



# Daw Suu Kyi urges constructive Dialogue

Following weeks of protests by Burmese monks and civilians campaigning for human rights and democracy in Burma, Burma's pro democracy leader **Aung San Suu Kyi** has welcomed the possibility of dialogue with Burma's military dictatorship – the State Peace and Development Council – and has urged constructive engagement on all sides. Daw Suu Kyi's views were made known in a recent statement read on her behalf by United Nations Envoy Ibrahim Gambari on 8 November last, at the end of his six-day mission to her country. (*Statement in full below*).

Burma Action Ireland (BAI) has welcomed Daw Suu Kyi's statement and also Mr Gambari's recent visit to Burma. Since his return, Mr Gambari reported back to the UN Security Council (on 15 November) and said that "a process is now in motion...which will hopefully lead to substantive dialogue with concrete outcomes."

BAI is concerned however that the Burmese dictatorship is still refusing to enter into genuine negotiations with Daw Suu Kyi – despite a United Nations Security Council statement which has called on them to do so. Eileen Seymour, Chairperson of BAI said: "The Security Council has asked the regime to enter negotiations, but they still have not done so. We are asking, together with other European Burma solidarity groups that the Security Council authorise what is called a 'binding' resolution that forces them, the military, to enter genuine dialogue." Eileen Seymour added: "The regime is trying to buy time in the hope that crises in other parts of the world will divert attention from their country. Now is the time for change. We cannot let the moment pass."



*In solidarity with the recent protests in Burma by Buddhist Monks: Catholic Monks based in Dublin 'walk on' in solidarity with the people of Burma on O'Connell Bridge, in Dublin on 6 October 2007.*

## Aung San Suu Kyi's statement of 8 November 2007



I wish to thank all those who have stood by my side all this time, both inside and outside my country. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon, for his unwavering support for the cause of national reconciliation, democracy and human rights in my country.

I welcome the appointment on 8 October of Minister Aung Kyi as Minister for Relations. Our first meeting on 25 October was constructive and I look forward to further regular discussions. I expect that this phase of preliminary consultations will conclude soon so that a meaningful and timebound dialogue with the

SPDC leadership can start as early as possible.

In the interest of the nation, I stand ready to cooperate with the Government in order to make this process of dialogue a success and welcome the necessary good offices role of the United Nations to help facilitate our efforts in this regard.

In full awareness of the essential role of political parties in democratic societies, in deep appreciation of the sacrifices of the members of my party and in my position as General Secretary, I will be guided by the policies and wishes of the National League for Democracy. However, in this time of vital need for democratic solidarity and national unity, it is my duty to give constant and serious considerations to the interests and opinions of as broad a range of political organizations and forces as

possible, in particular those of our ethnic nationality races.

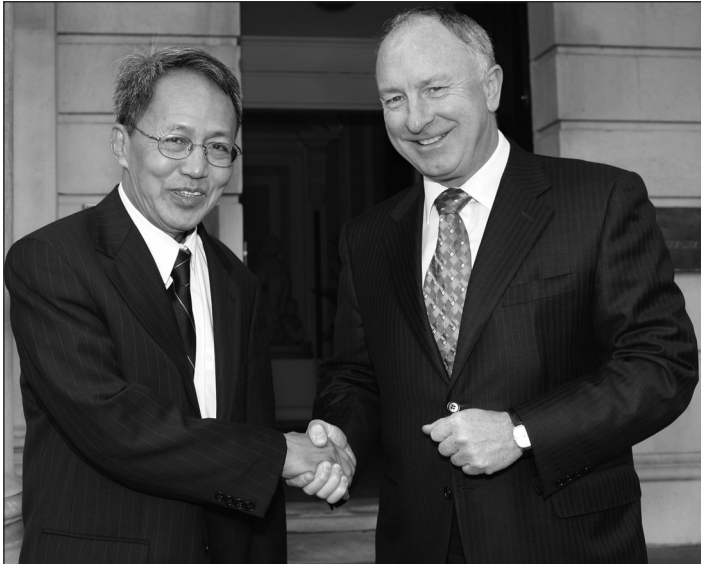
To that end, I am committed to pursue the path of dialogue constructively and invite the Government and all relevant parties to join me in this spirit.

