



# Chin National Community - Japan

在日チン族協会

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Violations against the dignity, livelihood and fundamental rights of the people of Burma perpetrated by military dictatorship



This CD is dedicated to the people of Burma who have sacrificed their homes, freedom, and lives to lifting the veil of terror that shrouds the truth in Burma today.

HRDU would like to express our deepest gratitude to the all of the organizations and individuals who contributed their time and hard work to assist with the production of the 2005 Burma Human Rights Yearbook.

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# Historical Background

## Constitutional Period (1947-62)

On 4 January 1948, Burma gained its independence from the British who, in the nineteenth century, fought three wars against the Burman Empire and finally conquered it in 1886. On the eve of the Second World War, the Japanese secretly promised to help Burma recover its freedom by training 30 youth led by Gen. Aung San who then formed the nucleus of a national army. During the war, the Japanese drove the British out of Burma and governed the country directly under military rule until 1 August 1943, when it was granted independence under its protection.

On 27 March 1945, the armed forces of Burma revolted against the Japanese and joined the Allies. Also during the war period, the leaders of the new army, together with an underground civilian group, formed a broad anti-Japanese coalition, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). The AFPFL and the army were led by Gen. Aung San. On 19 July 1947, Gen. Aung San and some of his colleagues were assassinated while the constituent assembly that was writing a new constitution was in recess. U Nu, a civilian and close colleague of Aung San, was able to lead Burma to gain its independence on 4 January 1948. A parliamentary federal union system was introduced as the basis of the system of governance.

Independence did not bring peace and progress to Burma. Within three months of independence, the members of the Communist party in Burma revolted, resulting in the defection of two army battalions. In January 1949, following growing hostility between the ethnic Karen and Burman, the Karen also revolted. Several other political and ethnic groups also took up arms against the State. The multiple insurgencies nearly caused the Union of Burma to completely collapse. Prime Minister U Nu managed to keep his government in power and he gradually recovered control of the people and territories, though the country remained unstable.

During this tumultuous period, democracy took root and began to grow. However in 1958 unity among the leaders of the ruling AFPFL dissolved. Prime Minister U Nu proposed that the parliament decide which group should govern the country. U Nu won by such a narrow margin that within a few months he resigned and recommended that Gen. Ne Win, the head of the army, replace him and conduct new elections.

Gen. Ne Win's provisional government, comprising senior military officers, was short-lived, lasting only 16 months. When the promised elections were held, a U Nu-led faction won. After he resumed leadership U Nu called a meeting for February 1962 where he planned to discuss with all ethnic leaders a way to find a solution to their grievances through peaceful and open discussions. However, before U Nu could instate his recommendations for peace, Gen. Ne Win led a military coup to seize power on 2 March 1962. Gen. Ne Win established a Revolutionary Council comprised of 17 senior officers, effectively ending the constitutional period.

## Military Rule (1962-88)

The Revolutionary Council established a military dictatorship replacing the parliamentary federal system enshrined in the constitution. In July 1962, the Revolutionary Council created its own party, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), after having failed to win the backing of the established political parties. The Revolutionary Council published its first ideological statement entitled, "The Burmese Way to Socialism" at the end of April 1962. A year later it moved to a policy of rapid nationalization and assumed direct control of the economy. In 1971, the BSPP transformed itself

into the governing structure though it retained the same military rulers, many of whom had retired from the armed forces. In 1974, a new constitution was adopted with additional centralized powers, serving to further entrench BSPP's position as the only legal political party in the country.

The second constitution of independent Burma differed markedly from its predecessor. The *Pyithu Hluttaw* or People's Assembly, a single chamber legislature, became the highest governing structure in the country and U Ne Win, who was the head of the BSPP, took over the Presidency. Under the one-party regime, freedom for the people of Burma was largely repressed. Furthermore, civil strife continued with the military instigating campaigns against the forces of the ethnic nationalities and the Burma Communist Party (BCP). During this period, the ruling regime faced popular unrest. Workers staged violent strikes in 1974 and 1975. Students also demonstrated throughout this period. A particularly serious student protest erupted in 1974 after a struggle between the students and the regime over the proper burial of the remains of U Thant, the third Sec. Gen. of the UN. In 1981 Ne Win abdicated the presidency but continued to head the BSPP. Political mismanagement and instability also severely affected the economy. For example, in 1987, following intense criticism from Ne Win, the regime demonetized three banknotes without warning or reimbursement. As a result, nearly 70 percent of the currency in circulation became worthless.

Tension within the country escalated to a breaking point in 1988. In March 1988, a teashop brawl led to the death of a student from the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT) after the intervention of riot police. Daily protests by RIT students ensued and spread to other universities. After twelve days of violent clashes with police, the regime closed the universities. The riots left several students dead and missing. When the universities reopened in June, the students resumed protests, calling for accountability into the student deaths and injuries. The military, however, responded with force, killing at least 20 more students and arresting hundreds of others. And once again the universities closed.

The wave of social unrest spread as the people of Burma became unified in their demand for political change. In response, the military declared a state of martial law. On 23 July 1988, the BSPP appointed Gen. Sein Lwin as the new party head and later president. To demonstrate opposition to continued military rule in the country, students and activists organized a peaceful, nationwide strike on 8 August 1988. The now notorious 8888 uprising led to the death and arrest of thousands of protestors and demonstrators at the hands of the regime.

Following the protest, on 12 August 1988 Gen. Sein Lwin was replaced by a civilian lawyer named Dr. Maung Maung. The period of civilian rule was not only superficial but short-lived. On 18 September 1988, the military regained power through a bloody coup. During the month of civilian leadership, agents of the military spread rumors that criminals had been released into the general population, the water supply was poisoned and that other heinous acts had been committed in order to stimulate an environment of fear and chaos. The revived military dictatorship forcibly took control under the name "State Law and Order Restoration Council" (SLORC). Opting for martial law, SLORC suspended the 1974 constitution and brutally suppressed all opposition through force, resulting in thousands of deaths and arrests.

## **SLORC's Military Rule (1988-1997)**

On 23 September 1988, having established himself as Burma's leader, the head of the SLORC, Gen. Saw Maung, assured the public that the sole aim of military intervention was to restore law and order, improve the economic conditions of the people, and organize multiparty elections as soon as possible. He insisted that it was not his intention to "cling to State power for long."

