

BU RMA

ALTERNATIVE A SEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

BN 2009/1059: November 5, 2009

NEW US POLICY: AN ALIBI FOR REGIONAL COMPLACENCY

- The new US policy on Burma, combining long-standing sanctions with high-level engagement, has been deliberately misread by Burma's neighbors and used to justify greater tolerance of the regime's escalating crimes against humanity and war crimes. The misrepresentation has:
 - Emboldened the SPDC's sense that it can placate its neighbors through rhetoric instead of genuine reform;
 - Created a sense of complacency in the region that conditions in Burma are actually improving; and
 - Tacitly encouraged the SPDC to jail opposition leaders and persecute ethnic nationalities.
 - Essentially, the new US policy means:
 - "Pragmatic engagement", aimed at achieving meaningful reforms, will supplement and not replace sanctions;
 - Discussions on easing sanctions will be possible only if significant advances on core human rights and democracy issues occur; and
 - The option remains of tightening sanctions on the regime and its supporters if the situation worsens.
 - Despite the hype over improvements in Burma, the facts reveal the opposite:
 - As of September, there was a record high of 2,211 political prisoners as a result of the SPDC's intensified crackdown on political dissidents. The crackdown, coupled with the bogus trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, ensures that viable opposition candidates in the 2010 elections are locked up.
 - Escalating crimes against humanity and war crimes against ethnic communities have led to a sharp spike in displacement.
 - President Obama must use the ASEAN-US Summit in mid-November in Singapore to reinforce the key elements of the US policy on Burma. President Obama should utilize his Asia trip to draw in governments in the region, in particular China, onto the same page as the US and not the other way around.
 - In the wake of some governments' rejection of human rights groups at the recent ASEAN Summit, President Obama must speak up forcefully in favor of human rights defenders and the vital role of an independent civil society.
 - US officials need to clearly articulate a set of benchmarks hinged on human rights and democracy to measure progress in Burma in the run-up to the 2010 elections. It is also critical to ensure:
 - The election law guarantees participation of all people, including political activists, as voters and candidates;
 - Changes to the constitutional article on amendments to remove an effective military veto and reflect common practice.
- INSIDE

2 BURMA'S NEIGHBORS MISINTERPRETING
US POLICY REVIEW

3 WHAT IS THE NEW US POLICY?

3 SPDC PLACATES NEIGHBORS

3 COMPLACENCY FUELS SPDC ABUSES

3 Political prisoners

4 Displacement

4 BGF ultimatum has fueled instability in
border areas

5 SPDC THREATENS REGIONAL STABILITY

5 China

5 Bangladesh

6 OPPOSITION TO THE 2010 ELECTIONS
GROWS

6 DAW SUU REACHES OUT TO THE SPDC

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- INSIDE
- 2 **BURMA'S NEIGHBORS MISINTERPRETING US POLICY REVIEW**
- 3 **WHAT IS THE NEW US POLICY?**
- 3 **SPDC PLACATES NEIGHBORS**
- 3 **COMPLACENCY FUELS SPDC ABUSES**
- 3 Political prisoners
- 4 Displacement
- 4 **BGF ultimatum has fueled instability in border areas**
- 5 **SPDC THREATENS REGIONAL STABILITY**
- 5 China
- 5 Bangladesh
- 6 **OPPOSITION TO THE 2010 ELECTIONS GROWS**
- 6 **DAW SUU REACHES OUT TO THE SPDC**
- 7 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

BURMA'S NEIGHBORS MISINTERPRETING US POLICY REVIEW

On 27 September, just four days after US Secretary of State announced the new US policy, Thai FM Kasit Piromya said that ASEAN had scrapped a plan to appeal to the SPDC for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Kasit said the appeal was unnecessary as the United Nations, the US, and the European Union had reviewed their policies and there were signs they would engage more with Burma.¹

ASEAN was quick to misconstrue the new US policy as being the same as ASEAN's traditional approach toward the SPDC. On 25 October, Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva said, "ASEAN has always argued that engagement is the right approach and we feel that if everyone takes this engagement approach we would be encouraging Myanmar in the successful implementation of her road map."²

During the 15th ASEAN Summit held from 23 to 25 October in Cha-am, Thailand, ASEAN leaders devoted just three lines to the Burma's political situation in the nine pages of their final declaration. While the statement called for elections promised by the junta in 2010 to be "fair, free, inclusive and transparent," it made no mention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who has been detained for 14 of the past 20 years.³

India also trumpeted that the US policy shift as a fundamental change. Indian PM Manmohan Singh said: "There was an atmosphere of hope that the leadership is moving towards normalizing its relationship with the US [and] that next year's election should see a reconciliation of the various segments of Myanmar society."⁴

The real tragedy of ASEAN's and India's actions is that its feeling of vindication over the change in US policy somehow gives credence to its approach of "constructive engagement," which has produced no tangible results in the SPDC's behavior since 1997.

