



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for December, 2009



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MONTHLY CHRONOLOGY – DECEMBER 2009

Summary of current situation

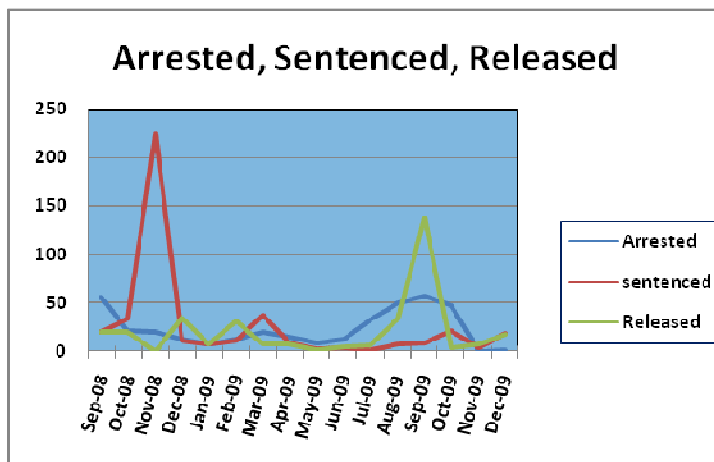
There are a total of **2,177** political prisoners in Burma. This is an overall increase of 4 in comparison to last month's figure of 2,173. In December, 3 political prisoners were arrested, and 18 were released. The AAPP also received information about activists who were arrested and released before December 2009, and this retroactive information explains why there is actually an overall increase of 4 this month.

These include:

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Monks	251
Members of Parliament	12
Students	286
Women	178
NLD members	430
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network	34
Ethnic nationalities	208
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	30
Teachers	27
Media activists	41
Lawyers	11
In poor health	129

Since the protests in August 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **1,167** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

Monthly Trend Analysis



During the month of December 2009, at least **3** activists were arrested, **19** were sentenced and **18** were released. At least **129** 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.

Following last month, when no political prisoners were arrested, this month's three arrests appear to indicate temporarily diminished activity with

regard to the arrest of political dissidents.

News in the month of December was dominated primarily by developments regarding Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal to the Burma Supreme Court and naturalized U.S. citizen Nyi Nyi Aung's treatment in prison. Additionally, activist Tin Tin Htwe became the 143rd political prisoner to perish in Burma's prisons after suffering a burst aneurysm on 24 December.

Burma's military dictatorship also came under fire by the international community in December for its continued and systematic human rights abuses, including the incarceration of over 2,000 political prisoners. The UN General Assembly approved a resolution condemning Burma's history of human rights abuses, and in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, U.S. President Barack Obama singled out Burma, amongst other nations, for its acts of tyranny and oppression, warning of 'consequences' should these acts continue. Additionally, 53 U.S. congressmen and members of parliament from around the world condemned the continued detainment of U.S. citizen and pro-democracy activist Nyi Nyi Aung.

Although junta leaders had not yet set a date for the 2010 national elections as of the end of December, numerous pro-democracy groups and democratic political parties, including the NLD, began preparing for the national elections by means of polling and planning of election strategy meetings.

Treatment of prisoners and their families

Health conditions in Burmese prisons continue to be a dominant theme with regard to treatment of prisoners in Burma. In December, the health of Shan leader, Hkun Htun Oo, continued to decline. Hkun Htun Oo has not received adequate medical treatment in prison, and was denied external medical treatment by prison authorities. Furthermore, family visits have been decreased from twice a month to twice a year, and as a result, the family has not been able to assess the Shan leader's medical situation, and are unsure as to whether or not medicines they send are appropriate for his current condition.

Activist Nyi Nyi Aung also suffered from poor health in December. After engaging on a hunger strike, it was widely reported that Nyi Nyi Aung faced torture as well as cruel treatment such as placement in a military dog cell for extended periods. His health situation was considered sufficiently serious so as to necessitate a delay in his legal proceedings. Additionally, his lawyer and the United States ambassador have not been granted sufficient access to Nyi Nyi Aung during his trial.

