ceremonies every Tuesday since Suu Kyi's first incarceration, and includes members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party. Myint Myint Aye, NLD secretary in Mandalay division's Meikhtila township, who is one of the organisers of the campaign, urged the public to join. "From 15 to 19 August, we will be wearing white and holding prayers at pagodas," he said. "This is to peacefully express our will to bring our leader to freedom. We urge our NLD members [across Burma] to join in with the campaign." Bago NLD women's wing leader Khin Nyunt Mu said the campaign "is not a demonstration, this is not an act against the government – we are to only show our will from inside the law." ([15 August 2009 DVB](#))

14 August 2009

NLD members invited to Naypyidaw

Four leading members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) were invited by the Burmese military government on Thursday to go to the capital, Naypyidaw, according to the opposition party. Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Friday, a representative of the NLD, Ohn Kyaing, said that four members of the party's central executive committee (CEC)—Thankin Soe Myint, Than Tun, Nyunt Wai and Hla Pe—had been invited to travel to Naypyidaw on Friday, though they were not told why or who they would meet with. Ohn Kyaing said that the Burmese authorities had contacted the CEC members through the NLD's chairman, Aung Shwe, and had offered to take the four from Rangoon to the capital with "government transportation." "These are the four members who met with the UN secretary-general in July," he said. ([14 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

NLD organizer gets an additional 2-year sentence

NLD township organizer, U Tin Yu, and ten of his colleagues – Thant Zin Myo, Myo Kyaw Zin, U Win Myint, Aung Min Naing aka Mee Thwe, Yan Naing Tun, Kyaw Soe Win, San Win, San Naing, Soe Min Min, and Hla Hla Maw - received additional 2-year sentences at a court hearing in Insein prison. Tin Yu was previously given 7 years and 6 months imprisonment. ([18 August 2009 Mizzima](#) and [AAPP](#))

12 August 2009

NLD calls for release of political prisoners

The Nation League for Democracy (NLD) has called on Wednesday for the release of its detained leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and all other political prisoners for the sake of national reconciliation, in an apparent response to Tuesday's verdict. The NLD said in two statements relating to Suu Kyi's imprisonment that in the interests of the people and the country, the ruling military junta must release Suu Kyi and other political prisoners for "dialogue and national reconciliation" as earlier as possible. ([12 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

11 August 2009

50 briefly detained during Suu Kyi trial

At least 50 persons were arrested outside Insein Prison after the verdict from Aung San Suu Kyi's trial was announced on Tuesday afternoon. However, they were released outside the headquarters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in central Rangoon soon after, according to NLD sources in the former Burmese capital. A combined force of riot police, security forces and Swan Ah Shin militia detained the persons, who were reportedly mostly NLD supporters and well-wishers of Suu Kyi, and took them away in police trucks after the verdict was announced at 11:50 a.m. They were released with a warning not to go back onto the streets, said some NLD members who were arrested. ([11 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

NLD members detained overnight

In the early hours of the morning, five NLD members from Yanagyaung township, Magwe division – NLD township leader U Tint Lwin, Daw Khin Saw Htay, U Kyaw Nyein, U Than Aung, and U Aye Ko - were arrested at their homes. According to their families, the authorities arrested them because they suspected they were organising a prayer campaign for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. According to reports, they were released the next day. ([11 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

NLD members detained overnight

Five NLD members from Bago town in Bago Division – Daw Khin Nyo Mu, Kyaw Win, Daw Shwe, Pauk Si and one unknown – were briefly detained by the authorities after they prayed for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at a local pagoda and then distributed photos of her in the market. Before they were released, they were forced to sign a paper saying they would not do it again, according to Pauk Si who talked to the media after his release. ([11 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#), [11 August 2009 Mizzima](#)).

10 August 2009

87-year old NLD MP transferred to remote prison

U Kyaw Khaing, MP and Chairman of Taungup NLD in Arakan State, was transferred to Thayet prison in Magwe Division from Thandwe prison in Arakan State without any reason. He was given 2 years imprisonment. “He hasn't been able to eat, he can only drink rice soup because he has been suffering from stomachache,” said his family. ([10 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Aung San Suu Kyi supporter sentenced

NLD member Htwe Thein was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment at a court hearing in Insein prison on 10 August because he delivered black ribbons to other Aung San Suu Kyi supporters on 18 May, as a gesture of solidarity when she was in court. His wife Khin Thet Hlaing said, “He didn't do anything to cause unrest, he just wanted to support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. His arrest and sentence is unfair.” ([10 August 2009 RFA](#), [10 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

NLD member and lawyer Soe Han transferred

NLD member and lawyer Soe Han was transferred from Insein prison to Lashio prison in Shan State. Prior to his transfer, he had been held in solitary confinement in a dog cell as a punishment (as were U Saw Naing Naing, Thet Oo, U Ba Myint, and one other) although the reason is unclear. He is currently serving a 21-year sentence. ([10 August 2009 RFA](#))

4 August 2009

NLD member held in solitary confinement

NLD member Myo Kyaw Zin is in solitary confinement in Insein prison and he is not allowed family visits. This is apparently because he wrote “Release Aung San Suu Kyi now!” on his shirt when he recently appeared in court. ([04 August 2009 RFA](#))

NLD members go on trial

Aung Aung Oo aka Aung Gyi, Bo Tun aka Kyaw Win Tun, and Kyaw Myo Naing went on trial, charged under section 505b of the Penal Code. When the police arrested them, they had photos of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with her father national leader Aung San ([4 August 2009 AAPP](#)).

NLD member hospitalized in prison

U Tin Yu, NLD member from Hlaing Thayar township in Rangoon town in Rangoon Division, was hospitalized on 3 August because of serious stomachache. On 4 August his daughter went to Insein prison, as U Tin Yu was due to appear in court. She said, “I didn’t see my father. I was told that he was brought by stretcher to hospital, as he cannot walk due to his stomach pain.” He often suffers from dizziness because of spondylitis (inflammation in the vertebrae of the neck). Two weeks ago, he was also hospitalized because of this condition. ([04 August 2009 RFA](#), [05 August 2009 DVB](#), [07 August 2009 Mizzima](#)).

88 Generation Students

There are at least 46 members of the 88 Generation Students group currently in detention.

12 August 2009

All Burma Monks’ Alliance, the 88 Generation Students, All Burma Federation of Student Unions open letter to US Senator Jim Webb: extracts

We, three major dissident groups in Burma, the All Burma Monks’ Alliance (ABMA), the 88 Generation Students (88GS), and the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), write this letter to you to express our concerns over your visit to our country and on your position towards situation in Burma. We are concerned that the military regime will manipulate and exploit your visit and propagandize that you endorse their treatment on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and over 2,100 political prisoners, their human rights abuses on the people of Burma, and their systematic, widespread and ongoing attack against the ethnic minorities. We are surprised to learn that you have an intention to support the regime’s 2010 election; even if its constitution is imperfect. We appreciate the long standing support of the United State Senate for our non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma and we expect, as a U.S. Senator, you will urge the

Burmese military regime to accept these demands and solve the problems in Burma peacefully through political dialogue. (12 August 2009 ABMA, 88 Generations Students, ABFSU)

Ethnic Nationalities

There are at least 197 ethnic nationality political prisoners currently in detention. In early August, Shan human rights groups documented that 500 houses were burned down and 10,000 people were forced to flee their homes in Eastern Shan State. In late August, the UNHCR estimated that around 30,000 refugees from the Kokang area in Northern Shan State fled into China, after fighting broke out between Burmese army troops and the Kokang ceasefire group. The ceasefire had held for 20 years. At the time of going to press, media reports indicated that the fighting had stopped and refugees were slowly returning to their homes. In Mon, Kachin and Arakan States, monks have been subjected to increasingly tight security measures (see 'Monks' section).

27 August 2009

Arakan governor arrives in Taungup after anti-government flyers distributed

The Chairman of the Arakan State Peace and Development Council, General Thaung Aye, arrived on Monday in Taungup a day after unidentified democratic activists distributed anti-government posters in the town, said a resident. General Thaung Aye, who is also commander of the Western Command, is likely visiting the town to instruct the local authorities to take action against the democratic activists who have undertaken anti-government activities in Taungup recently. A reliable source said that the high authority is reportedly ordering all commanders around Burma to control their respective states and divisions. If they are unable to do so, the authority will take action or punish the concerned authorized person. ([27 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

18 August 2009

Nonagenarian protester sentenced to week in prison

A nonagenarian protester was sentenced to seven days in prison by the Taungup Township court on August 14 because he staged a solo protest against the court verdict pronounced on U Kyaw Khaing, said a townspeople. "He was sentenced to a week in prison. The authorities charged him under a section of Act 47, which is related to drinking with disarray," he said. The protester, U Chit Htwe, is a former tuition teacher, and a close associate of U Kyaw Khaing the NLD Township chairman. U Chit Htwe went to Taungup Township court on July 13 to hear the verdict of the court on U Kyaw Khaing, a defamation case against whom was filed by U Than Pee, former NLD Taungup Township member. When U Chit Htwe heard that the court had sentenced U Kyaw Khaing to two years in prison, he staged a protest before the judge. ([18 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

Traditional musician missing after arrest

A traditional drummer in Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State, has gone missing after being arrested by police on 11 August, 2009, said a relative. A police team raided his teacher's house on the night of 11 August, on the pretense that his drumming team went to Bangladesh illegally to teach drumming among the Arakanese community there, and arrested U Tun Shwe, who was taken to an unknown location for interrogation and has been missing since then. His teacher U Kyaw Zan Maung is a prominent drummer in Arakan State. His team typically performs at Arakanese traditional festivals, and are known for their anti-government stance. A politician, who asked to remain anonymous, said that the truth is that the government is afraid the drum team might lead a demonstration in Sittwe. Because of that fear, the police raided the drum leader's home and arrested his student U Tun teacher, U Kyaw Zan Maung, is a former political prisoner, having served five years in prison before 2000 because his drum team had played and performed funeral music during a welcome ceremony for former Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt at Sittwe airport in 1994. ([11 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

10 August 2009

Prison transfer for detained elderly opposition member

U Kyaw Khaing, an Arakanese Member of Parliament, elected in the 1990 election, was transferred from Thandwe prison in Arakan state to Thayet prison in Magwe division in central Burma on Sunday. Kyaw Khaing (87), who is also chairman of the organizing committee of the National League for Democracy, Taungup Township branch and vice-chairman of the organizing committee of the Arakan State NLD, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 13 July 2009, on defamation charges, in an incident related to fundraising for Cyclone Nargis. "It is intended by the authorities that U Kyaw Khaing will face more difficulties in Thayet Prison. He is now very old and he will face many problems there because his relatives and colleagues will be unable to go there to see him regularly. Thayet Prison is far away from Arakan State," said a relative of his. Kyaw Khaing had been earlier arrested for his involvement in the monk-led protests in September 2007 and sentenced to seven years in prison but he was later released from the Thandwe prison after serving just a month's term. ([11 August 2009 Mizzima](#), [11 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

Monks

There are currently at least 237 monks in detention. As the second anniversary of the Saffron Revolution in September approaches, there are reports that monks are reorganising inside Burma and preparing for a third boycott on receiving alms from military personnel and their families. Three monks from Magwe division and one from Rangoon were arrested this month. U Sandar Dika told his family that he was tortured under interrogation following his arrest. Security measures aimed at monks are also being tightened around the country, including in Mon, Kachin and Arakan states.