In actuality, the "new" US policy towards Burma is an acknowledgement that a sanctions-only policy was not working because Burma's neighbors were engaged in an engagement-only policy. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD have displayed a better sense of what the new US policy entails and have been quick to reach out to both the US and the SPDC to ensure that Washington's engagement with the SPDC is based on concrete reform and not empty promises. Now that the US has adopted a policy of sanctions plus engagement, it needs to convince Burma's neighbors to do the same.

WHAT IS THE NEW US POLICY?

Despite ASEAN's and India's premature cheers that the US will abandon sanctions in favor of dialogue, the US has made it amply clear that it was initiating dialogue with the expectation that the SPDC would respond with meaningful reforms. Existing sanctions would remain in place.

On 23 September, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that sanctions remain an important part of the US policy towards Burma.⁵ Clinton said, "Lifting sanctions now would send the wrong signal and we will maintain our existing sanctions until we see concrete progress towards reform. But we will be willing to discuss the easing of sanctions in response to significant actions on the part of Burma's generals that address the core human rights and democracy issues that are inhibiting Burma's progress."⁶

On 30 September, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell said that said engagement with the SPDC will supplement rather than replace sanctions. "Lifting or easing sanctions at the outset of a dialogue without meaningful progress on our concerns would be a

¹ Bangkok Post (28 Sep 09) Asean scraps plan to appeal over Suu Kyi

² IANS (25 Oct 09) ASEAN welcomes US engagement with Myanmar

³ AFP (25 Oct 09) Asia lets Myanmar off hook over Suu Kyi again: analysts

⁴ Irrawaddy (27 Oct 09) Too Soon for Optimism

⁵ WSJ (24 Sep 09) U.S. to engage Myanmar's junta

⁶ Irrawaddy (24 Sep 09) New US Policy to Include Engagement, Sanctions: Clinton

mistake,” Campbell said. “We will reserve the option of tightening sanctions on the regime and its supporters to respond to events in Burma,” Campbell concluded.⁷

On 21 October, Campbell reiterated the intent of US policy on Burma in his testimony before the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. Campbell said that dialogue with the junta would “supplement rather than replace” sanctions on the regime. Campbell also said, “We will not judge the success of our effort at pragmatic engagement by the results of a handful of meetings. Engagement for its own sake is obviously not a goal for US policy.”⁸

SPDC PLACATES NEIGHBORS

This misreading of US policy by Burma’s neighbors has created a sense of complacency in the region. This has further emboldened the SPDC to make more empty promises. The SPDC’s recent statements at the UN General Assembly in September and at the 15th ASEAN Summit reflected the junta’s feeling that no one will hold them responsible to make good on these statements.

On 28 September, in the SPDC’s speech at the annual session of the UN General Assembly, SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein promised that the junta would take “systematic steps to hold free and fair elections” in 2010.⁹

At the ASEAN Summit, SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win reiterated the junta’s promise that the 2010 elections would be “inclusive, free, and fair.”¹⁰ SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein said that the junta would reconsider Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s house arrest if she “maintains a good attitude.”¹¹

COMPLACENCY FUELS SPDC ABUSES

The latitude extended to the SPDC by its complacent neighbors has given it free reign in the run up to the 2010 elections to consolidate its control over the country. In the last year: the number of political prisoners reached an all time high; an increasing number of people were displaced; and the SPDC upped its aggression against ethnic nationality groups in the border areas.

Political prisoners

In the run up to the 2010 elections, the SPDC has intensified its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement and imprisoned more people.

