

# BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE A S E A N N E T W O R K O N B U R M A  
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **President Thein Sein's bogus amnesty program releases only 55 political prisoners out of 14,578 inmates freed from prisons across Burma.**
- **Over 20 political prisoners go on a hunger strike to protest the regime's bogus amnesty and demand better prison conditions.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma says the Tatmadaw continues to commit "widespread" abuses in ethnic nationality areas and renews his call for a Commission of Inquiry into serious crimes in Burma.**
- **Conflicts between the Tatmadaw and armed ethnic groups escalate in Karen, Shan, and Kachin States. Protracted clashes in Karen State force 1,200 villagers to flee into Thailand.**
- **Regime sentences five farmers to lengthy prison terms for "trespassing" on their own land which was confiscated from them.**
- **Burma remains among the world's worst-rated countries with regard to press freedom as the regime steps up media censorship and internet restrictions.**
- **ASEAN leaders defer the regime's request to serve as the ASEAN Chair in 2014.**
- **UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon's Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar says the regime needs to do more to release political prisoners and democratize.**
- **US President Barack Obama extends sanctions against the regime.**
- **UN report says that between 1990 and 2008, for every US\$1 received in ODA, US\$4.70 exited Burma in illicit flows.**

## IN THIS ISSUE

### KEY STORY

- 1 Bogus amnesty program
- 2 Political prisoners protest
- 2 Ojea Quintana slams regime

### INSIDE BURMA

- 3 Conflict and displacement
- 4 Pro-democracy activities
- 4 NLD on tourism
- 5 Military strikes back
- 5 Food insecurity in Karen State
- 6 Regime neglects aid

### HUMAN RIGHTS

- 6 Regime jails farmers
- 6 Burma's press "Not Free"

### DISPLACEMENT

- 7 Rohingya pushed back

### INTERNATIONAL

- 7 ASEAN defers regime's bid
- 7 ASEAN civil society hijacked
- 8 Nambiar visits Burma
- 8 US sanctions & engagement
- 8 China-Burma relations
- 9 North Korea-Burma relations

### ECONOMY

- 9 Regime's Illicit financial outflow

### 9 OTHER BURMA NEWS

### 11 REPORTS

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## KEY STORY

### Bogus amnesty keeps political prisoners behind bars

Despite repeated calls for the release of political prisoners by the international community and political parties in Burma, President Thein Sein implemented a very limited clemency that ensured that more than 2,000 political prisoners remained behind bars.

On 16 May, Thein Sein issued an order that commuted 348 death sentences to life in jail and reduced all other sentences by one year.<sup>1</sup> On 17 May, the regime released 14,578 inmates from prisons across

<sup>1</sup> AP (16 May 11) Myanmar president announces clemency for prisoners; NLM (17 May 11) Government grants amnesty for prisoners; AFP (17 May 11) Myanmar announces limited cut to prison terms; Reuters (18 May 11) Myanmar fails to release political detainees; BBC (17 May 11) Burma's prison sentence reduction plan derided; DPA (17 May 11) Rights group: Myanmar's

Burma.<sup>2</sup> However, as in previous mass releases of prisoners [See Table *Most recent mass releases of prisoners*], most of those freed were common criminals.<sup>3</sup> Only 55 (or 0.4%) of those released were political prisoners.<sup>4</sup> Among those released were 27 NLD members - including former NLD MP Kyaw San and female activist Naw Ohn Hla - three journalists, and Generation Wave member Zayar Thaw.<sup>5</sup>

Most recent mass releases of prisoners			
Date	Total Prisoners	Political prisoners	%
18 Nov 2004	3,937	28	0.7%
29 Nov 2004	5,311	12	0.2%
13 Dec 2004	5,070	21	0.4%
3 Jan 2005	5,588	26	0.5%
6 Jul 2005	334	253	75.7%
3 Jan 2007	2,831	50	1.7%
23 Sep 2008	9,002	10	0.1%
20 Feb 2009	6,313	24	0.4%
17 Sep 2009	7,114	128	1.8%
16 May 2011	14,578	55	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,078</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

Regime officials, including some of Thein Sein's recently-appointed advisors, reiterated the outrageous claim that there were no political prisoners in Burma.<sup>6</sup>

### Political prisoners protest detention conditions

- **17 May:** Four female political prisoners began a weeklong hunger strike in Rangoon's Insein prison to protest the regime's amnesty program.<sup>7</sup>
- **22 May:** Seventeen more political prisoners in Insein prison went on a hunger strike and five staged a sit-in in their ward to demand better prison conditions.<sup>8</sup>
- **24 May:** Insein prison authorities placed at least seven of the striking political prisoners, including two Buddhist monks, in solitary confinement in the prison's dog kennels for two days.<sup>9</sup>
- **30 May:** Political prisoners U Gambira, Nyi Pu, Htay Aung aka Aung Myat, and Min Min Tun began a hunger strike in Kale prison, Sagaing Division, after regime authorities failed to respond to a letter that the four had sent earlier in the month to the regime's Minister of Home Affairs Ko Ko to demand better prison conditions.<sup>10</sup>

### Ojea Quintana slams regime

On 16 May, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana began a seven-day visit to Thailand to gather information about the human rights situation in Burma.<sup>11</sup> On 23 May, at a press conference held in Bangkok, Ojea Quintana said that:<sup>12</sup>

