



# Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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## MONTHLY CHRONOLOGY – NOVEMBER 2009

### Summary of current situation

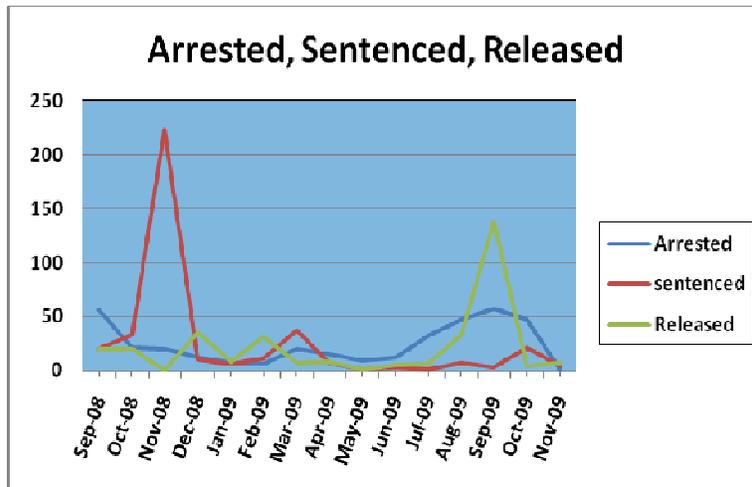
There are a total of **2,173** political prisoners in Burma. This is an overall increase of 5 in comparison to last month's figure of 2,168. In November, there were no political prisoners were arrested, and 7 were released. The AAPP also received information about activists who were arrested and released before November 2009, and this retroactive information explains why there is actually an overall increase of 5 this month.

These include:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Monks	251
Members of Parliament	12
Students	284
Women	179
NLD members	433
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network	34
Ethnic nationalities	206
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	30
Teachers	26
Media activists	43
Lawyers	12
In poor health	130

Since the protests in August 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **1,176** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

## Monthly Trend Analysis



During the month of November 2009, there were no reports of any arrests of political prisoners. **4** activists were sentenced and **7** were released. At least **130** political prisoners are in poor health due to the harsh prison conditions, transfers to remote prisons where there are no doctors, and the denial of proper medical care.

The month of November was thus eerily quiet, and represents the first time in at least 12 months where the junta has not arrested any political activists. Moreover, it contrasts sharply with the last three months, where authorities arrested 47, 57 and 47 activists, respectively.

The attention of international media was therefore yet again focused on international and diplomatic developments, with visits to Burma by high-level U.S. diplomats and U.S. President Obama's much anticipated presence at the US-ASEAN summit. An announcement by a high-ranking junta official about Aung San Suu Kyi's possible release also received much attention, fueling rumours, hope, and skepticism in and out of Burma. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), has made it clear, however, that the release of political prisoners, while positive, is not enough to guarantee free and fair elections in 2010, and has renewed calls for international pressure to amend the Burmese constitution ahead of the elections.

As a stark reminder of the continued breach of human rights in Burma, the United Nations' Human Rights Committee approved of a resolution condemning the Burmese government for its violation of its population's fundamental rights.

## Treatment of prisoners and their families

The health of two icons of the democratic movement in Burma, Min Ko Naing and U Gambira, has steadily deteriorated over the past month. The situation of the prominent monk and the leader of the 88 Generation Students' group highlights the plight of at

least 130 political prisoners who are in bad health and are not receiving the treatment they desperately need.

The AAPP recommends the two following texts – the first, a testimonial by former political prisoner Myo Yan Naung Thein delivered to DVB, and the second, a story about Hla Moe, husband of imprisoned political activist Mie Mie – as they provide a glimpse into the struggles of political prisoners and their families in Burma.

### **Testimony of a released political prisoner – DVB (2 November 2009)**

Online at: <http://english.dvb.no/news.php?id=3010>

### **A Husband whose wife is a political prisoner – By Than Htike Oo, The Irrawaddy (27 November 2009)**

Online at: [http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=17304](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=17304)

## **Prisoners Released**

7 political prisoners were released in September. At least 1 of these prisoners – Khin Maung Kyi (2 months) – was released after having served his full sentence. Two others – Htet Soe Lin and Thet Paing Lin were released after having completed 9 months of their 2 and a half year sentence. The other released prisoners are Aung Myo Latt, Min Satta, Zaw Tun Naing, and Ye Htet Soe, who is a member of the AASYC.

## **National League for Democracy**

There are at least 433 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) that are currently detained. This presents a decrease compared to the 435 that were detained in August. The release of Htet Soe Lin, a youth member of the NLD in charge of the Dala Township in Rangoon, is most noteworthy. The NLD remained politically active in November, notably by holding meetings with visiting U.S. diplomats. While the party has supported Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's overtures to the junta, it has simultaneously made clear that its participation in the 2010 elections are contingent not only on the release of political prisoners, but also an amendment of the Constitution which, in its current form, would guarantee that the elections would not be free or fair.

### **24 November 2009**

#### **U Win Tin: Junta not worried by sanctions**

U Win Tin, a Central Executive Committee (CEC) member of Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), on Tuesday told Mizzima that the chances of Than Shwe responding to the Nobel Peace Laureate's letter, requesting a meeting with him, are slim as the military clique seems to be far too preoccupied with its planned elections rather than looking at easing western sanctions. On November 11, Aung San Suu Kyi, through her party spokesperson Nyan Win, sent her second letter to Than Shwe

requesting a face to face meeting to follow up on the work to help ease western sanctions. Nyan Win on Tuesday told Mizzima that Than Shwe has not responded to the letter, which also requested permission to allow her a meeting at her home with the party CEC. “Sanctions do not constitute real problems for them [junta], as it does not hurt them much but creates slight difficulties in their relationship with the international community. But the elections are very important to them,” Win Tin said. Aung San Suu Kyi on September 25 sent her first letter to Than Shwe offering to cooperate in easing sanctions. The junta responded to her proposal by granting her request to meet diplomats from the United States, European Union and Australia. Besides, the junta also allowed the detained Burmese democracy icon to meet the junta’s Liaison Minister Aung Kyi and also the visiting US high-level delegation led by Assistant Secretary for Asia Pacific Affairs, Kurt Campbell. But Win Tin added, “This election will guarantee the rule of the military because it will be held based on the 2008 constitution. And the new Parliament and will be controlled by this constitution that will guarantee the military’s rule for many years to come in Burma.” ([24 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **17 November 2009**