On 11 August, the SPDC sentenced Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to a further 18 months under house arrests. The sentencing of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is a vicious part of the SPDC’s “roadmap” to ensure that the most viable pro-democracy candidates will be unable to run in the elections. The SPDC-drafted constitution prohibits individuals who are serving prison sentences for any offense from standing for election to Parliament.¹²

In September, the number of political prisoners reached a record high 2,211. In August and September alone, the SPDC intensified its crackdown on pro-democracy activists, arresting 101, including 59 NLD members, and imprisoning eight, including four NLD members.¹³ These actions made a mockery of the release of 152 political prisoners during two general prisoner amnesties in February and September 2009.¹⁴

⁷ Mizzima News (01 Oct 09) Testimony by experts at US-Burma relations hearing

⁸ AFP (22 Oct 09) US warns of ‘slow’ talks with Myanmar ahead of visit

⁹ AP (28 Sep 09) At UN, Myanmar blasts sanctions, pledges democracy; Reuters (28 Sep 09) Myanmar PM Meets U.S. Senator, Promises Reforms; Reuters (29 Sep 09) Myanmar PM - Reforms can’t be imposed from outside

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (24 Oct 09) Burmese PM: Electoral Law Coming Very Soon

¹¹ AFP (24 Oct 09) Myanmar could ease Suu Kyi detention; VOA (24 Oct 09) Japan: Burma Could Ease Aung San Suu Kyi’s Detention; BBC (26 Oct 09) Burma: Suu Kyi ‘can play a role’; FT (24 Oct 09) Burma generals signal flexibility on Suu Kyi

¹² Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Article 121

¹³ See Altsean Burma August-September 2009 Burma Bulletins

¹⁴ DVB (23 Feb 09) Amnesty granted to at least 23 political prisoners; Mizzima News (23 Feb 09) Junta released prisoners to ease off mounting pressure: critics; DVB (26 Feb 09) NLD member released in amnesty; AP (17 Sep 09) Myanmar announces amnesty for 7,114 prisoners; Irrawaddy (19 Sep 09) More Political Prisoners Released: AAPP

Displacement

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has climbed since last year. Between August 2008 and July 2009 the SPDC destroyed or forcibly relocated 120 villages and forced at least 75,000 people to leave their homes, up from 66,000 a year before (up 13.6%).¹⁵ The total number of IDPs in Eastern Burma increased to 470,000 from 451,000.¹⁶

In addition, recent SPDC military offensives in Eastern Burma have caused a spike in refugees and IDPs. An estimated 43,800 refugees have fled to China and Thailand from Karen and Shan States.

In early June, SPDC Army and DKBA forces launched a joint operation in Hpa-an District, Karen State.¹⁷ While hundreds remained trapped by the fighting, an estimated 6,800 Karen fled into Thailand.¹⁸ Karen refugees reported that many fled fearing forced recruitment into the DKBA or forced labor to porter military supplies for the SPDC Army.¹⁹

In late July, The SPDC Army launched a military offensive against civilian populations in Shan State. The SPDC Army forced an estimated 10,000 people in Central Shan State out of their villages.²⁰ It was the single largest forced displacement in Shan State since 1998, when the SPDC Army uprooted over 300,000 people.²¹

BGF ultimatum has fueled instability in border areas

In an attempt to coerce the ceasefire groups into joining the SPDC-controlled Border Guard Force (BGF), the SPDC Army increased its military presence in Kachin, Shan, and Karen States.²² In August, the SPDC Army broke the 20-year ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army (MNDAA) in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone of Northern Shan State.²³ After the MNDAA leaders fled to Wa-controlled areas, the SPDC installed a new provisional government in Kokang, which promptly announced that its armed forces would join the BGF.²⁴

Larger ceasefire groups such as the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) have thus far refused to become BGFs. On 9 October, a senior official in Thailand's National Security Council (NSC) warned that as many as 200,000 refugees from Burma could flood into northern Thailand if fighting breaks out between the SPDC and UWSA.²⁵

¹⁵ TBBC (29 Oct 09) Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma – 2009 Survey

¹⁶ TBBC (29 Oct 09) Protracted Displacement and Militarization in Eastern Burma – 2009 Survey

¹⁷ Mizzima News (08 Jun 09) Thousands flee latest military offensive in Karen State; Irrawaddy (06 Jun 09) Attacks on KNLA Continue; Mizzima News (05 Jun 09) Karen villagers flee to escape battlefield; Mizzima News (09 Jun 09) Fresh clashes force many Karen to flee; Mizzima News (09 Jun 09) Fresh clashes force many Karen to flee; Irrawaddy (11 Jun 09) Joint Forces Concentrate on Mortar Attacks against KNU