31 August 2009

Two monks arrested in Magwe division

Local authorities arrested monks in Magwe division, in the lead-up to the Saffron Revolution anniversary in September. U Vimala from Sanaynan monastery in Yenanchaung Township and U Vithodda, from Zawtikaryone monastery, Pakokku Township were both arrested. Sources close to U Vimala speculated that he was arrested in a preemptive crackdown in the run-up to the Saffron Revolution anniversary, as he was involved in that protest. According to Irrawaddy, U Vithodda had been ordered by local authorities not to leave his monastery. He refused to accept that order, went outside, and was arrested. ([31 August 2009 RFA](#), [31 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#), [31 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

29 August 2009

Monk tortured under interrogation

Ashin Sandar Dika aka Nyi Nyi San is suffering from a hernia as a result of torture received under interrogation. While appearing in court, he told his family that he was beaten by Police Lieutenant Kyaw Sein and Second Lieutenant Pyi Khaing Zaw under interrogation. He appeared at Rangoon Division court on 27 August. He was arrested by authorities on 11 August. He went to Insein prison to hear the verdict in the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and then went to NLD headquarters, and on his way back to his monastery he was arrested. ([29 August 2009 Yoma 3](#))

28 August 2009

Monks form secret organisations

The statements issued by the All Burma Students Union said branch organizations under the aegis of the underground All Burma Monks Organization were formed in Pegu, Irrawaddy and Rangoon Division. The information is being disseminated among Burmese internet users. The All Burma Monks Organization Foreign Affairs in-charge Sayadaw U Eithiriya said that these branches were formed with the intention of toppling the military junta through mass movements, taking to the streets unitedly and with solidarity in order to achieve victory. "We have consolidated all monk organizations such as Sangha Samaggi (Sangha Union), Young Monks Union and Thawthuzana. But for all these organizations, it is very difficult to form a unified organization. So we have now arranged to let all these organizations conduct their movements in their own area under the unified command and instruction of a central leadership," he said. The monks' organization's has demanded that the junta make a formal apology for its atrocities, killings and persecution committed against monks. The apology should come before the deadline of October 2, noon. The statement issued by the All Burma Monks Organization is being widely disseminated among the people of Burma. A spokesperson of the organization U Dhama Wuntha told Mizzima that the monks in Burma are facing difficulty in going about their movement. "In fact, we are mobilizing people through this movement. We showed them what we are doing and are trying to boost their morale. We are into this movement inside Burma without almost any political space. First we launched a poster campaign as part of

an awareness campaign among the people and to encourage them to join us. Now we can no longer do these," he said. ([28 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

27 August 2009

Opposition activists launch yellow campaign

With the second anniversary of the 'Saffron Revolution' round the corner, 10 opposition activists launched a campaign in Rangoon to pay tribute to monks, who took part in chanting Metta sutra two years ago. The activists donned yellow symbols during their weekly so-called 'Tuesday prayer campaign', conducted in Shwedagon pagoda for the release of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. "September is drawing close. So we wore yellow ribbons, yellow hairpins, yellow flowers and yellow dresses as symbols, while paying tribute to the 'Saffron Revolution' during our prayer campaign. We prayed for the release of our leader," Naw Ohn Hla, one of the campaigners, told Mizzima. The activists plan to forge ahead with the yellow campaign with their prayer meetings and prayer services at pagodas every Tuesday until September 25. ([27 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

Monk arrested in Magwe division

Assistant Abbot U Waryama (Varyama) from Shwe Zayti (Golden Pagoda) Dhamma University (*pali* language university), Yenangyaung Township, Magwe Division was arrested by Magwe Division special police force at midnight on 27 August. He is over 50 years old, and actively involved in social welfare and religious work. Daw Khin Saw Htay from NLD Magwe Women's Wing, who regularly sponsors U Waryama, told the media she thought he had been arrested because he allowed a Martyr's Day ceremony in his monastery, and therefore the authorities might be worried he would allow an event to mark the Saffron Revolution anniversary. She added that he is not involved in politics. ([28 August 2009 RFA](#))

26 August 2009

Junta warns Buddhist monks online

A military government Web site, "*kyaymon*" [meaning "the mirror"], which operates as an online daily newspaper in Burmese, on Wednesday criticized two well-known Buddhist monks' organizations and warned that the Burmese military authorities will take action against them. The Burmese-language *kyaymon* Web site claimed that the International Burmese Monks' Organization [commonly known as "Sasana Moli"] and the Sangha League (Myanmar) are trying to launch another monks' boycott in Burma similar to the 2007 Saffron Revolution when Buddhist monks were instrumental in leading anti-government protests. It said that the Burmese government would not tolerate this type of movement and would take "severe action" against those involved in it. The Web site urged the public "not to become the monks' victims." The warning comes the day after *The Irrawaddy* reported that several exiled monk leaders had said that Buddhist monks across the country were preparing to stage a third boycott of military personnel and their families. ([26 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

25 August 2009

Monk leaders call for third Sangha boycott

Several exiled Buddhist monk leaders have told *The Irrawaddy* that Burmese monks across Burma are preparing to launch another boycott of military personnel and their families due to ongoing abuses against Buddhist doctrine and clergy by the ruling military junta. Known as a “*pattanikkujjana*” in Pali, a Buddhist monks’ boycott involves refusing morning alms from those said to have violated religious principles. Burma’s monasteries, some housing as many as 1,000 practicing monks, have been largely silent since the junta ordered a crackdown on the monk-led protests in August and September 2007. But several sources say that the simmering resentment could come to a head again in the lead-up to the regime’s election planned for 2010. A monk in Rangoon who asked to remain anonymous told *The Irrawaddy* on Tuesday: “The local authorities are closely watching the monks and their monasteries. Moreover, there are plainclothes security forces keeping an eye on them.” ([25 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

21 August 2009

Sittwe security beefed up with riot police

Security in Sittwe has been beefed up by riot police once again, since a rumor began spreading in the town that monks in Sittwe are preparing to stage a demonstration against the Burmese military government, said a businessman. “Recently the security forces were doubled in Sittwe and most of the riot police are stationed at Bura Gri Temple and Ottama Garden, both of which are located in downtown Sittwe. The area around Bura Gri Temple is blanketed in military vehicles and riot police,” he said. According to a local source, there is information spreading in Sittwe that monks are secretly preparing to stage a demonstration during the month of August. The authority has deployed riot police at many places in Sittwe in response to these rumors. ([21 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

18 August 2009

Monks searched as they travel through Mon state

Burmese government authorities in Mon State have been increasing security measures and investigating Buddhist monks who are traveling – searching through their saffron robes and requiring them to open their bags. According to one monk who was searched on his way from Moulmein to Mudon at the checkpoint in Ro Go, “At 5:00 PM I reached Ro Go checkpoint by bus. A soldier in uniform asked me to open up my bag. As he found nothing he made me lift up my robe and again found nothing. Then he allowed me to proceed on my way.” The security increase has come as tension has mounted after the recent re-incarceration of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was found guilty of violating her house arrest and was sentenced to serve an additional 18 months. After her return to her home, every town gate and roadblock between Moulmein to Ye has been checked thoroughly, though some say these checks have been the standard military security practice even before the verdict. ([18 August 2009 Mon News Agency](#))

17 August 2009

Police escorts for monks accepting offerings

It has become mandatory, from early last week, for Buddhist monks going out to accept food offerings from local devotees in Myitkyina, the capital of Burma's northern Kachin State, to be escorted by two policemen, said local sources. Local police sources said, the monks are being escorted to prevent any anti-junta demonstrations in the town similar to the countrywide monk-led anti-regime demonstrations known as the 'Saffron Revolution' in September, 2007. The order to escort monks comes from the junta's Maj-Gen Soe Win, commander of Myitkyina-based Northern Regional command (or Ma-Pa-Kha). The military authorities of Myitkyina have been listing monks, Christian pastors and preachers and all government personnel along with their brief bio data since last July, said residents of Myitkyina. ([17 August 2009 Kachin News](#))

15 August 2009

Are Monks Preparing to Return to the Streets?

Buddhist monks, angered by the Burmese junta's decision to place democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi under a further 18 months of house arrest, may be preparing to take to the streets again in protest, according to sources in Rangoon. Burma's monasteries, some with as many as a thousand monks, have been largely silent since a crackdown on monk-led protests nearly two years ago. But some monks say that simmering resentment could come to a head again over the August 11 court ruling, which found Suu Kyi guilty of violating the terms of her house arrest. "We can't accept the court's shameful verdict," said a monk from a monastery near Rangoon's famous Shwedagon Pagoda. "The military government has angered us again." Local residents said they have seen a handful of monks gathering near Shwedagon and Sule pagodas, two of the focal points of massive pro-democracy demonstrations in September 2007. Both locations have been under close surveillance in recent weeks as the Rangoon Northern District Court prepared to pass sentence on Suu Kyi. Security has also been tight in other parts of the former capital. ([15 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

12 August 2009

All Burma Monks' Alliance, the 88 Generation Students, All Burma Federation of Student Unions open letter to US Senator Jim Webb: extracts

We, three major dissident groups in Burma, the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA), the 88 Generation Students (88GS), and the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), write this letter to you to express our concerns over your visit to our country and on your position towards situation in Burma. We are concerned that the military regime will manipulate and exploit your visit and propagandize that you endorse their treatment on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and over 2,100 political prisoners, their human rights abuses on the people of Burma, and their systematic, widespread and ongoing attack against the ethnic minorities. We are surprised to learn that you have an intention to support the regime's 2010 election; even if its constitution is imperfect. We appreciate the long standing support of the United State Senate for our non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma and we expect, as a U.S. Senator, you will urge the

Burmese military regime to accept these demands and solve the problems in Burma peacefully through political dialogue. (12 August 2009 ABMA, 88 Generations Students, ABFSU)

6 August 2009

Burmese authorities ban chanting of Metta Sutta

Buddhist monks at the Myat Saw Nyi Naung Pagoda in Yenangyaung, Magwe Division, were warned on Wednesday not to hold a ceremony to chant the Metta Sutta—the Buddha’s discourse on loving-kindness. Similar ceremonies are normally held throughout the country on this day. However, since a brutal crackdown on the monk-led protests of 2007, which featured marching monks reciting the Metta Sutta, most monasteries have been wary of publicly chanting the sutta. “Banning chanting of the Buddhist suttas is a great insult to the Buddha, his teachings and his followers,” said Ashin Issariya, one of the leaders of the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), the group that spearheaded the 2007 Saffron Revolution. ([6 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

5 August 2009

Monks question gov’t use of personal photographs

Buddhist monks in Rangoon and Pegu divisions were ordered to attach a personal photograph to their government information form, which were collected by local authorities in July. A monk in Pegu said, “I feel it is unusual because I had to attach my picture this time. Last year, I only had to provide information—no photo.” He said members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a government-backed volunteer group, collected the information forms from the monasteries. Pegu, one of the main locations of Buddhist unrest during the 2007 monk-led uprisings, has an estimated 10,000 monks. “They told me they have to send my personal file to the Southern Command in Pegu,” said the monk. “But they didn’t explain the reason. I want to know, because I don’t want the military to have my photograph.” An abbot in Pegu said, “They believe we’ll start another uprising. This is why they collected the pictures with the information forms—in order to make us afraid of them.” ([5 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Cyclone Nargis Volunteers

There are currently at least 21 cyclone Nargis volunteers in detention. There is no news this month.

Journalists, Bloggers and Writers

There are currently at least 51 media activists in detention. There is no news this month.

Women

There are currently at least 191 women in detention, including 6 nuns.

Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network

There are currently at least 43 members of the HRDP network in detention. There is no news this month.

Other Organisations

15 August 2009

Nyein Chan held in solitary confinement

Nyein Chan aka Khaing Ko Mon aka Khaing Gyi, a member of Generation Wave, is currently being held in solitary confinement. This is as a punishment for speaking out on behalf of criminal prisoners. He told prison authorities they should be allowed to stop work on religious and public holidays. ([15 August 2009 AAPP](#))

5 August 2009

Generation Wave member Nyein Chan back on trial

Nyein Chan aka Khaing Ko Mon aka Khaing Gyi, a member of Generation Wave, is back on trial. He faces charges under section 17/20 of the Printing and Publishing Act at Sangchaung Township Court in Rangoon. He also faces charges under section 33/a of the Electronic Transactions Law at Rangoon Western District Court. He already received an 8-year sentence on separate charges. ([5 August 2009 AAPP](#))

Labour Activists

There are currently at least 29 labour activists in detention. Well-known labour activist Su Su Nway, who has a serious heart condition, has received harsh treatment this month according to her family. First she was placed in solitary confinement in Kale prison, then she was transferred to Hkamti prison. Hkamti prison is 1200 miles from Rangoon, while Kale prison is 680 miles from Rangoon.

11 August 2009

Labour rights activist Su Su Nway transferred to Hkamti Prison

Prominent Burmese labor rights activist, Su Su Nway, was transferred from Kale Prison to Hkamti prison in Sagaing Division on August 6, according to her sister, Htay Htay Kyi. "I found out that she was transferred to Hkamti on Thursday. I asked the authorities at the prison why they transferred her. They responded that they weren't authorized to discuss the matter," Htay Htay Kyi said. Su Su Nway was originally sentenced to 12 and a half years in prison for political activities, but this was reduced by four years in February. ([11 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

4 August 2009

Su Su Nway put in solitary confinement

A prominent Burmese labor rights activist, Su Su Nway, was placed in solitary confinement for three days after participating in a ceremony to mark the 62nd anniversary of Martyrs' Day on July 19 in Kalay Prison, in Sagaing Division, according to her sister. Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* her sister Htay Htay Kyi, said, "She was put in solitary confinement because she stood up and sang an independence anthem composed by Min Ko Naing to mark Martyrs' Day." Htay Htay Kyi said she visited her sister on July 21 when she delivered medicine to Su Su Nway who said she had been denied medical care by the prison authorities. Su Su Nway, 37, suffers from hypertension and heart disease. In 2006, she won the John Humphrey Freedom Award for promoting human rights. She was arrested together with two colleagues after they pasted anti-government posters on a billboard in downtown Rangoon during the monk-led uprising of 2007. ([4 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Students

There are currently at least 286 students in detention, including 46 members of the 88 Generation Students group.