Within months parties began to register with the advent of a new election law. The National League

for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of the national hero Gen. Aung San, quickly emerged as the leading opposition party. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi traveled throughout the country attracting large crowds, despite the SLORC decrees limiting public gatherings to four persons. As her following expanded, the military tried to discredit her. They accused her of not having “pure” motives, disparaged her marriage to a foreigner, questioned her loyalty to Burma, and suggested that she was being manipulated by Communists in her party. Unable to sway her supporters, in July 1989 SLORC placed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest and disqualified her from participating in the elections. In spite of these tactics, the NLD achieved a landslide victory in the elections held on 27 May 1990, winning 392 of the 485 seats contested. In contrast, the SLORC-backed National Unity Party (NUP) won 10 seats.

Rejected by popular vote, the junta refused to implement the results claiming a constitution must be drafted before Parliament can convene. Meanwhile, the SLORC maintained control over the country through martial law. On 27 July 1990, the SLORC promulgated Declaration 1/90 confirming this stating, “[the SLORC] is not an organization that observes any constitution; it is an organization that is governing the nation under Martial Law.” Following this announcement SLORC began to arrest, harass, and intimidate NLD members as well as members of other political parties. As time progressed and the SLORC persisted in its refusal to hand over power, in December 1990 members of the elected Parliament established the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) with the support of all major ethnic groups struggling to assert themselves within Burma.

On 24 April 1992, two years after the elections, SLORC issued Order No. 11/92 titled the “Convening of a National Convention.” It indicated that a National Convention (NC) would be convened “in order to lay down basic principles to draft a firm constitution.” On 2 October 1992, however, without consulting any political or ethnic leaders, the regime delineated six objectives to “guide” the NC. The sixth principle essentially guarantees a dominant role for the military in any future government. In January 1993, the convention finally assembled with 702 delegates, of whom only 106 were elected representatives. The remaining delegates were either handpicked by the SLORC to “represent” workers, peasants, intellectuals, national races, and service personnel, or were “specially invited persons.” Regardless, meetings were repeatedly suspended after ethnic delegates persist in opposing a centralized state structure. Overriding such opposition and alternative proposals, the regime imposed another 104 principles to “guide” the constitutional drafting process. Furthermore, to suppress opposition to the NC, the SLORC also issued Order No. 5/96 on 7 June 1996 prohibiting criticism of the NC. The order carries a potential 20 year sentence.

On 10 July 1995, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from almost six years of house arrest. Although her release initially raised hopes for an improvement in the human rights situation in Burma, nothing changed. Rather, the pace of political arrests and persecution accelerated dramatically after November 1995 when the NLD withdrew, along with other groups, from the SLORC-controlled NC due to its undemocratic processes. SLORC responded to the NLD withdrawal by expelling the NLD permanently from the convention. Increased targeting and harassment of NLD members and supporters followed. On 9 November 1996, a group of about 200 young men attacked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s motorcade with iron bars and sticks. The men were thought to be members of the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA), a puppet organization created by the regime to feign civilian support for the regime and intimidate the pro-democracy movement. In December 1996, more than 2,000 people, including hundreds of students, were arrested after engaging in peaceful demonstrations calling for genuine reforms. Public gatherings on weekends in front of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s home have been banned since the end of 1996.

Hostilities between the SLORC and armed ethnic resistance groups meanwhile continued throughout this period. The SLORC maintained a military presence throughout the ethnic minority areas,

instigating attacks against resistance fighters. Singapore, China, and Pakistan supported the SLORC campaign by supplying the weaponry needs of the regime. Thailand disregarded increased offensives against border groups after the SLORC granted timber and fishing concessions in the border areas. In 1989, the SLORC heightened aggressive tactics in an effort to pressure opposition groups into one-sided ceasefire pacts. At this time, several resistance groups succumbed to the regime's pressure and signed onto restrictive ceasefire agreements. Meanwhile attacks have continued in the ethnic minority areas. During the offensives, the military committed a range of human rights violations and abuses against ethnic minority villagers living within the conflict zones.

## **SPDC's Military Rule (1997-Present)**

On 15 November 1997, the SLORC was paradoxically renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Although the three most senior members of the regime retained their posts in the SPDC, 14 former members, all senior military officers, were replaced and a four - member SPDC advisory group was established. In late November three members of this advisory group were placed under house arrest, including the former Tourism Minister Lt. Gen. Kyaw Ba; the former Commerce Minister Lt. Gen. Tun Kyi; and the former Agriculture Minister Lt. Gen. Myint Aung. A number of their aides and staff at other ministries were also placed under investigation. Following the detention, the advisory group was dissolved on 10 December 1997, less than one month after its formation. Officials said the members of the advisory group no longer held their military posts. The changes did not stop there. On 20 December, there was another unexpected reshuffle within the second tier of the military regime's cabinet and eight posts were replaced and one new member was added. SPDC leaders conducted another reshuffle of top generals in November 2001, and in March 2002 arrested four relatives of former top general Ne Win. The four were accused of plotting to overthrow the current government in a military coup, and were sentenced to death for treason in September 2002.

With instability plaguing the military ranks and the regime refusing to cede power, the Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP) formed on 16 September 1998. In accordance with the 1974 *Pyithu Hluttaw* Law requiring the approval by 34 percent or more of the MP's to convene Parliament, 52 percent of the elected MPs (or 251) gave approval to the ten founding members to form the CRPP. The CRPP's objective was to convene as a provisional Parliament until all elected MPs are able to convene. As the first official act of the CRPP, the group repealed all SLORC and SPDC orders, decrees, notifications, rules and laws. In immediate response, the SPDC outlawed the organization. Despite serious restrictions and the imprisonment of Chairman Dr Saw Mra Aung, the CRPP has survived and continues to operate, although under constant threat.

In September 2000, a major crackdown by the SPDC on NLD leaders led to the detention of Chairman U Aung Shwe, and the house arrest of Vice-Chairman U Tin Oo and Gen. Sec. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The crackdown, however, acted as a catalyst for the initiation of UN brokered 'talks' between the regime and the NLD. In the months that followed, the SPDC allowed a number of NLD offices to reopen and released substantial numbers of political prisoners, acts which were hailed by the international community as a sign of the regime's sincerity towards pursuing change. As dialogue continued, the SPDC agreed to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from 19 months of house arrest on 6 May 2002. The military intelligence, however, continued to monitor NLD leaders and attend meetings in Rangoon. Following her release, the junta allowed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD a greater measure of freedom to travel around the country and to meet with representatives of foreign governments and international organizations.