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jail sentence reductions a «joke»; DPA (16 May 11) Myanmar president announces amnesty for death row prisoners; Mizzima News (16 May 11) All Burmese prisoners' sentences reduced by one year

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar Times (23 May 11) Presidential 'amnesty' sees more than 14,000 freed

<sup>3</sup> AFP (18 May 11) No political detainees among thousands freed; Al Jazeera (17 May 11) Myanmar prisoner release fails to impress; Mizzima News (17 May 11) Former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt excluded from commutation; Kaladan News (23 May 11) 300 Rohingya prisoners released with Presidential Amnesty; Narinjara News (20 May 11) 341 Prisoners Released from Buthidaung Prison

<sup>4</sup> VOA (24 May 11) Burmese Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike; Mizzima News (20 May 11) Female political prisoners on hunger strike in Insein Prison: AAPP-B

<sup>5</sup> Mizzima News (17 May 11) 16 NLD members ordered freed from Burmese prisons; Mizzima News (19 May 11) Hip hop singer wants to meet with Suu Kyi; DVB (18 May 11) Freed hip-hop star says Burma 'regressing'; Irrawaddy (19 May 11) Burma's Amnesty Program Receives Widespread Criticism; Mizzima News (25 May 11) Three journalists released under presidential commutation

<sup>6</sup> AP (17 May 11) Myanmar frees 14,600, but few political prisoners; Myanmar Times (16 May 11) Govt has 'political will' for reform, advisers tell Nambiar

<sup>7</sup> Mizzima News (20 May 11) Female political prisoners on hunger strike in Insein Prison: AAPP-B; Mizzima News (24 May 11) Burmese political prisoners in protests likely to be transferred

<sup>8</sup> BBC (23 May 11) Burma prisoners on hunger strike at Insein jail; Mizzima News (23 May 11) 17 male political prisoners join women on hunger strike; AHN (24 May 11) Political prisoners protest in Myanmar for improved prison conditions; Irrawaddy (24 May 11) Crackdown begins on prison hunger strikers

<sup>9</sup> DVB (24 May 11) Hunger strikers put in Insein solitary; Mizzima News (24 May 11) Burmese political prisoners in protests likely to be transferred; AAPP (25 May 11) AAPP is deeply concerned over the safety of 7 political prisoners placed in solitary confinement for undertaking a hunger strike; VOA (24 May 11) Burmese Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike; Irrawaddy (25 May 11) Seven hunger strikers sent to 'dog cells'; Mizzima News (26 May 11) Burmese political prisoners in Insein Prison protest allowed visitors

<sup>10</sup> DVB (30 May 11) Hunger strike spreads to remote jails; DVB (16 May 11) Jailed MPs, monks lobby home minister; Mizzima News (23 May 11) 17 male political prisoners join women on hunger strike; DVB (24 May 11) Hunger strikers put in Insein solitary; Irrawaddy (30 May 11) Imprisoned Saffron Revolution Leader on Hunger Strike

<sup>11</sup> OHCHR (23 May 11) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana

- In ethnic nationality areas, the Tatmadaw continued to commit “widespread” human rights abuses, including land confiscation, forced labor, internal displacement, extrajudicial killings, and sexual violence. Abuses remained “essentially unaddressed” by regime authorities.
- A Commission of Inquiry (CoI) into serious international crimes in Burma should be an instrument to bring about national reconciliation and accountability and prevent ongoing human rights abuses. Ojea Quintana said he would continue to push for the establishment of a CoI at the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly.
- The electoral process excluded several significant ethnic and opposition groups and, as a result, the new parliament was too weak institutionally to address the “complex issue” of human rights abuses in ethnic nationality areas.
- The regime’s commutation of prison sentences by a year “did not provide the strong signal of commitment to national reconciliation.” Ojea Quintana called for “a concrete and time-bound plan for the systematic release of all prisoners of conscience.”

## INSIDE BURMA

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### Conflict and displacement continues in Eastern Burma

In May, conflicts between the Tatmadaw and armed ethnic groups escalated in Karen, Shan, and Kachin States.

#### Karen State

Clashes between joint forces of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) with Tatmadaw soldiers in Kyainnseikyi Township that began in late April intensified in the first week of May. The hostilities caused over one thousand civilians to flee to Thailand only to be forced back to Burma by Thai authorities a few days later.<sup>13</sup>

- **1-4 May:** A four-day-long battle between KNLA and Tatmadaw troops forced 1,200 villagers from Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State to flee across the Thai border into Thailand’s Tak Province.<sup>14</sup>
- **11 May:** Joint forces of the DKBA and KNLA killed a Tatmadaw battalion commander in one of four clashes that took place in Kawkareik Township, Karen State.<sup>15</sup>
- **29 May:** Twenty families from Mae Thasa Village, Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State, arrived at the Thai-Burma border town of Three Pagodas Pass after fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA troops forced them to flee their homes.<sup>16</sup>