December also brought reports of HIV/AIDS in Burma's prisons, with a DVB Burmese report indicating on 2 December that ten prisoners had died from the disease.

On a positive note, the AAPP is not aware of any prisoner transfers having taken place in December 2009.

The AAPP recommends the following text, which details the state of health care in Burma's prisons, and the challenges faced by prisoners with regard to their health and well being.

Report on medical treatment in Burma's prisons:

http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=17493

Prisoners Released

In total, 18 political prisoners were released in December. These include: Khant Min Htet, Thant Zin Soe, Paing Soe Oo, Ka Gyi Zaw Gyi, Lai Ron, Shwe Moe, Aung Myat,, Kyaw Thu, Thet Ko, Myint Thein, Min Min, Win Min Thu, Wai Phyo Aung, Pyay Phyo Wai, Aung Naing Myint, Min Min Oo, Zaw Htut, and Zaw Min Tun

National League for Democracy

There are at least 430 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) that are currently detained. This presents a decrease compared to the 433 that were detained in November. This month, the NLD underwent historic reform as Daw Aung Suu Kyi called for a reorganization of the aging central executive committee (CEC) of the NLD. This represents the first time since formation of the party in September 1988 that any type of major party reform has taken place. Additionally, party leader Suu Kyi met with a junta liaison officer for the third time in as many months; a sign that the regime is still willing to listen to the detained opposition leader. The NLD also began preparing for the upcoming 2010 elections. For details regarding the appeal to Suu Kyi's latest sentence, please see the "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi" section.

30 December 2009

NLD keen on holding CEC plenary meet

The National League for Democracy party is keen on holding its CEC plenary meeting with all 11 members for reorganizing and expansion of the CEC. "This is related to our party's future plan so the regime must permit us. Even if they don't allow us we will hold the meeting when the political parties' registration law and other related laws and regulations are declared," party spokesman Khin Maung Swe told Mizzima. "If the junta does not allow us to hold such a meeting, the current CEC must go ahead with the plan and inform Aung San Suu Kyi," he added. Ageing party leaders Chairman Aung Shwe, Secretary U Lwin and CEC member Lun Tin agreed to expand the current CEC when they met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on December 16 at Green Bank State Guest House in Rangoon. Aung San Suu Kyi has not yet been allowed to meet the CEC members. ([30 December 2009 Mizzima](#))

17 December 2009

'Enthusiastic' Suu Kyi calls for party reform

The detained leader of Burma's largest political party has called for it to be reorganised for the first time in the party's 21-year history, following rare talks with three senior party members. The demand was heralded as "really necessary" by senior National League for Democracy (NLD) member, Win Tin,

who has been a lynchpin for the pro-democracy movement in Burma since the party's formation in September 1988. The winds of change that Aung San Suu Kyi has ushered in came after she earlier requested, via a letter to the ruling junta, a meeting with party elders. She also requested a cross-party meeting and talks with the junta's senior general, Than Shwe. The talks were also hailed by the US, which has been urging for dialogue between the junta and opposition parties. "We hope this is a step towards a meeting between Aung San Suu Kyi and the entire central executive committee of the National League for Democracy," US state department spokesperson, Ian Kelly said. Win Tin said that it signifies both a fresh approach from the NLD, and a sign that "if the junta agrees to her meeting with the party elders, she may be able to meet with Than Shwe. It can result in dialogue". The top echelons of the NLD are all in their senior years. At the meeting on Monday, at which Suu Kyi proposed the reform, were 92-year-old U Aung Shwe, 85-year-old U Lwin and U Lun Tin, who is 89. "They are more than 80 years old. The NLD already has the idea of expanding and reforming by giving young people places so that future activities could be carried out," said NLD spokesperson Khin Maung Shwe. ([17 December 2009 DVB](#))