By the end of 2002, it was clear that the regime was using the talks merely as a tool to deflect international criticism and garner increased aid and investment rather than to genuinely advance

the country towards democratic reform. As the economic situation deteriorated inside Burma, dialogue between the NLD and SPDC came to a halt. Despite repeated calls for more open lines of communication, the SPDC increasingly withdrew from further discussions and throughout the first half of 2003 the regime refused to schedule more talks. In addition, beginning in 2003 and continuing throughout 2005, the regime has excluded Razali Ismail, the UN Special Envoy for Burma, and Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, from entering the country. Although Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD were able to engage in several campaigning tours in the first half of 2003, harassment and targeting of NLD members continued. Tension escalated to a breaking point when on 30 May 2003, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her entourage were violently attacked by members of the USDA and other state organized individuals on the road to Depayin, Sagaing Division. An unknown number of individuals were killed in the attack, subsequently labeled the "Depayin Massacre." In addition, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD Deputy Chairman U Tin Oo, and all members of the Central Executive Committee of the NLD were placed under military custody. NLD offices across the country were also ordered closed.

In an attempt to assuage international criticism following the Depayin Massacre, the junta reshuffled the military leadership on 25 August 2003. In the military reshuffle, the relatively moderate Gen. Khin Nyunt was removed from the position of Secretary 1 and placed in a newly created position of Prime Minister. Lt. Gen. Soe Win, who is believed to have planned the Depayin attack on the NLD, replaced Gen. Khin Nyunt as Secretary 1. To further deflect international criticism, the regime also announced a seven-point road map to democracy just five days later on 30 August 2005, the first step of which was to resume the NC.

Reconvening on 17 May 2004 without the participation of eight ethnic minority groups and several political parties including the NLD, the NC proved to be a continuation of the previous undemocratic, unrepresentative sessions. In total, 1,076 out of 1,088 delegates attended the 2004 session of the NC. Only 15 MPs elected in the 1990 elections were present. In addition, only seven legally registered political parties that participated in the 1990 elections attended. Besides being unrepresentative in nature, the 2004 session of the NC proceeded under highly restrictive conditions that suppressed the freedoms of opinion, expression, movement, assembly and association of the delegates. On 9 July 2004, the NC recessed with very little progress achieved towards genuine democratic reform.

Disagreements among the SPDC military elite resulted in yet another reshuffling of the ranks in October 2004. On 19 October 2004, Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was removed from his post, arrested, and placed under house arrest. His two sons, Zaw Naing Oo and Ye Naing Win were also arrested. Gen. Khin Nyunt was charged on eight grounds, including bribery and corruption, and given a 44-year suspended sentence on 22 July 2005. His sons along with other relatives were given similarly lengthy sentences.

Following Gen. Khin Nyunt's removal, Lt. Gen. Soe Win took over the office of Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the regime underwent a widespread purge of everything associated with the former Prime Minister. In addition to the removal of all photographs, posters and billboards of Gen. Khin Nyunt, all his cronies and affiliates were dismissed and subject to potential arrest. The purge resulted in the dismantling of the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), the body that controlled the Defense Ministry's Military Intelligence Services (MIS). In the months that followed, 300 top level former MI agents were arrested, some 1,500 were allowed to "retire," and about 2,500 were transferred to combat duty. Dismemberment of the NIB, however, has not meant the end to MI in Burma. Intelligence operations have since reorganized now functioning under the Office of the Military Affairs Security and reporting directly to the regional military commands. The reshuffle also included several other shifts in the leadership and was viewed as a consolidation of hardliners among the military elite of the SPDC.

The removal of Gen. Khin Nyunt as prime minister and dissolution of the NIB also led to three mass prison releases over the course of 2004. However, out of the 14,318 prisoners released from November to December 2004, only 76 were political prisoners. Among the 76 political prisoners released was Min Ko Naing, chairman of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), who had been imprisoned for over 15 years. Another mass release of prisoners occurred on 3 January 2005, with the NC a little over a month away and the regime desperate to gain political favor. The SPDC released 5,588 inmates from prisons around the country, however only 23 political prisoners were among those released. Despite these releases, over 1,100 political prisoners remained incarcerated at the end of 2005.

The removal of Gen. Khin Nyunt, however, did little to stabilize the political atmosphere in Burma. Since the ouster of Gen. Khin Nyunt, the military leadership line-up has been in constant flux. Power struggles between SPDC chairman Sen. Gen. Than Shwe and his second-in-command Vice Sen. Gen. Maung Aye continued throughout 2005 spurring rumors of another potential ouster. At the end of May 2005 and in August 2005, the regime underwent yet another major reorganization with a reshuffle of about half of the regional commanders. In addition, several high ranking SPDC officers were removed from their posts in August 2005 and placed under house arrest or “permitted to retire,” including the Director General of the SPDC Office Lt. Col. Pe Nyein, Director General of the Prime Minister’s office Soe Tint, as well as Brig. Gen. Pyi Sone and Than Shwe who are attached to the Prime Minister’s office.

Several bombings throughout the country further demonstrated the lack of stability within the country. From the end of 2004 throughout 2005, a total of 18 bombs were detonated. Following a series of bombings on 7 May 2005 in Rangoon that killed at least eleven people and injured 162, the junta increased restrictions. Despite being unable to produce concrete evidence of the perpetrators of the bombings, the regime blamed several opposition groups subsequently outlawing them, labeling them as terrorist organizations and conducting widespread arrests.

In an attempt to feign some level of stability and progress within the country following the ouster of Gen. Khin Nyunt, the regime announced plans to recommence the NC on 17 February 2005. However, in the lead up to the February 2005 session, the junta made efforts to stifle all potential opposition to the process by targeting and harassing opposition groups. Political and ethnic minority leaders were subject to arrest, detention, and other abuses at the hands of the SPDC in an attempt to silence resistance to the regime’s agenda. The regime arbitrarily extended the detention of ten prominent political dissidents, including NLD leaders, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo as well as several elected MP’s. Military build-up and increased hostilities in the ethnic areas also continued. The SPDC also arrested several prominent Shan activists and leaders, including Gen. Hkun Htun Oo and Gen. Hso Ten, chairmen of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and the Shan State Peace Council (SSPC) respectively, only days before the February session was scheduled to resume. These leaders were later handed severely harsh sentences ranging from 70 years to 93 years of imprisonment.

The February 2005 sessions adjourned on 31 March 2005 without achieving any genuine progress towards democratic reform. Despite indications by the regime in May 2005 that the December 2005 NC proceeding would be the final session of the protracted constitutional drafting process, the Convention adjourned in January 2006 without any real advancement. Participation in both 2005 sessions remained highly unrepresentative with several political and ethnic minority groups excluded from the proceedings. Like past Conventions, a majority of the delegates in attendance were members of SPDC-sponsored organizations, such as the USDA. Furthermore, open discussion was largely circumscribed by the regime, with the regime actively stifling all proposals initiated by delegates that were not in keeping with its predetermined agenda. Meanwhile, hostility against ethnic minority

groups and harassment against political organizations continued. The regime again extended the terms of house arrest for Daw Aung Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo on 27 November and 13 February 2005 respectively. The undemocratic nature of both terms of the 2005 proceedings spurred criticism within the country as well as throughout the international community.