### **RSF publishes U Win Tin Biography**

The Paris-based media watchdog Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) has published a new French-language biography of veteran journalist and prominent pro-democracy activist U Win Tin. According to the RSF, the book, titled “*Une vie de dissident*,” was published because the 80-year-old Win Tin has played an active role in a number of Burmese political movements throughout his life. Asked about being the subject of a book-length biography, U Win Tin, who was one of the founding members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), said that there were others worthier of the attention. “It would have been better to make a biography of anti-dictatorship leader Aung San Suu Kyi, student leader Min Ko Naing, Shan leader Khun Htun Oo, or monk leader Ashin Gambira than my biography, because they have sacrificed more than me,” he told *The Irrawaddy*. Maung Wuntha, a well-known Rangoon-based journalist and biographer, hailed the decision to publish a life of Win Tin. “It is a very valuable book for younger people because *Sayagyi* [great teacher] Win Tin is a very important figure in Burmese politics, journalism and other areas of historical importance.” He added that he would have preferred to see a biography of Win Tin written by a Burmese writer, but acknowledged that that was impossible in a country where censorship is rampant. Win Tin, a former editor, was released in September 2008 after serving 19 years in Rangoon’s notorious Insein Prison. ([17 November 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

## **4 November 2009**

### **NLD urges US to call for constitutional amendments**

Burma’s main opposition party – the National League for Democracy – on November 4 told visiting United States diplomats to include the revision of the 2008 constitution as one of the main items in its engagement with the ruling junta. The party told the delegation led by US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell that without revising the

2008 constitution there could be no free and fair elections, and no improvement in the situation of Human Rights or the process of national reconciliation could take place. The U.S. delegation visited the NLD office as part of their fact-finding mission. They also had a two hour meeting with detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Wednesday afternoon prior to their meeting with the NLD CEC. In their discussions, the NLD made it clear that they will not participate in the 2010 elections unless the junta revises the 2008 constitution, on the basis of which the elections will be held. “It is good to demand the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, but if the constitution is not revised, there would be no improvement in Burma’s politics,” NLD leader U Win Tin said. He argued that the 2008 constitution, which was drafted following a 14-year long convention where delegates were handpicked, is designed to safeguard the military’s interest and not to guarantee the peoples’ rights. “If we take out the gist of the constitution, we can say that the Tatmadaw [military] is the principle guardian of the constitution, Tatmadaw is the principle operator of the constitution and Tatmadaw is the principle interpreter of the constitution” Win Tin remarked, adding that he is disappointed with the US for remaining silent over the junta’s 2008 constitution and making no particular mention in their calls for reform. ([4 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **88 Generation Students**

There are at least 41 members of the 88 Generation Students group currently in detention. The health of its leader, Min Ko Naing, has been a particular concern for observers.

**25 November 2009**

### **Min Ko Naing suffering from hypertension**

Min Ko Naing, the imprisoned leader of the 88 Generation Students activist group who is serving a 65-year prison sentence in the remote Kengtung prison in Burma’s northeastern Shan state, has high blood pressure and is in need of immediate medical assistance, his sister told a National League for Democracy (NLD) party member. He has been kept in solitary confinement since his transfer in November 2008 to Kengtung prison, 700 miles from Rangoon, whose cells offer little protection against severe winter weather conditions. “His family is worried and they are preparing to bring some medicine to him,” said NLD member Khin Maung Swe. Min Ko Naing’s sister visited the student leader and founder of the All Burma Federation of Students Union (ABFSU) in Kengtung. Meanwhile, another 88 Generation Students leader, Pyone Cho, who was sentenced along with Min Ko Naing, is suffering from constricted blood vessels, his father Win Aung said. He is serving a 65-year sentence in Kawthaung prison in Tenasserim division, southern Burma. Doctors are reportedly confident however that he would recover. Win Aung’s week-long trip to visit Pyone Cho is typical for families of political prisoners held in remote jails, many of whom struggle to raise funds to visit. “I think it would’ve been better if our children are kept in somewhere near to their parents,” he said. “But now, the long distance makes it possible to reach to them only in

emergencies.” Healthcare in Burmese jails is rudimentary, with prisoners often forced to pay bribes to receive medical attention. ([25 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **12 November 2009**

### **Two imprisoned 88 Generation Students group members transferred**

AAPP has learned that two imprisoned members of the 88 Generation Students group were transferred to different prisons. Thet Zaw (aka Zout Htoe) was transferred from Moulmein prison in Mon State to Insein prison. He was arrested in August 2007 and sentenced to 65 years in prison. He is currently facing another trial to face fresh charges. Thin Thin Aye (aka Mee Mee) was, for her part, was transferred from Bassein prison to Katha prison. She was arrested in October 2007 and, like Thet Zaw, was handed a 65 year sentence, and is currently facing another trial. The decision to transfer her is particularly reprehensible given that she has already suffered of a heart condition, and was reported to be suffering from gout and weakness earlier this month. (12 November 2009 AAPP and 2 November 2009 DVB Burmese)

## **6 November 2009**

### **Imprisoned female activist ‘too weak to speak’**

The health of Nemo Hlaing, a female activist serving a five-year prison sentence in central Burma is rapidly deteriorating, according to family members who visited her in late October. Her sister, Su Su Hlaing, told *DVB* that she had been ill since 6 October but that the family was notified only last week. “We tried to visit her as soon as we got the telegraph on 27 October but we could not make it there until 31 October,” she said. The 88 Generation Students group and National League for Democracy (NLD) party member was sentenced in June 2008 on four separate charges. She had initially been treated by a prison doctor but was barred from leaving her cell. The doctor had reportedly given her antibiotics to treat a gastric complaint but with no result. “After three days of no improvement, the doctor changed the diagnosis and gave her six injections for typhoid but her fever never went down,” said Su Su Hlaing “My sister doesn’t know what is happening to her; she asked the doctor but was not given an answer. She is now too weak to speak.” Nemo Hlaing had previously suffered from gout and heart disease, her sister said, and the family was anxious to get her treated. ([6 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **Ethnic Nationalities**

There are at least 206 members of ethnic nationalities currently held in prison.