I believe that stability, prosperity and democracy for my country, living at peace with itself and with full respect for human rights, offers the best prospect for my country to fully contribute to the development and stability of the region in close partnership with its neighbours and fellow ASEAN members, and to play a positive role as a respected member of the international community.



# Ireland's response to recent events in Burma

*Since mid-August 2007 the protests in Burma and their suppression by its military dictatorship have prompted reactions world-wide, not least in Ireland.*



*Dr Sein Win with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern TD on 25 October 2007.*

In September, BAI joined other solidarity groups around the world in expressing its concern about the welfare and safety of thousands of people in Burma who were demonstrating peacefully in Rangoon and elsewhere demanding improved living conditions and peace and democracy in their country. The protestors, led by Buddhist monks, had commenced their marches on **19 August** following fuel price increases in the country of up to 500 percent. On **25 September** BAI held a protest outside the Chinese Embassy in Ballsbridge, Dublin – asking the Chinese Government to stop providing financial, economic, diplomatic and military support to Burma's military dictatorship. An attempt was made to deliver a letter outlining these requests to China's representative in Ireland, his Excellency Zhang Xinsen, Chancery of the People's Republic of China, but an official refused to accept it. The letter was later faxed and posted to the Ambassador.

On **29 September** BAI held a solidarity protest in conjunction with Amnesty International (Ireland) opposite the GPO in Dublin. During the gathering, which attracted over 300 people, sympathisers including some of the Burmese community now living in Ireland, read aloud the *Metta Sutra* of the Buddha, which the marching monks had been chanting outside Aung San Suu Kyi's house in Rangoon. Its peaceful message says: "May all with a boundless mind cherish all living beings, radiating friendliness over the entire world". The following Saturday **6 October**, saw a Global Day of Action at noon in over 20 countries around the world. In Dublin, a BAI protest, this time on O'Connell Bridge (a site chosen with the bridge symbolizing reconciliation) involved the participation of Catholic monks who threw red carnations into the River Liffey, symbolizing those who had lost their lives in the recent military crackdown. Others gathered held banners, wore red headbands and many signed a petition to the Governments of Burma's most powerful neighbours, China and India, urging that they do their utmost to promote the country's peaceful progress to democratic rule. Similar protests were organised by Amnesty Northern Ireland in Belfast and candlelight vigils were held in other parts of the country including Kinsale and Tralee. BAI wishes to thank those who have protested to date and the manner in which people protested. Members of BAI also visited Áras an Uachtaráin on **10 October** and met with **President Mary McAleese**. BAI wishes to express its sincere thanks to the President of Ireland for her support.

**Dr Sein Win**, the Prime Minister of Burma's 'Government-in-exile' the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, and its representative to the UN, Dr Thaug Htun, visited Ireland on **23 October** – the first stop in a lobbying tour of European countries which also included the UK and France.

The purpose of their visit was twofold. On **24 October** Dr Sein Win addressed the Historical Society of **Trinity College**, Dublin and accepted the **Society's Award** for *Outstanding Contribution to Public Discourse* on behalf of his cousin, Aung San Suu Kyi. The award from Trinity coincided with Daw Suu Kyi's 12 years (in total) on that day in detention.

On **25 October** Dr Sein Win and Dr Thaug Htun met with the **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Dermot Ahern, TD**. The delegation thanked the Minister for the Irish Government's support for the strengthened measures in the EU Common Position on Burma which was adopted in mid-October. The new measures include a ban on and investment in, and imports of, Burmese timber, metal and gems. The EU is considering a ban on all new investment if there continues to be no progress towards democracy in Burma. The Burmese delegation also met with several **Dáil and Seanad Éireann** representatives and NGOs with links to Burma. The Burmese delegation also travelled to Belfast and met with members of the **Northern Ireland Assembly** and addressed a public meeting in **Queen's University**, Belfast which was organised by the Amnesty group at Queen's. The Burmese representatives were heartened by the huge turnout and the reception they received from the students at both universities north and south. BAI would like to thank the organisers of both college events.