In another unexpected move, the SPDC relocated its ministries, civil servants and operations to the remote village of Pyinmana, Mandalay Division, located about 320 km. from Rangoon. The move occurred at the auspicious time of 6:37 am on 6 November 2005. Without advanced notice, civil servants were forced to relocate to Pyinmana, leaving families and businesses behind. The civil servants meanwhile found Pyinmana unprepared for their arrival, with basic accommodations, facilities, and commodities lacking. However, civil servants who applied for resignations were threatened with imprisonment, causing some to go into hiding. The site itself is reportedly surrounded by barbed wire and under heavy military guard.

Throughout 2005, the regime continued to commit severe human rights abuses against the people of Burma, including forced labor and portering practices, forcible recruitment of child soldiers, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, rape, torture, forcible relocation and confiscation of property. Furthermore, the regime continued to restrict basic freedoms, including the freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, movement, and religion.

## [Facts on Human Rights Violations in Burma 2005](#)

### [10. Freedom of Belief and Religion](#)

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice,*

*worship and observance.” - Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

#### [10.1 Background](#)

#### [10.2 Religious Discrimination against Christians](#)

#### [10.3 Religious Discrimination against Muslims](#)

#### [10.4 SPDC Control over Buddhism](#)

### **10.1 Background**

Burma is a predominantly Buddhist country with 90 percent of the population adhering to the Buddhist tradition according to official statistics. For the ethnic Burman majority and also the Mon, the Shan and the Rakhine (from Arakan State) ethnic minorities, Buddhism is the primary religion with Theravada being the most widely practiced form of Buddhism in Burma. The Christian population makes up around four percent of the population. The Chin and Kachin communities are largely Christian while the Karen and Karenni populations practice Christianity alongside Buddhism. Most Christians in Burma are Baptists. Roman Catholics, Anglicans and other Protestant groups also have an established presence in Burma. According to official statistics, four percent of the population is Muslim. Muslim leaders however dispute these figures and argue that followers of the Islam faith comprise 14 to 20 percent of the population. While there are Muslim communities throughout the country, the Islam faith is particularly visible in Arakan State where it is the primary religion of the Rohingya minority. The Muslim population is primarily Sunni. The remaining two percent of religions represented in Burma include forms of animism, Hinduism and even a small Jewish population in Rangoon. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

Although there is no official state religion of Burma, the junta has actively promoted Buddhism over other religions. Buddhist doctrine remains part of the mandated curriculum for all primary level school children. Students are required to recite a Buddhist prayer everyday and only some schools allow Muslim students to opt out of Buddhist recitations. Since the military seized power in 1962, non-Buddhist minority religions have been marginalized. In 2005, for the sixth consecutive year, Burma was designated by the U.S. Secretary of State as a “Country of Particular Concern” under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. Members of minority religious groups continue to suffer from persecution, abuse, and severe discrimination by the military regime. Muslim and Christian groups, in particular, experience difficulty in obtaining permission to build new places of worship or repair existing ones. Required national identification cards indicating religious affiliations have led to the harassment and persecution of non-Buddhists by the regime. Meanwhile, non-Buddhists are constantly pressured and forced to convert. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

The junta-imposed guidelines for the constitutional drafting sessions of the National Convention recognize the existence of minority religions in Burma and state that “citizens in the State should have the right to freely profess any faith of their choice.” However, the guidelines also indicate religious groups should be denied any opportunity to engage in or influence politics (source: “The State Also Recognizes Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animism as Some Religions Existing in the Union on the Date of the Coming into Force of the State Constitution,” *NLM*, 11 January 2006). This limitation could potentially provide justification for sustained surveillance and restrictions on the activities of religious groups. At present, SPDC personnel continue to infiltrate and monitor the meetings and actions of virtually all religious groups, Buddhists included. Meanwhile non-Buddhists are heavily underrepresented in the public sphere. Promotions and leadership positions within the military regime are reserved for Buddhists. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

Theravada Buddhism, despite being the regime-preferred religion, is not free from interference. All monastic orders, apart from nine recognized by the junta, are considered illegal. Furthermore, monks are not accorded any special leniency due to their religious positions. Monks who are deemed to be in violation of the law are subject to the same punishment and abuse as other transgressors. In addition to the standard terms of punishment, monks are often also subject to public defrocking. Efforts by monks to promote human rights and political freedoms in Burma have been met with severe repercussions by the regime. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), reported that 76 monks continued to languish in the prisons of Burma in 2005 for politically related reasons. (Sources: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005; AAPP, 2005).

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## **10.2 Religious Discrimination against Christians**

Members of the Christian minority have been suppressed by successive military regimes since the seizure of power in 1962. In the mid 1960’s nearly all foreign missionaries were expelled and Christian schools and hospitals nationalized. While foreign clergy have in the past been allowed to enter the country on tourist visas, their supporting organizations must be careful not to give off the impression of proselytizing the local population, which is strictly prohibited by the regime. To limit proselytizing, Christian ministers attempting to relocate to new townships have been denied resident permits. Furthermore, printing and importing of bibles and other religious literature in ethnic languages is heavily restricted by the regime. Those found producing or in possession of such material are subject to arrest and confiscation of the illicit material. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

Christian groups have been denied permission to construct new churches or other religious meeting places. On 9 September 2005, it was reported that the junta terminated the construction of a new Baptist church in Tachileik, Shan State without justification (source: “Junta Closes Popular Rangoon Church,” *Irrawaddy*, 9 September 2005). Permission to repair dilapidated worship structures has also been withheld. While some groups have been given unofficial permission to build small meeting places in inconspicuous locations, these establishments remain subject to closure at the will of the authorities. There continued to be reports of church closures and bans on home prayer services. Some churches,

particularly in Rangoon, have been forced to pay bribes to the authorities in order to remain open (source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005). The most significant church closure during 2005 was the Full Gospel Assembly, a rapidly growing church in Rangoon, which was ordered to cease all its activities in September 2005 (source: "Junta Closes Popular Rangoon Church," *Irrawaddy*, 9 September 2005).