## **26 November 2009**

### **Shan locals arrested for “insurgent links” over the past months**

Arrests of civilians in Shan state have reportedly intensified in recent weeks as the Burmese government looks to break perceived links between locals and rebel groups in the region. Four people are currently standing trial in the southern Shan state townships

of Siseng and Hopon. Military authorities have accused them of having contact with the anti-junta Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), which now controls Siseng, and the Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organisation (SSNPLO). The government first launched a crackdown on local Shan after a senior member of the Burmese military was shot dead by an unidentified gunman early last year. The four men are being charged under the Illegal Organization Act, according to sources close to family members of the accused. One of the defendants is reportedly a member of the pro-government Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), an organization widely tipped to play a key role in government affairs following elections in Burma next year. The latest crackdown follows the recent imprisonment of seven Shan villagers who were also accused of having links to local insurgent groups. They were each given two year sentences. Many civilians in the region have been forced to sign pledges asserting that they will not aid or abet ethnic groups opposing the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The threat of arrest and interrogation by military personnel, added to the numbers of people already imprisoned, has been an effective tool in coercing villagers to sign the pledges, locals said. ([24 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **24 November 2009**

### **Shan leader suffering from malaria**

Gen. Hso Ten (aka Sai Kyaw Sein), Chairman of the Shan State Peace Committee (SSPC), is suffering from malaria and is also reportedly losing his eyesight. He has been denied treatment. He is serving a 106 year sentence in Hkamti prison. (24 November 2009 RFA Burmese)

## **2 November 2009**

### **Death in Thayet Prison**

AAPP has received information confirming the death of Saw Char Late, from Kya-in-Seikkyi, Karen State, in Thayet prison on 28 July 2009. He was the son of U Saw Tu Lu, a member of the KNU. He was serving a 27 year sentence in Thayet prison. (2 November 2009 AAPP)

## **Monks**

There are at least 251 monks currently held in prison. Continued surveillance of monks has been noticed around the country, and there have been many reports of the junta using its political levers to silence dissenting monks.

## **25 November 2009**

### **Junta continues crackdown on monks**

The military junta continues to put pressure on monks and their family members, place bans on preaching the Dhamma and impose travel restrictions. Ashin Thavara, the secretary of the India-based All Burma Monks' Representative Committee

(ABMRC), told *The Irrawaddy*: "My parent sign up at the township authority every month, and the authorities order my family to inform them whenever I contact them. They also pressured my parents' employer to fire them from their job." Ashin Thavara, 26, and is a founding member of the ABMRC, which launched the 2007 demonstrations together with other monk organizations. "The Burmese authorities confiscated all of my belongings in February 2008, and pressured monks to leave my monastery. It now has only one old monk." Ashin Issariya, one of the founders of All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA), said: "The military junta still oppresses and insults monks and the Buddhist religion. There are currently more than 250 monks and more than 20 nuns in prison in Burma for their political activities." The regime's Ministry of Religious Affairs seeks to control monks through the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (a state-sponsored Buddhist monks' organization), which has issued orders restricting monks' travel and ability to offer dhamma teachings. The Ministry has also stopped issuing letters of recommendation, which are required for a monk to travel to a foreign country. Ashin Nayminda, who played a leading role in the 2007 demonstrations, said the authorities told his friends that if they contacted him, they could be arrested. "Some of my friends who took part in the demonstrations have stayed away from me and returned to lay life," he said. "All of my property in my monastery was confiscated." An abbot in Mandalay Division told *The Irrawaddy*: "Plain clothes security officers are closely watching certain monks and monasteries." He said four youths who were in contact with monks in Mandalay were detained in September. "Their family and relatives do not know where they are now". State authorities closed Maggin Monastery in Rangoon in November 2007 after its abbot, Sayadaw U Indaka, was arrested for his involvement in the demonstrations. Monks and novices were evicted along with several HIV/ AIDS patients who were receiving treatment in the monastery. In October 2009, the ABMA expelled Sen-Gen Than Shwe from the Buddhist faith because he had failed to issue an apology for his abuse of monks and the religion of Buddhism. ([25 November 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

## **18 November 2009**

### **U Gambira in bad health**

U Gambira, the monk who famously led the Alliance of All Burma Buddhist Monks during the Saffron Revolution of 2007, is suffering from malaria. His constant movement from one prison to the other has had negative impacts on his health, and he was the object of brutal treatment by various prison guards. In Mandalay prison, for instance, he was punished without reason on January 3, 2009. He was then transferred to Khamti prison on May 29, 2009, where he was beaten by police officers upon his arrival, and was denied food and water. This treatment is particularly shocking as he was already so weak at the time of his arrival that he was unable to speak. He is currently detained in Kale prison, where appropriate medical care is lacking, and hopes for treating malaria are dim. The AAPP can also confirm that the information he was given by the Special Branch of the Burmese police concerning the arrest of his sister was false, and was seemingly given only to demoralize and weaken him further. U Gambira's sister, Ma Lwin Lwin Mying, is indeed currently in Mae Sot, Thailand. (18 November 2009 AAPP)

## **Cyclone Nargis Volunteers**

There are currently at least 30 Cyclone Nargis volunteers currently held in prison.