15 December 2009

Two NLD members charged in relation to traffic accident

Zaw Min Tun and Sandar, two members of the NLD, are currently detained and awaiting trial for charges resulting from a recent traffic accident. Both NLD members witnessed the accident, and attempted to help the injured victim by bringing the victim to a private hospital. However, when the hospital refused to treat the victim, the NLD members complained to the doctor. For these complaints, they were arrested and charged under sections 353 and 294. ([15 December DVB Burmese](#))

10 December 2009

NLD member suffers stroke

Detained MP, Nyi Pu, suffered a stroke in December while serving time at Rangoon's infamous Insein Prison. Further details regarding his current state of health are not available at this time. (10 December 2009 AAPP)

9 December 2009

Some Optimistic After Third Dialogue

Some NLD members are voicing cautious optimism about negotiations between the Burmese junta and Aung San Suu Kyi, following the third meeting in three months between her and the junta's liaison officer, Aung Kyi, on Wednesday. State-run media on Thursday reported that they met in the regime's Seinle Kantha Guesthouse for 45 minutes, from 1:05 p.m. to 1:50 p.m. No official details of the meeting were made available. However, senior National League for Democracy (NLD) members told The Irrawaddy that the meeting probably was in response to Suu Kyi's Nov. 11 letter to Senior-Gen Than Shwe. NLD spokesman Khin Maung Swe said, "The topic of the meeting might be related to economic sanctions, which she mentioned in her letter, and it shows that the government is still willing to talk with her." Suu Kyi sent letters to the junta leader in September and November. In both letters, she said she wanted to cooperate with the junta in working toward the lifting of international economic sanctions against Burma. In the November letter, she also requested to meet with Than Shwe. The meeting on Wednesday came as somewhat of a surprise, following a recent commentary article in state-run newspapers that criticized Suu Kyi and the NLD for providing details about her two letters to the media, describing it as "dishonesty." ([10 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

88 Generation Students

There are at least 41 members of the 88 Generation Students group currently in detention.

29 December 2009

Burma affairs forum to be held in Rangoon

A lesser known pro-democracy group, comprising former student activists is attempting to hold a Burma Affairs Forum in Rangoon. The preliminary meeting for the forum will be held in January next year for greater cooperation among pro-democracy forces and to combine all diverse views on the planned 2010 general election. "The main agenda will have various issues of democracy, human rights and national reconciliation. The deliberations will focus on how we will face and work in the 2010 political scenario," the organizing committee spokesman Phyo Min Thein said. The organizing committee of the forum is comprised of five 88-Gen students - Thein Htay, Thaung Win, Min Lwin and Thein Tin Aung. The committee was formed in November this year. "We shall invite leaders from pro-democracy forces. We also invited the National League for Democracy (NLD). Even if they can't attend the meet, they can give their opinions," Phyo Min Thein said. ([29 December 2009 Mizzima](#))

Ethnic Nationalities

There are at least 208 members of ethnic nationalities currently held in prison. Of particular note in December is the declining health of detained Shan leader Hkun Htun Oo. Hkun Htun Oo, whose health condition has been weak for much of 2009, is now suffering from bladder distention, peptic ulcer, and arthritis in the hands and knees.

28 December 2009

Police Interrogate Four Kachin Cultural Festival Officials

In a bid at harassment, the police interrogated four officials of the acting committee for the cultural Thanksgiving and Manau festival in Burma's northern Kachin State three weeks after the conclusion of the festivities, local sources alleged. The four played important roles in the committee for the "2nd Thanksgiving and Manau festival" for Kachins in Bhamo (or Manmaw in Kachin) district on November 27 and 28. The committee members in Bhamo city were first interrogated at the police station on December 19 regarding the publication and distribution of a daily newspaper and the new 2010 calendar during the festival. They were also quizzed for distributing recorded festival VCDs, according to sources close to them. The police said that the two publications and the VCDs distributed during the two-day festival were done without authorization of the city military authorities, sources said. They were also questioned regarding the attendance of the main Kachin armed group's Vice-chairman Lt-Gen N'ban La Awng and his soldiers carrying arms, sources added. Again on December 21, they were summoned to the city police station for detention. But they evaded imprisonment with two Kachin locals standing guarantors, said sources in the Bhamo Kachin Culture and Literature, or Jinghpaw Laili Laika hte Htunghking Hpung (JLH) in Kachin. ([28 December 2009 Kachin News](#))

