

BURMA BULLETIN

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ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
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- **NLD announces it will not contest the upcoming elections because of SPDC's unfair and unjust election laws.**
- **The SPDC election laws exclude Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other key pro-democracy leaders and activists from joining political parties and participating in the polls.**
- **The SPDC tightly controls the electoral process through its handpicked Election Commission. The junta's Censorship Board prevents media from reporting on election-related issues.**
- **The international community condemns the SPDC election laws. The UN says that under current conditions the elections cannot be considered credible.**
- **China invokes the principle of non-interference in Burma's internal affairs as it delivers 300 more military trucks to the SPDC.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma recommends the UN consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the SPDC.**
- **UN Human Rights Council passes yet another resolution that condemns the SPDC's "systematic and gross" violations of human rights.**
- **The SPDC moves more than 70,000 troops into Shan and Kachin States, stepping up pressure on the KIO and the USWA.**
- **The crackdown on Rohingya in Bangladesh exacerbates the humanitarian crisis for tens of thousands of Rohingya living in makeshift settlements.**
- **Six thousand workers from at least six factories in**
- **Rangoon go on strike to protest low wages and poor working conditions.**

For comprehensive monitoring of the 2010 elections, please visit the "[2010 Election Watch](#)" at [www.altsean.org](#)

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KEY STORY

NLD boycotts elections

On 29 March, the NLD announced it would not register as a political party to contest the upcoming elections. Consistent with the April 2009 Shwegondaing Declaration,¹ the decision came as a result of a

¹ The "Shwegondaing Declaration", issued on 29 April, outlined the NLD's conditions for participating in the polls. The NLD said it would take part in the elections only if the SPDC released all political prisoners, reviewed the Constitution, and held "inclusive free and fair" elections "under international supervision." The NLD also said that it would have to wait until the publication of the election and party registration laws before deciding whether to contest the polls

vote by more than 100 NLD Central Committee and Central Executive Committee members who gathered at the party headquarters in Rangoon.²

NLD spokesman Nyan Win said the party decided not to register because the SPDC election laws were “unfair and unjust.”³ On 23 March, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that she would “not even think” of registering the NLD as a party because of the “unjust” SPDC election laws.⁴

The NLD’s decision to boycott the polls sent a strong message to Burma’s people and the international community that the upcoming elections are nothing more than a façade aimed at prolonging military rule in Burma.

SPDC imposes unfair election laws

Despite the SPDC’s repeated pledges for “free and fair” elections, the junta’s legal framework for the polls is repressive and undemocratic. On 8 March, the SPDC issued five laws: the Election Commission Law; the Political Parties Registration Law; the People’s Assembly Election Law; the National Assembly Election Law; and the Region or State Assemblies Election Law.⁵

As with the 2008 constitution and the 2008 Referendum Law, the SPDC election laws were the result of a unilateral, non-transparent, and non-inclusive process. The laws contained provisions designed to tightly control the electoral process and exclude pro-democracy activists from carrying out political activities and participating in the polls:

- Under the Election Commission Law, the junta handpicked the new Election Commission, which presides over all aspects of the electoral process.⁶ On 11 March, the SPDC appointed a 17-member Election Commission.⁷ The majority of the members are retired civil servants who served under the junta. The Election Commission Chairman Thein Soe is a former Army Major General who served as a military judge.⁸
- The Election Commission Law gives the Election Commission the authority to scrap polls in ethnic nationality areas, where they deem that “security reasons” would prevent the vote from being “free and fair”.⁹
- The Political Parties Registration Law excludes from forming or joining a political party the following: a) anyone convicted by a court *and* serving a jail term (e.g.: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi); b) anyone associated with “outlawed organizations”; c) Buddhist monks or members of other religious orders; d) civil servants; and e) citizens under the age of 25.¹⁰
- The Political Parties Registration Law forbids armed opposition groups from taking part in the elections.¹¹
- The Election Commission Law states that the Election Commission judgments regarding political parties are not subject to appeal in any court.¹²

² AP (29 Mar 10) Myanmar opposition party to boycott elections; Reuters (29 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s party says won’t stand in Myanmar polls; FT (29 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s party to boycott Burmese election; BBC (29 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s NLD party to boycott Burma election; DPA (29 Mar 10) Myanmar opposition party rejects polls; Kyodo News (29 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s NLD announces intention to boycott election; Guardian (29 Mar 10) Burma’s National League for Democracy fails to register for election; DVB (29 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s party to boycott elections; Straits Times (30 Mar 10) Suu Kyi’s party to boycott polls; Irrawaddy (29 Mar 10) NLD Says ‘No’ to Election; Mizzima News (29 Mar 10) NLD not to re-register with Election Commission

³ AP (29 Mar 10) Myanmar opposition party to boycott elections

⁴ AP (23 Mar 10) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi against party joining elections; BBC (23 Mar 10) Suu Kyi ‘opposes election role for her party’; Reuters (23 Mar 10) Detained Suu Kyi says would snub Myanmar polls; Al Jazeera (24 Mar 10) Suu Kyi slams ‘unjust’ Myanmar vote; DVB (23 Mar 10) Suu Kyi ‘wouldn’t think of registering’ for elections; Mizzima News (23 Mar 10) Aung San Suu Kyi against party contesting polls

⁵ AP (08 Mar 10) Myanmar enacts election laws, paving way for polls; AFP (08 Mar 10) Burma enacts first election laws; Irrawaddy (08 Mar 10) Regime Announces Election Law; Mizzima News (08 Mar 10) Burma to announce details of election laws tomorrow; Chinland Guardian (08 Mar 10) Burma Announced Elections Laws with No Details

