

PRESS RELEASE

28 September 2007

### **122 Human Rights Groups in Asia-Pacific Call for a Special Session on Burma**

(Bangkok) 122 human rights organisations, representing every sector of civil society, join hands in writing an open letter to Ambassador Doru-Romulus Costea, the President of the Human Rights Council (HRC) calling for the HRC to convene a special session on the human rights situation in Burma. This is one of the largest shows of solidarity to date from national, regional and international NGOs based in the Asia Pacific; the situation in Burma is in dire need of focused attention.

The open letter, which was delivered to the Human Rights Council Bureau this morning at 10 am (Bangkok Time) stated that “[the situation in Burma] requires immediate international concerns and actions...[as] the Myanmar government since 26 August 2007 responded by forcefully dispersing the demonstrators and monks who have been demonstrating peacefully in Rangoon”.

Currently, more than 200 human rights defenders, including monks and National League for Democracy (NLA) members, have been arrested, while nine people have reportedly been killed although this number could be significantly higher. There are eyewitness reports and footage of monks, demonstrators and civilians being beaten, tear gassed and shot at.

The letter stressed that the ongoing violence, if the HRC remains silent, could become a regional human rights issue, if not global one; in 1988 the government’s response to mass demonstrations was to massacre over 3,000 people. Currently over 3 million refugees and asylum seekers have escaped Burma, as well there are an estimated 27,000 Internally Displaced Persons in the Karen State due to the military offensive.

Lastly the open letter urged:

- The Presidency of the UN Human Rights Council to issue concern on the human rights situation in Myanmar in light of the urgency of the situation.
- The UN Human Rights Council to take immediate response to the human rights situation in Myanmar in its 6<sup>th</sup> Session.
- The UN Human Rights Council to convene a Special Session on the urgent human rights situation in Myanmar, with the view to prevent further human rights violations in Myanmar and to establish an appropriate preventive mechanism with the involvement of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar.
- To urge the Government of Myanmar to implement all the decisions and resolutions by the former Commission on Human Rights Regarding Myanmar.

The letter was initiated by Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), a regional human rights organisation based in Bangkok, Thailand. The letter was endorsed by 122 organisations in 18 countries in Asia-Pacific region.

For more information, please contact:

Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), +66 (02) 391 8801, [anselmo@forum-asia.org](mailto:anselmo@forum-asia.org), or Pokpong Lawansiri, Programme Officer on Southeast Asia, +66 (0) 86 603 8844, [pong@forum-asia.org](mailto:pong@forum-asia.org)

Please see attached letter: Open Letter to Ambassador Doru-Romulus Costea, President of the Human Rights Council

28 September 2007

Ambassador Doru-Romulus Costea,  
President of Human Rights Council

cc. Members of the Human Rights Council in Asia

Your Excellency,

The present ongoing political and human rights crisis in Myanmar is of great concern to the international community today. As this situation requires immediate international concerns and actions, we are asking you to convene a special session to examine the deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar. After the demonstrations by the Burmese people and Buddhist monks from 19 August 2007 onward, the Myanmar government since 26 September 2007 responded by forcefully dispersing the demonstrators and monks who have been demonstrating peacefully in Rangoon for the ninth consecutive day. As this letter is written, the deteriorating situation includes:

- In Rangoon: At Shwedagon pagoda, the holiest Buddhist place in Rangoon, the Burmese soldiers today used baton and tear gas against the Buddhist monks and civilian protesters. Some of the demonstrators were reportedly beaten up while hundreds were arrested and taken away in trucks. At least one Buddhist monk was killed
- More than 200 human rights defenders have been arrested, while nine persons have reportedly been killed. Large numbers of army and riot police personnel have been deployed around a number of monasteries in Rangoon. In the morning of 27 September, monks were beaten in morning raid at monasteries by the soldiers.
- Mandalay, Central Burma; On 26 September, Eight National League for Democracy (NLD) members were arrested in the township across Mandalay division. One famous comedian, Par Par Lay was also arrested. In the afternoon of 26 September, military troops fired shots and used tear gas in an effort to disperse tens of thousands of monks gathering peacefully.
- Kachin State; Early morning of 26 September —At least 90 monks from several monasteries in Moe Nyin Township were arrested by the authorities at 10 p.m. Five NLD members were also arrested.