26 December 2009

11 Arakanese Youths Produced in Court After 3 Months

Burmese military authorities produced 11 Arakanese youths inside Insein prison's court on 23 December, after three months of detaining them for interrogation, said a colleague of the youths. "The authority produced them at the western district court of Insein prison on 23 December, and Judge

San Myint was hearing the government plaintiff's complaint," he said. Among the 11 Arakanese youth are Tun Lin Kyaw, Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe, and Ko Kyaw Win, who were arrested by Burma's special police in Rangoon and Sittwe in September 2009, on accusations they had connections to outside political organizations. "The police charged them in court with two offenses, one is having connections to illegal political organizations, and another is an immigration offense, as some of them crossed the border without permission," he said. The connection with an illegal organization is prohibited under a section of Act 17 (1), while crossing the border without permission was charged under Act 13. According to family sources, the youths were severely tortured and harassed by the authority during the interrogations prior to being produced on charges in court. The Burmese military junta-run newspaper published a story about the arrest of the youths on 24 September, claiming the authority seized C-4 cartridges from them and reporting the government had accused the youth of plotting with the ABSDF and AASYC to create public unrest in Burma. ([26 December 2009 Narinjara](#))

18 December 2009

Detained Shan leader's health condition worsens

Hkun Htun Oo, 66, detained chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), Burma's second largest winning party in the 1990 elections, is reported to be undergoing a serious health condition, according to Sai Lake, the party's spokesperson. He has been suffering from bladder distention, peptic ulcer and arthritis both in hands and knees. Due to his bladder problem, he had to get up at least ten times every half an hour in a night, he said. "It is difficult for him to move easily as he is getting older," he quoted one of his family members as saying. "We are worried about his condition even though he tries his best not to worry us." In April, the leader was suffering from legs swelling due to lack adequate exercise and regular medical treatment. However, he is still not permitted to get medical checkup outside even though the family has applied to have access to medical check outside several times because there is no health service that reaches his place, Putao, the northernmost town in Burma. He was only allowed to receive oral treatment, according to a member of his family. His wife was reported to have visited him on 4 December to 15 December, but she was only allowed to meet him once which lasted 30 minutes. Before the family was allowed to visit him twice a month, but now the family is allowed to visit him only twice a year. "Furthermore, the family is not aware whether the medicine they sent him suits his situation or not because medicine were only allowed to pass with basket by a little door and not enough time to ask in details," the spokesperson said. There were many difficulties and challenges for the family to visit to his place apart from the limited visit time like difficulty in getting air ticket and sometimes flight cancellations or delays, according to the family. Hkun Htun Oo was sentenced to 93 year imprisonment in Putao on 3 November 2005 along with 7 other Shan leaders for defamation of the state, association with illegal parties and conspiracy against the state. However, he has not changed his political stand despite his serious condition, still convinced he is treading the right way, said the spokesperson. ([18 December 2009 Shan Herald](#))