¹⁸ BBC (08 Jun 09) Burma's Karen flee army offensive; AP (07 Jun 09) Aid groups: 3,000 villagers flee Myanmar shelling; AP (07 Jun 09) Aid group says 4,000 refugees flee to Thailand from Myanmar; DVB (10 Jun 09) UN staff sent to assess Karen refugees; BBC (11 Jun 09) Burma's Karen unable to return home; Irrawaddy (13 Jun 09) Burmese and DKBA Troops Block Civilians Fleeing Conflict

¹⁹ Reuters (08 Jun 09) Nearly 1,800 Karen flee Myanmar fighting – Thailand; Irrawaddy (08 Jun 09) Clashes Force More Karens to Thailand; Free Burma Rangers (08 Jun 09) Thousands of Refugees Flee Ler Per Her Camp as Burma Army Attack Begins; DVB (10 Jun 09) UN staff sent to assess Karen refugees; IMNA (24 July 09) DKBA ramps up civilian abuses and set sights on Brigade 6; Irrawaddy (21 Aug 09) 30 More Karens Flee Hlinebwe; DVB (06 Aug 09) More Karen refugees flee to Thailand

²⁰ Irrawaddy (13 Aug 09) 10,000 Villagers Forcibly Relocated in Shan State: Rights Groups; DVB (13 Aug 09) 500 Shan houses burned in scorched earth campaign

²¹ DVB (13 Aug 09) 500 Shan houses burned in scorched earth campaign

²² Kachin News Group (11 Aug 09) Four ethnic ceasefire groups to take on junta in event of war; Mizzima News (14 Aug 09) KIO trains administrative staff; Irrawaddy (25 Aug 09) Tension Mounts between Junta and Kokang Ceasefire Group; SHAN (24 Aug 09) Tension sparks people to flee into China; SHAN (14 Aug 09) Junta's ploy is to push Kokang to shoot first; Irrawaddy (10 Aug 09) Kokang Thwart Burma Army Drug Raid; Irrawaddy (13 Aug 09) Tension Mounts at Three Pagodas Pas; Irrawaddy (31 Aug 09) Junta Sends Major Reinforcements to Shan State

²³ SHAN (27 Aug 09) Rebels say junta shell kills Chinese soldiers

²⁴ Reuters (02 Sep 09) Myanmar rebels head home 'in disarray'; SHAN (03 Sep 09) Junta's next move still a question mark; Xinhua (11 Sep 09) Kokang group ready to participate in 2010 Myanmar vote

²⁵ Irrawaddy (09 Oct 09) Defeating the Wa would Win Wide Applause

SPDC THREATENS REGIONAL STABILITY

China

The massive inflow of refugees from Northern Shan State as a result of the regime's offensive against the Kokang in August prompted uncharacteristically strong statements from Beijing.

On 11 August, Chinese officials from Yunnan Province warned SPDC Northeastern Military Command Commander Maj Gen Aung Than Htut not to fuel instability on the Sino-Burma border.²⁶ The Chinese Army moved over 700 troops to the Sino-Burma border.²⁷ On 28 August, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement calling on the SPDC to "properly handle domestic problems and maintain stability in the China-Burma border region." The statement also urged the SPDC "to protect the security and legal rights of Chinese citizens in Burma."²⁸

The SPDC paid little heed to Beijing's warnings. In the aftermath of the Kokang conflict in early September, SPDC Army soldiers who occupied the Kokang main city of Laogai looted stores owned by ethnic-Chinese businessmen and assaulted Chinese-born immigrants.²⁹ On 21 September, Beijing again urged the SPDC to safeguard the safety and legal rights of Chinese citizens in Burma.³⁰ However, on 25 September, the SPDC ordered the 10,000 Chinese nationals living in the Kokang region to return to China.³¹

Bangladesh

During the last year, an ongoing dispute on the maritime boundary between the SPDC and Bangladesh, and the SPDC's persecution of Rohingya have exacerbated relations between the two countries.

In November 2008, the SPDC Navy used two of its ships to escort oil and exploration rigs owned by Daewoo Corporation into disputed waters in the Bay of Bengal. The Bangladesh Navy deployed three navy ships in response.³² After a naval stand-off that lasted six days, the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry announced that Burma had ended when the SPDC warships left the disputed waters.³³

In March 2009, the SPDC started building a border fence along the border with Bangladesh. Bangladesh objected to the border fence because the SPDC was reportedly building the fence too close to "no-man's land".³⁴ The SPDC temporarily halted construction activities in late April 2009.³⁵ The fence was to restrict the movement of Rohingya fleeing Burma's Arakan State to Bangladesh. Rohingya flee from Burma because of the SPDC's ongoing and pervasive human rights abuses that target Rohingya. On 2 October, the SPDC Army resumed fence construction and tensions between the two countries heightened once again.³⁶