Speaking about the Burma-support activities over the past weeks in Ireland including the support and interest shown by the Irish media, **Eileen Seymour**, BAI Chairperson said: "The people of Ireland and their elected representatives support as staunchly as ever the cause of freedom in Burma."

All undoubtedly would agree with **Minister Dermot Ahern TD** in his statement issued after his meeting with Dr Sein Win at Iveagh House when he said: "There is an urgent need to get a process of genuine national dialogue and reconciliation underway."



*A protest in support of the people of Burma outside the GPO on O'Connell Street on 29 September 2007.*



## Update on Burma

### EU appoints special envoy for Burma

Italian politician Mr Piero Fassino has been appointed as the European Union's special envoy for Burma. Mr Javier Solana, the EU high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, appointed Mr Fassino to the post to coordinate the EU's efforts to bring about positive change in Burma and support the efforts of United Nations special envoy Ibrahim Gambari. Mr Fassino is an Italian member of parliament from the Democrats of the Left party, and a former Minister of Justice.

### UN support for expelled official

United Nations special envoy Ibrahim Gambari has expressed (6 November) the UN's support for resident coordinator Mr Charles Petrie after the Burmese military regime asked him to leave Burma. Mr Petrie, the highest-ranking UN official in Burma, was summoned to Naypyidaw, Burma by Government officials on Friday 2 November and informed of their decision. Tensions between Mr Petrie and junta officials originally arose when the UN country team published a statement on 24 October criticising the Burmese Government for failing to meet the basic needs of its people. The statement called for urgent Government action to address the "deteriorating humanitarian situation" in Burma, and said that the protests in the country in August and September stemmed from "the everyday struggle to meet basic needs".

In a letter, the Burmese Foreign Affairs ministry laid out the reasons for the resident coordinator's expulsion: "[Petrie] acted beyond his capacity by issuing the country team statement on UN Day about the social and economic situation. The Government considered that inappropriate and does not want Mr Petrie to continue in his post", the letter said. A UN spokesperson said that it is possible for the Burmese Government to expel a UN official in this way, but that no timeline has been given for him to leave.

### Actions and protests against PetroChina

On 5 November the petroleum and natural gas corporation PetroChina became the world's first trillion-dollar company. Four billion shares floated that day in Shanghai trebled their asking price at once. Eighty-seven per cent of its shares, however, are still owned (through its National Petroleum Company) by the Government of China, which imports nearly half the oil consumed by its economy, not least from Sudan and Burma. PetroChina has also spent over a billion dollars on a pipeline project in Burma, which will give the junta \$150 million a year.

The flotation has swollen a new wave of actions and protests against such companies, their investors and their associates, like PetroChina's front-line adviser, the Swiss Bank UBS, which has offices in Dublin. European pension groups, led by ATP in Denmark, have pulled almost \$215m in investments from the French oil company Total. Campaigners are also targeting the world-wide electronic trading network Swift, which enabled the Burmese Government, by shifting to euros, to sidestep US sanctions against its trading in dollars.

### Ethnic Leaders support monks

The leaders of many ethnic minority groups in Burma have come out in support of the monk-led protests against the oppressive military regime. Contradicting recent reports, they pointed out that many of the demonstrators were from ethnic minorities who walked side by side with Burmans. Although the monk-led demonstrations mainly took place in Rangoon, there were also protests in ethnic areas, particularly Arakan and Kachin states.

It is estimated that up to a third of Burma's population of 53 million is from ethnic minorities. The military junta likes to portray this diversity as threatening to national unity, but most of the ethnic leaders favour a federal democracy for Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) consistently demands

representation for the ethnic minority groups. In her recent statement, Aung San Suu Kyi emphasised the vital need for serious considerations to be given to the interests and opinions of the ethnic nationalities. (See front page article re statement).