⁶ AFP (09 Mar 10) Myanmar vote unfair but hope for change remains: analysts

⁷ NLM (12 Mar 10) Formation of Union Election Commission; Mizzima News (11 Mar 10) Burmese regime discloses Election Commission members; Chinland Guardian (11 Mar 10) Burma Appoints Election Commission as Canada Slams Junta

⁸ Irrawaddy (12 Mar 10) Election Commission Members from Various Backgrounds

⁹ Reuters (09 Mar 10) Myanmar junta unveils first of five election laws

¹⁰ Mizzima News (09 Mar 10) Burma bans imprisoned dissidents from up-coming elections; Mizzima News (29 Mar 10) USDA transformed to political party

¹¹ Mizzima News (09 Mar 10) Burma bans imprisoned dissidents from up-coming elections

¹² The Political Parties Registration Law (SPDC Law No. 2/2010) Chapter 5

- The Election Commission issued Political Parties Registration Bylaws, which set the registration fee for each political candidate at 500,000 kyat (US\$500), the equivalent of approximately one year's salary of an average Burmese civil servant or factory worker.¹³

Restrictions continue

The SPDC also continued to impose restrictions on the freedom of information and assembly:

- The SPDC Censorship Board barred private news outlets from publishing any comment or analysis of the election laws that did not conform to the regime's views.¹⁴ However, the SPDC allowed state-run newspapers and newspapers close to the junta to run commentaries in favor of the election laws.¹⁵
- SPDC authorities prevented some NLD offices from reopening in Mandalay Division and Arakan State.¹⁶ On 10 March, unknown individuals demolished an NLD office in Akyab, Arakan State.¹⁷
- On 17 March, the SPDC Censorship Board issued an order that forces registered political parties to register with the Board for permission to print election-related material. According to the order, party literature cannot criticize the military or the SPDC, and must not disturb "law and order and tranquility" of the nation.¹⁸

Other election news in brief

- **9 March:** SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein and two ethnic-Shan SPDC Army officials campaigned for the elections in Muse, Northern Shan State.¹⁹
- **11 March:**
 - The SPDC declared the 1990 polls null and void because they did not comply with the newly-enacted election laws.²⁰
 - Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called on the Burmese people to respond to the "unjust" SPDC election laws.²¹
 - The SPDC allowed the NLD to reopen an estimated 300 regional party offices that had been closed since May 2003.²²
- **17 March:** SPDC Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig Gen Phone Swe held meetings with local Muslim leaders and USDA officials to discuss the elections in Maungdaw, Arakan State.²³
- **17 March:** Leaflets condemning the SPDC polls and the 2008 constitution were distributed at road intersections and bus stops in some Rangoon townships.²⁴
- **22 March:** Pro-junta 88 Generation Students (Union of Myanmar) and Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics parties filed their registration papers to participate in the upcoming elections.²⁵
- **27 March:** In his Armed Forces Day speech in Naypyidaw, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe said that the upcoming elections would be free and fair.²⁶ Than Shwe warned political parties against "engaging in divisive acts that lead to disunity" and said that the armed forces can take part in politics "whenever the need arises."²⁷
- **29 March:** Pro-junta National Unity Party filed registration papers to participate in the upcoming elections.²⁸
- **30 March:** Democratic Party filed registration papers to participate in the upcoming elections.²⁹
- **31 March:** Karen People's Party filed registration papers to participate in the upcoming elections.³⁰

¹³ Irrawaddy (18 Mar 10) Newly-registered Parties Face Financing Problems; Reuters (10 Mar 10) Western sanctions fuel rare strikes in Myanmar

¹⁴ Mizzima News (12 Mar 10) Election analysis barred in Burmese publications; Irrawaddy (13 Mar 10) Junta Bans Election News; DVB (17 Mar 10) Election views blocked in Burmese media

¹⁵ AP (21 Mar 10) Myanmar state paper blasts election law critics; DVB (17 Mar 10) Election views blocked in Burmese media

¹⁶ Mizzima News (11 Mar 10) One third of NLD offices reopen; Narinjara News (12 Mar 10) Two NLD Offices Open in Arakan State

¹⁷ Narinjara News (12 Mar 10) NLD Office In Arakan State Demolished

¹⁸ Irrawaddy (26 Mar 10) Censorship Board Issues Political Parties Order; Mizzima News (25 Mar 10) Party literature cannot criticize military: Junta

¹⁹ SHAN (11 Mar 10) Junta tries to win over people with ethnic officers

²⁰ Reuters (11 Mar 10) Myanmar junta annuls election held 20 years ago

²¹ AFP (11 Mar 10) Myanmar's Suu Kyi calls for united response to 'unjust' law

²² Reuters (11 Mar 10) Myanmar lets Suu Kyi's party reopen regional offices; Irrawaddy (12 Mar 10) About 300 NLD Branch Offices Reopened

²³ Narinjara News (18 Mar 10) Deputy Home Minister Arrives in Maungdaw for Election Campaign

²⁴ Mizzima News (18 Mar 10) Leaflets distributed in Rangoon condemning 2010 polls