28 August 2009

ABFSU statement addressed to all students: extracts

Two years ago, the military government, called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) cracked down a series of peaceful demonstrations by the people including our brothers of 88 generation students who expressed their grave concerns on the issues of rocketing commodity prices and the fuel price, and arrested many people including Min Ko Naing and other student leaders, without making any effort to deal with the people hardship in their economic lives. We, students of a new generation therefore could not help but joined the student movements by reformation of ABFSU led by Kyaw Ko Ko, Sithu Maung and Lin Htet Naing on August 28, 2007. Then, in order to fight for democracy and human rights, we together with Buddhist monks took the streets with high spirit of student activism at the forefront of the people movements of September Saffron Uprising. We, in the interest of the people and the country as well of fellow students, has vowed to go forward with our struggle under the banner of student union although the military government has continued arrests of our colleagues and friends and given them long-term imprisonments. With a great deal of mind to keep away from any action which might be leading to distrust and disunity among the student activists, we would like to let all the students know that we have assured our commitments for the struggle under a collective leadership. We, the students of ABFSU, simply believe that a peaceful developed nation cannot be built on the military might, but on the development of democratic civil education in the society. Thus, we want a democratic education, not the militarized education system. A democratic education can only be guaranteed under a democratic constitution, not under the SPDC's 2008 Consitution which was produced from the undemocratic drafting process. (28 August 2009, ABFSU)

12 August 2009

All Burma Monks' Alliance, the 88 Generation Students, All Burma Federation of Student Unions open letter to US Senator Jim Webb: extracts

We, three major dissident groups in Burma, the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA), the 88 Generation Students (88GS), and the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), write this letter to you to express our concerns over your visit to our country and on your position towards situation in Burma. We are concerned that the military regime will manipulate and exploit your visit and propagandize that you endorse their treatment on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and over 2,100 political prisoners, their human rights abuses on the people of Burma, and their systematic, widespread and ongoing attack against the ethnic minorities. We are surprised to learn that you have an intention to support the regime's 2010 election; even if its constitution is imperfect. We appreciate the long standing support of the United State Senate for our non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma and we expect, as a U.S. Senator, you will urge the Burmese military regime to accept these demands and solve the problems in Burma peacefully through political dialogue. (12 August 2009 ABMA, 88 Generations Students, ABFSU)

6 August 2009

ABFSU member Ye Myat Hein gets additional 2 years in prison

Ye Myat Hein, university student and member of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), was given an additional 2-year sentence at South Dagon Township Court in Rangoon Division. He is now facing a total of 10 years in prison ([06 August 2009 DVB](#)).

Lawyers

There are currently at least 12 lawyers in detention.

10 August 2009

NLD member and lawyer Soe Han transferred

NLD member and lawyer Soe Han was transferred from Insein prison to Lashio prison in Shan State. Prior to his transfer, he had been held in solitary confinement in a dog cell as a punishment (as were U Saw Naing Naing, Thet Oo, U Ba Myint, and one other) although the reason is unclear. He is currently serving a 21-year sentence. ([10 August 2009 RFA](#))

Individual Activists

28 August 2009

Individual activist sentenced

Mar Mar Aye was arrested on 15 August 2009. The reason for her arrest is unclear, but prior to her arrest she was seen talking to some monks. She was charged under section 505b of the

Penal Code and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment at Gyobingauk Court, Bago Division on 28 August. Her brother Myo Thant is a member of the 88 Generation Students, and is currently serving a 2-year sentence in Thayet prison, Magwe division. ([28 August 2009 Yoma 3](#))

24 August 2009

Young people arrested

Some young people were arrested by authorities. Phyu Phway, Maung Wyne, Ko Aung, Zarny, Aung Naing Myint, were arrested by the authorities on suspicion of being in touch with opposition groups, and of distributing pictures of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. ([24 August 2009 AAPP and DVB](#))

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

On 11 August 2009 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to three years with hard labour, commuted to 18 months house arrest by Senior General Than Shwe. Her two live-in party members Daw Khin Khin Win and Daw Win Ma Ma received the same sentence. American citizen John Yettaw was sentenced to seven years with hard labour, but was later released 'on humanitarian grounds', following a visit by US Senator Jim Webb. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – together with her two party members - was returned to house arrest shortly after the verdict was delivered. Lawyers for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have said they will file an appeal in early September against the criminal conviction. According to Nyan Win, one of her lawyers, her detention conditions have worsened since her conviction this month. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is also planning renovations to her lakeside home, in order to protect her security. Meanwhile, security guards implicated in the security breach at her home received token sentences of between three and six months.

31 August 2009

Suu Kyi to boost house security

A spokesman for her party said Ms Suu Kyi worried about security and wanted to prevent a repeat of the incident. US well-wisher John Yettaw swam uninvited to her lakeside home in May. He was convicted and then released, but Ms Suu Kyi's house arrest was extended by 18 months, ensuring that she cannot take part in elections next year. Nyan Win, her lawyer and spokesman for the National League for Democracy (NLD), said Ms Suu Kyi had been in contact with architects about the renovations. "She worries for the security of her house and that's why she wants to repair it," he said, quoted by AFP news agency. "It is to prevent another trespassing." She would pay for the renovations herself, he added. ([31 August 2009 BBC](#))

28 August 2009

Myanmar's Suu Kyi to appeal

Lawyers for Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's detained opposition leader, have said they will file an appeal next week against the criminal conviction that extended her house arrest by another 18 months. The detention order prevents Aung San Suu Kyi from contesting in general election's

planned by Myanmar's military government for next year. Nyan Win, one of the lawyers, said they met Aung San Suu Kyi, 64, for two hours on Thursday afternoon to finalise details of her appeal which will be submitted to the Divisional Court in Yangon early next week. ([28 August 2009 Al Jazeera](#))

26 August 2009

NLD leader wants more security

Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi wants more security around her home, after she was sentenced to 18 more months under house arrest for letting an unwanted visitor into the lakeside compound, her lawyer said. Nyan Win, who represented the Nobel peace laureate at her trial for allowing an American, John Yettaw, into her home, also expressed puzzlement at Yettaw's statement that he and Aung San Suu Kyi had held confidential discussions and that she was "ecstatic" to see him. "Aung San Suu Kyi never discussed anything with Yettaw except to repeatedly urge him to return home to his family," Nyan Win said in a telephone interview, adding that he had discussed the issue with Aung San Suu Kyi ahead of her trial and that no such conversation with Yettaw had occurred. Yettaw's comments in a broadcast interview with CNN were "out of sync" with statements he made during his testimony, Nyan Win said, calling them "false" and saying that they created "a lot of implications." ([26 August 2009 RFA](#))

25 August 2009

Japan pushes for Suu Kyi's release

Japan showed signs of disapproval today over the sentencing of Burma opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the ruling junta to quickly release her prior to next year's elections. During talks earlier today with Burma's agriculture minister, Htay Oo, the Japanese foreign minister Hirofumi Nakasone said that Tokyo "strongly expects the swift release of Aung San Suu Kyi". A statement released by the Japanese foreign ministry following the meeting stressed that Suu Kyi should be able to participate in Burma's democratic process, likely hinting at her role in the 2010 elections scheduled for March next year. Htay Oo, who is also secretary of the controversial pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in Burma, replied that the government "will consider [Suu Kyi's] early release if she leads a sincere life", according to the statement obtained by AFP. ([25 August 2009 DVB](#))

24 August 2009

Suu Kyi asks for return of family doctor

Burma's pro-democracy leader is seeking to have her regular physician, Tin Myo Win, reinstated as her primary doctor, following her return to her home after being sentenced to 18-months of house arrest. Nyan Win, one of Suu Kyi's lawyer, told *The Irrawaddy* on Monday that since she returned home on August 11, the authorities sent another doctor to check on her health. "She told officials that she wanted her family physician, Dr Tin Myo Win, to take care of her health," Nyan Win said. "So far, I don't think Dr Tin Myo Win has been able to visit her." Tin Myo Win was a leading pro-democracy activist during the 1988 uprising that toppled the 26-year rule of

the late dictator Ne Win. After the military coup in September 1988, Tin Myo Win became a member of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). In the following year, he was jailed. He was the only regular visitor to see Suu Kyi during 2003-09, when he performed monthly check ups. ([24 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Aung San Suu Kyi worse off this time in detention: lawyer

Detained Burmese democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's situation under house arrest this time around is worse than her earlier term, her lawyer Nyan Win said. The Burmese opposition leader was escorted back to her lakeside house on August 11, after her three-year prison with hard labour was commuted to 18 months. "But since her return, the situation under which she is detained seems to be far more complicated and is worse than her earlier house arrest term," said Nyan Win, who is also the spokesperson for her party – the National League for Democracy. He said, the eight-point condition imposed on her by the regime is amorphous and has created far more confusion. "Even we, her lawyers, are not sure of the implications of the eight-point condition," Nyan Win said. Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence was commuted from three years with hard labour by an executive order from the junta supremo Snr Gen Than Shwe, which was read out in the court on August 11. Than Shwe's order said she could be released if she is found serving her suspended sentence without violating the conditions. ([24 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

Poster campaign in Arakan for Daw Suu's release

Unknown democratic activists in Taungup, Arakan State started distributing posters and pamphlets calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Burma, said an NLD member in the town. "We saw some posters and pamphlets with Daw Suu's portrait in the gate of my house in the early morning of Sunday. But I did not know who distributed the flyers in front of my house. In the posters and pamphlets there is some text calling on the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally and immediately," he said. Another townspeople from Gu Dar Ward said, "I saw a poster with the portrait of Daw Suu with her father, national hero Aung San, in which the activists demanded the release of Daw Suu now. I heard many posters were distributed by the activists throughout Taungup." The posters were likely distributed during the night. The police team seized all posters and brought them to the police station. ([24 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

22 August 2009

Yettaw says guards let him enter Suu Kyi compound

John Yettaw, the American man who made international headlines after he swam to the lakeside home of detained Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in May, said in an interview published on Friday that guards did nothing to prevent him from entering her compound. "I don't know why they [security guards] didn't stop me," Yettaw said in a telephone interview with Newsweek magazine. "The man with the AK-47 shook my hand and let me in." In his first public statement on the circumstances of his visit to Suu Kyi's home since leaving Burma, Yettaw appeared to lend credence to suspicions that the incident was part of an effort by the Burmese junta to extend Suu Kyi's detention, which was due to end just weeks after Yettaw's sudden appearance on the scene. ([22 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

20 August 2009

ASEAN mulls Suu Kyi amnesty call: Indonesia

Senior Asian officials met in Indonesia on Thursday to discuss issuing an unprecedented call for amnesty for Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, Indonesia's foreign ministry said. The officials from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which includes Myanmar, were considering a "joint appeal" for Suu Kyi's release from house arrest, ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah said. The appeal could be in the form of a letter to the Myanmar junta, which recently extended the Nobel Peace laureate's confinement for 18 months after a trial widely seen as a sham. "From what I remember, this would be the first such joint appeal for amnesty," Faizasyah told AFP. "We don't know what form it will take. It could be in the form of letter to Myanmar, but they will have to discuss this." Any such appeal would signal a toughening of the bloc's attitude toward the junta and would be a significant departure from ASEAN's much-criticised principle of non-interference in members' internal affairs, analysts said. ([20 August 2009 AFP](#))

19 August 2009

'Humanitarian Junta,' says state press

The Burmese military regime has shown itself as an advocate of human rights by releasing the American intruder, John W Yettaw, and is promoting bilateral relations with the US by hosting Senator Jim Webb, Burma's leading state-run newspaper said on Wednesday. In an editorial titled "*Constructive attitude in the area of international relations*," the English-language *The New Light of Myanmar* said that in granting amnesty for Yettaw, the regime has shown respect for "the rule of law, as well as humanitarianism and human rights." Commenting on the *New Light of Myanmar's* editorial, Bo Kyi, the joint-secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), said that if the regime really wants to show respect for the rule of law and human rights it must first release Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, and stop human rights violations in ethnic areas. "It is clear that the junta released Yettaw after they had used him to keep Daw Aung San Suu Kyi continually under arrest during the elections in 2010," Bo Kyi said. According to AAPP and other human rights groups, Burma holds more than 2,100 dissidents in prison across the country and hundreds of thousands are internally displaced in eastern Burma. ([19 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

US man says no regrets about Myanmar jailing

American John Yettaw said Wednesday he has no regrets about taking a secret swim to the home of Myanmar's detained democracy leader — a decision that landed them both in prison — and indicated that he still believes his bizarre visit somehow saved her from being assassinated. "If I had to do it again, I would do it a hundred times, a hundred times, to save her life," an exhausted-looking Yettaw said of Aung San Suu Kyi in an interview with The Associated Press after arriving in the U.S. on Wednesday. He added, "That they locked her up, it just breaks my heart." ([20 August 2009 AP](#))

18 August 2009

Asean officials to discuss Suu Kyi pardon proposal

A Thai government proposal for a request by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to the Burmese junta to pardon Aung San Suu Kyi is expected to be discussed at a meeting of senior Asean officials in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, on Wednesday and Thursday. Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said on Monday that the pardon proposal had been winning more support among Asean member countries, according to a report in the Bangkok English-language daily *The Nation*. Cambodia and Vietnam, however, were reported to be still opposed to the proposal. “We respect Burma's justice system but are concerned about the unity of Asean too, since Aung San Suu Kyi's case makes Asean and Burma a common target,” Kasit was quoted in *The Nation*. Kasit noted that Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as Indonesia and Singapore, had spoken positively about the rate of progress in Burma. ([18 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Suu Kyi clarifies her sanctions policy