### Theatre Dates in 2008

'The Lady of Burma,' a powerful and inspirational play by Richard Shannon in which Aung San Suu Kyi is played by **Liana Mau Tan Gould**, was performed this year at the Edinburgh Festival and the Old Vic and is currently showing (until 2 December) at the Riverside Studios in London. This one woman show will be coming to Ireland next year as part of an extended tour.

Dates for your diary are: 30 April 2008, **Hawk's Well Theatre** in Sligo; 1 May 2008, **Island Arts Centre** in Lisburn and the **Helix** in Glasnevin in Dublin on 2 and 3 May. Booking details when available will be posted on:

[www.ladyofburma.com](http://www.ladyofburma.com) and in local press.

Riverside Studios, Louise Chantal and James Seabright in association with the Burma Campaign UK present the Red Fighting Peacock production of

# The Lady of Burma

Written and directed by Richard Shannon  
with Liana Mau Tan Gould as Aung San Suu Kyi


**'She is my pin-up! She inspires me with her gentle determination.... Men, armed to the teeth, are running scared of her. She has won, and they know they have lost.'**  
Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

This compelling solo show tells the inspirational true story of Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi, at a time when the world is watching another crisis in Burma unfold. Politician, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and mother, Aung San Suu Kyi is the democratically elected leader of the country, yet has endured house arrest for over a decade.

This powerful performance has already made sell-out appearances at this year's Edinburgh Festival and at the Old Vic. Whatever you know or think about Burmese politics, this is an unmissable hymn to the power of the human spirit in the quest for freedom.

**'Tells it all - and catches the pain and wry humour inside that tiny frame and strong, wise face.'**  
The Times

**'A clever, effective script that requires little in the way of prior knowledge of Burma to thoroughly entrance you.'**  
Metro



7 November - 2 December 2007  
Tuesday - Saturday at 8pm, Sundays at 6pm  
Previews 7th & 8th November - tickets £10/£5 concessions. All other performances - tickets £15/£10 concessions

**RIVERSIDESTUDIOS**  
Crisp Road, Hammersmith, London W6 9RL  
020 8237 1111 [www.riversidestudios.co.uk](http://www.riversidestudios.co.uk)

The Burma Campaign UK is part of a global movement to promote democracy and human rights in Burma. [www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk)

Liana Mau Tan Gould as Aung San Suu Kyi in 'The Lady of Burma'.

## RED CROSS FEARFUL FOR MISSING PROTESTORS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has officially asked the Burmese Government for access to all detainees in the country, particularly those arrested in the recent protests.

In a press release issued on 1 November, the ICRC noted that the whereabouts of many of those detained since the beginning of the demonstrations remains unclear, causing great anxiety to their families.

The organisation is seeking to restart a programme of regular visits to detention facilities with the aim of helping family members find and contact those

who are still being held. "The ICRC is ready to resume all its activities at very short notice, provided it is given the necessary guarantees that it will be able to act as a neutral and independent humanitarian organisation," the Red Cross said. The ICRC's Director of Operations, Pierre Krähenbühl, has said the organisation is "deeply worried" about the thousands of people arrested and reported missing. The organisation has tried to re-establish dialogue with the Burmese Government to address the most immediate humanitarian concerns, but their attempts have so far been unsuccessful. In June, the ICRC

took the highly unusual step of publicly denouncing the "systematic abuses" of detainees and civilians by the Government and urging immediate action to put an end to these violations.

"The ICRC has repeatedly drawn attention to these abuses but the authorities have failed to put a stop to them," said Jakob Kellenberger, president of the ICRC.

The ICRC usually engages with Governments directly and confidentially to highlight and seek to resolve violations of humanitarian norms, but this has not been possible with the Burmese regime.



## BEANNACHTAÍ NA NOLLAG

Burma Action Ireland wishes all members, funders, supporters and readers of this newsletter a happy Christmas. Beannachtaí na Nollag oraibhse go léir.