**24 November 2009**

### **AI: Stop arresting Nargis volunteers**

In a statement released on Tuesday, Amnesty International (AI), the UK-based human rights watchdog, urged international donors meeting in Bangkok this week to pressure the Burmese military regime to “end harassment of activists trying to help survivors of Cyclone Nargis, and ensure sufficient aid reaches those affected.” About ten political activists and journalists—seven are members of Lin Lat Kyei (Shining Star), a group founded in 2008 devoted to relief and social activism—were arrested by the Burmese authorities in late October, allegedly for accepting relief donations from abroad, according to sources in Rangoon. The recently arrested aid workers and journalists are now in Burmese prisons, joining other imprisoned activists involved in helping cyclone victims, such as the famous comedian Zarganar and sports writer Zaw Thet Htwe. The most recent crackdown precedes the 25 November meeting of the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) founded in May 2008. The group comprises high-level representatives from the Burmese government, the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) who monitor, coordinate and facilitate international aid to Cyclone Nargis affected regions. “Leaders meeting in Bangkok must ensure the required aid is forthcoming and reaches those who need it,” said Benjamin Zawacki, a researcher for Amnesty International on Burma affairs. “More than 18 months after the cyclone, the survivors still require critical support from the international community. “The international community should increase its donations and demand transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination in the distribution of aid,” he said. ([24 November 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

## **Journalists, Bloggers and Writers**

There are currently at least 43 journalists held in prison.

**20 November 2009**

### **Jailed cameraman wins media award**

Two Burmese cameramen who filmed an acclaimed documentary on the aftermath of Burma’s cyclone Nargis have received a top media award, although it is revealed that one of them is now in prison. Following the cyclone last year, the two cameramen, known only as ‘Z’ and ‘T’, who work for the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), evaded military officials who had barred all reporters from entering Burma’s southern Irrawaddy delta and documented a group of children orphaned by the storm. The resulting film, ‘Orphans of the Storm’, was first shown in Britain earlier this year. Receiving the Rory Peck Features Award on behalf of ‘T’ and ‘Z’, DVB’s Myo Min Naing revealed that one of

the two had been arrested earlier this year, adding that he would perhaps be sentenced to 10 to 15 years of imprisonment. Speaking to DVB, 'Z' said that the project had been difficult and dangerous in light of a government announcement that the use of photography or video in the delta would be seen as a criminal offence. "Security was the biggest concern for us; it was risky to go to a same location twice," he said. "Authorities could be aware that you were in a place and likely to be there again after you had released news about it." The award ceremony coincided with an Oscar nomination for another documentary film involving DVB cameramen, 'Burma VJ'. The film, which documents journalists reporting on the September 2007 monk-led uprising in Burma has already received 33 international awards. ([20 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **18 November 2009**

### **BNI demands release of journalists**

Burma News International (BNI), a network of 11 independent news organizations in exile, urged the military regime today to unconditionally release detained journalists before the 2010 general election. It also demanded that the regime hold free and fair elections, and allow the media free access to the election and freedom in printing. It also said the junta must put a halt to censorship in Burma. BNI made these demands at its 14<sup>th</sup> bi-annual meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand from November 15 to 17. "Even in the post-election period, the junta must allow journalists to cover the election and report freely. It must allow free movement in all areas and allow media freedom including allowing photojournalists to take photographs and send news and photographs to the international media without any restriction and censorship," BNI office bearer Nai Ka Sot Mon told Mizzima. BNI comprises of Kachin News Group, Karen News Centre, Kandarawaddy Times, Kaladan, Kaowao, Mizzima, Narinjara, Shan Herald News Agency (SHAN), Independent Mon News Agency, Network Media Group and Khonumthung News. According to the New York based Committee for Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Burma is one of the worst countries in terms of suppression of internet users and bloggers. Reports attacking the foreign media are always published in the state-run media. On the other hand, the junta allows some news related to politics to be published in domestic journals. Burma Media Association (BMA) Secretary San Moe Wei specifies, "They just allow reports and criticisms, which are not quite different from their planned agenda and policy. In fact they still don't allow free commentary and critical reports on politics," he said. ([18 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **14 November 2009**

### **RSF: Junta continues suppressing journalists**

Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and its partner, Burma Media Association (BMA), in a press statement, expressed concern for the recently arrested Burmese blogger Win Zaw Naing, saying he is facing a possible 15 years jail sentence for posting pictures of the 2007 September protests in the military-ruled Southeast Asian nation. Win Zaw Naing, age 24, has been held for the past several weeks by police in Rangoon and has not been allowed to see a lawyer, the two organisations said. "He was arrested

under article 33 (A) of the Electronic Act, which provides for sentences of up to 15 years in prison,” added the statement. “The international community is so absorbed by diplomatic strategies aimed at resolving the Burmese crisis that it seems to be neglecting the fact that the military government is continuing its repression and is still arresting journalists, bloggers and human rights activists,” the two organisations said. The two groups urged, “The release of prisoners of conscience should continue to be a major priority for the international community.” The two groups said, despite of the military junta’s claim of conducting a free and fair and credible elections in 2010, which would be Burma’s first ever poll in 20 years, the continued arrest of journalists, bloggers and human rights activists are clear indications that the junta is not interested in making the polls free and fair. “Without the freedom to inform others, next year’s elections will be neither free nor fair.” ([14 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **Women**

There are at least 178 women currently held in prison.

### **9 November 2009**

#### **Trial of four female activists begins**

The case against four women, including Naw Ohn Hla, was heard by the Rangoon East District court, where the prosecutor's made their submission. Naw Ohn Hla, Myint Myint San, Cho Cho Lwin and Ma Cho appeared in court at the Insein Prison. The prosecutor, Sub-Inspector of Police Aung Tun Thet and two prosecution witnesses made submissions in court. The accused are pro-democracy activists, who are supporters of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. They said they were arrested by police after offering food as alms to monks at the Magwe monastery in South Dagon Township on 3 November. They were initially sent to an interrogation camp and then transferred to prison. They have been charged for crime against the state and public tranquility by the police. Usually such cases are tried in township courts but on the intervention of Naypyitaw, this case is being heard inside the prison, it is learnt. "Today I asked the judge why this case was being heard at the district court rather than the usual township court. The judge said that they did it under the direction of the High Court in Naypyitaw," Kyaw Hoe said. The next hearing is on Monday, November 16. All four accused held prayer meetings every Tuesday for the release of political prisoners. ([10 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network**

There are at least 34 members of the Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network currently held in prison.