²⁵ NLM (26 Mar 10) Union Election Commission accepting applications

²⁶ UPI (27 Mar 10) Shwe vows fair elections in Myanmar

²⁷ AP (27 Mar 10) Myanmar junta chief sets ground rules for polls; Reuters (27 Mar 10) Myanmar junta chief warns against "divisive acts"; Straits Times (28 Mar 10) Junta to keep political role; UPI (27 Mar 10) Shwe vows fair elections in Myanmar

²⁸ NLM (30 Mar 10) Continued existence as political party applied

²⁹ NLM (31 Mar 10) Those wishing to form political party submit application

Burmese groups condemn SPDC election laws

- **11 March:**
 - “The election law is terrible. It bans Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from participating in her political party and the election.” - Committee Representing the Peoples' Parliament (CRPP) Secretary Aye Thar Aung.³¹
 - “[...] [T]he NLD is not at all happy and not satisfied with the Electoral Law.” - NLD spokesperson Nyan Win.³²
 - “We will not participate in the election as our leaders have been detained in prison. [...] This election law is biased. It is not based on the people's wishes. If this were a move to real democracy, then Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic leaders who were elected by the people should be able to participate.” - Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) spokesperson Sai Leik.³³
 - “The UNA will not participate at election. [...] There is discrimination in this election law unlike the 1990 election law.” - United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) spokesperson Pu Cin Sian Thang.³⁴
- **13 March:** “We [...] denounce the [SPDC election laws] as they are completely devoid of fairness.” - National Democratic Front (NDF) statement.³⁵
- **16 March:** “All these election laws are based on the unjust and legally unapproved 2008 constitution, and we feel that the coming elections cannot be free and fair.” - UNA letter to UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon.³⁶
- **16 March:** “The [SPDC election] Laws are totally undemocratic and unfair.” - Karen National Union (KNU) statement.³⁷
- **22 March:** “The junta are holding an election because their main political goal is to supersede the 1990 election result that gave the NLD victory and legalize their military rule.” - New Mon State Party (NMSP) Secretary Nai Hang Thar.³⁸

International reactions to the SPDC election laws

- ASEAN** “The new regulations were regrettable because the poll should be inclusive. The new regulation may undermine the poll because it will result in an election that fails inclusivity.” - Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah, 12 March.³⁹
- “The junta [...] should no longer create new laws or anything to bar Suu Kyi.” - Indonesian MP Muhammad Najib, 12 March.⁴⁰
- “Unless they release Aung San Suu Kyi and allow her and her party to participate in elections, it's a complete farce and therefore contrary to their roadmap to democracy.” - Philippines Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, 11 March.⁴¹
- UN** “Under these current conditions, elections in Myanmar cannot be considered credible.” - UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana, 15 March.⁴²
- “It is frustrating and disappointing that we have not seen the progress we expected. The current electoral laws do not measure up to what is needed.” - UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon, 25 March.⁴³
- “Without full participation, including by the some 2,100 prisoners of conscience, and an environment that allows people and parties to engage in the range of electoral activities, the elections cannot be credible.” - UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon, 25 March.⁴⁴
- “[The Human Rights Council] expresses regret and concern that the newly adopted electoral laws do not meet the expectations of the international community regarding what is needed for an inclusive political process.” - Human Rights Council, 26 March.⁴⁵

³⁰ NLM (01 Apr 10) Those wishing to form political party submit application

³¹ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 10) Ethnic Leaders To Boycott Election

³² Mizzima News (11 Mar 10) Burmese opposition displeased with Electoral Law

³³ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 10) Ethnic Leaders To Boycott Election

³⁴ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 10) Ethnic Leaders To Boycott Election

³⁵ NDF (13 Mar 10) NDF Statement on Military Clique's Election Laws

³⁶ Kaowao News (18 Mar 10) UNA calls for a free and fair 2010 Election

³⁷ KNU (16 Mar 10) KNU Statement on SPDC's 2010 Election Law

³⁸ Irrawaddy (22 Mar 10) New Mon Party to Join Election

³⁹ Jakarta Post (12 Mar 10) Indonesia hits out at Myanmar junta over new poll regulation

⁴⁰ Jakarta Post (12 Mar 10) Indonesia hits out at Myanmar junta over new poll regulation

⁴¹ Business Mirror (Philippines) (11 Mar 10) New Burma election law 'a farce'

⁴² Reuters (15 Mar 10) Myanmar elections "not credible" - U.N. envoy

⁴³ CNN (26 Mar 10) U.N. critical of Myanmar election process; Mizzima News (26 Mar 10) Burma faces critical challenges: Ban

⁴⁴ UN News Center (25 Mar 10) Upcoming polls in Myanmar must be transparent, say Ban and Group of Friends

⁴⁵ HRC, 13th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 19 March 2009, UN Doc A/HRC/13/L.15