The people of Chin State have been particularly affected by religiously motivated abuses perpetrated by the regime. Because Christianity is integral to the identity of the majority of the Chin people, the junta has been particularly heavy-handed with implementing a campaign of Burmanization in Chin State. Through Burmanization, the regime has attempted to create a Burma of "One race, One Language, One Religion." To dilute and eradicate the religious practices in Chin State, the regime has made extensive efforts to convert Christians to Buddhism through aggressive conversion drives and forced conversion campaigns. SPDC soldiers have been offered incentives to marry and convert Chin women. Furthermore, Chin Christian children have been forced into monasteries. The regime has also demolished churches and Christian religious symbols. Sites of former Christian structures have then been replaced with Buddhist pagodas, which have been constructed through the forced labor of Chin Christians. Abuses against members of the Christian faith are rampant in Chin State. Christians, including church leaders and ministers, have been tortured and killed for their beliefs. (Source: *Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma*, CHRO, February 2004).

## **Persecution of Christians - Partial List of Incidents for 2005**

### **Chin State**

On 3 January 2005, a large concrete cross that had stood on a hill in Matupi Township for decades was destroyed by SPDC IB 304 under the command of Col. San Aung sparking protests in Chin communities abroad. Later in the year, it was reported that there were plans to build a Buddhist pagoda on the former cross site. There were also reports of demands for material and labor for the pagoda construction. (Source: "Ethnic Groups Condemn Junta's Brutality Against Religion in Burma" *Kaladan News*, 25 January 2005).

On 2 February 2005, it was reported that 20 predominantly Christian villages from Shinletwa village tract, Paletwa Township were forced by the SPDC LIB 354 to assist in the construction of a Buddhist Monastery near Shinletwa army camp. Camp Comdr. Lt. Thein Lwin ordered the headman of each of the 20 villages to collect 5,000 kyat per household no later than 15 January 2005 to fund the transportation of cement for the monastery. Villagers were also forced to provide labor or money to relocate the Shinletwa army camp in order to make way for the new monastery. Pathianthang and Para village tracts were told to provide 70,000 kyat and 50,000 kyat respectively to fund the relocation process. (Source: "Chin Christians Forced to Contribute Money and Labor for Construction of Buddhist Monastery," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, January-February 2005).

On 5 May 2005, it was reported that villagers in and around Sabawngte village, Maputi Township were ordered by Deputy Battalion Comdr. Maj. Hla Myint of SPDC LIB 140 to donate one tin of sand per household for the construction of a Buddhist monastery being built inside the army camp. The inhabitants of Hlung Mang village were also forced to contribute 25 bags of cement. (Source: "Chin Christians Forced to Supply Construction Materials for New Buddhist Monastery," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, May-June 2005).

On 8 June 2005, Col. San Aung, commander of Tactical Command No. 2, forced more than 300 local Christians in Matupi Township to attend the opening ceremony of a new Buddhist pagoda. Construction on the pagoda, named Maha Thandi Thuta Aung, began in May. "Invitations" were sent out to all civil servants and community leaders of the area, with Col. San Aung and his wife Daw Htay Htay Lwin acting as hosts of the event. (Source: "Local Christians Forced to Attend Opening Ceremony of Buddhist Pagoda," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, July-August 2005).

On 18 June 2005, it was reported that Col. San Aung, commander of SPDC Tactical Command No. 2, announced during a public meeting, "I have the power to destroy any symbols and monuments, except Gen. Aung San, for the betterment of the people." It is speculated that this announcement was made to justify the dismantling of two Christian crosses and the destruction of at least 20 houses without compensation in Matupi Township. The announcement came after radio reports criticized his actions. Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and Democratic Voice of Burma reported the destruction of a large cross in Boltlang. (Source: "SPDC Commander Justify His Barbaric Action," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, May-June 2005).

On 14 November 2005, it was reported that the military destroyed a village in Chin State after plans were exposed to build a new church and school in the village. No further details were available. (Source: Mission News Network, 14 November 2005).

### **Rangoon Division**

On 9 September 2005, it was reported that the Full Gospel Assembly in downtown Rangoon, had been ordered by the junta to cease all activities. The church had operated several programs in Rangoon, including Bible training courses, women's and youth meetings, weekly worship services and monthly fasting and prayer. (Source: "Junta Closes Popular Rangoon Church," *Irrawaddy*, 9 September 2005).

On 5 December 2005, it was reported that various Christian groups have been denied places of worship in Rangoon. Some pastors were forced to sign a blank sheet of paper that purportedly would be later filled in by the junta agreeing to the closures. Despite the fact that Buddhists use the public address system during their daily worship services, the junta has justified the ban on services on the basis that the noise is a public nuisance. The groups, of different denominations, have all been forced to conduct services at the Fundamental Far East Theological College, despite the fact that time and space is severely limited, especially on Sundays. (Source: "Conversion to Christianity on the Rise Despite Being Denied Places of Worship," *Khonumthung*, 5 December 2005).

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### **10.3 Religious Discrimination against Muslims**

The Muslim population of Burma can be divided into four distinct groups, all of who follow the Sunni sect of Islam. The ethnically Chinese Hui generally live in Mandalay and the North. Muslims of Indian and Pakistani descent are found throughout Burma, particularly in the larger cities. Those who are ethnically Burman are thought to have been converted between the 9th and 14th centuries by Islamic merchants and scholars. The final group and most oppressed of the Muslims living in Burma are the Rohingya who speak a Bengali dialect and live mostly in Northern Arakan State. (Source: "Myanmar's Muslim Sideshow," *Asian Times*, 20 October 2003).

Like the Christian population in Burma, the junta largely interferes with the religious

freedom of Muslims in the country. Muslims have been denied permission to build new mosques and have also experienced difficulty in obtaining permission to repair or expand existing religious structures. Furthermore, the authorities have arbitrarily and without notice ordered the closure of several Muslim worship centers. Those holding religious services in unofficially registered venues have been subject to arrest and severe punishment. The authorities have also prohibited Muslim celebrations and ceremonies without advanced permission. Even when permission is granted, the terms are often restrictive. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

In addition to restrictions on their religious practices, Muslims also face abuse and discrimination based on their religious orientation. Muslims are subject to severe travel restrictions and are required to request permission from township authorities to travel outside their home villages. Such permission is frequently withheld from Rohingya and Rakhine Muslims while other Muslims are typically required to furnish a bribe. Bribes are also required to obtain National Registration Cards and passports, which are necessary documents for all forms of travel (source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005). Furthermore, the NaKaPa, border security forces in Arakan State, have been inspecting Muslim households to ensure that all family members are present and that the household is fully registered. Absent family members risk being deleted from the household registration lists, which could result in future repercussions (source “Nasaka Begins Operation to Check Registry of Burmese Muslim Family Members Along Border Area” *Narinjara News*, 4 June 2005).