There is no news to report in November.

## **Labour Activists**

There are currently at least 44 labour activists held in prison.

**23 November 2009**

### **Families of sentenced labour activists criticize ILO**

The International Labour Organisation should do more to protect those who complain about abuses in Burma, the families of men imprisoned recently after complaining to the UN body said. Pleas for the release of 12 farmers who were last month sentenced to up to five years with hard labour after filing complaints to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) last week called for their release. Along with the farmers, their lawyer, Pho Phyu, who had helped them file the complaints, was sentenced earlier this year to four years in prison. Labour activist, Zaw Htay, who had also assisted with the complaint, was handed a 10-year sentence in January. “Everyone who contacted to the ILO is now in prison so we dare not complain to them anymore,” said a family member speaking on condition of anonymity. “The ILO should do something with this.” The wave of sentencing stems from a case in which 5000 acres of farmland in Aunglan township, in central Burma’s Magwe division, were confiscated last year by the Burmese army. The farmers, with the help of Pho Phyu and Zaw Htay, had complained to the ILO, which is the only organisation in Burma with a mandate to tackle issues of land confiscation, as well as forced labour. Although the Burmese government signed an agreement with the ILO not to retaliate against complainants, the organisation has repeatedly expressed concern about the government’s commitment to the agreement. ([23 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **Students**

There are currently at least 288 students held in prison.

There is no news to report in November.

## **Lawyers**

There are currently at least 12 lawyers detained in prison.

There is no news to report in November.

## **Individual Activists**

**23 November 2009**

### **Discrepancies highlighted in trial of Burmese-American**

The lawyer for an American citizen currently standing trial in Burma last week highlighted what he said was an inconsistency in one of the key charges brought against his client. The Burmese-born United States’ citizen, Kyaw Zaw Lwin (also known as Nyi

Nyi Aung), is standing trial in a Rangoon courtroom on charges of fraud and of carrying excessive amounts of the Burmese currency into the country. His lawyer, Nyan Win, said that testimonies from four prosecution witnesses were heard in Friday's court hearing. "Nyi Nyi Aung was accused of possession of Burmese currency exceeding value of \$US2000," he said. "But by the time he was arrested, he was still waiting in a queue to reach the airport's custom checkpoint to make a personal declaration [of the items and money he was carrying.]" "The government prosecutors said they had already handed a declaration form to passengers to fill out on the plane before it landed," he added. "[Nyi Nyi Aung] handed that to the officials so he didn't have to go through the custom check point. This is an interesting point." The defendant was recently allowed to see his relatives for the first time since he was detained in Rangoon's Insein prison on 3 September, a family member told *DVB*. His aunt said in September that US embassy staff who had visited him in prison reported that he had been denied food for eight days and showed signs of being beaten. ([23 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **6 November 2009**

### **Additional charge against Burmese-American activist**

A new charge was added to the existing ones against Burmese born American, Kyaw Zaw Lwin (aka Nyi Nyi Aung) by a district court in Rangoon on November 6, his attorney said. Kyaw Zaw Lwin, who was charged with fraud and forgery under article 420 and 468 of the Criminal Code, has been additionally charged under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act Section 24, his lawyer Kyi Win told Mizzima. "We don't yet know the details of the new charge against Nyi Nyi Aung. We don't know for what reason this charge has been added," Kyi Win said. The Burmese born American was arrested on September 3, on arrival at the Rangoon international airport and has been detained since then. He was later charged for fraud and forgery – cheating the immigration and possessing a fake Burmese national identity card. While he was charged and was being tried by the Minglardon Township court, whose jurisdiction covers the Rangoon International airport, last week authorities transferred his case to the Southern District Court without any official reason given. Kyi Win last week told Mizzima that while transferring the case is not out of procedure, he expressed his fear that the District court, which is a step higher than the Township court, would add extra charges. According to his attorney, if found guilty, Nyi Nyi Aung could be sentenced to 14 years in prison, seven each on charges of fraud and forgery. But Kyi Win said he still does not have any idea what the new charge is all about. ([6 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

### **Ko Aunt Nyung released after one year**

Maungdaw: Ko Nyunt Maung, who was sentenced to one year in prison in Burma for sending information to exiled media, was released from Buthidaung prison on 30 October, said a close friend. "I met him after his release but his health is not very good. He needs to check his health," the friend added. Ko Nyunt Maung, a businessman, was arrested by Burmese military intelligence, known as Sarafa, from his residence in Maungdaw in western Burma in January of 2008 on accusations he sent information to exiled media groups, including the BBC Burmese service. 8 months after his arrest, the

Maungdaw court sentenced him to serve one year in prison. A lawyer from Maungdaw who wished to remain anonymous said, "The court could not find any evidence to sentence him, but the officials from the Burmese military intelligence pressured the judge to sentence him to at least one year. So the judge sentenced him to one year in prison for sending information to the outside." Last year, army intelligence authorities arrested at least three Arakanese people for having connections with exiled media in Bangladesh. Among them is Ko Mrat Tun from Pauktaw Township and Ko San Lwin from Taungup Township. Both were sentenced to five years in prison by the military authority. Ko Mrat Tun is serving his jail term at the Buthidaung prison while Ko San Lwin is now serving his sentence at Thandwe prison. ([6 November 2009 Narinjara](#))