Burma's detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi told US Senator Jim Webb on Saturday that “interaction” must first be established inside the country, according to her lawyer. The comment was made in response to Webb's assertion that, with regard to sanctions, Burma “needs interaction with the international community,” the lawyer said. “Daw Suu told me that when she met with Senator Webb on Saturday she reiterated the need for the Burmese regime to first interact ‘inside the country.’ She said only when that happens ‘will Burma benefit from relations with the international community,’” said Nyan Win, Suu Kyi's lawyer, who met her for about one hour on Monday afternoon. Speaking to *The Irrawaddy* on Tuesday, Nyan Win said he asked Suu Kyi about the recent reports in several British newspapers that she had agreed to an overturn of the international tourism boycott on Burma. “She replied that she had not discussed the issue with anyone recently,” Nyan Win said. ([18 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

No change on Burma policy: US

US President Barack Obama on Monday said he appreciated the decision of the Burmese military government to release US citizen John W Yettaw; however, his administration said it would have no impact on its review of the Burma policy, noting that it is looking for positive pro-democracy signals from military regime. “We continue to look for signs that the Burmese government is prepared to embark on a meaningful dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, along with the rest of the democratic opposition,” the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, P.J. Crowley, told reporters at the daily State Department press briefing. Soon thereafter, the White House issued a press statement which read: “The president is pleased that Senator Webb has facilitated the release of American citizen John Yettaw from detention in Burma. He appreciates this decision by the Burmese government.” Yettaw was released following a meeting between Sen Jim Webb and Burmese leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe last week. ([18 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Myanmar gets US praise and pressure

The US has welcomed Myanmar's move to release an American man jailed for his role in violating the house arrest terms of the country's detained opposition leader. But Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under detention for 14 of the last 20 years and was sentenced to a further 18 months of house arrest for Yettaw's stunt, criticised the military government's double standard

on Monday. "The fact that the person who entered the house was released whereas residents of the house remained detained is ugly," Nyan Win, her lawyer, quoted her as saying. Phillip Crowley, a US state department spokesman, said Yettaw's release could not be seen as an indication that Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, was embracing change. "We remain very concerned about the continued detainment of Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,100 prisoners that are in detention," Crowley told reporters on Monday. ([18 August 2009 Al Jazeera](#))

17 August 2009

Webb hints Suu Kyi may favor engagement

Webb fuelled speculation that Aung San Suu Kyi favors the removal of some of the international sanctions applied by the US and EU. Discussing the issue at a Bangkok press conference on Monday, Webb was coy, telling the media that "I don't want to misrepresent her views, but my clear impression is that she is not opposed to the lifting of some sanctions." He spent around eight minutes fielding questions from journalists, before closing the Q&A session. However, Webb did not raise the issue of Western sanctions or the recent allegations surrounding nuclear cooperation with North Korea during his meeting with the junta leaders. Speculation persists as to what the visit means for US policy on Burma. Back in February US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the US would review its Burma stance, and while the US government renewed its sanctions policy less than one month ago, it has been dropping hints that it would consider a greater degree of engagement with Naypyidaw going forward. ([17 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#), [18 August 2009 DVB](#))

16 August 2009

Yettaw leaves Burma

John Yettaw of Falcon, Missouri, arrived in Bangkok on a US government plane with Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia, who secured his freedom Saturday with a plea to Burma's ruling military junta. Webb's visit to Burma was the first by a member of the US Congress in more than a decade, and could presage a new approach by Washington toward the military government, which it has shunned. "I believe he was probably motivated by good intentions but he committed a very serious violation in this country," Webb said in Rangoon. "It was a good gesture from your country to our country for humanitarian reasons to allow him to return to his family." "I don't think Sen. Webb can be proud for the release of Mr. John Yettaw, while our leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the real victim of this conspiracy and injustices, and two women colleagues, are still under detention," said Aung Din of the US Campaign for Burma, a Washington-based group. "This will surely make a negative impression among the people of Burma. They will think that Americans are easy to satisfy with the dictators when they get their citizens back," he said. ([16 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Singapore backs Asean call to free Suu Kyi

Singapore supports a new Thai initiative to draft a joint Asean letter appealing to the Myanmar government to grant a full amnesty to Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. Foreign Minister George Yeo said this yesterday, after hosting a dinner for visiting Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, who had dropped in on his constituency's National Day celebrations. Mr Kasit, who said Malaysia and

Indonesia supported the idea too, added that the letter will be ready 'as soon as possible, within this week'. ([16 August 2009 Asiaone](#))

15 August 2009

US Senator meets Than Shwe, Suu Kyi

The head of the Burmese military junta, Snr-Gen Than Shwe, met with pro-engagement American Senator Jim Webb in Naypyidaw and allowed the senator to meet with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Reports said that Than Shwe met with the Democratic senator in the Burmese capital on Saturday morning. No further details were released by either Burmese or US officials. Webb is scheduled to hold a press conference at Rangoon's international airport on Sunday, according to his official Web site. Khin Maung Swe, a spokesperson for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, told The Irrawaddy that the party did not expect Webb's visit to bring any big changes. "It's too early to say if Mr. Webb's visit will have a major impact on Burma or Washington's Burma policy," he said. Burma's state-run-newspapers reported a meeting between Webb and Burmese Prime Minister Gen Thein Sein on Friday as the front-page story on Saturday. Webb also held a separate meeting on the military-backed 2008 constitution with Aung Toe and three other members of the constitution-drafting committee on Friday. Prior to his visit, he expressed an interest in the constitution, which was approved last year in a referendum widely dismissed as a sham. ([15 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Suu Kyi remains upbeat says her lawyer

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was positive and cheerful after returning to her Inya Lake residence, one of her lawyers, Kyi Wynn, told The Irrawaddy. "She was not dejected and I was surprised to see that, on the contrary, she appeared cheerful and was laughing," the lawyer said. Suu Kyi met with her lawyers on Wednesday around the dining table in her lakeside house, he said, adding that Suu Kyi appeared upbeat as she spoke of the trial. Suu Kyi knew the verdict would be "guilty," but was not upset and showed no signs of bitterness, Kyi Wynn said. However, the Burmese pro-democracy leader had expressed surprise that the regime had revived a "dead constitution" in order to implicate her, he said, in reference to the 1974 constitution which is officially invalid since a new constitution was approved last year. ([15 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Thailand urges Asean for a consensus on Burma

Thailand has circulated a letter to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to bring about a consensus urging for a pardon and release of Aung San Suu Kyi, even as Vietnam and Laos disapproved. Kasit Piromya, Thailand's Minister of Foreign Affairs said on Friday that he has submitted a letter to the Asean bloc. Khenthong Nuanthasing, Lao's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' spokesperson said that Laos would not interfere in a neighbouring country's internal affairs and the trial is a legal procedure of Burma. "However, Laos believes that Burma will achieve the Seven Steps Road Map to democracy in the given time frame. As a member, Laos will stand by the basic principle of the ASEAN Charter," according to a report in the Thailand National News Bureau. The Vietnam state media reported yesterday that Vietnam did not support calls by other Asean member states for Burma to free Aung San Suu Kyi. ([15 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

13 August 2009

Suu Kyi begins house arrest amid outrage

Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi awoke at her lakeside home Wednesday to begin the first full day of her latest house arrest, following her globally condemned conviction that lawyers said they would promptly appeal. Suu Kyi has already spent 14 of the past 20 years under house arrest—but Tuesday marked her first conviction. Suu Kyi now begins 18 more months in detention behind a new barbed-wire fence that was erected at the lakeside entrance to her home, where American John Yettaw had entered. Later Wednesday, witnesses said a group of her lawyers visited her home. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. According to the regulations for her new house arrest, Suu Kyi can receive visitors at her home only with permission from authorities. ([13 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

12 August 2009

Aung San Suu Kyi to appeal verdict, attorney says

An attorney for Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said Wednesday that the Nobel Peace Prize laureate plans to appeal the guilty verdict that placed her under house detention for another 18 months, outraging the international community. “I will try to get a certified copy of the verdict, and after I’ve got it, we will appeal to the Divisional Court for Daw (Mrs) Aung San Suu Kyi to overturn the guilty verdict,” lawyer Nyan Win said. Meanwhile, authorities arrested pro-democracy activist Naw Ohn Hla as she attempted to visit Suu Kyi at Suu Kyi’s Yangon home, now her prison again, witnesses said. She was held overnight and released the next day. ([12 August 2009 Thaindian](#) and [AAPP](#))

Myanmar's Suu Kyi says conviction 'totally unfair'

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi called the verdict returning her to house arrest "totally unfair," but remains cheerful and alert, her lawyer said Wednesday. Four of her lawyers were allowed to visit the Nobel Peace Prize laureate at her lakeside home for an hour to discuss an appeal of her conviction Tuesday on charges of violating the terms of her previous house arrest. ([12 August 2009 AP](#))

11 August 2009

Rules set for Suu Kyi’s house arrest

A list of conditions under which Aung San Suu Kyi will live out her house arrest has been laid down by the courtroom, following an announcement that she could be released early if she abides by them. The only guests Suu Kyi is allowed are her doctor and the few visitors, likely only senior level diplomats, whom the junta authorises. She is only allowed to watch and read state-run media and is denied any leave of her compound. According to a statement read out in the courtroom today by Burma’s home affairs minister, General Maung Oo, “if she has concerns about the regulations, she can contact the authorities”. ([11 August 2009 DVB](#))

Junta claim ‘sympathy’ for Suu Kyi

Burma’s ruling junta have said that the commutation of Aung San Suu Kyi’s sentence was due to them “feeling sorry” about the trial and seeking to carry out justice “fairly and righteously”, according to a courtroom source. Following a dramatic five-minute wait after the initial three-year sentence with hard labour was handed to Suu Kyi today, Burma’s home affairs minister entered the courtroom with an order signed by junta leader Than Shwe commuting it to 18 months under house arrest. According to a source who was at the courtroom when the verdict was given this morning, the statement cited “sympathy” for Suu Kyi. “[The statement] said the chairman...has decided to grant her a pardon as she is the daughter of Burma’s independence founder General Aung San, [and] the government looks for peace and tranquillity of the nation,” he said. ([11 August 2009 DVB](#))

U.N. council delays statement on Suu Kyi sentence

Western nations pressed the U.N. Security Council to adopt a statement condemning a detention sentence passed on Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Tuesday, but other countries stalled for time. A council meeting called by France to discuss the verdict ended without result and was adjourned until Wednesday, the president of the 15-nation body, British Ambassador John Sawers, said. "There was considerable support for the principle of a statement, but a number of delegations wanted to refer it back to their capitals overnight for advice and instructions," Sawers told reporters. Diplomats said the countries concerned were China, Vietnam, Russia and Libya. China, which has a veto in the council, has consistently opposed tough action such as sanctions against its neighbor and trade partner Myanmar. ([11 August 2009 Reuters](#))

Suu Kyi to return to house arrest

A Myanmar court has found pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kui guilty of violating her house arrest, but the head of the military-ruled country says she can serve out a 1 1/2-year sentence under house arrest. The court initially sentenced Suu Kyi on Tuesday to a three-year prison term. But after a five-minute recess, the country's home minister entered the courtroom and read aloud a special order from junta chief Than Shwe. The order said Than Shwe was cutting the sentence in half to 1 1/2 years and that it could be served under house arrest. Suu Kyi has been in detention for 14 of the last 20 years, mostly under house arrest. “The whole trial was politically motivated and began as a deliberate attempt to jail her. The regime wants to attach a criminal record to Aung San Suu Kyi's life, which they think will prevent her role in politics and in public life," said Bo Kyi, Joint-Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Ko Bo Kyi also suggested the sentence could spark anti-government actions. "I expect more domestic pressure," Bo Kyi said. "People in Burma are really angry and they want to show their desire for release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Therefore, the military regime is also afraid of mass mobilizations." ([11 August 2009 AP](#) , [11 August 2009 Reuters](#), [11 August 2009 Al Jazeera](#), [11 August 2009 VOA](#))

American found guilty of entering Suu Kyi's home

A Myanmar court has sentenced American John Yettaw to seven years in prison, including four years at hard labor, for entering pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's home while she was under house arrest. The 53-year-old Yettaw was found guilty Tuesday of violating the terms of

Suu Kyi's detention by swimming to her lakeside home uninvited and staying for two days. The court sentenced Yettaw to three years in prison for breaching Suu Kyi's house arrest, three years in prison with hard labor for an immigration violation and another year in jail with hard labor for swimming in a restricted zone. ([11 August 2009 AP](#))

Journalists allowed to cover Suu Kyi verdict

Journalists in Burma have unexpectedly been allowed to enter the courtroom ahead of a scheduled verdict in pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's highly watched trial. Tuesday's decision to admit journalists to the courtroom came minutes before the hearing was due to begin. Journalists have been allowed to cover proceedings on only two prior occasions since the trial started May 18. ([11 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