- US** “I think it would be fair to say what we have seen so far is disappointing and regrettable.” - US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, 10 March.⁴⁶
- “The political party registration law makes a mockery of the democratic process and ensures the upcoming election will be devoid of credibility. We are deeply disappointed with the political party law which excludes all of Burma’s 2,000 political prisoners from political participation. This is step in the wrong direction.” - US State Department spokesman P J Crowley, 10 March.⁴⁷
- “We were clearly disappointed by them [the SPDC election laws]. It by no means does what Burma has to do in terms of opening up its political process and having meaningful dialogue with parties, including Aung San Suu Kyi’s, as well as the various ethnic groups within Burmese society.” - US State Department spokesman P J Crowley, 26 March.⁴⁸
- UK** “[The British government is] concerned at the implications of the laws we've seen so far, and regret that they are not based on genuine and inclusive dialogue between the regime, opposition and ethnic groups. Our position remains that elections in Burma will not be credible unless such dialogue takes place.” - UK Foreign Office Minister Ivan Lewis, 10 March.⁴⁹
- “Burma has ignored the demands of the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General, the US, EU and its own neighbors by imposing restrictive and unfair terms on elections. The targeting of Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD is particularly vindictive and callous.” - UK PM Gordon Brown, 15 March.⁵⁰
- “[T]he electoral laws [...] fall well short of what the international community expected in a free and fair process and fell short of the expectations set out in previous statements by the Security Council, which had highlighted the importance of releasing all political prisoners, of establishing a national dialogue and creating the right conditions for reconciliation. By contrast, we believe that these laws set up a process which is not conducive to free and fair elections later this year, and in many ways, seemed designed to target Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD opposition party and to make it very difficult for them to register for the elections.” - UK Ambassador to the UN Mark Lyall Grant, 24 March.⁵¹
- “The instability that could be caused by a flawed electoral process is a threat to international peace and security.” - UK Ambassador to the UN Mark Lyall Grant, 24 March.⁵²
- Canada** “Canada is deeply concerned by the new election laws unveiled by the Burmese regime this week. [...] what we have seen to date suggests that the Burmese regime is resolutely failing to deliver on its promise of free and fair elections this year.” - Canada FM Lawrence Cannon, 11 March.⁵³
- “Elements of the laws point to a deliberate effort by Burmese military leaders to prevent legitimate democratic actors from participating in the promised elections.” - Canada FM Lawrence Cannon, 11 March.⁵⁴
- “We are very disappointed with the electoral laws, which exclude Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,100 political prisoners from political participation.” - Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Burma, 15 March.⁵⁵
- Australia** “[O]n the basis of the publication of these electoral laws, I have very grave reservations as to whether it is possible for an election to be conducted appropriately in Burma with the full, free and fair participation of all those concerned. I very much regret this development. We had in some respects hoped very much that the authorities were more completely embracing a genuine return to democracy. This is a disappointment [...]” - Australia FM Stephen Smith, 16 March.⁵⁶
- Japan** “This clearly differs from a free election where all stakeholders can participate, such as Japan wishes.” - Japan FM Katsuya Okada, 26 March.⁵⁷
- India** “Unless Suu Kyi is allowed to participate the electoral laws would have no credibility and not be counted as free and fair.” - Indian MP Sharad Joshi, 17 March.⁵⁸

⁴⁶ AFP (10 Mar 10) US says Myanmar election law 'disappointing, regrettable

⁴⁷ AFP (10 Mar 10) Myanmar polls 'devoid of credibility': US

⁴⁸ Irrawaddy (27 Mar 10) US Ready to Engage in Military Dialogue with Burma: Official

⁴⁹ Mizzima News (12 Mar 10) World Reacts to Burma election laws

⁵⁰ Number 10.gov.uk (15 Mar 10) PM calls election terms in Burma “restrictive and unfair”

⁵¹ Irrawaddy (25 Mar 10) UNSC Differences Emerge after Burma Briefing

⁵² Reuters (25 Mar 10) U.N.'s Ban frustrated and disappointed over Myanmar

⁵³ Canada Ministry of Foreign Affairs (11 Mar 10) Canada Deeply Concerned by Burmese Election Laws

⁵⁴ Chinland Guardian (11 Mar 10) Burma Appoints Election Commission as Canada Slams Junta

⁵⁵ CPFOB Letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe (15 Mar 10)

⁵⁶ Australian Minister For Foreign Affairs (16 Mar 10) Question Without Notice – Subject: Burma

⁵⁷ Irrawaddy (29 Mar 10) Junta on Collision Course with Asia

⁵⁸ Mizzima News (17 Mar 20) Opposition urges India to take stand on Burmese polls

“The electoral laws enacted on 8th March 2010 are extremely undemocratic. We don’t believe the election held under such a law meets any democratic norms. It will not resolve the problems of Burma.” - Indian Parliamentarians’ Forum for Democracy in Burma, 17 March.⁵⁹

China “These are the internal affairs of Myanmar, which need to be properly resolved by the government and people of Myanmar.” - Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang.⁶⁰

“[The] general election [...] is a matter of sovereign state, so that should be respected, so this principle applies to the case in Myanmar. [The election] is a very important step in the process of national reconciliation, democracy. It is very important for the international community and the Security Council to help Myanmar promote a constructive, healthy environment conducive to the coming general election.” - China Ambassador to the UN Li Baodong, 24 March.⁶¹

INSIDE BURMA

Ethnic tension escalates

In March, the SPDC intensified its pressure on the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and United Wa State Army (UWSA) to transform into Border Guard Forces (BGF), which involves surrendering control of their armed forces.