On 8 October, Bangladeshi officials inflamed the situation when it notified both India and Burma of their intent to resolve the disputes over the maritime boundaries with the two countries in the Bay of Bengal through compulsory arbitration under the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.³⁷

²⁶ Irrawaddy (14 Aug 09) China Warns Commander to Avoid Instability in Shan State

²⁷ SHAN (25 Aug 09) PLA moves to the Kokang border

²⁸ FT (30 Aug 09) China rebukes Burma after border fighting

²⁹ Irrawaddy (01 Sep 09) Laogai is a Silent Capital; SHAN (03 Sep 09) Junta's next move still a question mark; Irrawaddy (03 Sep 09) Kokang Conflict Highlights Tatmadaw Xenophobia

³⁰ Xinhua (26 Sep 09) Myanmar urged to safeguard lawful rights of Chinese citizens; DVB (28 Sep 09) China warns Burma on eviction

³¹ DVB (25 Sep 09) Burma orders 10,000 Chinese to leave; Kachin News Group (25 Sep 09) Chinese citizens from eastern Burma asked to return;

³² Daily Star (03 Nov 08) Myanmar brings warships to explore Bangladesh waters

³³ Hindu (10 Nov 08) Withdrawal of Myanmar's warships ends crisis in "Bay"

³⁴ New Age (30 Mar 09) Bangladesh to protest against Burma's border fencing

³⁵ DVB (27 Apr 09) Burma suspends border fence construction

³⁶ Daily Star (04 Oct 09) Myanmar border tense again

³⁷ AHN (08 Oct 09) Bangladesh goes for U.N. tribunal to settle maritime dispute with India, Myanmar

On 9 October, the SPDC responded by sending nine SPDC Army battalions to the border with Bangladesh.³⁸ The SPDC also sent: fighter aircraft to Akyab; artillery and tanks to the border; and 12 warships; and a frigate to the Bay of Bengal.³⁹ Bangladesh reacted to the SPDC's provocations by deploying three army battalions to the border and increased its naval presence in the Bay of Bengal.⁴⁰ On 12 and 13 October, the SPDC and Bangladesh navies dispatched more warships in the Bay of Bengal.⁴¹

OPPOSITION TO THE 2010 ELECTIONS GROWS

While the SPDC steps up its aggression toward pro-democracy and ethnic nationality groups, the number of groups denouncing the elections swells. Likewise, US statements on the 2010 elections have echoed the demands from Burma's pro-democracy groups. Both say that for the elections to be credible, the SPDC must release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; cease its hostilities in ethnic areas; and commence tripartite dialogue with the pro-democracy movement and ethnic leaders.

Opposition to the polls stem from grave concerns that the elections will be rendered irrelevant because the 2008 effectively guarantees a military veto over any amendments proposed in a future parliament. Articles 109 and 141 grant the military 25% of the seats in Parliament, while Article 436 requires over 75% approval from both houses of parliament to amend the constitution.

The NLD and other groups have offered up countless opportunities for dialogue and have recognized the military as an important player in a future Burmese democracy. Instead of responding to these calls for dialogue, the SPDC continues to detain NLD leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo, and ethnic leaders such as Hkun Htun Oo, Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD). While the SPDC has made token gestures in an attempt to deflect international criticism, it has ignored more 18 years of calls from the international community for genuine dialogue with pro-democracy and ethnic leaders.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged the leaders of the countries participating in the UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon's Friends of Burma to take a measured approach to Burma's 2010 elections. Clinton said, "[...] we should continue discussions with the Burmese authorities to emphasize that the international community will only recognize the planned 2010 elections as a positive step to the extent that the Burmese authorities allow full participation by members of Burma's opposition and ethnic minority groups."⁴²

DAW SUU REACHES OUT TO THE SPDC

Despite her ongoing detention, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has once again showed her flexibility and determination in dealing with the SPDC in an effort to find a solution to Burma's political crisis. Showing a greater understanding for the US policy than any of Burma's neighbors, she used the review as an opportunity to push the SPDC toward reform.