10 August 2009

American in Suu Kyi trial leaves Myanmar hospital

An American on trial with Myanmar's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi was taken back to prison after a week in the hospital, making it likely the court would announce a verdict Tuesday as scheduled, the defense lawyer and a government official said. Suu Kyi's lawyer Nyan Win said Monday that he expected the rulings to be delayed again because of American John Yettaw's hospitalization. But a government official said he was discharged from Yangon General Hospital on Monday night. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. ([10 August 2009 AP](#))

Interview with Malaysian opposition leader and former political prisoner Anwar Ibrahim: extracts

Q: What do you think of the charges against Aung San Suu Kyi and what would you say if she is sentenced to jail? A: The charges are contrived and have been made simply to deny Aung San Suu Kyi the freedom that she is entitled to and that has been denied to her for so many years. It is quite clear that the democratic contagion which is sweeping across Southeast Asia has made inroads into Myanmar such that the generals are fearful of what she can achieve as a free citizen leading her people. I think her continued imprisonment would be a tragedy for Myanmar and an embarrassment to the international community's efforts to bring a measure of justice to Myanmar. Q: Why should the junta free her – of course it's a human rights issue, but what is Burma and Asia missing out on by her continued detention? A: The junta should free her because she is the leader of the democracy movement in her country. She is the legitimate choice of her people as expressed in an election that took place in 1990 whose results have been ignored by the junta. All of free Asia should join in one voice to press for Myanmar's immediate transition to democracy. Isn't 47 years of military rule long enough to be ended for a people willing and able to move out of the shadows of military dictatorship and economic stagnation? ([10 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

9 August 2009

Myanmar warns against riots

Myanmar's junta-controlled state media Sunday accused "power-craving" opportunists of using Aung San Suu Kyi's trial to incite riots as it condemned the uprising 21 years ago that made her a heroine. The Nobel Laureate is in a Yangon prison awaiting the delayed verdict in her trial on charges that she breached her house arrest when an American man swam uninvited to her lakeside home in May. On Saturday, exiled Myanmar nationals in Bangkok and elsewhere marked the 21st anniversary of their country's failed student-led uprising with pro-democracy demonstrations and renewed calls for Suu Kyi to be freed. "The people noticed that today, some political opportunists and power-craving elements are trying to incite riots under the pretext of Daw Suu Kyi's case," a commentary in The New Light of Myanmar newspaper said. It also warned that would-be agitators should abandon their plans "if they think they really love their country, and they should stand for election in the 2010 multi-party democracy election". ([9 August 2009 AFP](#))

8 August 2009

Security tight in Myanmar for protest anniversary

Pro-junta supporters and truckloads of riot police patrolling Myanmar's commercial capital on Saturday kept potential demonstrators off the streets on the 21st anniversary of pro-democracy protests that triggered one of the country's bloodiest uprisings. The anniversary comes days before a Myanmar court rules on whether democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi should be jailed for five years for violating terms of her house arrest. The Nobel laureate came to prominence during the demonstrations and remains the country's most popular politician. The verdict — scheduled for Tuesday — has already been delayed because judges said they needed more time to sort through legal issues. But Myanmar scholars say the real reason for the postponement were fears that pro-democracy groups would take to the streets on the anniversary if a guilty ruling was handed down. ([8 August 2009 AP](#))

Burma marks 21st anniversary of student uprising

Exiled Burmese nationals in Bangkok on Saturday called for democracy at home as they marked the 21st anniversary of the 1988 uprising with their leader Aung San Suu Kyi behind bars. About 50 activists outside the Burmese embassy in the Thai capital donned white T-shirts and red head scarves, shouting: "We want democracy!" with similar actions planned around the world, including Japan, Canada and France. The demonstrations mark the anniversary of the student-led uprising against Burma's military rule that began on August 8 1988, and was crushed that September by the army, killing more than 3 000 people. However, in Burma's main city of Rangoon on Saturday, the streets were quiet amid tightened security for the anniversary, with police trucks patrolling overnight as state media denounced anti-government groups. ([8 August 2009 Mail & Guardian Online](#))

US calls for Aug San Suu Kyi's unconditional release

The United States called Friday for the unconditional release of Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the country's military rulers to begin a process of national

reconciliation. "As the world honors the long struggle of the Burmese people for a better future, we renew our call on the Burmese authorities to begin a process of national reconciliation and a genuine transition to democracy," State Department deputy spokesman Rebert Wood said in a written statement made public Friday. The appeal marked the 21th anniversary of the 1988 popular democratic uprising in Myanmar that was suppressed by the military junta. ([8 August 2009 AFP](#))

‘Suu Kyi trial burdens Asean’: Dr Surin Pitsuwan

As the day the verdict is set to be handed down on Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi nears, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Secretary General Dr. Surin Pitsuwan has expressed hope the judgment would lead to “stability, reconciliation and calm.” At a press conference here as part of Asean’s 42nd anniversary celebration last Saturday, Surin virtually admitted how the issue of Suu Kyi’s trial by the military junta that runs Burma (Myanmar) has burdened Asean. ([8 August 2009 Philippine Daily Inquirer](#))

Security men guarding Suu Ky’s house punished

Action has been taken against the security personnel deployed in and around Aung San Suu Kyi’s residence, who were responsible for the intrusion of an American John Yettaw, Police Chief Police Brig. Gen. Khin Yee has said. “We investigated and questioned 61 security personnel from the police battalion deployed at Aung San Suu Kyi’s residence and then took action against some of them for dereliction of duty”. In an earlier press briefing, he had said that the authorities would investigate the security lapse at Suu Kyi’s house and would take action against security personnel if they were found guilty. “We have demoted a Police Lt. Col. and gave other personnel various prison terms ranging from three to six months,” Brig. Gen. Khin Yee said. Police chief also said that action has been taken against over 20 personnel under the Police Disciplinary Rule. ([7 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

Suu Kyi, junta part of burma's problem and solution: Goh

Singapore views Burma's military junta and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as equal parts of both that country's problems and the solution leading to its democratization, its leaders said at the weekend. "In the view of the West, Aung San Suu Kyi is seen as the solution. But in my view, she is [only a] part of the solution, she cannot be the [whole] solution. At the same time, she is also part of the problem," said Singapore's former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. He said Suu Kyi should not think that her National League for Democracy party remained the "legitimate government" that was "thrown aside" by the armed forces 19 years ago. "In Third-World countries, once there is a coup, you are out. You can't be going back. If she wants to come back to take charge of a government, then she must find a way to win the next elections, which should be held next year," Goh told visiting journalists. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said he agreed with Goh, who is now a senior minister. He said Burma had an opportunity to adjust its stance because the United States had a new government under President Barack Obama, who was ready to rethink its position, and Europe was also changing its position. ([7 August 2009 The Nation](#), [7 August 2009 DVB](#), [7 August 2009 Top News](#))

American on trial in Myanmar has more seizures

An American on trial for entering the house of Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi had three short epileptic fits Friday, police said, fueling concerns that his poor health could delay next week's verdict. John Yettaw, 53, was admitted to Yangon General Hospital on Monday after suffering a seizure in prison, Khin Yi said. Four truckloads of police were stationed around the building Friday. Each of Yettaw's seizures on Friday lasted for a few seconds, the police chief told a news conference. He did not elaborate on the American's overall condition. ([7 August 2009 AP](#))

Junta denies frame up in Yettaw case

The Burmese military junta has flatly denied that the intrusion into Aung San Suu Kyi's residence by an American Mr. John William Yettaw, was a conspiracy hatched by the government. Police Chief Police Brig. Gen. Khin Yee denied the accusation made by certain quarters at a press conference held at Burma's Narcotic Drug Museum today at 2 p.m. In fact he made a counter allegation that the opposition forces in exile were responsible for the incident. As Mr. Yettaw had many past contacts with these exile opposition forces and they must have masterminded the incident, he alleged. ([7 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

Suu Kyi meets lawyers over house dispute

Burma's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met with her lawyers yesterday to discuss the dispute over ownership of the house in which she has been imprisoned for 13 of the last 19 years. The lawyers met with Suu Kyi for two hours inside Insein prison, where she has been held during a trial in which she is accused of breaching conditions of her house arrest. A dispute has arisen after Suu Kyi's estranged cousin, Khin Maung Aye, claimed ownership of the compound nearby Rangoon's Inya lake, which was opposed through an official letter by the lawyers last month. Khin Maung Aye is a retired army officer, and there was speculation that he would sell the plot of land to government cronies. ([7 August 2009 DVB](#))

6 August 2009

Security beefed up on University Ave

The Burmese military authorities on Thursday began beefing up security around the lakeside home of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sources in Rangoon said. "This morning, security personnel surrounded Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house," said a journalist in Rangoon who spoke on condition of anonymity. University Avenue—where the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's house stands—was open to traffic on Thursday morning, the sources said, but riot police blocked the road in the afternoon. "At about 2 pm, the police stopped all motorists from driving down University Avenue. We had to divert to other roads," a taxi driver in the city said. Security forces were withdrawn from University Avenue in May after Suu Kyi was taken to Insein Prison to face trial for allegedly harboring American intruder John W Yettaw. ([6 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

US man's health in Suu Kyi case 'could delay verdict'

The ongoing seizures suffered by the US man on trial in Myanmar for trespassing at opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's home could further delay a court verdict, an official told AFP

Thursday. John Yettaw, 54, who according to his lawyer has epilepsy and other health problems, is being treated in intensive care at Yangon General Hospital after being taken from Insein prison on Monday night. "If it continues like this the trial could be delayed, but it is up to the senior authorities," the Myanmar official said on condition of anonymity. "Mr Yettaw is getting better but he is still in intensive care because sometimes he has fits." A press conference will be held on August 7th at Rangoon's Narcotics Museum, and is expected to discuss the situation surrounding John Yettaw, the US citizen whose swim to Suu Kyi's compound triggered the charges. ([6 August 2009 AFP](#), [6 August 2009 DVB](#))

3 August 2009

Suu Kyi visitor hospitalized in Myanmar

John William Yettaw, the American facing charges in Myanmar for visiting the compound of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, has been admitted to hospital after suffering convulsions. Yettaw, 53, was admitted Monday night to Yangon General Hospital, according to staff. Myanmar's ruling junta accused Yettaw of trespassing and violating immigration laws after a May 3 incident in which he allegedly swam across a lake and stayed at Suu Kyi's home for two days, violating the terms of her house arrest. The Myanmar government rarely allows Suu Kyi visitors. The charges carry up to five years in prison. A lawyer selected by the U.S. Embassy is representing him. ([4 August 2009 CNN](#), [3 August 2009 AFP](#) [4 August 2009 BBC](#))

Court verdict will test constitution, judiciary: Suu Kyi

Detained Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has said the verdict on her trial and three other defendants will test the "Rule of Law" and the judicial system of Burma, a country ruled by military dictators since 1962. The National League for Democracy, in a statement released on Monday, published comments on the trial made by party leader Aung San Suu Kyi on the last day of the hearing of final arguments on Friday. The Burmese pro-democracy leader said the verdict on her trial and her two live-in party mates and the uninvited American visitor, will test Burma's constitution and the judiciary. "Without first investigating whether the law, that allows detaining me for over five years under house arrest, is legal or illegal, I do not believe that the verdict of the current trial can be given rightly," she said. "Equally critical is the principle that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done, clearly and unequivocally," she said. ([3 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

Prayer ceremony for release of political prisoners in Burma

Arakanese living in exile in Bangladesh held a prayer ceremony in the border town of Cox's Bazaar for the immediate release of political prisoners in Burma, including democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Ko Naing Naing, one of the organisers of the programme, said the prayer was held for the immediate and unconditional release from custody of all political prisoners including Daw Suu. The prayer ceremony was held in keeping with Buddhist religious rights. The prayer ceremony was held at a monastery in the town at 2 pm. It concluded at 4 pm. ([3 August 2009 Narinjara](#))

Suu Kyi's trial gives rare glimpse into Burma's judicial system

A political trial in Burma that could prolong its pro-democracy icon's isolation by five more years has opened a rare window for the international community to judge the quality of justice in the military-ruled country. "There has never been a [more] high-profile case than this one. It has drawn so much international attention and international pressure," says Soe Aung, the spokesman for the Forum for Democracy in Burma, a network of Burmese political activists living in exile. "It is not usual for diplomats to attend such cases." "The Burmese regime is feeling the heat both inside and outside the country due to all the attention on this trial," Soe Aung added. "Prolonging the trial process by postponing the verdict till mid-August is one of the signs that they (the regime) are worried about growing international pressure." ([3 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Statements and reactions following Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's verdict

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's verdict has provoked an international outcry, with strong statements released from many governments and international leaders, including UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown who called it 'monstrous'. US President Barack Obama's statement was more measured, calling the decision 'unjust'. Other prominent figures who spoke out included fourteen Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he strongly deplored the 18-month house detention sentence passed on Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. A statement issued by his spokesperson said Ban urged Myanmar's military government "to immediately and unconditionally release" Nobel laureate Suu Kyi and to "engage with her without delay as an essential partner in the process of national dialogue and reconciliation. Unless she and all other political prisoners in Myanmar are released and allowed to participate in free and fair elections, the credibility of the political process will remain in doubt," the statement said. ([12 August 2009 Reuters](#))

