

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 16/007/2007 (Public)
News Service No: 183
25 September 2007

Myanmar: UN Security Council must deploy urgent mission

The United Nations Security Council must immediately send a mission to Myanmar, said Irene Khan, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

The UN Security Council mission should take urgent steps to resolve the human rights crisis in Myanmar and avert the risk of violence and bloodshed. The mission should also discuss with the Myanmar authorities how to resolve the long-standing human rights problems in the country including the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners.

Amnesty International has documented Myanmar's appalling human rights record. More than 1,160 political prisoners are held in deteriorating prison conditions. Child soldiers and forced labour continue to be used. The use of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common, especially during interrogation and pre-trial detention.

Myanmar is now witnessing mass demonstrations comparable in scale to those in 1988, when security forces broke up massive pro-democracy demonstrations with deadly violence killing thousands.

"The high risk of a crackdown against the demonstrators makes it imperative for the international community to act urgently. The military government in Myanmar must be told in no uncertain terms that there will be dire costs if they repeat the violent repression as in 1988," warned Ms Khan.

"The demonstrators in Myanmar have the right to peacefully express their opinion and the Government of Myanmar has a duty to fully respect this right."

"China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and as a government with political influence over Myanmar, has a critical role to play. So do ASEAN countries, Japan and India. They must use their influence to end the truly forgotten human rights emergency in Myanmar."

Background

Peaceful demonstrations sparked by sharp increases in fuel prices have grown in size and number. Peaceful protests led by Buddhist monks have called for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners, and national reconciliation. Sporadic reports indicate mounting tension in the country as authorities allegedly issue public warnings of legal action against protesters. Military postings are said to be increasingly present in Yangon, while troops from an elite division in the capital Naypyitaw have reportedly been sent to Yangon.

Human rights violations in Myanmar are widespread and systematic. They include:

- The use of child soldiers and forced labour.
- Laws that criminalize peaceful expression of political dissent. At the end of 2006 most senior opposition figures were imprisoned or administratively detained, among more than 1,160 political prisoners held in deteriorating prison conditions.
- People are frequently arrested without warrant and held incommunicado.
- Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common, especially during interrogation and pre-trial detention.
- Judicial proceedings against political detainees have failed to meet international standards of fairness.

- Defendants are often denied the right to legal counsel and prosecutors have relied on confessions extracted through torture.

Public Document

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