It has also been reported that Aung San Suu Kyi, the pro-democracy leader who has been under house arrest for 15 years have been sent to high-security Insein Prison for detention, reflecting the Myanmar government's denial of international community's calls to release her. The detention of Ms Suu Kyi in this prison is unacceptable and in contravention of the existing standards, both domestic in Myanmar and international.

In 1988 at a similar mass demonstration, the government responded brutally firing into the crowd – leading to about 3,000 killed. The 1990 election where the opposition National League for Democracy won the most seats was not upheld, and the military continued its undemocratic rule to the present. Since then there have been tremendous cases of violence against women, human rights abuses, and cases of political dissidents being harassed, tortured, killed, or disappeared. Currently there are more than 3 million refugees and asylum seekers around the world from Myanmar – from the massive massacre in 1990 onward – not to mention 27,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Karen State. As a result from

the possible crackdown, million will flee Myanmar as refugees making them vulnerable to further human rights abuses.

This special session is, in addition, especially called for, in light of the current serious deterioration of the situation, to examine the persistent non-cooperation of the government Myanmar with the United Nations. The UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, appointed by the former Commission on Human Rights, has been denied visits to the country since 2004 – reflecting the setbacks and untruthfulness to bring national reconciliation and genuine democracy to the country.

We, consider that the situation in Myanmar of possible massive human rights violations is in its most critical period. The Resolution 60/251 emphasize on the responsibilities of all states, including the Government of Myanmar, to respect the human rights and fundamental freedom of all (PP 5), therefore we urge the Human Rights Council:

- The Presidency of the United Nations Human Rights Council to issue his concern on the human rights situation in Myanmar due to the urgency of the situation.
- The UN Human Rights Council to take immediate response to the Human Rights Situation in Myanmar in its 6<sup>th</sup> Session.
- The UN Human Rights Council to convene a Special Session on the urgent human rights Situation in Myanmar, with the view to prevent further human rights violations in Myanmar and the establishment of an appropriate preventive mechanism with the involvement of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar.
- To urge the Government of Myanmar to implement all the decisions and resolutions by the former Commission on Human Rights regarding Myanmar.

We remain at your disposal for any further information or consultation on this urgent matter.

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,



Anselmo LEE  
Executive Director  
FORUM-ASIA

For more information, please contact:

Anselmo Lee, Executive Director, The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), +66 (02) 391 8801, [anselmo@forum-asia.org](mailto:anselmo@forum-asia.org), or Pokpong Lawansiri, Programme Officer on Southeast Asia, +66 (0) 86 603 8844, [seap@forum-asia.org](mailto:seap@forum-asia.org)

The letter is endorsed by 122 organisations in 18 countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.

1. 1988 Students Generation, Burma
2. Activists Society for Change (ACS), Thailand

3. Asian Center for Human Rights (ACHR), India
4. Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
5. Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU)
6. ADHIKAR, India
7. Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh
8. Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI), Indonesia
9. All Rabha Students' Union, India
10. All Women's Action Society (AWAM), Malaysia
11. Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma)
12. AsiaDHRRA, Philippines
13. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
14. Asia-Pacific People's Partnership for Burma (APPPB)
15. Asian Legal Resource Center (ALRC)
16. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
17. Association of Burma Ex-Political Prisoners (ABEP)
18. Boro Peoples' Welfare Society, India Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
19. Burma Issues, Thailand
20. Burma Peace Group, Thailand
21. Burmese Women's Union (BWU), Burma/ Thailand
22. Cambodia League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
23. Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia
24. Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC), Malaysia
25. Centre for Organisation Research & Education (CORE), India
26. Citizens' Council for Human Rights (CCHR), Philippines
27. Civil Rights Committee of The Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall (CRC-KLSCAH)
28. Commission for the "Disappeared" and Victims of Violence (KONTRAS), Indonesia
29. Community Trust Fund (CTF), Sri Lanka
30. Coordination on Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM-Asia)
31. Education and Research Association for Consumer (ERA Consumer), Malaysia
32. Free Burma Coalition - Philippines (FBC)
33. Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB)
34. Forum Tae Matam – Eyes on Human Rights, Timor Leste
35. Foundation for Democracy and Development, Nepal
36. Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA), Philippines
37. Friend's Association for Rural Reconstruction (FARR), India
38. Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, Philippines
39. Generation peace youth network (GenPeace), Philippines
40. Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW)
41. Globe International (GI), Mongolia
42. HAK Association, Timor Leste
43. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan
44. Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB)
45. Human Rights Now, Japan
46. Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Coordination Committee (HRTMCC), Nepal
47. Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) Indonesia
48. Igreja Protestante Timor Lorosae, Timor Leste
49. Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples North East Zone (ICITP-NEZ), India
50. Indonesian Human Rights Monitor (IMPARSIAL)
51. Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI), Indonesia
52. Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples (IKAP), Thailand