Four independent United Nations human rights experts deplored the confinement of Aung San Suu Kyi to 18 months of house arrest, and reiterated their call for her immediate and unconditional release. "This was a baseless trial convened by the Government of Myanmar to exclude Aung San Suu Kyi from the 2010 elections", stated the Vice Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on arbitrary detention, Mr. El Hadji Malick Sow; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Frank La Rue Lewy; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Ms. Margaret Sekaggya; and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana. "The court was not independent, judicial guarantees were disregarded, and charges under the State Protection Act were unsubstantive. As we have stated time and again, this trial should never have occurred in the first place," the UN experts said. "This case has been riddled with irregularities from start to finish," the four experts concluded. ([11 August 2009 UNHCHR](#))

However, the UN itself failed to agree a tough response to the verdict. The UN Security Council agreed on a watered-down statement expressing "serious concern" at the extended detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar after a tougher draft met opposition from China, Libya, Russia and Vietnam. After two days of closed-door bargaining, the 15-member body could only agree on a statement expressing "serious concern at the conviction and sentencing of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and its political impact" and reiterating "the importance of the release of all political prisoners." The tougher US draft which would have condemned Suu Kyi's conviction ran into opposition from China, a key ally of Myanmar, as well as from Russia, Vietnam and Libya. The four countries invoked the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a UN member state. The text approved on Thursday affirmed the council's "commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Myanmar" and reiterated that "the future of Myanmar lies in the hands of all its people". ([12 August 2009 AFP](#) [12 August 2009 Al Jazeera](#))

Notably however, ASEAN criticised Burma's ruling junta, expressing grave concern about recent developments relating to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, especially given her fragile health. The current Thai Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan also said that the issue of Aung San Suu Kyi and of all political prisoners in Burma affects ASEAN's image and collective interests ([12 August 2009 MCOT](#)). The body has since discussed the possibility of sending a letter appealing for an amnesty for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the ruling Burmese junta, but have yet to make their position on this clear.

Individual ASEAN reactions were on the whole mixed. The Philippine government denounced the court ruling as "incomprehensible and deplorable" and renewed its call for Suu Kyi's "immediate and unconditional release." In Singapore, the Foreign Ministry commended Myanmar's generals for reducing Suu Kyi's jail sentence and choosing to put her under house arrest instead of keeping her in jail. "These are significant gestures by the Myanmar government" the Singaporean Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding it is "happy that the Myanmar government has exercised its sovereign prerogative to grant amnesty for halving her sentence and that she will be placed under house arrest rather than imprisoned." Malaysia expressed "deep disappointment" over the renewed incarceration of Suu Kyi and pressed for ASEAN member countries to discuss the court verdict. ([12 August Bernama](#)) The Indonesian government said that "the government also considered that the 18-month house arrest was odd and unfair. In fact, the former security officers who were guarding (Suu Kyi) when she was under the previous house arrest was not instead brought before the court," said spokesperson of the Indonesian foreign affairs department Teuku Faizasyah. ([12 August 2009 Viva News](#))

China however said in a statement that the world should respect Myanmar's judicial sovereignty. ([11 August 2009 Reuters](#))

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma (EPCB) called for a global arms embargo and a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity committed by the regime, in line with human rights campaigners ([11 August 2009 BCUK](#)) Notably, popular campaigns have been launched by Burma Campaign UK, US Campaign for Burma and Avaaz, demanding a global arms embargo and an investigation into the Burmese military regime for crimes against humanity. "Citizens across the globe are asking world leaders to hold this brutal regime to

account," said Ricken Patel, director of campaign network Avaaz.org which has members in every country. "Aung San Suu Kyi 's detention today on spurious charges removes any shred of legitimacy." Citing recent independent investigations, Patel added: "The evidence of killings, torture and sexual violence in Burma is overwhelming. Reports list tens of thousands of child soldiers, widespread slave labour and destruction of ethnic villages on the same scale as Darfur." ([11 August 2009 Avaaz](#)) At the governmental level, the UK followed by France called for a global arms embargo.

Other statements included those from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) ([11 August 2009 AAPP](#)) the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), the 88 Generation Students, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma ([11 August 2009 NCGUB](#)), the Swedish Presidency of the European Union ([11 August 2009 Swedish Presidency of the EU](#)), UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown ([11 August 2009 Gordon Brown](#)), Norway ([12 August 2009 Norway Post](#)), Canada ([12 August 2009 AFP](#)), Australia ([12 August 2009 AAP](#)), The Elders, ([11 August 2009 The Elders](#)), India ([12 August 2009 Reuters](#)), Amnesty International ([12 August 2009 Amnesty International](#)), U2 band, ([12 August 2009 Burma Campaign UK](#)), Japan ([11 August 2009 Japanese MOFA](#)), Human Rights Watch ([11 August 2009 HRW](#)), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Burma Lawyers Council (BLC), Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean-Burma) ([11 August 2009 FIDH, BLC, Altsean-Burma](#)), the Indian Parliamentarian Forum for Democracy (IPFDB) ([13 August 2009 IPFDB](#)).

Key International Developments

This month the US expressed its concerns over Burma's nuclear ambitions and the nature of cooperation between Burma and North Korea. The US is currently undertaking a review of its policy on Burma, and the recent visit to the country by pro-engagement Senator Jim Webb has reignited the sanctions versus engagement debate. Meanwhile, a meeting in Indonesia of the Burmese democracy movement in exile to propose a democracy transition package was restricted by authorities, after complaints by the Burmese embassy. And the UNHCR estimated that around 30,000 refugees from the Kokang area in Northern Shan State fled into China, after fighting broke out between Burmese army troops and the Kokang ceasefire group. The ceasefire had held for 20 years.

31 August 2009

UN chief defends leadership style, citing efforts in Myanmar

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon defended his leadership style and work in Myanmar, after criticism from a Norwegian diplomat. "Different circumstances may require different leadership styles and different charisma," Ban said today at a joint news conference with Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg during a visit to Oslo. Ban's performance was criticized by Norway's UN ambassador, Mona Juul, in a leaked Foreign Ministry report this month, according to the *Aftenposten* newspaper. The Norwegian diplomat cited Ban's work in Myanmar as an example of his lack of leadership skills. Ban pointed to his efforts to help

Myanmar recover from Cyclone Nargis last year, saying, “we were able together with the international community, particularly led by the Norwegian government, to save at least a half a million of population during this cyclone.” Ban persuaded the junta in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, to accept international aid last year in the wake of the cyclone, which killed about 138,000 people. “We need to work more for the democratization of Myanmar,” Ban said, calling on the country to hold “fair, credible and inclusive” elections next year. “All political prisoners, including, Aung San Suu Kyi, should be released.” ([31 August 2009 Bloomberg](#))

UN, West pressure Myanmar to change from within

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Monday that elections in Myanmar must be free and fair, amid mounting concerns that they won't be. "We need to work more for the democratization of Myanmar," Ban told a press conference in Oslo, Norway, with Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. "This election in 2010 must be a fair and credible and inclusive one." Ban said he was working hard to keep the pressure on General Than Shwe and other of Myanmar's leaders to live up to their commitments to hold legitimate elections in 2010. At a minimum, the U.N. wants Suu Kyi and 2,000 other political prisoners released. Than Shwe has resisted U.N. demands to open up democratically, ignoring four Security Council statements and direct entreaties by Ban and a top envoy. Myanmar's government has given no indication it will release her or the 200 political prisoners that Ibrahim Gambari, Ban's top envoy, told The Associated Press he expected would be freed after Ban's most recent trip. "It's the Burmese leadership that have to take the decision to move forward, rather than to keep their country held back in a state of lack of freedom, military regime and an environment in which there's going to be very little international investment," British Ambassador John Sawers said in an AP interview. ([31 August 2009 AP](#))

US urges an end to the violence in Eastern Burma

“The United States is deeply concerned over the attacks by the Burma Army in eastern Burma against several ethnic nationality groups, and we continue to monitor developments carefully. The brutal fighting has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes for safety in Thailand and China, and reduced both stability and the prospects for national reconciliation. We urge the Burmese authorities to cease their military campaign and to develop a genuine dialogue with the ethnic minority groups, as well as with Burma’s democratic opposition.” Ian Kelly, US Department of State spokesman. ([31 August 2009 US Department of State](#))

28 August 2009

30,000 flee as China rebukes Burma

Around 30,000 refugees have crossed into China according to UN estimates as fighting between Burmese troops and ceasefire groups sparked a rare admonishment from China’s foreign ministry. A spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said today that between 10,000 and 30,000 civilians have fled Burma’s northern Shan state into China in recent days. Fighting broke out between Burmese army troops and the Kokang ceasefire group yesterday after weeks of heightening tension. Kokang troops yesterday attacked a police outpost near to Laogai town close to the China-Burma border, killing one Burmese police officer and injuring two. The Kokang group has been joined by the United Wa State

Army, Burma's largest ceasefire group who had held a 20-year truce with the government. Today China's foreign ministry issued a statement urging Burma to "properly deal with its domestic issue to safeguard the regional stability in the China-Myanmar [Burma] border area". "We also urge Myanmar to protect the safety and legal rights of Chinese citizens in Myanmar," said spokesperson Jiang Yu in the statement. China is a key ally of Burma's ruling junta, and seldom criticizes the internal affairs of its southern neighbour. ([28 August 2009 DVB](#))

Burma review to be completed soon: US

The Obama Administration indicated that its policy review on Burma could be completed in the next few weeks. The acceleration of the Burma review process, which was started by the Obama Administration in February this year, follows recent developments including the visit to Burma of Sen James Webb and the extension of house arrest for the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. "I would expect that in light of recent developments, we would advance that review and reach some judgments in the next few weeks," said Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P J Crowley at the daily State Department news conference. Last week, Crowley had said that extension of house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi would have a negative impact on the review process. ([28 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

27 August 2009

Burmese exile government urges Washington to stay firm on sanctions

A spokesman for the Burmese government in exile has urged Washington not to hastily ease sanctions against Burma's military government. The exile government and rights groups support U.S. engagement with Burma, but they also want pressure for change. A spokesman for the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, Zin Linn, says U.S. sanctions should stay in place until opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is released and Burma's rulers agree to talks with the opposition. "All the sanctions made by the U.S. and EU will hurt directly to the military junta, the generals, and only their cronies," he said. "Not hurt to the ordinary peoples, because all the economic business, all the big industries are in the hands of the generals and their relatives. No other, ordinary people have a chance, or they have no rights to participate in the economic sectors." Zin Linn was responding to U.S. Senator Jim Webb's call for reducing sanctions and further engaging Burma's rulers. ([27 August 2009 VOA](#))

26 August 2009

US senator lashes Myanmar sanctions

US Senator Jim Webb, back from a rare trip to Myanmar, called sanctions against the military regime "overwhelmingly counterproductive" and asked the opposition to consider taking part in upcoming elections. Webb, whose against-the-grain views on Myanmar have infuriated some activists, voiced concern that Western isolation of Myanmar pushed it into the arms of China, "furthering a dangerous strategic imbalance in the region." The United States and European Union have imposed sanctions on Myanmar, earlier known as Burma, due to its refusal to recognize the last elections in 1990 and prolonged detention of the victor, democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. Webb said he opposed lifting sanctions due to US economic interests or "if such a decision were seen as a capitulation of our long-held position that Myanmar should abandon its

repressive military system in favor of democratic rule. "But it would be just as bad for us to fold our arms, turn our heads and pretend that by failing to do anything about the situation in Myanmar we are somehow helping to solve it," he said. ([26 August 2009 AFP](#))

24 August 2009

Cementing Japanese-Burmese relationship

The Burmese Agriculture and Irrigation Minister Maj-Gen Htay Oo's visit to Japan is yet another sign of the cosy relationship that Japan maintains with Burmese military generals, observers said. Htay Oo, who is also secretary of the pro-junta civilian organization – the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) – is leading a team of delegates to Japan reportedly to explore possible cooperation with Burma on agriculture and irrigation sectors. "But that is just a pretext. It's an all-expenses-paid trip. I think the visit is the Japanese government's way of telling the junta that Japan very much supports the regime and its "roadmap to democracy" including the 2010 elections," Yuki Akimoto, a Japanese researcher on Burma, said. Akimoto also said, the visit could be the Japanese government's act to "soften the blow" of its statement that expressed "deep disappointment" over the verdict against Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi by the ruling junta. ([24 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

21 August 2009

USDA Leader in Japan

A key leader of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), the junta-backed mass organization, Maj-Gen Htay Oo, who is also the minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, is on an official visit to Japan, the first Burmese senior official to visit the East Asia nation in four years. Akamatsu Takeshi, a press secretary of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told *The Irrawaddy* that Htay Oo arrived on Thursday at the invitation of the Japanese government. "We are talking about possible cooperation with Burma's agriculture and irrigation sector—that is the main reason for his visit," the Japanese press official said. ([21 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

20 August 2009

Myanmar vote 'opportunity for change': think tank

Myanmar's elections next year are set to alter the political landscape despite not being free and fair, with a chance that leaders of the ruling junta could step aside, a think tank said Friday. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group said in a report that the polls will give local and international stakeholders an opportunity to push for change, despite a constitution that entrenches the military's political role. while the elections will not be free and fair... the constitution and elections together will fundamentally change the political landscape in a way the government may not be able to control," the report said. The influential think tank said junta leader Than Shwe, 76, and his ageing deputy Maung Aye "may soon step down or move to ceremonial roles, making way for a younger military generation" after the polls. "All stakeholders should be alert to opportunities that may arise to push the new government toward reform and reconciliation," the group said. The report said the international community, including Myanmar's Southeast Asian neighbours, must continue to press the regime to make

the vote as fair as possible "while looking for opportunities that the elections may bring." ([21 August 2009 AFP](#))

Myanmar junta urges West to lift sanctions

Army-ruled Myanmar urged Western countries on Thursday to lift economic sanctions and allow the country to modernize and achieve its democratic goals. A commentary in three official newspapers, which serve as mouthpieces for the reclusive junta, praised "visionary" United States officials who were critical of sanctions, which it said would not bring the downfall of the government. "The more anti-government groups exercise economic sanctions as a means to put pressure on the government, the further the goal of democracy aspired by the people will divert from its route," the newspapers said. It urged "all political forces to give up the tactic of economic sanctions and collectively open the golden door to a modern, developed and peaceful democratic nation." The comments came days after a visit by Jim Webb, a U.S. senator who favors engagement with the generals. ([20 August 2009 Reuters](#))

19 August 2009

Pro-democracy camp to U.S. Senator: what success?