Tensions between the Muslim and dominant Buddhist populations have frequently ruptured into violence, often under speculations of provocation by the SPDC. Following the 30 May 2003 attacks on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD supporters near Depayin, Sagaing Division, clashes broke out between Buddhists and Muslims in Rangoon and Kyaukse. It was believed that the junta orchestrated the riots as a method of deflecting interest in the incident at Depayin (source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005). Buddhist-Muslim violence also broke out on 20 January 2005 in Kyauk Pru, Arakan State after a Muslim street sweeper allegedly insulted a group of Buddhist monks near Naga Pariyeti Sathin Thik monastery. The street sweeper that provoked the violence was a known informant for the local army post. The clashes lasted several days and left three Muslims dead, including a religious teacher. The regime used the incident to justify an increase of security in the region, including tightening movement restrictions and cutting all telephone lines in the area (sources: “54 Burmese Muslims Arrested While Illegally Entering Bangladesh,” *Narinjara News*, 1 February 2005; “Religious Riot in Arakan State” *Narinjara News*, 1 February 2005). Furthermore, on 22 June 2005, it was reported that the Chief Secretary of the USDA and Industry Minister, U Aung Thaung, had plans to distribute anti-Muslim propaganda and destroy the property of Muslim activists in Mandalay Division then blame the NLD in an attempt to provoke religious riots (source: “New Strategies Dreamt Up by Burma Junta to Destroy NLD,” DVB, 22 June 2005).

### **The Situation of Discrimination Against Rohingya**

The Rohingya are a distinct Muslim ethnic group living predominantly in the northern Arakan State townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung. The Rohingya speak a dialect of Bengali and are considered to be ethnically and religiously related to the Chittagonian people of southern Bangladesh. Estimates place the Rohingya population of

Arakan State at between 700,000 and 1.5 million, approximately 50 percent of Arakan State's population. The Rohingya experience severe legal, economic, social and religious discrimination. This, in part, stems from the fact that the junta does not recognize Rohingya as one of the 135 "national races" of Burma. (Source: *The Rohingya Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied*, AI, May 2004). (For more information, see [chapter 8 Rights of Ethnic Minorities](#))

Rohingya Muslims in northern Arakan State continued to face severe travel restrictions in 2005, which prevented them from moving from village to village, let alone throughout the country. Despite the disbanding of the NaSaKa on 19 October 2004 with the ouster of Gen. Khin Nyunt, the junta maintained a border security force in Arakan State, renaming it the NaKaPa in January 2005. Beginning on 1 October 2005, Muslims living in Sittwe have been banned from traveling outside the Sittwe area (source: The Arakan Project, 9 November 2005). Rohingyas living elsewhere were also required to obtain permission in advance to travel outside their home villages. The authorities, meanwhile, imposed a curfew and beginning in January 2005 all the VPDC Chairmen in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Township in Arakan State were ordered by NaKaPa commanders to begin fencing in each village. Although the fences were ostensibly for security reasons despite the virtual absence of potential infiltrators, Rohingya villagers believed they were more likely erected to contain villagers. (Source: Forum-Asia, 26 May 2005).

Due to their inability to travel freely, Rohingya villagers face tremendous difficulties in securing food sources outside their villages, including from their own remotely located farms. Furthermore, Rohingyas have been required to purchase travel permits to collect World Food Program (WFP) humanitarian aid food rations. Due to this situation, Rohingyas in Arakan State are particularly vulnerable to starvation. (Source: "Junta Restrictions Cause Food Shortages Among Rohingyas," *Irrawaddy*, 23 September 2005). (For more information see [Chapter 12 Freedom of Assembly, Association, and Movement](#)). Following the removal of Khin Nyunt, the Rohingya briefly enjoyed relief from previously imposed marriage restrictions in the townships of northern Arakan. In 2005, the restrictions were reinstated and extended to include the central Arakan townships of Kyauk Pyu and Ramree. Rohingya youth have often been arbitrarily accused of violating the marriage ban and subjected to arrest, extortion and harassment. While some Rohingyas have married in secret, others have fled the country in order to marry without obstacle. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

To dilute the Muslim population in Arakan State, the junta has continued to establish "model villages" to resettle both Rakhine and Burman Buddhists onto Muslim land in northern Arakan State. As many as 39 "model villages" currently exist in northern Arakan State (source: "**Nasaka Forcibly Extracts Labor and Donation from Rohingya Villagers,**" *Kaladan News*, 18 October 2004). On 7 September 2005, 50 Buddhist families were brought in from Rangoon for resettlement in Taragu village tract. Rohingyas reportedly were forced to build houses for the new arrivals (source: "50- Family of New Buddhist Settlers Brought into Northern Arakan from Rangoon," *Kaladan News*, 6 October 2005). The resettlement campaign continued in January 2006 with the junta expanding its recruiting efforts by providing incentives to Buddhists living in Bangladesh to relocate to northern Arakan State. Fifty-two Buddhist families, approximately 257 persons, had already been granted approval to relocate to NaSaKa region 3 in early 2006 (source: "Burma Offers Bangladeshi Buddhists to Settle in Northern Arakan," *Narinjara News*, 3 January 2006).

## **Persecution of Muslims - Partial List of Incidents for 2005**

The SPDC imposed various restrictions and demands on Muslims in Arakan State celebrating Eid-ul-Adha on 21 and 22 January. Prayers were not allowed to be conducted at the Eid-Ghah, an open area of worship, and religious ceremonies in Mosques were restricted. The SPDC also extorted money and meat during Eid-ul-Adha. Muslims had to furnish payment of a “tax” of 1,000-1,500 kyat in addition to 300 kyat for each goat and 10 kilograms of meat for each cattle slaughtered. Furthermore Muslims in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathidaung and Akyab Townships were prohibited from moving or gathering in large numbers. (Source: “Muslims Complain of Military Extortion During Religious Festival in Arakan,” *Kaladan News*, 25 January 2005).

In June 2005, 8 Muslims including the local imam were arrested for holding group prayers at the imam’s house in Shwepitha Township, Rangoon Division. By November 2005, they still had not been released. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

In June 2005, the local authorities banned a Muslim private tutor from continuing his teaching activities in Rangoon Division. Although he was teaching only the public school curriculum, he was charged with conducting free courses to convert local children to Islam. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

On 26 August 2005, Rashid Duhul, a 22-year-old Muslim student from Sittwe University, Arakan State, was attacked by a group of USDA members and died 3 days later from his injuries (source: “Burma Arakan Muslim Student Killed by ‘Unknown’ Thugs,” DVB, 4 September 2005).