#### Shan State

In May, Tatmadaw activities in Shan State involved significant troop and militia deployment against the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).<sup>17</sup> On 21 May, the SSA-N and the SSA-S responded to Tatmadaw aggression by merging into one armed force.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> OHCHR (23 May 11) Myanmar: situation of ethnic minority groups restricts transition to democracy - UN Special Rapporteur; UN News Center (23 May 11) Treatment of ethnic minorities in Myanmar limiting path to democracy - UN expert; AP (23 May 11) UN envoy: Myanmar does little to stop rights abuse; DPA (23 May 11) UN envoy says inquiry needed over rights abuses by Myanmar; Chinland Guardian (23 May 11) Violence Continues in Ethnic Areas, says UN Special Rapporteur; Irrawaddy (23 May 11) UN Envoy Doubts Burma Govt Commitment; Chinland Guardian (23 May 11) Violence Continues in Ethnic Areas, says UN Special Rapporteur

<sup>13</sup> Irrawaddy (06 May 11) Karen Refugees Sent Back to Burma

<sup>14</sup> Irrawaddy (04 May 11) Karen State Refugees Flee Latest Clash; TAN Network (04 May 11) Burmese Karens Flee Battle into Thailand; DVB (05 May 11) Karen fighting forces 700 to flee

<sup>15</sup> DVB (12 May 11) Karen hospital hit by artillery fire

<sup>16</sup> IMNA (30 May 11) Villagers Flee Fighting in Mae Thasa Village

<sup>17</sup> IMNA (03 May 11) Burmese Army Changes Focus to the North; Three Pagodas Pass Calms Down; SHAN (18 May 11) Militia units assigned to keep their eyes on rebel movements; SHAN (05 May 11) Newsflash; SHAN (13 May 11) Offensive against the SSA: From 6 days to two months; SHAN (16 May 11) Junta army employs more militias against Shan rebels; SHAN (18 May 11) Militia units assigned to keep their eyes on rebel movements; Kachin News Group (30 May 11) Two battalions of Burmese reinforcements deployed near KIA position

<sup>18</sup> DVB (24 May 11) Factional Shan armies bid for unity

- **5 May:** Tatmadaw forces killed one UWSA soldier in an attack on a truck carrying UWSA soldiers from the 171st Military Region in Mongton Township.<sup>19</sup>
- **9 May:** SSA-S troops killed nine Tatmadaw soldiers in a clash with LIB 442 in Mongkeung Township.<sup>20</sup>
- **12 May:** SSA-N forces attacked Tatmadaw troops from LIB 514.<sup>21</sup>

### **Kachin State**

In Kachin State, hostilities erupted between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Tatmadaw, as the regime deployed additional troops into KIA-controlled areas.<sup>22</sup> In addition, on 19 May, the Tatmadaw issued a 25 May deadline for the removal of KIA forces from Shwegu Township.<sup>23</sup> The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) countered with its own ultimatum that Tatmadaw forces in Shwegu Township withdraw before 26 May.<sup>24</sup> Both messages were ignored, and tensions between the two groups remained high.<sup>25</sup>

- **18 May:**
  - KIA Battalion 11 forces killed four Tatmadaw soldiers in a clash at Kasung Pa between Namti and Myitkyina.<sup>26</sup>
  - KIA Battalion 25 detained six Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB 320.<sup>27</sup>
  - Soldiers from Tatmadaw LIB 320 fired three mortar shells into KIA Brigade 5 territory in Bhamo Township.<sup>28</sup>
  - Tatmadaw forces launched mortar shells at a KIA outpost of in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State.<sup>29</sup>
- **27 May:** KIA Brigade 3 clashed with Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 105 in Mansi Township.<sup>30</sup>

### **Pro-democracy activities continue despite harassment**

In May, the NLD continued to carry out its social activities across Burma.<sup>31</sup> The regime responded by forcing two NLD-affiliated schools in Rangoon to relocate:

- **12 May:** It was reported that two days after being forced to move for the second time in less than four months, regime authorities pressured the landlord to evict the Bayda Institute from its premises in Thingangyun Township.<sup>32</sup>
- **22 May:** Regime's Military Affairs Security (MAS) personnel pressured the landlord to evict the Mother's Home school from its premises in North Dagon Township.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the NLD continued to spearhead political activities across Burma:

- The NLD-promoted petition campaign that called for the release of all political prisoners, a ceasefire in ethnic areas, and the start of national reconciliation talks [See *April 2011 Burma Bulletin*] continued to receive signatures throughout the country.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>19</sup> SHAN (12 May 11) Wa fighters shot by Burma Army, killing one

<sup>20</sup> SHAN (11 May 11) Burma Army officers killed in Shan ambush

<sup>21</sup> SHAN (12 May 11) Newsflash

<sup>22</sup> SHAN (24 May 11) Newsflash; Kachin News Group (30 May 11) Two battalions of Burmese reinforcements deployed near KIA position

<sup>23</sup> Kachin Nws Group (19 May 11) Burmese army sets deadline for removal of the KIA's Battalion 5

<sup>24</sup> Mizzima News (19 May 11) Kachin armed group warns government to withdraw troops

<sup>25</sup> Kachin News Group (24 May 11) Four Burmese soldiers killed in KIA Battalion 11 area; Mizzima News (19 May 11) Kachin armed group warns government to withdraw troops; Kachin News Group (27 May 11) First gunfire in N. Burma after KIA deadline

<sup>26</sup> Kachin News Group (24 May 11) Four Burmese soldiers killed in KIA battalion 11 area

