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MYANMAR: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REJECTS GOVERNMENT CRITICISMS AND CALLS FOR DIALOGUE

Amnesty International today reiterated its call to the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other governments to redouble their efforts to improve human rights in Myanmar, following the worst year of political repression this decade.

“The Burmese government’s strong reaction to our report shows just how sensitive the authorities are to criticism of their human rights record,” Amnesty International said. “This shows the importance of the members of ASEAN and other governments continuing to put pressure on the Burmese authorities. ASEAN is in a unique position to be able to influence events in Myanmar, and can use Myanmar’s wish to join the association as a lever to improve human rights in the country.”

Amnesty International reiterated the findings in its report that 1996 marked the worst year for human rights in Myanmar this decade, with more than 2,000 people arrested for participating in peaceful demonstrations, and some 100 political prisoners remaining in detention. Amnesty International is particularly concerned at the physical threats made to members of the National League for Democracy. At the same time, the state-controlled media has been making increasingly virulent attacks on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

“We welcome comments by a member of SLORC that we are a ‘reputable organization’”, Amnesty International said. “As a reputable organization, we ask SLORC to allow a visit by Amnesty International to Myanmar, and we remain willing to meet with members of the government at the earliest opportunity.”

“The SLORC disputes well-documented reports about the number of arrests and detainees in Myanmar as being inaccurate. Amnesty International calls on the authorities to release full accounts of prisoners being held, where they are detained, and on what grounds.”

Amnesty International is calling on the Burmese authorities to grant access to the country to the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and independent human rights organizations.

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