A rare visit by a United States senator to Burma—billed as "successful" in some quarters—is winning little applause from sectors critical of the military regime that rules the country. Critics, however, warned that the two-day visit by Senator Jim Webb, which began on August 14, could be used by the country's strongman, Snr-Gen Than Shwe, to bolster his image and win more concessions without conceding any ground to improve human rights and to let a democratic culture flourish in Burma, officially the Union of Myanmar. Webb, after all, has been a strong proponent of engaging with the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), as the military junta is formally known. "The release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is most important. We need to judge if Senator Webb's trip was a success or failure based on that," said Bo Kyi, head of the Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPP), a group of former political prisoners campaigning for the rights of the country's jailed activists. "Yettaw's release is not that important." Yettaw's freedom, in fact, is not a surprise, added Bo Kyi during a telephone interview from Mae Sot, a town along the Thai-Burma border. "The military regime had no use of him anymore. They needed him earlier to find a way of keeping Daw Suu under house arrest," he revealed. ([19 August 2009 IPS](#))

18 August 2009

Myanmar junta's media hail US senator's visit

Myanmar's government-controlled newspapers on Tuesday hailed the visit of U.S. Sen. Jim Webb, who secured the high-profile release of a jailed American, as "the first step" toward improving relations with Washington. The full-page commentary titled, "The first step of a long journey," was published in all three state-run newspapers that serve as mouthpieces for the junta. The tone was highly uncharacteristic for Myanmar media, which typically blast the U.S. as a "neocolonialist," a "loudmouthed bully," and the "superpower nation" that has imposed harsh economic and political sanctions against the country. "The visit of Mr. Jim Webb is a success for both sides as well as the first step to promotion of the relations between the two countries," said

the article published in the Myanmar Ahlin and Kyemon newspapers and the English-language New Light of Myanmar. "It is indeed the first step toward marching to a 1,000-mile destination," said the commentary, which said the junta "enthusiastically cooperated with (Webb) because of its stance to deepen the bilateral relations and relieve the disagreements between the countries." ([18 August 2009 AP](#), [18 August 2009 Reuters](#))

14 August 2009

Thai PM rejects sanctions on Burmese gems

Thailand is continuing to oppose sanctions against Burma's gems to put more pressure on the military regime after the sentence imposed on opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi this week. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said yesterday Thailand had no problem with other countries beefing up arms sanctions against Burma but banning gems would affect the Kingdom. Thailand and China are the two main importers of gems from Burma. The US has banned imports of rubies, jade and other stones direct from Burma and through third countries. ([14 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

EU sanctions target Burmese state-run media

The European Union has added four state-run media outlets to its list of Burmese sanctions targets in response to the court ruling against pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Four media enterprises—the Myanmar News and Periodicals Enterprise, which publishes three state-run newspapers; the Tatmadaw Telecasting Unit, which runs Myawaddy Television; Myanmar Radio and Television; and the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise—were added to the revised sanctions list published on Friday. The EU stated that it put the media organizations on the list because they have been involved in promoting the regime's policies and propaganda. Journalists in Rangoon noted that the listed enterprises were not the only ones used by the regime to promote its policies. Private journals and magazines owned by the junta's associates also play a similar role, they said. Also added to the sanctions list were judges and government prosecutors from the Northern District Court, which sentenced Suu Kyi on August 11. The EU sanctions on Burma includes visa bans, an arms embargo, limiting diplomatic contacts, freezing officials' offshore accounts, and suspending non-humanitarian aid or development programs. First introduced in 1996, such sanctions are set to expire on April 30, 2010, if they are not renewed. ([14 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

13 August 2009

Council of the European Union adopts additional restrictive measures against Burma

Under the new restrictive measures, members of the judiciary responsible for the verdict are added to the existing list of persons and entities subject to a travel ban and to an assets freeze. Moreover, the list of persons and entities subject to the restrictive measures is extended to cover the assets freeze to enterprises that are owned and controlled by members of the regime in Burma/Myanmar or by persons or entities associated with them. The present EU measures are the latest of a series of measure which the EU initially adopted in 1996 (Common Position 96/635/CFSP) such as banning arms exports, visa restrictions on members of the regime, their

allies and families, limiting diplomatic contacts and freezing officials' offshore accounts, and suspending non-humanitarian aid or development programmes. ([13 August 2009 Council of the European Union](#))

India, Southeast Asian nations sign free trade agreement

India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have signed a free trade agreement after more than six years of negotiations. Indian Commerce Minister Anand Sharma and his counterparts from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations sealed the agreement in Bangkok Thursday. They met on the sidelines of the annual ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting. The agreement creates one of Asia's biggest trading areas and integrates India's fast growing economy with 10 of its neighbours. Trade between India and ASEAN amounts to \$40 billion each year. Under the pact, India and ASEAN will eliminate tariffs on various goods by 2016. ([13 August 2009 VOA](#))

We believe in engaging Myanmar Govt: India

India on Thursday justified its policy of engaging with the military government of Myanmar and made it clear that it will not indulge in any "prescriptive" approach towards it. "We believe in engaging with them... It is important to remain engaged," Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma said. On criticism by the West, Sharma said: "It is easy to look at a picture from a distance" but made it clear that India's policy on democracy cannot be questioned. "India's stand on democracy is well known. We stand for democracy and democratic reforms," said Sharma, who was Minister of State for External Affairs in the previous UPA government. India, while advocating the need for democracy in Myanmar, believes that deriding of the military government will not help achieve the aim but rather complicate matters. ([13 August 2009 Hindu](#))

500 Shan houses burned in scorched earth campaign

The Burmese junta's latest scorched earth campaign in Shan state has in the last three weeks destroyed 500 homes and uprooted around 10,000 civilians, according to a data released today. Burma's eastern Shan state has long been a site of conflict between the Burmese army and armed opposition groups, driven in part by its abundance of opium poppy plantations. Data compiled by Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF), the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and other Shan community-based organizations show that since 27 July, around 40 villages have been relocated by the army. According to the groups, it is the single largest forced relocation in Shan state since a campaign from 1996 to 1998 saw the uprooting of 300,000 villagers, many of whom fled to Thailand. ([13 August 2009 DVB](#))

12 August 2009

Indonesia restricts meeting of Myanmar exiles

Indonesia said Wednesday it had shut down a meeting of exiled Myanmar opposition groups in a move that the activists blamed on pressure from the military junta in Yangon. Myanmar's self-proclaimed government-in-exile and six pro-democracy alliances were due to hold two days of talks in Jakarta to spearhead a democracy transition plan for the military-ruled country. Organisers said their meeting had been curtailed due to "restrictions by police" and intervention

from Yangon. "Regional politics or ASEAN internal politics (are) as usual taking place... We are very disappointed," Bo Hla Tint, foreign affairs minister for the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, told AFP in an email. Foreign ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah confirmed that Jakarta had disallowed the meeting despite being aware of "international disappointment" over the situation in Myanmar. ([12 August 2009 AIPMC](#))

Nobel laureates call for action on Burma: A UN Security Council Commission of Inquiry

The UN Security Council must take strong action on Burma and issue an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Burmese military regime. This was the message sent by 14 Nobel Laureates—including The Dalai Lama, Shirin Ebadi, Jody Williams, Mairead Maguire, Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Kim Dae-jung and Archbishop Desmond Tutu in an open letter to the Security Council. The letter was released today in response to the guilty verdict of Burma's democratically elected leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. Over 2100 democracy activists are presently in Burmese prisons. In the meantime, the Burmese military continues its attacks on the people of Burma. In June, the Burmese military dropped mortar shells onto an internally displaced persons camp, causing over 5,000 villagers to flee for their lives. Experts have documented hundreds of cases of crimes against humanity in Burma over the last 15 years, including the rape of hundreds of women. The Laureates' open letter states that the crimes against the Burmese people and the full extent of the brutality of the regime must be investigated and must not be tolerated any longer. It calls on the UN Security Council to pass a resolution creating a Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma, and to end the impunity of the Burmese military. ([12 August 2009 Nobel Women's Initiative](#))

All Burma Monks' Alliance, the 88 Generation Students, All Burma Federation of Student Unions open letter to US Senator Jim Webb: extracts

We, three major dissident groups in Burma, the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA), the 88 Generation Students (88GS), and the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), write this letter to you to express our concerns over your visit to our country and on your position towards situation in Burma. We are concerned that the military regime will manipulate and exploit your visit and propagandize that you endorse their treatment on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and over 2,100 political prisoners, their human rights abuses on the people of Burma, and their systematic, widespread and ongoing attack against the ethnic minorities. We are surprised to learn that you have an intention to support the regime's 2010 election; even if its constitution is imperfect. We appreciate the long standing support of the United State Senate for our non-violent struggle for democracy in Burma and we expect, as a U.S. Senator, you will urge the Burmese military regime to accept these demands and solve the problems in Burma peacefully through political dialogue. (12 August 2009 ABMA, 88 Generations Students, ABFSU)

8 August 2009

Myanmar marks 21 years since student uprising

Exiled Myanmar nationals in Bangkok on Saturday called for democracy at home as they marked the 21st anniversary of the 1988 uprising with their leader Aung San Suu Kyi behind

bars. Some 50 activists outside the Myanmar embassy in the Thai capital donned white T-shirts and red head scarves, shouting: "We want democracy!", with similar actions planned around the world, including Japan, Canada and France. The demonstrations mark the anniversary of the student-led uprising against Myanmar's military rulers that began on August 8, 1988, and was crushed a month later by the army, killing more than 3,000 people. ([8 August 2009 AFP](#))

Ivan Lewis, UK's deputy minister at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, pays tribute to Burma's political prisoners: extracts

"Suu Kyi's plight also highlights the appalling state of the 2,100 or more political prisoners in Burma. It is important that we know their stories, which are heart-rending. They are people with families from whom they have been separated. On the anniversary of 8888, I want to pay tribute to all of Burma's political prisoners. Their courage and resilience in the face of the abuse of their fundamental human rights are humbling. I also want to repeat the international community's call for the Burmese regime to release unconditionally all political prisoners and commit to a genuine and inclusive process of dialogue and national reconciliation. Until they do so, future elections, such as those they are planning for 2010, will have absolutely no legitimacy". ([8 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#), [8 August 2009 Jakarta Post](#))

Burmese opposition told to join next year's election

Thai academics suggested yesterday that instead of a boycott, Burma's opposition groups should participate in the general election organised by the Burmese military junta next year to move the country out of political stalemate. "The role of the opposition and civil society in Burma must be clear. If they insist on boycotting the junta government, that means they will have to stay on the [political] fringe as they have been for 20 years," said Puangthong Pawakapan of Chulalongkorn University's faculty of political science yesterday at a panel discussion on "2010 Election: The prospect of Change inside Burma". She urged the international community too not to let the junta run the election alone whether the junta-drafted new constitution was democratic or not. ([8 August 2009 The Nation](#))

7 August 2009

Myanmar opposition unites at UN

Exiled opposition leaders from Myanmar came together at the U.N. on Friday to present a plan for a democratic future in their homeland and ask the U.N. to transmit it to the country's military rulers. The opposition leaders called for the release of Nobel Prize-winning pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, a dialogue with the regime, credible elections in 2010 and a review of the constitution adopted last year. The alliance of political parties and ethnic groups asked the U.N. Security Council and Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to send its reconciliation plan to the military regime in Myanmar, which was previously called Burma. ([7 August 2009 AP](#))