<sup>27</sup> Kachin News Group (19 May 11) KIA detains six Burmese soldiers

<sup>28</sup> Kachin News Group (18 May 11) Civil war close between the KIA and Burmese Army

<sup>29</sup> Irrawaddy (19 May 11) Tatmadaw Fire Warning Shots at KIA

<sup>30</sup> Kachin News Group (27 May 11) First gunfire in N. Burma after KIA deadline

<sup>31</sup> NLD (03 May 11) Second batch of the Educational Training for Farmers started; Mizzima News (04 May 11) Fourth NLD charity school opens in Pegu Region; DVB (11 May 11) Jailed activists' children get school aid; NLD (16 May 11) Media training batch (1) opened

<sup>32</sup> Mizzima News (12 May 11) Bayda Institute asked to leave premises—again and again

<sup>33</sup> Irrawaddy (23 May 11) Mother School Forced to Close; Mizzima News (25 May 11) NLD-affiliated free school faces difficulty finding new location

<sup>34</sup> Mizzima News (03 May 11) 10,000 people sign appeal letter to Burmese president; NLD (16 May 11) Pyapon Township NLD youth met; Mizzima News (06 May 11) Free Funeral Service members join campaign to release political prisoners; Narinjara News (09 May 11) NLD Collects 5,000 Signatures in Arakan for Political Prisoners

- **17 May:** About 30 activists, including NLD youth members, participated in a prayer vigil at Rangoon's Shwedagon pagoda for the release of political prisoners. On the same day, about 100 activists, including NLD CEC member Win Tin, held a similar ceremony in Rangoon's North Dagon Township.<sup>35</sup>
- **27 May:** About 250 people, including NLD members and recently-released political prisoners, participated in a ceremony that marked the anniversary of the party's victory in the 1990 elections at their headquarters in Rangoon.<sup>36</sup>
- **30 May:** About 150 NLD members held an alms offering ceremony at Mandalay's Khinmakan monastery to mark the eighth anniversary of the Depayin massacre.<sup>37</sup>

### **NLD calls for responsible tourism**

After releasing position papers on foreign investment and economic sanctions [See *January and February 2011 Burma Bulletins*], on 20 May the NLD published a five-page report to present its stance on tourism in Burma.<sup>38</sup> The report said that in order to reap the economic benefits of a "vibrant tourist industry," the NLD would welcome visitors "who are keen to promote the welfare of the common people and the conservation of the environment."<sup>39</sup> However, the report also noted:<sup>40</sup>

- Human rights abuses such as forced labor can be stopped only through appropriate political measures and not by an influx of foreign visitors.
- Many of the bigger tourism related businesses are still owned by regime family members or their cronies.
- Travel agents and human rights organizations should provide information on travel agencies, hotels, and other facilities that are free from links to the regime and human rights abuses.
- Positive discrimination in favor of businesses engaged in effective outreach programs and environmental conservation should be encouraged.

### **Military strikes back**

Despite claims that after the 2010 elections Burma's ethnic nationalities would enjoy greater self-governance, the military tightened its grip on power in Arakan State:

- **3 May:** The regime stripped the Arakan State's Minister of Immigration and Religious Affairs Hla Han, a civilian, of his immigration portfolio and transferred it to Col Htein Lin, the military-appointed Minister of Security and Border Affairs for Arakan State.<sup>41</sup>
- **13 May:** Former SPDC Home Minister and retired Maj Gen Maung Oo ordered the dismissal of Aung Than Oo, the headman of the Alay Than Kyaw Village in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, because he did not participate in a pro-USDP rally.<sup>42</sup>

### **Food security plagues Karen villagers**

According to an 11 May Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) report, at least 8,885 villagers in 118 villages in Papun Township, Karen State, had already run out of food or will do so before the October harvest. The shortfall in food supplies is due to Tatmadaw attacks that have caused a mass displacement of villagers in the area. The crisis is compounded by unseasonal rain in March and April that damaged crops. In addition, the budgetary constraints of local relief organizations have exacerbated effects of the food shortages.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Mizzima News (18 May 11) Prayer ceremonies held in Rangoon for political prisoners

<sup>36</sup> NLD (28 May 11) Anniversary celebration of 1990 elections held; Irrawaddy (27 May 11) Government disrespects the people's will: Suu Kyi

<sup>37</sup> Mizzima News (30 May 11) Depayin massacre anniversary raises fears for Suu Kyi's proposed tour

<sup>38</sup> Irrawaddy (24 May 11) NLD Condemn Tourism in Burma

<sup>39</sup> NLD (20 May 11) NLD statement No 10/05/11 released on 20th May 2011 regarding tourism in Burma

<sup>40</sup> NLD (20 May 11) NLD statement No 10/05/11 released on 20th May 2011 regarding tourism in Burma

<sup>41</sup> Narinjara News (21 May 11) Arakan's Immigration Ministry Transferred to Army's Minister; Irrawaddy (25 May 11) Arakan Immigration Minister Ousted in Reshuffle

<sup>42</sup> Narinjara News (16 May 11) Village Administrator Fired by Ex-Home Minister for Missing Rally

<sup>43</sup> KHRG (11 May 11) Acute food shortages threatening 8,885 villagers in 118 villages across northern Papun District; Irrawaddy (12 May 11) Food Shortages Hit Northern Karen State

## Regime neglects aid to disaster-affected areas

Survivors of the 22 October cyclone Giri in Arakan State and the 24 March earthquake in Eastern Shan state are still in need of food and shelter.