On 8 November 2005, it was reported that a Muslim cleric in South Dagon, Rangoon Division was arrested for holding Qur’an courses for Muslim children at his house (source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

On 26 November 2005, a Rohingya, 55-year-old Oli Ahmed, was arrested for failing to conclude a religious lecture held on 10 November 2005 within the permitted time period. The lecture went overtime by only a few minutes. As a result, Oli Ahmed was sentenced on 29 November 2005 to 10 months imprisonment with hard labor under Police Act No.49, Raki 932/05. In addition, following the violation, the use of loudspeakers to broadcast the Azan (call to prayer) was banned. (Source: “A Rohingya Elite Jailed for Not Concluding Religious Lecture Within Fixed Time,” *Kaladan News*, 19 December 2005).

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### **10.4 SPDC Control over Buddhism**

There are over 400,000 Buddhist monks and novices in Burma who are supported by donations from the Buddhist population. As the dominant religion of the country and the religion of the ethnic Burmans, Theravada Buddhism enjoys a privileged place in the development of Burma’s history. In pre-colonial times, the king’s legitimacy was linked to his patronage of the Sangha, which is the Buddhist clergy. A head abbot called a Tha Tha Na Baing appointed by the king controlled the Sangha. When the British abolished the monarchy in 1886, they neglected to continue this role as head of the religion, which led to a lack of central control in the Sangha. During the anti-British nationalist movement of the 1920’s and 1930’s politicized monks were a common sight and some of Burma’s earliest

nationalist heroes, such as the ethnic Rakhine U Ottama, were monks. This active role in politics has continued up to the present day.

Political awareness within the monastery has pitted some monks against the regime resulting in instances of tragic consequences. Six hundred monks were killed during the 1988 August pro-democracy uprising. On 8 August 1990, on the second anniversary of the pro-democracy uprising, over 7,000 monks took to the streets of Mandalay to peacefully collect alms from the people. The army retaliated to this peaceful protest by attacking the monks. Two monks were killed and 17 others were wounded in the attack. In response to the army's brutal actions, the Monks' Union (Sangha Samaggi) of Mandalay, led by Ven. Yewata, declared *pattam nikkujjana kamma*, "overturning the bowl." In solidarity, monks from across Burma joined in "overturning the bowl" and refused alms from military personnel and their families as well as boycotted religious services organized by members of the regime. (Source: *Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed and Detained in Dungeons*, AAPP, November 2004).

In response to political opposition within the monastery, the regime arrested and disrobed the leader of the 1990 protests, Ven. Yewata. In addition, the regime issued orders to control the Sangha and punish monks who opposed the regime. On 20 October 1990, the regime issued Order 6/90 banning all Sangha organizations as "unlawful" except for nine. The nine orders recognized by the junta are under the authority of the junta-sponsored State Monk Coordination Committee (Sangha Maha Navaka Committee – SMNC). On 21 October 1990, the regime also issued Order 7/90 which allowed for monks to be brought before a military tribunal for "activities inconsistent with and detrimental to Buddhism." Under this law, monks could be disrobed and imprisoned for participating in protests or boycotts. Punishments ranged from three years imprisonment to death. Finally, on 30 October 1990 the junta established a code of conduct for Buddhist monks, violations of which are punishable by criminal penalties. (Source: *Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed and Detained in Dungeons*, AAPP, November 2004).

Buddhist monks continued to be persecuted under accusations of involvement in political activities or support of armed resistance groups throughout 2005. For example, in June 2005, it was reported that monks in Nyaung U, Mandalay Division, were forbidden from participating in celebrations for Aung San Suu Kyi's 60th birthday. The authorities also banned a local religious association from contributing to the celebrations. When it was discovered that NLD members had been accepted at a number of monasteries the local authority chairman, Maj. Tayza, reportedly summoned and rebuked religious leaders (source: "Monks Told Not to Participate in Aung San Suu Kyi's Birthday in Burma," DVB, 21 June 2005). Furthermore, the SPDC has continued to restrict the activities of the Buddhist clergy in an attempt to stifle potential political influence over the populace. Following the Rangoon bombings on 7 May 2005, on 17 July 2005 it was reported that the authorities required registration of all persons, including monks, who intended to remain overnight in monasteries during Buddhist lent. Monks were also required to remain in the same monastery for the entire 3 month period of lent (source: "Monks are Targeted as a Result of Burma's Security Scare," *Narinjara News*, 17 July 2005). Buddhist festivals organized by villagers were also heavily restricted by the SPDC.

Meanwhile, the military has attempted to derive legitimacy through its public patronage of Buddhism. SPDC officials have often been portrayed in the media attending religious services and supporting the monastery. The junta has also sponsored projects to construct, renovate or maintain Buddhist shrines and monuments. However, villagers, particularly in rural areas, have often been compelled to contribute donations of food, money or

materials to the projects. (Source: *International Religious Freedom Report-2005*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 8 November 2005).

### **Persecution of Buddhists - Partial List of Incidents for 2005**

In January 2005, villagers in Ohn Pin Kwin and Phaung Daw villages, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division were forced to pay 200,000 kyat per village to SPDC LIB 273 Comdr. Moe San Winn for permission to hold a traditional Buddhist festival. Comdr. Moe San Winn justified the payment as necessary to ensure the security of the nearby Total gas pipeline during the festival. (Source: “**Taxation by LIB No. 273**,” HURFOM, 9 September 2005).

In February 2005, the SPDC Comdr. of the Special Triangle Region ordered from Mandalay a new headdress for a Buddha statue in Kaeng-Tung town and required villagers in Kaeng-Tung, Murng-Sart and Ta-Khi-Laek Townships to contribute money for its costs and a ceremony. Although the headdress only cost 1,500,000 kyat, the authorities collected 20,500,000 kyat by 17 February 2005. Nonetheless, after the ceremony, the Comdr. continued to extort money from villagers until the sum reached 100 million kyat. (Source: “Situation of Extortion in Kaeng-Tung, Murng-Sart and Ta-Khi-Laek,” *SHRF Monthly Report*, SHRF, June 2005).

In March 2005, it was reported that villagers in Kaeng Tawng sub-township, Murng-Nai Township had been fined 200,000 kyat for refusing to attend a religious ceremony organized by the SPDC on 23 and 24 March 2005. (Source: “Religion Used For Extorting Money in Murng-Nai,” *SHRF Monthly Report*, SHRF, June 2005).

