

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Myanmar: UN Security Council must act

As the Security Council meets today to be briefed by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs on his recent visit to Myanmar, Amnesty International urges the Security Council to act on the deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar by placing the situation on its agenda.

The Security Council has just renewed its commitment to protect civilians from human rights abuses including torture, recruitment of child soldiers and forced displacement. Amnesty International now calls on the Security Council to take concrete action to ensure that the government of Myanmar put an end to widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that have plagued the country for many years.

Since the Security Council was briefed on the situation in Myanmar in December 2005, Myanmar's grave human rights situation has continued to deteriorate. The number of refugees fleeing human rights violations in the country has significantly increased. Military operations in Kayin (Karen) state have caused large-scale displacement of more than 11,000 civilians from Kayin State and Bago Division in recent months, and grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law are being reported. Amnesty International continues to receive many reports of torture, extrajudicial executions, forcible relocation, and of civilians forced to take part in unpaid forced labour or act as porters for the military. Children continue to be forcibly recruited into military service. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced over years by the authorities.

The Myanmar authorities have consistently failed to act on numerous resolutions to improve the human rights situation passed by the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and have obstructed measures proposed by the ILO to put an end to forced labour. The Special Rapporteur appointed by the Commission on Human Rights to monitor the human rights situation in the country has been unable to visit Myanmar since 2003.

Amnesty International has long-standing concerns at the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience in deteriorating conditions. The government ignored a crucial opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to improving its human rights record when it extended the detention without trial of prisoner of conscience Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 27 May, the day after UN Secretary-General called for her release and shortly after Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari visited her under house arrest, the first such visit to Myanmar by a high-level UN official in two years. Amnesty International remains concerned at the ongoing abuse of the legal system to silence peaceful dissent and debate, and to prosecute people who have reported allegations of human rights violations, including forced labour.

Background

Under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council has primary responsibility for

the maintenance of international peace and security. World leaders convening in September 2005 adopted an Outcome Document acknowledging that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being, are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In the exercise of its mandate to maintain international peace and security, the Security Council has increasingly paid attention to human rights issues. The Security Council may formally place a matter on its agenda either by consensus or by a vote of nine of its fifteen members.