On 1 March, SPDC Army Military Affairs Security Chief Lt Gen Ye Myint sent a letter to UWSA leaders saying that the group had until 10 March to unconditionally accept the junta’s BGF proposal or be labeled an unlawful organization.⁶² However, on 10 March, the SPDC’s fourth deadline expired with neither the UWSA nor the KIO accepting the junta’s terms.⁶³

Both the KIO and the UWSA issued counter-proposals to the regime’s ultimatum that would preserve some autonomy and limit SPDC Army control over their forces.⁶⁴ The SPDC rejected these offers and responded with military escalation.⁶⁵ On 15 March, sources reported that the SPDC Army sent more than 70,000 troops to areas near KIO and UWSA bases in Kachin and Shan States.⁶⁶ On 22 March, the SPDC directed all civil servants and NGO personnel to leave the areas around the UWSA headquarters Panghsang in Shan State.⁶⁷ On 29 March, at a meeting with the Mongla-based National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) in Kengtung, Eastern Shan State, Lt Gen Ye Myint extended the deadline for the NDAA to accept the SPDC’s Border Guard Force to 28 April.⁶⁸

Villagers flee to avoid forced recruitment

During the first week of March, about 200 people from several villages in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, fled to areas controlled by the New Mon State Party to avoid forced recruitment into local militias by the SPDC Army.⁶⁹

More Chinese trucks

In mid-March China started the delivery of over 300 military trucks to the SPDC through the Jiegao border crossing opposite Muse, Northern Shan State. According to sources in Muse, the trucks are to be used in military operations against ethnic groups and in the case of anti-junta demonstrations during the election period.⁷⁰

⁵⁹ Narinjara News (18 Mar 10) Protest against Burma election laws; Kachin News Group (17 Mar 10) Burmese in New Delhi protest 2010 electoral laws

⁶⁰ AFP (11 Mar 10) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi calls for united response to ‘unjust’ law

⁶¹ AFP (24 Mar 10) Security Council mulls Myanmar’s electoral laws; Xinhua (24 Mar 10) China backs world efforts to promote Middle East peace process

⁶² SHAN (09 Mar 10) War looms as junta sets latest deadline

⁶³ SHAN (11 Mar 10) War of nerves continues as deadline expires

⁶⁴ Kachin News Group (18 Mar 10) Junta wants KIO to come clean on BGF

⁶⁵ SHAN (15 Mar 10) Junta spurns Wa proposal

⁶⁶ Irrawaddy (15 Mar 10) Tension Rises Further as BGF Deadline Passes

⁶⁷ SHAN (24 Mar 10) NGO, regime employees told to leave Wa capital

⁶⁸ SHAN (31 Mar 10) BGF deadline for armed groups extended again

⁶⁹ Kaowao News (11 Mar 10) HURFOM collects a list of 200 villagers who had fled from Yephyu Township; Mizzima News (06 Mar 10) Civilians flee forced recruitment into militia groups

⁷⁰ Kachin News Group (23 Mar 10) China delivers hundreds of military trucks to Burma

SPDC still behind drug trade

On 10 March, the US State Department issued its annual Narcotics and Control Strategy Reports. As with previous reports, it noted that Burma remained a major drug-producing country and that drug trafficking was a major source of money laundering in Burma. The report stated: “[...] collusion between traffickers and Burma’s ruling military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), allows organized crime groups to function with minimal risk of interdiction.”⁷¹ The report also stated that there were credible indications that middle and lower level military leaders and regime officials, particularly those posted in border and drug-producing areas, were involved in facilitating the drug trade.⁷²

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ojea Quintana calls for criminal accountability

On 11 March, in his report to the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that the ongoing “gross and systematic violations” of human rights in the country were “the result of a state policy.” Due to the regime’s lack of accountability for those abuses, Ojea Quintana made the unprecedented recommendation that the UN consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the SPDC. He also called for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the 2,100 political prisoners in Burma.⁷³

Australia and the UK expressed support for Ojea Quintana’s call for a Commission of Inquiry.⁷⁴ Pro-democracy organizations inside and outside Burma also backed the recommendation.⁷⁵

On 2 March, at the UN Headquarters in New York, 12 women from Burma testified before the International Tribunal on Crimes Against the Women of Burma about human rights abuses committed against them by SPDC officials.⁷⁶ The Tribunal is comprised of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and human rights experts. On 3 March, after hearing the testimony, the Tribunal strongly urged the UN Security Council to refer the SPDC to the International Criminal Court.⁷⁷

Human Rights Council condemns SPDC

On 26 March, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution that condemned the SPDC’s “systematic and gross” violations of human rights, including disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture of prisoners, and recruitment of child soldiers.⁷⁸ It was the 21st resolution passed by the Geneva-based body against Burma’s military regime since 1992.

The resolution called on the junta to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners ahead of the elections. It also urged the junta to “ensure a free, transparent, fair electoral process which allows

⁷¹ US Department of State (Mar 10) Narcotics Control Strategy Report Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes

⁷² US Department of State (Mar 10) Narcotics Control Strategy Report Volume I, Drug and Chemical Control

⁷³ Reuters (11 Mar 10) U.N. rights envoy seeks Myanmar war crimes inquiry; AFP (11 Mar 10) Myanmar abuse may be crimes against humanity: UN expert; AFP (12 Mar 10) UN urges war crimes probe in Myanmar; DVB (11 Mar 10) Burma war crimes probe gets UN backing; Irrawaddy (11 Mar 10) Quintana Recommends UN War Crimes Commission on Burma; Irrawaddy (11 Mar 10) Quintana Recommends UN War Crimes Commission on Burma

⁷⁴ Human Rights Council (15 Mar 10) Human Rights Council considers Human Rights situations in Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Myanmar; Irrawaddy (17 Mar 10) Australia Supports Considering UN Commission of Inquiry; Inner City Press (24 Mar 10) UK Favors Sending Myanmar to ICC, China Says It’s Sovereign, UN’s Ban Defers

⁷⁵ KNU (14 Mar 10) Press Release on Recommendation of UN Special Rapporteur; European Karen Network (15 Mar 10) Human Rights Council Burma debate Monday – must approve commission of inquiry; Narinjara News (24 Mar 10) Concerns expressed on Burma Human Rights Situation; Mizzima News (26 Mar 10) Burma faces critical challenges: Ban