- **12 May:** It was reported that many of the villages affected by cyclone Giri in Kyaukpyu Township, Arakan State, were facing shortages of rice after NGOs stopped distribution of rice in the area in March.<sup>44</sup>
- **27 May:** It was reported that survivors of the 24 March earthquake in Tarlay Village-tract, Kengtung Township, and Monglin Village-tract, Tachilek Township, Eastern Shan State, were still living in tarpaulin shelters. Survivors reported that aid groups decreased their assistance to the area after becoming frustrated by interference from regime authorities.<sup>45</sup>

## HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Regime jails farmers

On 19 May, a court in Minhla Township, Magwe Division, sentenced farmers Than Oo, Htun Min Lwin, Aung Lin, Khin Maung San, and Kyaw Nyunt, to prison terms ranging from eight to 12 years. The military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH) and Htoo Trading, owned by regime crony Tay Za, filed a complaint against the five farmers for trespassing on land the two companies had confiscated from them to build a factory.<sup>46</sup>

### Burma's press "Not Free"

On 2 May, Freedom House released "Freedom of the Press 2011," its annual survey of press freedom worldwide. The report ranked Burma 191<sup>st</sup> out of the 195 countries surveyed and rated its press as "Not Free."<sup>47</sup> On 3 May, in his message on World Press Freedom Day, US President Barack Obama said that Burma was one of the countries that "continue to be notoriously repressive of press freedom."<sup>48</sup>

The following restrictions in May showed why Burma remains among the world's worst-rated countries with regard to press freedom:

- The regime's Censorship Board suspended the publication of the True News weekly journal for two weeks. The Board accused the journal of printing misleading information about a mobile phone promotion launched by the regime's Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs. However, it was believed that the real reason for the suspension was the publication of an anti-regime cartoon.<sup>49</sup>
- The Board censored reports in private local media about the UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon's Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar's 13 May press briefing at Rangoon International Airport. Nambiar told reporters that he had asked top regime officials to release all political prisoners and start tripartite dialogue.<sup>50</sup>
- The Board suppressed parts of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's 13 May press briefing in which she said that change in Burma was more important than holding the ASEAN Chair.<sup>51</sup>
- It was reported that the most recent set of restrictions on internet cafés included a prohibition on the use of computer external storage devices such as CDs and USB drives.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Narinjara News (12 May 11) Giri-affected areas face food shortage

<sup>45</sup> SHAN (27 May 11) Quake victims in Shan State still under tarpaulin shelters

<sup>46</sup> DVB (23 May 11) Farmers given lengthy jail terms

<sup>47</sup> Freedom House (02 May 11) Freedom of the Press 2011

<sup>48</sup> Irrawaddy (04 May 11) Burma Among Most Repressive of Press Freedoms: Obama

<sup>49</sup> Irrawaddy (16 May 11) True News Journal Suspended for Two Weeks; Mizzima News (13 May 11) True News newspaper suspended for two weeks; RSF (17 May 11) Surveillance of media and Internet stepped up under new civilian president

<sup>50</sup> Irrawaddy (18 May 11) Burma censors reports on UN Envoy press briefing; Mizzima News (27 May 11) Journalists call for UN's Nambiar to speak about Burma trip

<sup>51</sup> Irrawaddy (18 May 11) Burma censors reports on UN Envoy press briefing

<sup>52</sup> DVB (16 May 11) Internet cafes ban CDs, USB drives; RSF (17 May 11) Surveillance of media and Internet stepped up under new civilian president

- On 10 May during a press briefing in Rangoon, the Rangoon Division Minister of Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, and Immigration Nyan Tun Oo warned journalists not to report news that could harm national security or that was critical of the state.<sup>53</sup> Nyan Tun Oo also said that video recordings of press briefings would be prohibited.<sup>54</sup>

## **DISPLACEMENT**

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### **Rohingya pushed back**

In May, Border Guards of Bangladesh (BGB) arrested more than 50 Rohingya refugees and forced them back to Burma:

- **16 May:** BGB arrested 37 Rohingya from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, when they illegally entered Bangladesh and pushed them back to Burma.<sup>55</sup>
- **16 May:** BGB arrested 15 Rohingya, including three women and a child, at the Whykong checkpoint and pushed them back to Burma.<sup>56</sup>

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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### **ASEAN defers regime's bid for 2014 Chair**

Prior to the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit on 7 May, President Thein Sein lobbied for Burma to serve as the ASEAN Chair in 2014.<sup>57</sup> On 5 May, Thein Sein met with Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and asked him to back the regime's bid to take over ASEAN's rotating chair in 2014. After the meeting, Indonesia's FM Marty Natalegawa said that Yudhoyono would bring the issue before ASEAN leaders at the Summit.<sup>58</sup>

However, on 8 May, in the final hours of the Summit, ASEAN leaders decided to defer the regime's request. The final communiqué issued at the end of the Summit said: "We considered the proposal of Myanmar that it would host the ASEAN summits in 2014, in view of its firm commitment to the principles of ASEAN."<sup>59</sup> In explaining their decision to defer, Indonesia's President Yudhoyono said that ASEAN leaders had no objection to Burma's request to serve as ASEAN Chair as long as it "continues making progress towards democracy."<sup>60</sup>