### **3 November 2009**

#### **Whereabouts of arrested poet unknown**

The whereabouts of poet Khant Min Htet, also the layout designer of Rangoon based Ahlinkar Wutyee Journal, picked up by the police about two weeks ago from his home, is still not known, his family said. The Special Branch (SB) of the police arrested him on October 22 from his home in Thaketa Township. Four days after his arrest, a four-member SB team came to his home again and searched his house. They seized some CDs from his home and a computer hard disk from his journal office. "They just said that they are taking him for questioning but we still do not know his whereabouts. The family is terribly worried," father of Khant Min Htet and Padauk Pwint Thit Editor-in-Chief Maung Sein Ni told Mizzima. His family felt his arrest has something to do with politics but the authorities did not disclose anything about it, his family said. ([3 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi**

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remained in the media spotlight in the month of November 2009, holding a rare meeting with a visiting U.S. delegation, and offering to hold a meeting with Sen-Gen. Than Shwe to talk about possible cooperation. Allusions to her possible release, made in early November, has fueled enthusiasm and rumours, and also skepticism. The High Court is also expected to hear the appeal of her latest 3 year sentence soon.

### **17 November 2009**

#### **Political prisoners overjoyed by possible Aung San Suu Kyi's release**

A 73-year-old mother broke into tears when she heard the message from her son, Tun Tun Oo, who is in Meik-Hitla Prison, one of thousands of political prisoners in Burmese jails. The message was delivered by his brother, who had visited him in prison. Tun Tun Oo told his mother not to worry about him, and "sooner or later, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be free." "My son preferred to talk about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom rather than his own," she said, holding back more tears. "He's said repeatedly that only Aung

San Suu Kyi can bring better times to Burma." After news reports appeared recently saying that the regime might release Suu Kyi, people across Burma—and in prisons—have hoped the news is true, and not just another tactic by the military government to buy time before the 2010 election. *The Associated Press* news agency reported on Nov. 9, that a senior Burmese diplomat said the junta will release Suu Kyi to take part in the reorganization of her political party. The wife of a political prisoner in Kalay Prison said, "I told my husband, and he was very happy. He didn't ask about home immediately, but he asked about more Suu Kyi news and information about the NLD. He asked me to give him details about his colleagues who are not in prison." She said she knew her husband wanted such news, and she had prepared magazines and journals to give to him, since authorities now allow prisoners to read the news in prison. "They don't have access to radio, so they don't know the latest news," she said. "He told me to bring news. He wants it more than food and medicine. He thrives on it," she said. Similarly, a family member of political prisoner Shwe Maung, who is bedridden in Pyapon Prison with a chronic illness, told *The Irrawaddy* that his morale improved noticeably when he heard the news of her possible release. "His is suffering. He can't speak much, and he can't walk, but when he heard the news, he started feeling better," said a family member. ([17 November 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

## **16 November 2009**

### **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi requests talk with junta chief**

Detained Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has requested a rare meeting with the leader of the country's ruling junta, Than Shwe, in a letter sent last week to the capital Naypyidaw. It is the second letter in a month that Suu Kyi has sent to Than Shwe, who has presided over the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) since 1992. "I would like to earnestly request permission to meet you so that we can talk about cooperating with the State Peace and Development Council in working in the interest of the nation," she said in the letter, obtained by Reuters. According to senior National League for Democracy (NLD) member, Win Tin, the letter "expressed that she was willing to work for dialogue and the national reconciliation" in Burma. Communication between the junta and the 64-year-old Nobel laureate, who in August was sentenced to a further 18 months under house arrest, has increased in the past month in what appears to be a step further towards dialogue between the military generals and opposition. ([16 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **13 November 2009**

### **High Court accepts Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's revision case application**

The High Court accepted the revision case application filed by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers. The lawyers filed an appeal case against the lower court's verdict for Suu Kyi, who is serving one and-a-half year suspended sentence at her home, but the Divisional Court dismissed the appeal on October 2, so they filed a revision case at the High Court today. "We filed our application for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's revision case at the High Court today at about 10:30 a.m. The court accepted our application and gave us

the case reference number -- 600(b),” lawyer Kyi Win told Mizzima. In the application, the lawyers pointed out that the 1974 constitution is no longer in existence and not in force anymore. So the verdict based on this constitution is inappropriate, Kyi Win said. “The 1974 constitution is no longer in existence since 1988. How can it be in accordance with the law by imposing an internment order against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by using a provision of this constitution? Using the dead constitution is unlawful,” he said. The Rangoon North District Court sitting inside Insein prison sentenced Suu Kyi to three years in prison on August 11 this year for violating her house arrest terms. But the junta supremo Senior General Than Shwe by an executive order reduced her sentence to half to be served at her home. ([13 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **10 November 2009**

### **Allusions to Daw Aung Suu Kyi’s release met with skepticism**

Comments made by a Burmese government official that detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi could soon be released have been greeted with skepticism by party members. The announcement was made by the director general of Burma’s foreign ministry, Min Lwin, as he boarded a plane in Manila, Philippines. He said that the junta may allow her to play a role in elections next year. Suu Kyi was sentenced in August to a further 18 months under house arrest, which looked set to keep her away from any involvement in the elections. Members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party have however remained wary of heightened expectations following the comment. “I am a little bit cautious about when and how she would be free” said Nyo Ohn Myint, foreign affairs secretary of the NLD–Liberated Areas (NLD-LA), while NLD spokesperson Nyan Win said that he “hopes it comes true”. Several clauses in Burma’s controversial 2008 constitution appear to prohibit her involvement in elections. The government has said that anyone married to a foreigner or previously incarcerated cannot compete for office, and Suu Kyi falls into both those categories. “The problem is, the 2008 constitution does not really allow the other political stakeholders to have their say, but we will decide our priorities when she is free,” Nyo Ohn Myint said. ([10 November 2009 DVB](#))