⁷⁶ DVB (04 Mar 10) Burmese women testify at the UN

⁷⁷ Nobel Women’s Initiative (03 Mar 10) International Tribunal On Burma Calls For End To Impunity Of Military Regime

⁷⁸ HRC, 13th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 19 March 2009, UN Doc A/HRC/13/L.15; Reuters (26 Mar 10) U.N. rights forum condemns Myanmar, extends probe

for the participation of all voters, all political parties.” The resolution also extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana by one year.⁷⁹

UK and US deplore human rights situation in Burma

During March, the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office and the US Department of State both issued their annual human rights reports and found that the human rights conditions in Burma remained dismal. The UK report said that the human rights situation in Burma continued its downward trend in 2009 and that daily life in Burma continued to be characterized by the denial of almost all fundamental rights.⁸⁰ The US report noted that the regime continued to violate the rights of its citizens and committed severe human rights abuses.⁸¹

In and out of jail

- **1 March:** Police in Buthidaung, Arakan State, arrested Kyaw Maung aka Nurul Haque, 48, for having attempted to talk with UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana on 17 February. On 4 March, a court in Buthidaung sentenced Kyaw Maung to six months in jail and a 300,000-kyat (US\$300) fine.⁸²
- **5 March:** SPDC released Pho Phyu, a lawyer who had been jailed for defending labor rights activist Zaw Htay.⁸³
- **18 March:** The SPDC released and deported Burma-born US citizen Nyi Nyi Aung aka Kyaw Zaw Lwin.⁸⁴
- **30 March:** A court in Rangoon’s Tamwe Township sentenced NLD youth leader Kyaw Myo Naing aka Kyaw Gyi to two years in prison under the Unlawful Association Act. The SPDC had already sentenced him to two years in prison under the Electronic Act on 20 November 2009.⁸⁵

Freedom of information

On 12 March, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) listed Burma and 11 other countries as “Enemies of the Internet.”⁸⁶ RSF said that Internet repression in Burma was “amongst the strictest in the world.” RSF accused the SPDC of being “determined to use any means necessary to prevent their citizens from having access to the Internet.”⁸⁷

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya humanitarian crisis intensifies

In March, Bangladeshi authorities arrested 115 Rohingya and pushed 91 back to Burma.⁸⁸ Rights groups continued to highlight the plight of stateless Rohingya from Arakan State as Rohingya resumed fleeing Burma and Bangladesh by boat.

On 9 March, Physicians for Human Rights released a report titled “Stateless and Starving: Persecuted Rohingya Flee Burma and Starve in Bangladesh.” The report warned that the tens of thousands of Rohingya in the settlement near the Kutupalong refugee camp were facing starvation.⁸⁹

⁷⁹ HRC, 13th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 19 March 2009, UN Doc A/HRC/13/L.15; Reuters (26 Mar 10) U.N. rights forum condemns Myanmar, extends probe

⁸⁰ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mar 10) Annual Report on Human Rights 2009

⁸¹ US Department of State (11 Mar 10) 2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

⁸² Kaladan News (05 Mar 10) Rohingya jailed for trying to talk to UN envoy

⁸³ Mizzima News (06 Mar 10) Lawyer arrested for defending labour activist freed

⁸⁴ Reuters (18 Mar 10) Myanmar deports jailed Burmese-American; AFP (18 Mar 10) Myanmar releases jailed US activist; officials; AFP (18 Mar 10) Myanmar to release US man jailed for fraud; BBC (18 Mar 10) Burma releases jailed US activist Nyi Nyi Aung; NYT (18 Mar 10) Myanmar frees jailed American; VOA (18 Mar 10) Burmese-American Jailed for Fraud Released

⁸⁵ Mizzima News (31 Mar 10) Fresh sentence for NLD youth leader

⁸⁶ AP (12 Mar 10) Report Finds Online Censorship More Sophisticated

⁸⁷ DVB (12 Mar 10) Burma an ‘enemy of the internet’

⁸⁸ Kaladan News (04 Mar 10) Forty eight prisoners handed over to Nasaka today; Kaladan News (15 Mar 10) Thirty seven Arakanese Rohingya pushed back to Burma; Kaladan News (17 Mar 10) Twelve Arakanese Rohingyas arrested on Indo-Bangla border; Kaladan News (18 Mar 10) BDR steps up restriction on movement of refugees; Kaladan News (30 Mar 10) Ten Rohingya pushed back to Burma

On 8 March, Thai authorities refused to grant safe haven to 93 Rohingya who reached Ranong by boat from Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, after spending more than 30 days at sea.⁹⁰ On 9 March, they arrived in Kedah State, Malaysia, where Malaysian immigration officials remanded them to the UNHCR.⁹¹

270,000 Burmese migrants in Thailand still not verified

Thailand pressed on with its nationality verification process, which put hundreds of thousands of registered Burmese migrants at risk of deportation. On 4 March, the Thai government extended the deadline to 31 March for migrants to enter the nationality verification process.⁹² On 24 March, Thailand's Ministry of Labor reported that of the over one million registered Burmese migrants in Thailand, more than 270,000 had still not entered the nationality verification process.⁹³ In addition, there are around 1.5 million unregistered Burmese migrants who are ineligible for nationality verification and who are under constant threat of deportation.⁹⁴