### **ASEAN leaders hijack its civil society - again**

In a move that has become all too familiar [See *February and October 2009 Burma Bulletins*], ASEAN leaders showed their disdain for civil society by attempting to interfere in the process of deciding who should represent civil society at the interface on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit. On 3-5 May, more than 1,000 members from ASEAN civil society organizations met to discuss a variety of important issues affecting the region at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF) event in Jakarta. The group selected representatives to present its collective recommendations to ASEAN leaders on 7 May. Some ASEAN governments attempted to dictate who would represent their respective civil society organizations for the dialogue but backed off after vigorous negotiations. In the end, Burma insisted on replacing human rights educator Aung Myo Min with President Thein Sein's legal advisor and former police Colonel Sit Aye.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Irrawaddy (11 May 11) Sensitive News Barred: Rangoon Minister; Irrawaddy (20 May 11) Journalists Barred from Anti-poverty Meeting; Myanmar Times (16 May 11) Meet the press: hints of change as Yangon govt calls weekly conference

<sup>54</sup> Myanmar Times (23 May 11) Yangon Region govt 'too busy' for press briefings

<sup>55</sup> Kaladan News (17 May 11) BGB arrests and pushes back 37 Rohingya at border

<sup>56</sup> Kaladan News (17 May 11) BGB arrests and pushes back 37 Rohingya at border

<sup>57</sup> Nation (06 May 11) Laos agrees to swap Asean chair in 2014; Bangkok Post (06 May 11) Burma applies to be Asean chairman; DPA (08 May 11) Myanmar likely to host ASEAN summit in 2014; Jakarta Post (08 May 11) Myanmar could lead ASEAN in 2014

<sup>58</sup> Jakarta Post (06 May 11) Myanmar wants RI to back ASEAN chair bid

<sup>59</sup> Reuters (08 May 11) ASEAN open to giving Myanmar chairmanship in 2014

<sup>60</sup> Reuters (08 May 11) ASEAN open to giving Myanmar chairmanship in 2014

<sup>61</sup> Mizzima News (04 May 11) Civil society groups protest Asean government appointments

## **Nambiar says the regime’s actions are “insufficient”**

On 11 May, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon’s Chief of Staff Vijay Nambiar arrived in Burma for a three-day visit.<sup>62</sup> During his visit Nambiar met with numerous regime ministers, presidential advisers, the People’s Assembly Deputy Speaker, and the USDP Sec-Gen. Nambiar also met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD CEC members, MPs, and civil society organizations.<sup>63</sup>

On 13 May, Nambiar said that he underlined the importance of the regime implementing its stated commitments on governance, human rights, and the rule of law. He stressed that this must include the release of all political prisoners as well as inclusive dialogue “with all segments of society.”<sup>64</sup> On 19 May, during a closed-door session, Nambiar briefed UN Security Council members and told them that while the regime had taken small steps in the right direction by releasing some political prisoners and reducing the sentences of others, the measures had been short of expectations and insufficient.<sup>65</sup>

## **US sanctions and engagement continue**

On 18 May, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun began a three-day visit to Burma.<sup>66</sup>

- **18 May:** Yun met with regime’s FM Wunna Maung Lwin in Naypyidaw to discuss bilateral relations.<sup>67</sup>
- **19 May:** Yun met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and told her that the US was pushing for “significant developments” in Burma.<sup>68</sup> Yun also met with pro-democracy and ethnic nationality members of the Committee Representing People’s Parliament.<sup>69</sup>
- **20 May:** The US Embassy in Rangoon issued a statement that said Yun had expressed concern to regime officials about the regime’s military ties with North Korea. The statement also said that Yun called for “meaningful, concrete steps” towards democracy, respect for human rights, and the release of political prisoners.<sup>70</sup>

On 16 May, in a formal notice to the US Congress, President Barack Obama renewed sanctions on Burma because the regime was taking actions “hostile to US interests.” Obama criticized the regime’s actions, including the “large-scale repression of the democratic opposition,” in deciding to extend the sanctions.<sup>71</sup>

## **China-Burma relations well-oiled**

In a move to secure a strategic alliance, on 26 May Thein Sein embarked on a three-day visit to China.<sup>72</sup> During his visit, Thein Sein met with all of China’s top leaders, including Premier Wen Jiabao, President Hu Jintao, and China’s top political advisor Jia Qinglin.<sup>73</sup>

On 27 May, Thein Sein and Hu Jintao signed nine agreements, including a cooperation framework agreement for a US\$765 million line of credit from China Development Bank to the regime’s Ministry of Finance and Revenue. Other loan deals were agreed between various Chinese and regime ministries, while another covered a hydroelectric project.<sup>74</sup> In another meeting on the same day, Wen Jiabao said Beijing would like to continue providing assistance to help Burma develop economically. Wen

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<sup>62</sup> DPA (11 May 11) UN special envoy visits Myanmar

<sup>63</sup> UN News Center (13 May 11) Myanmar: UN envoy meets with leading Government and opposition figures

<sup>64</sup> UN News Center (13 May 11) Myanmar: UN envoy meets with leading Government and opposition figures