## Membership Renewal

Membership subscriptions for the next twelve months are now due for renewal and a form is enclosed with this edition. (If you have kindly paid a membership fee in recent months, please ignore this letter). All subscriptions/donations enable Burma Action Ireland carry out our public awareness activities – such as street petitions, printing this newsletter and other materials and hosting Burmese speakers such as Dr Sein Win. Every euro matters, and sincere thanks to those of you who renew your membership annually or provide donations.

## How you can help

Bordering Thailand and China, Burma, with a population of 53 million, is ruled by a military regime called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The SPDC has been charged by the UN with 'crimes against humanity'. Burma has one of the highest levels of forced labour; over 60% of its people living in poverty; rape is routinely used as a weapon of war and nearly half of the Government budget is spent on military purposes.

### Send a Christmas Card to Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi's address is No 54 University Avenue, Bahan 11201, Yangon, (Myanmar) Burma.

Daw Suu Kyi has been in and out of detention in Burma since 1989. She was held under house arrest from 1989 -1995, and again under virtual house arrest from 2000 - 2002. She was then arrested in May 2003 after the Depayin massacre (in Burma), during which up to 100 of her supporters were beaten to death by the regime's militia. She is currently under house arrest in Rangoon. Aung San Suu Kyi has said: *I hope the world will not forget us.* Send her your best wishes this Christmas. Your Christmas or New Year card may be intercepted by the military but the arrival of the card(s) will illustrate an international recognition and awareness of both her existence and her status as the leader of the country's democratically elected representatives.

### New Years' Resolution

BAI is always pleased to welcome new members. Please contact Mary Montaut at BAI (number given below) if you would like to speak to someone about joining the group.

### Pack a Bag or Pack this Newsletter

BAI volunteers recently held two more successful bag-packs at Tesco stores. The first was on 6 October 2007 at Tesco's in the Bloomfield Centre in Dún Laoghaire, and the second on 10 November in Tesco's in Stillorgan Shopping Centre. Over €1,700 has been raised between both packings, and this money will be sent to assist people in Burma directly affected by the recent crackdown. BAI would like to warmly thank our volunteers and also Tesco (Ireland) for hosting these successful bag packs. If you have three hours to spare one occasional Saturday every few months, please contact Mary Montaut at the phone number below. Also this newsletter which you are reading goes out to our maillist four times a year. If you would like to pack the newsletter (generally in one evening with other people) please contact Mary Montaut – number below. The extra hands make the packing easier.

### Elected Representatives

Write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Dermot Ahern, TD (Iveagh House, 80 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2), thanking him for his concern to date with the situation in Burma and urge him to continue raising the Burma issue at every level of the political process and:

- Take all necessary measures toward a

speedy restoration of democracy in Burma,

- Demand the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi,
- Express your opposition to the use of torture in prisons, the growing AIDS/health crisis, sexual violence against women and treatment of Burmese refugees in adjoining countries.

### The oppression of the Burmese people and the detention of Daw Suu Kyi

Write appeals to the Burmese military regime, calling for the safe release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all Burmese political prisoners. This detention has to stop. Please ask the SPDC to take action on the following:

- To end the continuing violations of the human rights of women, in particular forced labour, forced relocations, abuse, torture, sexual violence, exploitation and abuse in detention and summary executions, often committed by military personnel,
- To end the systematic forced displacements of persons and the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries and create adequate conditions for their safe and voluntary return and complete reintegration, and to allow humanitarian personnel safe access to assist them in this process.

### Please address your action letters to the following:

*Lieutenant General Thein Sein,  
Acting Prime Minister,  
State Peace and Development Council,  
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar.*

*BAI would appreciate it very much if you could send us a copy of your letter(s).*

## Burma Action Ireland

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Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of **Burma Action Ireland** and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of **Irish Aid**.

Thank you to Minister of State, Máire Hochtór, TD and Deputy Joanna Tuffy, TD for the posting of this newsletter.

Burma Action Ireland is a voluntary group established since May 1996 to raise awareness in Ireland of the current situation in Burma and the nature of the ruling regime.

Hon. President:  
John Boorman

Chairperson:  
Eileen Seymour