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UNSC discusses SPDC election laws

On 24 March, the UN Security Council convened a closed door session on 24 March to discuss the SPDC's election laws⁹⁵ On 25 March, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon's 'Group of Friends' on Burma met for the same reason.⁹⁶ Neither meeting produced any tangible outcomes. China maintained its role as supporting the SPDC. China's Ambassador Li Baodong said that a country's election process was the matter of a sovereign state.⁹⁷ [See above *International reactions to the SPDC election laws*] The UK Ambassador to the UN Mark Lyall Grant was the most strident in his condemnation of the SPDC. Grant said that the instability that could be caused in Burma by a flawed electoral process was a threat to international peace and security.⁹⁸

ECONOMY

Strikes continue

Since 8 February, workers from 20 factories in Rangoon have gone on strike.⁹⁹ In March, around 6,000 workers from at least six factories in the former capital went on strike to protest low wages and poor working conditions.

On 3 March, about 1,500 workers from Grand Royal beverage factory, Super Garment and Kaunggyi Minglar textile factories in Rangoon's Shwepithar Township went on strike to demand better wages, public holidays and overtime pay.¹⁰⁰ The workers returned to their factories on 4 March after they reached a compromise with factory owners.¹⁰¹

⁸⁹ Boston Globe (09 Mar 10) Burmese refugees in Bangladesh suffer a shortage of food, care

⁹⁰ Kaladan News (10 Mar 10) Nearly 100-boat people reach Thailand; AFP (15 Mar 10) Rohingya chased out of waters

⁹¹ AFP (15 Mar 10) Rohingya chased out of waters; AFP (14 Mar 10) Malaysia 'detains 93 Myanmar boat people'; Kaladan News (16 Mar 10) First batch of Arakanese Rohingya boat-people reach Malaysia;

⁹² Irrawaddy (03 Mar 10) Thousands of Burmese Migrants Miss NV Deadline; DVB (03 Mar 10) Imminent Thai deportation condemned

⁹³ Thai Ministry of Labor Office of Irregular Workers Administration (24 Mar 10) Number of registered migrants and nationality verification

⁹⁴ Irrawaddy (07 Oct 09) UN Report Speaks Up for Migrant Workers; DVB (03 Mar 10) Imminent Thai deportation condemned

⁹⁵ Irrawaddy (25 Mar 10) UNSC Differences Emerge after Burma Briefing

⁹⁶ DVB (26 Mar 10) Junta urged to free political prisoners

⁹⁷ Reuters (25 Mar 10) U.N.'s Ban frustrated and disappointed over Myanmar

⁹⁸ Reuters (25 Mar 10) U.N.'s Ban frustrated and disappointed over Myanmar

⁹⁹ Reuters (10 Mar 10) Western sanctions fuel rare strikes in Myanmar

¹⁰⁰ Mizzima News (03 Mar 10) Distillery workers demand more wage; Irrawaddy (03 Mar 10) Workers Stage Strike at Rangoon Clothing Factory; Mizzima News (05 Mar 10) Rangoon workers quit demonstration

¹⁰¹ Mizzima News (05 Mar 10) Rangoon workers quit demonstration; DVB (06 Mar 10) Rangoon strike ends but unrest prevails

On 6 March, 4,000 workers from two garment factories in Rangoon's South Dagon Township staged a sit-in strike to demand better pay.¹⁰² On 7 March, the strike reportedly ended after workers reached a compromise with factory management.¹⁰³ On 9 March, 500 workers from shoe and garment factories in Rangoon staged sit-in strikes to demand better wages.¹⁰⁴

Telecom giant sells spy technology to SPDC

In late March, French media reported that the Paris-based company Alcatel-Lucent had provided the SPDC with technology that would allow the regime to monitor e-mails and other internet communication.¹⁰⁵ The deal was made via the firm's Chinese subsidiary Shanghai Bell Alcatel Business Systems.¹⁰⁶

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MARCH

1	SPDC authorities in Muse, Northern Shan State, confiscate land and houses in several villages on the China-Burma border.
5	Singapore FM George Yeo calls on the SPDC to release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to allow her to participate in free and fair elections.
6	State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reports that more bird flu cases have been found in Northwest Sagaing Division.
7	Bangladesh announces it will import 25,000 tons of rice from Burma to meet the growing demand.
8	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon says that he sent a letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to voice concern about the credibility of the elections.
9	Thailand Burma Border Consortium says that SPDC's constitution's failure to address "ethnic aspirations" could mean that conflict in the border areas will continue for "many more years to come."
9	SPDC Army soldiers from LIB 440 kill a 38-year-old man from Sha Shee Bo Village in Northern Karen State.
10	Unidentified assailants shoot and kill Liu Xiang, a liaison between the SPDC Army and the Kokang Border Guard Force in Lashio, Shan State.
10	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon renews his appeal to the SPDC to let Daw Aung San Suu Kyi take part in the upcoming elections.
11	The SPDC orders the deployment of 300 riot police in the main towns of Arakan State to prevent any form of public unrest during the issuance of the election laws.
12	The SPDC Election Commission holds its first meeting at its office in Naypyidaw.
12	Thai FM Kasit Piromya says that the SPDC elections will not be free and fair.
13	SSA-South kills 20 SPDC Army soldiers in an ambush in Namhsan Township, Shan State.
14	SPDC Army detains five KIA soldiers in Daw Hpum Yang, Kachin State.
14	A landmine explosion kills two people and wounds another 11 on a bus going from Winmaung Village to Michaungwun Village in Papun Township, Karen State.
15	SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe receives Thai Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn who is on a three-day visit to Burma.
15	SPDC Army soldiers from Pla Ko camp kill a local villager in Thandaung Township, Northern Karen State.
16	SPDC Army detains three KIA soldiers in Ngapyawtaw Village, Kachin State.
17	Hundreds of Burmese nationals demonstrate against the SPDC election laws in Delhi, India.
17	NLD sends a letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to request Daw Aung San Suu Kyi be allowed to meet with the party's CEC members.
17	Thirty-nine British MPs call on the Thai government to stop pressuring Karen refugees to return to Burma.
17	Philippines Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo says he raised his concerns about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