On 24 September, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told her lawyer Nyan Win that she welcomed US plans to engage in direct high-level talks with the SPDC. But Daw Suu said she also wanted the US to engage with pro-democracy forces.⁴³ On 25 September: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sent a letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to express her views on steps the junta should take to get economic sanctions on Burma lifted. In the letter, Daw Suu said that there must be understanding on which

³⁸ Narinjara News (08 Oct 09) Burma Reinforces Troops Along Border; Daily Star (11 Oct 09) Troops all alert on Myanmar front

³⁹ Daily Star (12 Oct 09) Myanmar brings in everything

⁴⁰ Reuters (11 Oct 09) Myanmar builds troops on border, says Bangladesh; Irrawaddy (12 Oct 09) Burma, Bangladesh in Warship Standoff

⁴¹ Mizzima News (15 Oct 09) Burma, Bangladesh warships swarm over disputed zone

⁴² Irrawaddy (24 Sep 09) New US Policy to Include Engagement, Sanctions: Clinton

⁴³ BBC (24 Sep 09) Suu Kyi 'welcomes US engagement'; AP (25 Sep 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi said to welcome new US approach; Reuters (25 Sep 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi gives backing to U.S. engagement;

sanctions were having a negative impact on Burmese people and also asked Than Shwe permission to consult on the matter with the Rangoon-based diplomatic representatives of US, EU, and Australia.⁴⁴

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's overture to the regime on the issue of international sanctions triggered a series of meetings in Rangoon.

On 3 and 7 October, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with SPDC Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi to discuss Daw Suu's September letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe.⁴⁵ [See *September 2009 Burma Bulletin*] Daw Suu and Aung Kyi had previously met five times between October 2007 and January 2008.

On 9 October, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the UK ambassador and the deputy heads of the Australian and US missions to discuss the nature and the impact of Western sanctions on Burma.⁴⁶ Following the meeting, the diplomats from the three countries met a group of NLD leaders and briefed them on their talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

The US must consistently reinforce its position to prevent any misunderstandings from governments in the region.

- President Obama must use the platform provided at the ASEAN-US Summit in mid-November in Singapore to reinforce the key elements of the US policy on Burma and urge ASEAN governments to extend greater cooperation on efforts to achieve durable peace in Burma. President Obama should use his Asia trip to draw ASEAN, China, and India onto the same page as the US and not the other way around.
- In the wake of some governments' rejection of human rights groups at the recent ASEAN Summit, President Obama should speak up forcefully in favor of human rights defenders and the vital role of an independent civil society. He should urge ASEAN governments to support the development of a vibrant and healthy civil society in Southeast Asia.
- US officials need to clearly articulate a set of benchmarks hinged on human rights and democracy to measure progress in Burma in the run-up to the 2010 elections. It is also critical to ensure:
 - The election law guarantees participation of all people, including political activists, as voters and candidates;
 - Changes to the constitutional article on amendments to remove an effective military veto and reflect common practice.

For more information on the 2010 elections and the 2008 constitution, please see:

- 2010 elections: A recipe for continued conflict
<http://www.altsean.org/Reports/2010Electionsbis.php>

⁴⁴ AP (26 Sep 09) Myanmar: Dissident Offers to Work With Junta; AFP (27 Sep 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi party calls for her freedom; AFP (26 Sep 09) Aung San Suu Kyi writes to Myanmar's junta on sanctions

⁴⁵ AFP (03 Oct 09) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi meets with junta minister; AP (03 Oct 09) Myanmar junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; UPI (05 Oct 09) Suu Kyi in offer to help lift sanctions; BBC (03 Oct 09) Suu Kyi in Burma government talks; NLM (03 Oct 09) Relations Minister U Aung Kyi meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; Mizzima News (03 Oct 09) Junta's Liaison Minister meets Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (07 Oct 09) Myanmar official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; AFP (07 Oct 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi meets junta minister: official; Reuters (07 Oct 09) Myanmar minister meets detained democracy icon Suu Kyi

⁴⁶ AP (09 Oct 09) Myanmar democracy leader Suu Kyi meets diplomats; AFP (09 Oct 09) Myanmar's Suu Kyi, diplomats discuss sanctions: US; BBC (09 Oct 09) Burma's Suu Kyi in diplomat talks NYT (09 Oct 09) Burmese dissident leader meets Western diplomats

⁴⁷ Mizzima News (09 Oct 09) Aung San Suu Kyi discusses sanctions with diplomats; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Discusses Sanctions with Diplomats; Chinland Guardian (09 Oct 09) Suu Kyi Prepared to Reassess Impacts of Sanctions; Mizzima News (09 Oct 09) Senior NLD leaders to meet foreign diplomats