Burma should seize chance to thaw ties with West: Lee

Myanmar should seize the opportunity presented by a possible shift in the position of Western governments, including the United States, in engaging with that country by making a "gesture" that would convey its willingness to improve relations. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien

Loong said in an interview with Asean journalists on Friday that leaders of ASEAN feel that Myanmar, more than ever before, has a chance to mend ties with the West. "Myanmar actually has an opportunity now because the Americans have a new government since Mr. Obama with Hillary Clinton, and they are rethinking their position on Myanmar. The Europeans are also reconsidering their positions on Myanmar [are] and not so stridently insistent on do this or that, as which they used to do," Mr. Lee said. Mr. Lee said this presents "an opportunity for Myanmar to make some gesture, to shift the position so you're not completely just stuck where you are." ([7 August 2009 Top News](#))

6 August 2009

UN to press Burma on child soldiers

The United Nations will send a team to Burma to push the military regime and ethnic rebels to cease in the use of children in their armed forces. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in a press conference on Tuesday in New York said the UN will send a team to assess details of the activities of the country taskforce and Burmese regime to end the use of children in the Burmese Army and ethnic rebel groups. Burma and the ILO in 2007 agreed to set up a complaint mechanism on the use of child soldiers. Marshall said over the past two years the ILO has received approximately 60 complaints from concerned relatives of underage children, among whom only a few have been reunited with their families. ([6 August 2009 Mizzima](#))

US Senator Webb to make rare Myanmar visit

Democratic US Senator Jim Webb will travel to Myanmar over the next two weeks, becoming the first US lawmaker to visit the country in more than 10 years, his office announced on Thursday. Webb -- a Vietnam war veteran who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific affairs -- leaves Sunday and will also visit Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia over a two-week span. The Virginia lawmaker, whose precise itinerary was not disclosed, aims "to explore opportunities to advance US interests in Burma and the region," his office said in a statement. The United States refers to Myanmar as Burma. At his stops outside Myanmar, Webb will meet with "government representatives and industry leaders," his office said in a statement. ([6 August 2009 AFP](#))

UN chief repeats call to release all political prisoners

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday said he hoped that the Burmese military junta would listen to the international community at this moment and release all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, the popular pro-democracy leader. The secretary-general made his remark at UN headquarters in New York following a meeting of the "Group of Friends" on Burma. Ban said he had the support of all key international players on his approach to Burma. "I expect that the authorities of Myanmar [Burma] will respond positively and in a timely manner to the expectations and concerns and repeated calls of the international community to release all political prisoners and particularly Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," Ban told reporters. ([6 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

UN to hold high-level meeting on Myanmar

The United Nations will hold a high-level meeting on the sidelines of next month's General Assembly to discuss the political crisis in Burma, UN chief Ban Ki-moon said speaking at a Group of Friends on Myanmar meeting. "The international community has high expectations that the government of Myanmar will act in Myanmar's interest by taking timely and positive steps in follow up, after the specific proposals which I made to the senior levels during my visit," Ban told reporters. Ban said the second high-level meeting would take place at the margins of the UN General Assembly in September, as a follow up the first meeting last year, also stressing that the international community remains committed to pressuring for the release of political prisoners in Burma. ([6 August 2009 Xinhua](#), [6 August 2009 DVB](#))

4 August 2009

US voices concern over Burma, N Korea nuclear nexus

The United States expressed concern on Monday over news reports that North Korea may be helping the Burmese military regime to achieve its nuclear ambitions. "It is an issue of concern and it is an issue that we continue to focus on intensively," the assistant secretary of state for public affairs, Philip J Crowley, told reporters at the State Department headquarters. Although he refrained from making any comment on the alleged underground nuclear facility being developed by North Korea inside Burma, Crowley said the US was concerned about "the nature of cooperation between North Korea and Burma." ([4 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

3 August 2009

Defectors outline Burma's nuclear ambitions

Burma and North Korea may be collaborating on the development of a nuclear reactor in northern Burma, according to experts who carried out extensive interviews with two Burmese defectors. One of the two defectors, who are both now based in Thailand, is a former army officer, while the other was an executive at Htoo Trading, a company with close ties to the military junta. During interviews carried out over the course of two years with Phil Thornton, a Thailand-based journalist, and Desmond Ball of the Australian National University, the two men detailed North Korea's assistance in helping Burma acquire a nuclear weapon. The report, published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 1 August, said that the junta was building a nuclear reactor and plutonium extraction plant in northern Burma, much of it hidden in a network of tunnels dug into a mountain at Nuang Laing. ([3 August 2009 DVB](#))

Opinion Section

Opinion editorials on the topic of Burma's political prisoners have this month reflected on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership whilst under house arrest; how best to secure the release of all Burma's political prisoners; as well as the sanctions versus engagement debate following Senator Jim Webb's visit to the country as the US considers a new policy on Burma.

26 August 2009

Webb's misguided views [extracts]

By Pyinya Zawta, one of the founding members of the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA) which lead the 2007 Saffron Revolution. He is now in exile in New York after fleeing the country due to the threat of arrest.

US Sen Jim Webb recently traveled to Burma to lean not on Burma's military regime, but to pressure my country's democracy movement into giving up economic sanctions—the most important tool in our struggle for freedom. Although he emphasized the necessity of the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, this falls far short of the demands of the US, the United Nations and the European Union for the immediate and unconditional release of all my country's 2,100 political prisoners. Webb's ignorance of the situation in my country was revealed his book "*A Time to Fight*" in which he came down squarely on the side of the oppressors in Burma. He wrote about the demonstrations which took place in Burma in 2007, led by Buddhist monks such as myself. "If Westerners had remained in the country this moment might never have occurred, because it is entirely possible that conditions may have improved rather than deteriorated." Webb's statement is either shockingly naïve or willfully misleading. We Buddhist monks, who Webb discounts as a "throng," marched for an end to military dictatorship in Burma not because we wanted marginal improvements in our economy. We marched because we believe in freedom and democracy and are willing to make sacrifices to reach those goals. While Webb may seek to sell out Aung San Suu Kyi, our courageous Buddhist monks, and all the people of Burma, we hold out hope that Secretary Clinton and President Obama will take a more nuanced view in formulating policy toward Burma. ([26 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

25 August 2009

We can't afford to ignore Myanmar [extracts]

By Jim Webb, a Democratic senator from Virginia.

This month I became the first American political leader to visit Myanmar in 10 years, and the first-ever to meet with its reclusive leader, Senior Gen. Than Shwe, in the haunting, empty new capital of Naypyidaw. From there I flew to an even more patched-and-peeled Yangon, where I met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the opposition leader and Nobel laureate who remains confined to her home. Among other requests, I asked Than Shwe to free her and allow her to participate in politics. For more than 10 years, the United States and the European Union have employed a policy of ever-tightening economic sanctions against Myanmar, in part fueled by the military government's failure to recognize the results of a 1990 election won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party. While the political motivations behind this approach are laudable, the result has been overwhelmingly counterproductive. The ruling regime has become more entrenched and at the same time more isolated. The Burmese people have lost access to the outside world. Sanctions by Western governments have not been matched by other countries, particularly Russia and China. Indeed, they have allowed China to dramatically increase its economic and political influence in Myanmar, furthering a dangerous strategic imbalance in the region. with respect to reducing sanctions, we should proceed carefully but immediately. If there is

reciprocation from the government of Myanmar in terms of removing the obstacles that now confront us, there would be several ways for our two governments to move forward. We could begin with humanitarian projects. We might also seek cooperation on our long-held desire to recover the remains of World War II airmen at crash sites in the country's north. Our ultimate goal, as it always has been, should be to encourage Myanmar to become a responsible member of the world community, and to end the isolation of its people so that they can live in economic prosperity, under an open political system. ([25 August 2009 New York Times](#))

21 August 2009

The virtues of careful engagement [extracts]

By Zarni, a research fellow on Burma at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics and founder of the Free Burma Coalition.

As a dissident who openly turned his back on sanctions and, since 2003, has attempted engagement with the junta, albeit with little or no success, I welcome US Sen. Jim Webb's highly publicized visit to my native country. In spite of my own failures in practicing "diplomacy without license," I can see virtues in a carefully developed engagement approach which compliments and strengthens—as opposed to undermines and contradicts—Aung San Suu Kyi-led opposition and ethnic minority resistance. Some of my fellow “engagers” are getting ahead of themselves. They sound increasingly preachy in their analyses and shrill with their pushes for engagement. While pro-sanctions dissidents and political NGOs obstinately refuse to acknowledge that China, India, Thailand and Russia, with their vested Burma interests, will not heed their pro-democracy calls, the engagers fail to recognize that the military regime has absolutely no desire to reconcile in any meaningful way with political opposition parties, dissidents or groups. The current top-down elitist approach towards engagement is narrow in scope, ill-conceived and woefully uninformed about how repressive regimes, left or right, civilian or military, foreign or native, change their policies and behavior. It has no greater potential to either improve our people's lives or liberalize the country's domestic politics than does the orthodoxy of unilateral sanctions. ([21 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

13 August 2009

Pressuring the Burmese Junta

by Jared Genser, president of Freedom Now and serves as international counsel to Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi

Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi herself has repeatedly urged that the international focus not be on her alone. The junta has released her on two previous occasions to relieve intense international pressure, and then used the reduced international focus to clamp down further on its people. The reality is that her freedom will not necessarily yield any real progress in achieving a comprehensive solution to Myanmar's turmoil. Since Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi was first detained before the 1990 elections, more than 3,000 villages have been destroyed under the military's campaign of killing, torture and rape against ethnic minorities, as reported by Human Rights

Watch. Even if Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi had been released, nothing would have changed. Some 2,100 political prisoners would remain imprisoned. The junta would continue to move toward 2010 elections based on an illegitimate constitution that is designed to make its rule permanent. First, the Security Council should adopt a global arms embargo on the Burmese junta. Second, Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. secretary general, should press the junta to respond to his requests for reform, which he presented on a recent visit to the country. Third, the United States, the European Union and allies such as Australia and Canada should urge China, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to make clear to the junta that repeated flouting of U.N. demands make defending the regime increasingly difficult. ([13 August 2009 NY Times](#))

Seven Steps to Freedom

By Ko Bo Kyi, co-founder of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) and a recipient of the 2008 Human Rights Defender Award from Human Rights Watch

Burma's political prisoners have long been pawns in an elaborate chess game of "saving face" with the international community. In July, the Burmese permanent representative to the U.N., U Than Swe, indicated a planned gesture of mercy. U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described this development as "encouraging," but in reality it was simply another hollow promise by the regime. Since November 2004, there have been five separate amnesties for prisoners in Burma. According to the SPDC's own publicly released figures, a total of 38,681 prisoners have been released. Yet just over 1% of them were political prisoners. The international community should demand the practical implementation of a concrete timeframe for the rapid release of all of Burma's political prisoners as a first step in a long process to prove that the 2010 elections will be fair and inclusive. This can be considered an alternative to the regime's seven-step plan. Step one would be for the regime to publicly acknowledge the very existence of political prisoners. Step two would be to immediately release the 137 estimated political prisoners in bad health. Step three would be to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to resume its impartial mandate to inspect prisons. Step four would be to cease the practice of prison transfers to remote jails, and return all political prisoners to facilities in their home towns, to allow family members to visit easily. Step five would be to unconditionally release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Step six would be for the regime to publicly declare a concrete timeframe for the release of all political prisoners before the end of 2009. And step seven would be to allow all political prisoners and former political prisoners to freely participate in the country's democratization process, without restrictions. This should include participation in a review of the 2008 constitution; dialogue for national reconciliation; and the right to stand in independently-monitored free and fair elections. ([13 August 2009 FEER](#))

1 August 2009

Lay off the Lady

Editorial, The Irrawaddy

Recently, the argument that Aung San Suu Kyi, the woman seen by many as the guiding light of Burma's quest for democracy, is actually the country's greatest impediment to progress has

made its way back into print. This notion, which is propagated by a faction of self-styled Burma experts known as the “third force,” has repeatedly reared its head over the years. The latest instance of this malicious meme appeared in the July 23 edition of *The Economist*, in an item titled “*The Lady should be for turning.*” The writer poses the question of whether Suu Kyi is an “icon or obstacle.” Suu Kyi’s position on sanctions is obliquely attacked as the cause of Burma’s economic misery, and by extension, its failure to achieve any meaningful progress towards democracy. Suu Kyi does not dictate the Burma policy of Western countries. It is a distortion of the facts to suggest that sanctions are the cause of Burma’s endemic poverty. A total absence of accountable governance—not a lack of international aid or investment—is the real reason this resource-rich nation can barely support its own population. It is true that official aid to Burma falls far short of what the country needs. Again, this is because most international donors don’t trust the regime to use aid appropriately or cooperate fully with the agencies that dispense it, not because they feel obliged to support the country’s pro-democracy leader. Suu Kyi is not above criticism, but blaming her for Burma’s woes, even indirectly, is completely out of line. ([1 August 2009 Irrawaddy](#))