<sup>65</sup> UN News Center (20 May 11) Myanmar’s release of political prisoners insufficient, UN envoy says

<sup>66</sup> Irrawaddy (18 May 11) US Diplomat Begins Visit to Burma

<sup>67</sup> NLM (19 May 11) Union FM receives US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

<sup>68</sup> DPA (19 May 11) Senior US diplomat demands “significant developments” in Myanmar

<sup>69</sup> US Embassy Rangoon (20 May 11) Press Release; Mizzima News (20 May 11) American high-ranking official meets Suu Kyi

<sup>70</sup> US Embassy Rangoon (20 May 11) Press Release

<sup>71</sup> AFP (17 May 11) US renews Myanmar sanctions

<sup>72</sup> Irrawaddy (25 May 11) Thein Sein Tackles Chinese Navy Issue

<sup>73</sup> Xinhua (28 May 11) Myanmar President concludes visit to China; DPA (27 May 11) Myanmar president meets Chinese leaders

<sup>74</sup> Reuters (27 May 11) Myanmar, China seal friendship with loan agreements



appealed for the smooth implementation of China’s infrastructure projects in Burma, including oil and gas pipelines, hydroelectric power, and transportation.<sup>75</sup>

## UN cautions on Burma-North Korea ties

On 14 May, Reuters news agency obtained a report compiled by a UN Panel of Experts that monitors compliance with UN sanctions imposed on North Korea. The report suggested that “extreme caution” might be needed to prevent cooperation between Burma and North Korea because of allegations that the regime had been developing a secret nuclear program with the help of Pyongyang. The report also said that Burma might have served as a trans-shipment point for delivery of dual-use technology to North Korea.<sup>76</sup>

## ECONOMY

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### UN report shows the results of regime’s corruption

On 12 May, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) released a report titled “Illicit Financial Flows in the 48 Least Developed Countries.”<sup>77</sup> Illicit financial flows involve the cross-border transfer of the proceeds of corruption, trade in contraband goods, criminal activities, and tax evasion. The report suggested that one of the contributing factors of illicit financial flows was an overvalued exchange rate,<sup>78</sup> which stimulates the growth in underground economic activities, worsens corruption, and further skews the distribution of income. It also noted that illicit flows are typically absorbed into developed country banks and offshore financial centers. In the case of Burma, the study found that:<sup>79</sup>

- Burma ranked eighth out of the top 10 exporters of illicit capital between 1998 and 2010, with about US\$8.5 billion unaccounted for.
- Illicit financial outflows averaged over 9% of Burma’s GDP between 2000 and 2006.
- Between 1990-2008, for every US\$1 received in ODA, US\$4.70 exited in illicit flows.
- Between 1999 and 2005, Burma’s “Shadow Economy” averaged over 50% of its GDP.

Despite the damning statistics, the regime continued to defend its tolerance of corruption. On 10 May, only two days before the release of the UNDP’s report, Rangoon Division Minister of Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, and Immigration Nyan Tun Oo said it would be impossible to immediately eliminate corruption in the regime because it would be difficult to find “qualified replacements” for many key regime jobs.<sup>80</sup>

## OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MAY

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1	Over 270 Tatmadaw soldiers from the Arakan State-based LIB 345 and 352 leave for the Shan State frontline.
2	United Wa State Army issues a statement that calls for fresh talks with the regime.
2	Regime authorities in Maungdaw, Arakan State, order a halt to the construction of the Maungdaw Juma mosque.
2	Thirty-one members of the US House of Representatives call on President Barack Obama to show greater urgency in setting up a UN Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in Burma.
3	Regime authorities in Myitkyina, Kachin State, detain a 30-year-old villager who is hit by an Asia World truck at the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam project site.
3	Vice-chair of the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission Mr. Nurkholis calls on ASEAN to support a UN investigation into business and human rights violations in Burma.
4	Director of Thailand’s Labor Ministry’s Office of Foreign Workers’ Administration Anurak Tossarat says

<sup>75</sup> Xinhua (28 May 11) China, Myanmar forge partnership, ink deals on Myanmar president's maiden visit

<sup>76</sup> Reuters (14 May 11) North Korea, Iran trade missile technology: U.N.

<sup>77</sup> “Illicit Financial Flows from the Least Developed Countries: 1990-2008”, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

<sup>78</sup> Burma records its revenues from gas and oil exports at the official exchange rate of approximately 6.23 kyat to the dollar while the current black market exchange is 820 kyat to the dollar [See *ALTSEAN-Burma (02 Aug 08) Burma 20 years on: hungry as ever for democracy - Mispent wealth*].