## **9 November 2009**

### **Japan calls for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s release before 2010 elections**

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has exhorted the Burmese military junta to release pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners before the 2010 general elections in the country. Yukio Hatoyama met Thein Sein on November 7 on the sidelines of a two-day summit between Japan and the Mekong Region Countries at the Prime Minister’s Office in Tokyo, according to the Japanese Foreign Affairs Ministry. During the meeting, the Japanese PM told his Burmese counterpart that it was extremely important that a substantive dialogue proceeds between the Burmese regime and the Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and her party the National League for Democracy (NLD). “Her release and that of other political prisoners is essential in order

to make the 2010 elections credible to the international community,” the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s statement said. Hatoyama specifically urged his Burmese counterpart to allow the re-opening of the NLD offices, and expressed his hope for an improvement of freedom of speech and association, and for a substantive dialogue between the regime and ethnic minorities. Thein Sein, reportedly, told Hatoyama that the Burmese military regime is making efforts to issue an electoral law at an appropriate time to allow any person or political parties, as well as people whose opinions differ from the regime, to participate in the planned elections ([9 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **7 November 2009**

### **Journalists welcome permission to cover Daw Aung Suu Kyi’s meeting**

Burmese journalists have welcomed the junta’s decision allowing them to cover the meeting between two US diplomats and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi along with photographers. Some Burmese media like ‘Myanmar Times’ Bi-weekly, Flowers Journal, Eleven Media Group reported online the meeting on November 4 during the two-day visit of US officials. “Most media reported the news but not the state-run media. It totally depends on the Information Department. I think they want to show they have a positive attitude on the US by allowing the coverage in the private media,” an editor from a Rangoon based journal told Mizzima. In August the junta controlled media also extensively reported on US Senator Jim Webb’s visit to Burma, when he reportedly criticized US imposed sanctions and said it could not bring change in Burma. But it deliberately omitted other issues that Webb raised. He had also urged the junta to release political prisoners including Suu Kyi and to engage in a dialogue with the opposition. The Burmese media community sees this new development as exploitation of the media by the junta while tightly controlling the Press in Burma. BMA Vice-Chairman Zin Linn also said, “Though an impression was sought to be given that there is media freedom in Burma if you see it superficially actually the government is exploiting the situation”. “We have experienced such media control and withholding of news under successive regimes. There is no freedom for Burmese journalists here. Now the next generation has to struggle for media freedom,” he said. ([7 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **6 November**

### **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi refuses to meet with party in absence of Tin Oo**

Burma opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday rejected a meeting with members of her party on the grounds that the party’s detained vice-chairman would not be present, state media said. Senior United States official Kurt Campbell had reportedly requested the meeting between Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) party prior to her meeting with Suu Kyi on Wednesday. Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for 14 of the last 20 years, has so far been barred from meeting with members of her party. “In accordance with the request of Mr. Kurt Michael Campbell, the Government made plans to arrange a meeting between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD [Central Executive Committee] members before meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,” the New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported. The government said however

that party vice-chairman, Tin Oo, who was put under house arrest along with Suu Kyi following the 2003 Depayin massacre, would not be permitted to attend. “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi replied that she did not want to meet them because not all CEC members were included; but she expressed thanks, all the same,” the newspaper said. Nyo Ohn Myint, foreign affairs secretary of the NLD-Liberated Areas (NLD-LA) said the decision was in line with NLD policy on all-inclusive dialogue. “The collective decision is very important,” he said. “The exclusion of Tin Oo is politically damaging to the positive atmosphere the government is trying to project.” “[Suu Kyi] cannot transform Burma into a democracy on her own; she needs all the executive committee. That’s why she thinks that this is not an appropriate time to meet with the CEC without Tin Oo.” ([6 November 2009 DVB](#))

#### **4 November 2009**

##### **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets US envoy, makes rare press appearance**

Detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met visiting US diplomats for over an hour and also made a rare appearance for the press for a photo shoot at the Innya Lake Hotel. The meeting was organized by the US embassy in Rangoon. The embassy informed Mizzima that journalists would be allowed to take photographs of Aung San Suu Kyi and the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell and Deputy Scot Marciel. The Burmese Nobel Peace Laureate, who in August was sentenced to yet another 18 months of house arrest, has rarely been allowed to appear before the press. “She looks fine but she did not speak to the press. We all took her pictures. The atmosphere seemed to be quite relaxed,” the journalist told Mizzima. Details of the meeting are still not known. The diplomats were expected to then hold a meeting the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, at their office. Similarly, the spokesperson of the National Unity Party (NUP), a political party backed by former military dictator General Ne Win, also said they have been informed that the US diplomats would be visiting their office to hold a meeting later on Wednesday. Han Shwe, a central committee member of the NUP told Mizzima that five central committee members will meet the US diplomats but declined to give details of the agenda that they would like to take up during the meeting. Campbell and Scot on Wednesday morning met Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein at the new jungle capital of Naypyitaw, where they spent the night. They also met several other junta officials. ([4 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

## **Key International Developments**

Visits by U.S. diplomats to Burma, as well as President Obama’s much anticipated presence at the US-ASEAN summit, highlighted the month of November. The issue of the release of all political prisoners was addressed by many key U.S., ASEAN, and other foreign officials, though little diplomatic progress has been made. As a reminder, a key UN Committee approved a resolution to condemn the Burmese government for its severe violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**21 November 2009**

**UN Human Rights Committee condemns violence in Burma**

Burma's 'systematic and widespread' human rights violations came in for severe condemnation by a special committee of the United Nations General Assembly on Thursday, which urged the junta to begin a process of genuine political reforms. The 192-nation world body's Third Committee focusing on Human Rights, on Thursday approved a resolution on Burma by a vote of 92 in favour to 26 against, with 65 abstentions. The draft resolution condemns Burma for its systematic violation of human rights and fundamental freedom of the Burmese people, expressing grave concern over the recent trial, conviction and sentencing of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi to another 18 months of detention. The resolution, while welcoming the recent release of more than 100 political prisoners, urged for the immediate and unconditional release of the more than 2,000 political prisoners languishing in prisons across the country, including Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. The resolution also strongly urged the Burmese Government to lift restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, movement and freedom of expression -- including for the media -- by ending censorship. It also stressed on the importance of national reconciliation through genuine dialogue with Burmese democracy icon, Aung San Suu Kyi, and expressed appreciation of the recent contacts between the government and her and all other stake holders including ethnic groups. ([21 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