53. Information Monitor (INFORM), Sri Lanka
54. Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), Nepal
55. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), Philippines
56. Institut Dayakologi, Indonesia
57. International Federation of Indigenous Youths' Associations
58. International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination (IMADR)
59. International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID)
60. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP)
61. Jaintia Students' Federation, India
62. Jaringan Organg Asal Se Malaysia (JOAS)
63. Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP), Timor Leste
64. Korean House for International Solidarity (KHIS), South Korea
65. Labour Union of Arakan (LUA), Burma
66. Law and Society Trust (LST), Sri Lanka
67. Legal Resources for Social Action (LRSA), India
68. Mainao Welfare Society, India
69. Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA), Bangladesh
70. Matupi Students Union, Burma
71. Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)
72. National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)
73. National Coalition for the International Criminal Court (NCICC), Nepal
74. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), Pakistan
75. National Council of Churches in Australia - Christian World Service (NCCA-CWS)
76. National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB)
77. National Human Rights Society of Malaysia (HAKAM)
78. North East Women Network, India
79. Paglingkod Batas Pangkapapatiran Foundation (PBPF), Philippines
80. Partners of Community Organisation (PACOS TRUST)
81. Paralegal Training and Services Center (PTSC), Philippines
82. People's Empowerment for Strong Civil Society, Thailand
83. People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), South Korea
84. People's Watch, India
85. Philippines Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), Philippines
86. PILIPINA Legal Resources Center (PLRC), Philippines
87. Odhikar, Bangladesh
88. Overseas National Students' Organisation of Burma
89. Rakhaing Patriotic Literature Club (RPLC), Burma
90. Rege-Regang, India
91. Resource Integration Centre (RIC), Bangladesh
92. Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA), Malaysia
93. Seafarers' Union of Burma (SUB)
94. Sekretariat Anak Merdeka Indonesia (SAMIN), Indonesia
95. Self Employed Bodo Women's Association, India
96. Shwe Gas Movement (SGM), Bangladesh, Thailand and India
97. Shwe Gas Pipeline Campaign Committee, India
98. Sister in Islam, Malaysia
99. Society for Aie Valley and Manash Area Road Communication Development, India
100. Southeast Asia Rivers Network (SEARIN), Thailand
101. Students Federation of Thailand (SFT)
102. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
103. Taiwan Alliance to End Death Penalty (TAEDP)
104. Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR)

105. Taiwan Association for Rights Advancement for Ping Pu Plans Aborigine Peoples (TARA-Ping Pu)
106. Taiwan Aung San Suu Kyi Network (TASSKN)
107. Tanggol-Kalikasan-Public Interest Environmental Law Office, Philippines
108. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Philippines'
109. TENAGANITA, Malaysia
110. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma (AAPP), Thailand
111. The Center of Independent Journalism, Malaysia
112. The Migrant Karen Labour Union (MKLU), Burma/Thailand
113. TIE Asia, Malaysia
114. Think Centre, Singapore
115. Timor Leste Institute for Reconstruction, Monitoring and Analysis (La'o Hamatuk)
116. Timor Leste Institute for Research, Advocacy and Campaign (Luta Hamutuk)
117. Workers Democracy Group (WD), Thailand
118. Women's Welfare Society (WWS), Nepal
119. Yaung Chi Oo Workers Association (YCOWA) , Thailand
120. Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI)
121. Yayasan Sosial Noroman, Timor Leste
122. Youth for Sustainable Development Assembly, Philippines