In May 2005, following the declaration of an independent Shan State Federal Government by a little known Shan group, the authorities arrested several Shan villagers, including Buddhist monks. Tae-Zin-Da, a Buddhist monk from Wan Paang village in Wan Hai village tract, Murng-Nai Township, Shan State was arrested and his monastery burned down by SPDC troops under the command of LIB515. Pan-Nya-Sa-Mi of Hin He monastery in Murng Nawng village in Kae-See Township was also arrested by local SPDC troops. (Source: “Arrest and Detention, Forced Labour and Extortion in Central Shan State,” *SHRF Monthly Report*, SHRF, August 2005).

On 14 July 2005, a Buddhist nun, Daw Thitsar Wadi, was arrested in Rangoon after being accused of having links with overseas opposition groups. (Source: “Buddhist Nun Arrested in Rangoon,” *Narinjara News*, 14 June 2005).

On 8 November 2005, 15 Buddhist monks from Bop Htaung village, Kao Jear sub-town, southern Ye Township, Mon State fled to the Thai-Burma border fearing arrest by the SPDC after being accused of supporting the Mon resistance groups. (Source: “15 Buddhist Monks Flee Mon State Fearing Persecution,” *Kaowao News*, 15 November 2005).

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## ASEAN Advisors Propose Sanctions for Members like Burma Who Breach Agreements

VOA News Washington *08 December 2006*

A group of advisors to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has proposed reforms that would include sanctions against member nations who breach agreements made within the organization.

Former Philippine President Fidel Ramos presented the proposal to reporters today, saying that the 10 member group must be able to ensure compliance among its members in order to be relevant.

Ramos says the proposal would alter the group's traditional policy of non-interference with member nations in exceptional cases. Sanctions could include suspension of rights or even expulsion from ASEAN.

The organization has received international criticism for its failure to hold member nation Burma accountable for its poor human rights record and lack of democratic reforms.

The proposed reforms are to be discussed at the ASEAN annual summit in the Philippines. The meeting had been scheduled for next week but has been postponed until January due to a powerful storm in the area.

Ramos is the Philippine representative to the so-called "eminent persons group" assigned with forming a charter for ASEAN.

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## British Conservative Party Report Names Burma as Worst Human Rights Violator

VOA News Washington *11 December 2006*

A new report released today by Britain's Conservative Party ranks Burma as the world's worst violator of human rights.

The report by the party's Human Rights Commission profiles 18 countries, rating them in three categories: freedom, rule of law and human rights violations.

The report says North Korea is the most oppressive country because it is a closed society where freedom and the rule of law are non-existent. However, it rates Burma as the worst country overall because of its human rights violations.

Burma's military government frequently receives international criticism for its poor human rights record, including the continued house arrest of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom has been restricted for most of the past 16 years.

## EU Parliament Calls For Increased Sanctions On Burma

VOA News Washington 15 December 2006

The European Union's parliament has condemned Burma's military rulers for what the parliament called their "total failure to make any significant move towards democracy."

The parliament said in a resolution on Thursday that the ruling junta has relentlessly suppressed the Burmese people for more than 40 years. The parliament called for wider sanctions against the government.

It urged the EU Council to expand sanctions to include all members of the ruling junta as well as their family members and any business leaders associated with them.

The parliament also urged Burma's neighbors to take a stronger stance against abuses by the military government.

In addition, it called on the United Nations Security Council to pass a binding resolution requiring the restoration of democracy in Burma and the release of all political prisoners.

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## US Circulates Draft Resolution on Burma Human Rights

VOA News Washington 15 December 2006

The United States is circulating a draft resolution in the UN Security Council calling on Burma's military government to improve the human rights situation in the country.

News agencies that obtained a draft of the resolution say it does not call for sanctions, but urges Burma's military to stop attacks and abuses inflicted on civilians. It also calls for the release of all political prisoners and for improved political freedoms.

Washington first proposed the resolution last month, saying the military government's human rights abuses represent a threat to regional security.

Burmese officials had said such a resolution would amount to UN interference in Burma's internal affairs.

The UN General Assembly committee has already approved a resolution saying Burma's government has refused to investigate widespread human rights violations.

# Canadian Foreign Minister Urges UN to Pass Burma Resolution

VOA News Washington 20 December 2006

Canada's Foreign Minister, Peter MacKay, has urged the UN Security Council to adopt a draft resolution addressing the human rights situation in Burma.

In a statement Tuesday, MacKay said Burma continues to show its disregard for international human rights standards. He also said Burma's military-led government is unwilling to engage constructively with the international community. MacKay said it is important that the Burmese government address human rights violations and restore democracy. He said a UN Security Council resolution on Burma would help make that happen. The Burmese government says a Security Council resolution would threaten the country's stability

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## US Law Group Urges Burma to Release Detainees

VOA News Washington 16 December 2006

A U.S. law group has criticized Burma over the recent detention of five political activists. The New York City Bar says the five were arbitrarily arrested on unsubstantiated charges and have been held in detention without trial, bail or access to lawyers. The five detainees are Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho. The law group says the five were all arrested in September and were later charged with having ties to terrorist organizations and receiving money from foreign embassies. It says the arrests appear to be politically motivated and it urged Burma's government to release the activists, or at the very least, to provide them with a fair trial. The New York City Bar is an independent non-governmental organization of more than 22-thousand lawyers, judges, law professors and government officials.

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### **Jailed 88 students' families call for acquittal as remand deadline looms**

Dec 15, 2006 (DVB) -

The families of five '88 generation student leaders taken into police custody almost three months ago have again pleaded for their release. Min Ko Naing, Ko Htay Kywe, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zayar and Pyone Cho were detained in late September and have not been charged. The military have remanded them in custody ever since but under Burmese law, the period of remand must end on December 18. Min Ko Naing's elder sister, Daw Kyi Kyi Nyunt told DVB her family was increasingly worried about his health.

"His heart is weak . . . We are very worried as we are not allowed to give medicines or see (him) personally," she said. She said her family and the family members of the other former student leaders planned to appeal to authorities to allow them to spend time with the detainees.

"The two week remand is going to expire on 18 December. If we are not allowed to see them even then, or if the situation is not getting better, we are thinking of requesting the authorities to let the families meet with them," Daw Kyi Kyi Nyunt said. "The five families will consult. When they were taken away it was said that it was for only a short while. When they were remanded, the families were not notified officially."

Fellow '88 generation student leaders Ko Arnt Bwe Kyaw and Ko Jimmy told DVB they would continue to make public calls for their colleagues' release. "We believe that the five student leaders are being detained lawlessly. We will continue to carry out activities within the legal boundary," they said.