<sup>79</sup> “Illicit Financial Flows from the Least Developed Countries: 1990-2008”, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

<sup>80</sup> Mizzima News(11 May 11) Impossible to eliminate corruption quickly: Rangoon minister

	that the ministry will grant one-year temporary work permits to victims of human trafficking.
4	Indonesia's FM Marty Natalegawa says that he was not aware of a plan for arms procurement by Burma's regime from Indonesia's state-owned arms producer PT Pindad.
5	Regime's Minister for Science and Technology Aye Myint meets with Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asia-Pacific Region Deputy Director-General Ruth Kahanoff to discuss cooperation in science and technological sectors.
6	Committee Representing People's Parliament holds a meeting at the NLD headquarters in Rangoon.
6	A delegation of UK-based charities and exile Burmese organizations delivers a petition with 5,323 signatures calling for a UN Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in Burma to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
6	Regime authorities in Rangoon Division release NLD Twante Township joint secretary Zaw Min Tun.
7	Malaysia's PM Najib Razak and Australia's PM Julia Gillard announce that over the next four years 800 asylum seekers in Australia will be sent to Malaysia for processing, in return for 4,000 mostly Burmese refugees.
7	President Thein Sein meets with Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva in Jakarta and the two discuss boosting trade and investment.
8	President Thein Sein meets with Vietnam's PM Nguyen Tan Dung in Jakarta and the two discuss promotion of bilateral relations.
9	US Chargé d'Affaires Larry Dinger meets with NLD members in Chauk Township, Magwe Division.
9	Unknown armed persons abduct four Chinese engineers from the Tasang Hydropower project in Shan State.
9	Burma's state-run and private trading companies resume rice exports after a two-month ban
10	In a phone interview with German broadcaster DW-TV, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that she hasn't seen any "meaningful change" in Burma since the November 2010 elections.
10	A 22-year-old local man dies from gunshot wounds after being shot by Tatmadaw soldiers at a checkpoint in Loikaw, Karenni State.
11	UN releases a "List of Shame" that details the recruitment of child soldiers by the regime and armed ethnic groups in Burma.
13	Thai FM Kasit Piromya says that Thailand would be interested in considering a refugee swap deal with Malaysia.
14	A bomb planted by five Mon People's Liberation Army's soldiers kills one policeman at a Telecommunication office in Mudon Township, Mon State.
15	A worker from a Chinese company in Kyaukpru Township, Arakan State, hits and seriously injures a local woman while driving intoxicated.
15	China's Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission Xu Caihou concludes his four-day visit to Burma.
16	A Tatmadaw soldier from LIB 390 forcibly conscripts a 15-year-old boy from his home in Mon Township, Pegu Division.
16	US State Department spokesman Mark Toner says that Washington reiterates its call for the immediate release of all political prisoners in Burma.
17	Imprisoned Shan State Army leader Maj Gen Hso Ten undergoes eye surgery at a hospital in Akyab, Arakan State.
17	Rangoon Division Minister of Education, Health, Foreign Affairs, and Immigration Nyan Tun Oo announces that the weekly press briefings held by the regime's local administration are "indefinitely" postponed.
18	Regime's Election Commission hears the election complaint filed by USDP members against nine Rakhine National Progressive Party MPs.
18	A bomb blast on a Rangoon-Mandalay train kills two passengers near Naypyidaw's Tatkon Township.
19	Brighton and Hove City Council in the UK awards Daw Aung San Suu Kyi the Freedom of Brighton and Hove City honor.
19	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi tells reporters that she will soon campaign in areas outside Rangoon.
23	ICRC representative in Burma Georges Paclisanu meets with the regime's Minister of the President's Office Soe Maung to discuss the resumption of prison visits.
23	Thailand's Tak Province Governor Smart Loyfa warns NGOs based in Mae Sot, Thailand not to get involved with Burmese opposition groups operating along the Thai-Burma border.
23	Tatmadaw Deputy Commander-in-Chief Lt Gen Soe Win meets with Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff Gen Mohammed Abdul Mubeen in Naypyidaw.
24	In a video message to a gathering of fellow female Nobel laureates in Canada, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi calls for an end to rape and sexual violence committed by Tatmadaw troops in Burma.
25	Regime's Deputy FM Maung Myint attends the 16th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Bali, Indonesia.

26	NLD CEC member Win Tin is hospitalized in Rangoon due to a liver problem.
26	KNU issues a statement saying that from early January to late April, Tatmadaw troops used 2,051 civilians, including women, as human shields.
26	Police in Kale, Sagaing Division, arrest a 22-year-old Chin theological student.
27	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that ignoring the result of the general election in 1990 was a “historically inappropriate policy that damaged the image of the country.”
27	Burmese company Success International Publisher says the regime granted a license for the distribution of Thai daily newspapers Bangkok Post and Nation.
30	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says she hopes to go on a political tour of rural Burma in June.
30	NLD CEC member Win Tin is discharged from a Rangoon hospital.
30	Tatmadaw forces from LIB 563 based in Three Pagodas Pass, Kyainnseiky Township, Karen State, force ten villagers to porter food supplies.
31	Kayan New Generation Youth says that 8,000 people from 23 villages are being forcibly relocated to make way for the Upper Paunglaung hydro-electric dam project.
31	US Senator John McCain says that the regime’s commitment to rights reforms will be measured by the manner in which it handles Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s upcoming tour outside of Rangoon.

## **REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN MAY**

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“**Crisis in Shan State - Burma Briefing No. 12**”, Burma Campaign UK (BCUK)

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<http://www.altsean.org/Docs/PDF%20Format/Thematic%20Briefers/100%20Days%20of%20Burmas%20Parliament%20-%20Strengthening%20the%20Status%20Quo.pdf>

“**The 10 Tools of Online Oppressors**”, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

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“**Freedom of the Press 2011**”, Freedom House

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<http://www.nd-burma.org/reports/item/download/60.html>