**20 November 2009**

**US hopes Suu Kyi's proposal will initiate dialogue**

The United States said it is aware of detained Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's proposal to the ruling junta supremo Snr. Gen Than Shwe and hoped that it would lead to a dialogue between the two. "We're aware of the letter that she's written to the senior general, and we hope that this will be the beginning of a dialogue that will lead to her release," Ian Kelly, spokesperson of the State Department said during a regular press briefing on Thursday in Washington. The detained Burmese Nobel Peace Laureate, in her letter, proposed a meeting with Than Shwe in order to further discuss activities that will benefit the nation. She also requested to allow her to pay homage to aging party leaders at their homes and a meeting with her party central executive committee. The United States, since announcing its new policy, has begun meeting Burmese officials, with a high-level delegation visiting the Southeast Asian nation in early November. The new US policy, which for the first time in over a decade opened a channel of engagement, demanded that Burma's military rulers improve human rights situations and implement political reforms, before it can lift sanctions, which are still in place. Kelly said, the US has begun "a very focused" dialogue with Burma's military regime. The dialogue is focused on the need for the Southeast Asian nation to open up its political system for more debate and discussion. "And I think one of the best steps that they could take to show that they [the junta] are willing to open up their system is to release political prisoners. There are over 2,000 of them. And of course, we've called, in particular, for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi," Kelly added. ([20 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

**16 November 2009**

**Obama calls for Aung San Suu Kyi's release at ASEAN summit**

U.S. President Barack Obama called for the unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Under house arrest under the orders of Myanmar's military rulers, Ms. Suu Kyi has spent over 14 years in detention, including a brief spell in prison. President Obama spelt out his position when he met Myanmar's Prime Minister Thein Sein and nine other leaders of the Association of South East Asian Nations here during the first-ever U.S.-Asean summit. In a short "door-stop comment" soon after the summit, Mr. Obama said: "I reaffirmed the policy that I put forward yesterday [Saturday] in Tokyo with regard to Burma [Myanmar]." The centrepiece of that policy is a call for "clear steps that must be taken – the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi; an end to conflicts with minority groups; and a genuine dialogue between the government, the democratic opposition and minority groups on a shared vision for the future." The other key aspect of the policy, as spelt out by President Obama in Tokyo, was a parallel call for "concrete steps towards democratic reform" in Myanmar. "We are now communicating directly with the leadership [in Myanmar] to make it clear that existing [U.S.] sanctions will remain until there are concrete steps towards democratic reform. We support a Burma that is unified, peaceful, prosperous, and democratic. And, as Burma moves in that direction, a better relationship with the U.S. is possible," added President Obama. ([16 November 2009 The Hindu](#))

**5 November 2009**

**US official: political dialogue in Burma a must**

Dialogue between the Burmese military regime, opposition parties and ethnic leaders was the need of the hour for political reforms in Burma, Scot Marciel, US Deputy Assistant Secretary, East Asian and Pacific Bureau said in the wake of his visit to Burma in a forum in Bangkok. This was the highest-level visit by US officials in more than a decade. "We certainly hope that there will be a dialogue. I don't frankly see how there can be a credible election that can bring legitimacy without inclusive participation. I don't see how that can happen without dialogue," Marciel said. "If there is to be a credible election that fundamentally changes the dynamics in the country, I think there needs to be dialogue and there needs to be participation," he added. The US official said that inclusive dialogue among related parties including the government, the opposition and minorities will be the first step for national reconciliation in Burma. Marciel and Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State met Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein, senior government officials, opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and some representatives from ethnic minority groups during the two-day trip to Naypyidaw and Rangoon on November 3 and 4. On the possibility of bilateral relations between Burma and US, Marciel said, "We are willing to move ahead in terms of bilateral relations, but we are only going to do that if there is real progress." The visit was an exploratory

mission and the main purpose was to explain the US policy review to the key parties there and hear their views, Marciel added. ([5 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

### **3 November 2009**

#### **US diplomats arrive in Naypyitaw**

US Assistant Secretary of State, Kurt Campbell and US Ambassador to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), arrived in Burma's new jungle capital Naypyitaw on Tuesday morning. The two US diplomats will be meeting various government officials, including Information Minister Kyaw San. The US embassy in Rangoon told Mizzima that the two diplomats will travel to Burma's former capital Rangoon on Wednesday and meet detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi before departing from the country. Campbell is the highest ranking US official to visit Burma since Madeleine Albright came as US Secretary of State in 1995. In August, US Senator James Webb visited the country and met junta chief Than Shwe as well as detained Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. ([3 November 2009 Mizzima](#))

*AAPP editorial note: Madeleine Albright was the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations at the time of her visit in 1995, and not Secretary of State.*

## **Opinion Section**

Opinion editorials in November continued to deal with the 'engagement vs. sanctions' debate, with a particular focus on the U.S.-ASEAN-Burma triangle. Links to some articles are posted below. The Opinion Section aims to provide a sampling of opinions expressed in the print and electronic media. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the AAPP.

#### **Beware of the Generals' Election – by Dr. Zarni (23 November 2009)**

Online at: [http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion\\_story.php?art\\_id=17270](http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=17270)

#### **Why Obama Will Meet With a Leader of Burma's Junta – by Hannah Beech, TIME (14 November 2009)**

Online at: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1938752,00.html>

#### **Burma Leader Poses ASEAN Hazard – by Kevin Brown and Edward Luce, Financial Times (14 November 2009)**

Online at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4beaebdc-d0be-11de-af9c-00144feabdc0.html>

#### **Engagement? It's Asean's Shame – The Irrawaddy editorial (3 November 2009)**

Online at: [http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion\\_story.php?art\\_id=17123](http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=17123)