¹⁰² Irrawaddy (06 Mar 10) 4,000 Workers Go on Strike in Rangoon; ABC (07 Mar 10) Burmese factory strikes at foreign firms spread

¹⁰³ Irrawaddy (06 Mar 10) 4,000 Workers Go on Strike in Rangoon; ABC (07 Mar 10) Burmese factory strikes at foreign firms spread

¹⁰⁴ DVB (10 Mar 10) Rangoon strikes pre-empt union call

¹⁰⁵ France 24 (26 Mar 10) Investigative documentary digs into Alcatel's involvement in Burma; Bloomberg (26 Mar 10) Alcatel-Lucent Denies Supplying Surveillance Gear to Myanmar; Irrawaddy (27 Mar 10) French Firm Secretly Worked on Junta Internet System

¹⁰⁶ DVB (29 Mar 10) French company denies 'surveillance' support; Irrawaddy (27 Mar 10) French Firm Secretly Worked on Junta Internet System

	being barred from running for election during a meeting with SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win.
19	More than 150 pro-democracy organizations call for the international community to denounce the upcoming elections.
19	About 100 activists demonstrate against the SPDC election laws in Manila, Philippines.
19	Indian police detain 68 Burmese activists for protesting the SPDC election laws outside the Burmese embassy in Delhi.
19	KNU General Secretary Zipporah Sein warns that the risk of armed conflict between ethnic nationality groups and the SPDC is at the highest level in more than two decades.
19	Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva says that he and other ASEAN members would like to see an inclusive election held in Burma.
19	A bomb planted by SPDC Army soldiers from LID 55 kills four novices and two teenage girls from Loi Namtao Village, in Mong Kung Township, Southern Shan State.
20	SPDC health officials say that swine flu is still affecting eight Townships in five Divisions and States with 36 people with flu-like symptoms being hospitalized so far during the month.
20	SPDC Army soldiers from LID 55 arrest over 20 villagers from Na Lawn Village, Mong Kung Township, Southern Shan State on suspicion of being SSA–South soldiers.
22	NLD issues a statement to reiterate their request to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to allow a meeting between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the party’s CEC members.
22	India’s Tata Motors says that it signed an agreement with the SPDC to build a heavy truck factory in Magwe Division.
22	SPDC Army soldiers from LIB 369 attack Kaw Hta village, Ler Doh Township, Pegu Division, burn nine homes, and kill a 37-year-old woman and two five-year-old children.
24	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon’s Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar briefs UN Security Council members on Burma.
25	In testimony before the US Congress, Commander of the US Pacific Command Admiral Robert Willard says that the SPDC presents challenges to regional stability.
26	SPDC authorities deport CNN correspondent Dan Rivers.
27	About 30 Rakhine pro-democratic activists demonstrate against the SPDC election laws in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
27	Five Burmese veteran politicians send a letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to demand a review of the 2008 constitution and changes to junta’s election laws.
27	NLD marks Revolution Day with a ceremony at the party headquarters in Rangoon. Around 300 people, including NLD members, veteran politicians, ethnic representatives, and foreign diplomats attend the event.
28	The ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights convenes in Jakarta for its first meeting.
29	During raids in the border towns of Teknaf, Cox’s Bazaar, and Sawkawriya, Bangladeshi authorities seize 200 amphetamine tablets, 1.4 kilos of heroin, and 1.1 kilos of marijuana.
29	Civil society groups from the Solidarity for Asian Peoples Advocacy Taskforce on Asean Human Rights say that ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights refused to meet with representatives of the group.
30	UK PM Gordon Brown says the SPDC has “squandered” the opportunity for national reconciliation and calls on the SPDC to allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate.
30	Australia FM Stephen Smith says that the SPDC elections would only be fair if the NLD can take part.
30	Nine US Senators call on the Obama administration to impose tougher sanctions on the SPDC in an effort to force the SPDC to repeal its election laws.
30	G8 FMs call for the SPDC elections to be transparent, fully inclusive, free, and fair. They also call on SPDC to enable full democratic participation in the election and to release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
31	Sixty pro-democracy activists demonstrate in Canberra, Australia, against the SPDC election laws.
31	Burmese pro-democracy activists demonstrate in front of the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo to protest China’s support for the SPDC.
31	The President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians Alberto Pimentel Jr. says that the SPDC elections should be free, fair, credible, and inclusive.
31	Indonesia FM Marty Natalegawa tells SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win that Jakarta expects the regime to “uphold its commitment to have an election that allows all parties to take part.”

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<http://centralcontent.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/human-rights-reports/human-rights-report-2009>

“**The Role of Political Prisoners in the National Reconciliation Process**”, Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)
http://www.aappb.org/AAPP_info_release_10th_anniversary_in_English.pdf

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