

Four Asian Human Rights Organisations Calling for EU to Strengthen Sanctions Against Burma's Junta

Saturday 13 October 2007, by [Altsean-Burma](#), [FDB](#), [SWAN](#), [Women's League of Burma](#) (Date first published: 12 October 2007).

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"PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS"

ASEAN ACTIVISTS URGE TOUGHER EU SANCTIONS ON BURMA

Bangkok Fri: - The Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (Altsean-Burma) today urged the European Union to fulfill its promise to impose targeted economic sanctions against Burma's State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

"The people of Burma have risked their lives to peacefully protest against the SPDC's economic and political mismanagement. It is time that the EU and the international community send an unequivocal message to the SPDC that their murderous rampage against monks and unarmed civilians is absolutely unacceptable," said

Debbie Stothard, coordinator of Altsean-Burma, a regional human rights group.

"The regime is using diplomacy to stave off international pressure while continuing its vicious crackdown against monks and civilians. Tougher sanctions will send a clear message that the EU sees through the regime's subterfuge. Otherwise, European support for democracy and human rights will be dismissed as mere rhetoric and diplomatic posturing." "The EU has an important opportunity to affect real change in Burma at this time when the SPDC is already economically vulnerable. The junta will have no choice but to commence political dialogue with the democracy movement and ethnic groups if it is hit by targeted economic sanctions," emphasized Ms Stothard.

On September 25, the EU warned the SPDC that it would strengthen sanctions if the military regime resorted to violence against its civilians. The next day, the SPDC launched a violent crackdown on Burmese citizens and members of the Buddhist clergy who had gathered for the ninth consecutive day to protest the military regime's oppressive rule. More than 3,000 monks and civilians have been detained, with the majority still incarcerated. At least 138 protesters have been killed, including many monks and a Japanese photojournalist*.

The SPDC's violent reaction to the protests continues. Kyaukpadaung Township NLD member Ko Win Shwe died as a result of torture during interrogation in Plate Myot Police Center near Mandalay. Those who have been released from various detention centers throughout the country report horrific, overcrowded conditions, with no sanitation, little food and drinking water, and denial of medical treatment. Protesters are being tortured during interrogation and monks have forcibly disrobed. Many have died.

"Now is the time for the EU to put its money where its mouth is. If the Europeans do not have the determination to keep up the pressure, it gives the rest of the world an excuse to backtrack on Burma, as well," stressed Ms Stothard.

ENDS

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** Detention figures reported by the Irrawaddy. Deaths reported by Mizzima.*

Burma's political alliance calls the EU for more pressure on the military government

12 October 2007

The Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB) would like to call all 27 European Union (EU) members to impose economic sanctions including a total ban on all new investments in Burma and a ban on financial transactions.

FDB recalled the EU's statement on 25th September 2007 which reads,

"The EU further underlines to the authorities in Naypyidaw that it will not hesitate to reinforce and strengthen the existing sanctions regime, should they resort to using violence against the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators."

The recent brutal crack down by the military government against peaceful protesters, mainly Buddhist monks has proved that the Burma's military government ignored not only the real desire of all the people of Burma, but also the will of international community including the EU.

Continuous ignorance by the military government on calls to stop the human rights violation and engage in a dialogue for peaceful transition towards democracy shouldn't be left overlooked any more. The EU has particularly to show this time that it can no longer expect the regime to move forward a positive change in Burma without any punitive pressure from the international community.

FDB acknowledged that the EU's previous policy of gradually increasing pressure on the Burmese military government if there was no change, and relaxing pressure if there was positive change. It is the time all 27 EU members to assess the current situation in Burma and judge whether there has been positive change or not.

FDB believes that there can be no other option for the EU than putting more effective pressure on the military regime, and the EU needs to stand with Burmese people who bravely express their choice for democracy.

Therefore, the FDB strongly requests all 27 EU members to take the situation of Burma into their serious consideration and take further steps together by imposing stronger targeted economic sanctions.

Policy Forum

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Statement by SWAN urging EU to impose stronger sanctions against the Burmese military regime

The Shan Women's Action Network has consistently called for economic sanctions against the Burmese military regime, and at this crucial time urges the European Union to impose strong new economic sanctions on the regime.

The Shan State is the largest state of Burma, and one of the richest in natural resources. Since the opening up of the economy to foreign investment in 1988, foreign companies have rushed in to invest in our forests, minerals and rivers. Yet the vast majority of our people have seen no benefits from this investment whatsoever. On the contrary, we have seen a massive increase of Burma Army troops to protect these investments, which include vast logging concessions, gem mines, and mega-dams, including on the Salween River. This has led to increased forced relocation, land confiscation, forced labour, extrajudicial killing, torture and systematic rape. Our environment has been ravaged, and food security has plummeted, as have standards of health and education, resulting in an influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees into Thailand.

The international community has recently witnessed the regime's brutal crackdown on the peaceful demonstrations led by Buddhist monks in Rangoon. In fact, such brutality has been commonplace over the past decades in Shan State, in areas inaccessible to the international media. Countless civilians, including Buddhist monks, have suffered extrajudicial killing and torture at the hands of the regime's troops. Since the publication of our report "Licence to Rape"? in 2002, detailing the rape of 625 women and girls in Shan State, SWAN has been exposing the ongoing use of rape as a weapon of war by the regime. With the continual build-up of Burma Army battalions in Shan State, civilians face the constant threat of violence, and women and girls live in perpetual fear of sexual assault.

It is very clear that foreign investment in Burma at this time means complicity in the military regime's oppression of our people and exploitation of our resources. We therefore urge the EU to impose strong new economic sanctions on Burma's military regime. In particular, we call for an

international arms embargo.

Calling for EU to strengthen sanctions against Burma's military junta

The Women's League of Burma is greatly heartened by the international response to the recent crackdown in Burma, and the collective condemnation of Burma's military regime by the UN Security Council. However, raids, arrests, torture and killing of peaceful protestors, including Buddhist monks, are continuing inside Burma, meaning that increased pressure is needed from the international community to force the regime to stop these ongoing atrocities. We therefore call on the EU to impose stronger economic sanctions against the regime.

Brutal army crackdowns of peaceful protestors, as witnessed recently by the international media, have in fact taken place repeatedly in Burma since July 1962. Such crackdowns have always been followed by raids, arrests, interrogation and torture, and lengthy imprisonment of suspected activists.

In this recent crackdown, at least 63 women protestors have been arrested by the regime, and other prominent women activists, including Phyu Phyu Thin, Mi Mi and Nilar Thein, are being hunted down and are in hiding. Nilar Thein has had to abandon her baby daughter, who she was breast-feeding. Most recent reports have revealed that wives, mothers and daughters of activists have also been detained, to induce them to surrender to the authorities.

Women arrested in previous crackdowns, for example in 1988, were sexually assaulted by the Special Police ("Lon Htein"), and during the recent arrests in August 2007, women were witnessed being sexually harassed by army and paramilitary personnel. We are therefore gravely concerned at the fate of the women currently being held in various prisons and detention centres.

The safety of these women, and other political prisoners, cannot be guaranteed while the regime maintains its grip on power, and refuses to enter into a genuine political dialogue to bring peace and democracy to Burma. This is why we urgently need stronger sanctions from the EU to put increased pressure on the regime.

Foreign investment in Burma has prolonged military rule, by providing the regime with financial support to buy weapons and build up its army to cruelly oppress its own people. Therefore WLB calls on the EU to impose a complete ban on all investment in Burma, an arms embargo and a ban on all financial transactions benefiting the regime and its associates.

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