Prisoners used as labor at Arakan businesses

More than 100 inmates from Sittwe prison in western Burma's Arakan State were transferred by prison authorities last Tuesday to reportedly work as laborers in local shrimp and salt farming businesses. The inmates were sent from Sittwe prison to a labor camp on Ngamanray Kyunt Island nearly 25 miles east of the city, under the supervision of U Aye Tun, the in-charge of the camp, according to a relative of one of the prisoners who witnessed the event. "I have seen that there were nearly 150 prisoners along with the labor camp in-charge U Aye Tun leaving for Ngamanray Island in an engine boat from Sittwe Myoma Market's jetty around 2:00 pm on Tuesday," he told Narinjara on the condition of anonymity. He also said that the boat that brought the prisoners was one of the boats owned by U Kyaw Win, owner of shrimp farms in Lunloonpike Village on the island. "I later came to know that the prisoners including my brother are being used as labor for making embankments for

shrimp ponds and leveling salt farms there on the island. But wages for their work being paid by the owners are being enjoyed by the labor camp and prison authorities," he added. It is not uncommon for prison authorities to dispatch the prisoners to the labor camp as a final punishment a few months before they are due to be released, according to a source close to Sittwe prison. The source said that any prisoner who does not want to be sent to the labor camp has to pay an amount ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 kyat as a bribe to prison authorities. ([18 December 2009 Narinjara](#))

8 December 2009

Prisoners in Buthidaung Suffer Malnutrition

Prisoners from Buthidaung prison in northern Arakan State have been suffering from malnutrition due to a shortage of meat provided by the prison authority, said an ex-prisoner who was recently released from the prison. "In the past, the prison authority fed each prisoner five grams of meat twice a week, but the authority changed the amount of meat and now feeds each prisoner only two grams twice a week," he said. The change began when new prison officials arrived at the prison, even though the government did not change its allowance of five grams of meat. "In the tenure of former Jail Warden Sein Tun and Jailer Tin Shwe, the prison authority fed 5 grams of meat to each prisoner but it was reduced to two grams when new jail warden Tint Swe and Jailer Nay Thura Htike were posted to the prison," he said. In addition to cutting food rations, prison authorities have also been using prisoners as day laborers every day outside the prison. "We have not taken nutritious foods in the prison but the authority has forced prisoners to work outside the prison as day laborers. If any prisoner does not want to work outside, the prisoner has to pay a bribe to the prison authority," he said. ([8 December 2009 Narinjara](#))

4 December 2009

Youths arrested in Buthidaung Township

Two youths in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State were arrested for hanging posters disparaging the NUP political party. ([4 December 2009 Irrawaddy Burmese](#))

Monks

There are at least 251 monks currently held in prison.

15 December 2009

Violence erupts after police arrest monk

A large group of monks protesting against the arrest of a fellow monk in central Burma have reportedly vandalized government property and encouraged attacks on police, an eye-witness said. The clash was triggered after police at a pagoda festival in Bago division's Shwe Thalyaung town yesterday arrested a young monk who had climbed aboard a stage. The exact reason for the arrest is unclear. An eye-witness said that around 60 monks then gathered at the police station and demanded his release. "They came out and shouted, 'If you see the police beat them up'," he said. "They smashed signboards and offices of local authorities, and they also smashed a police security post. They were looking for the police that night [but] there were no police there." A local police officer confirmed the incident but refused to give further details, saying only that the station commander had attended a meeting "in connection with that incident". Police stopped the festivities as soon as the incident occurred but yesterday allowed it to resume for another week. It is not known which monastery the detained monk is from. ([15 December 2009 DVB](#))

7 December 2009

Monk handed two year sentence

A monk who appeared at the Rangoon courtroom on the day Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced in August has been imprisoned for two years, family sources said. Nyi Nyi San, also a member of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, who had entered temporary monkhood, was arrested whilst walking away from the Insein prison courtroom on the day the verdict was given. He has been sentenced on charges of defaming the Buddhist religion at the end of a trial held in Bahan township, Rangoon, where the NLD headquarters are based. Nyi Nyi San was in temporary monkhood under the name of Ashin Sandatika at Daysunpa monastery in Bago division when the opposition leader began her trial. "He requested permission from the abbot at the monastery where he was ordained [to attend the trial]," said a source. "He was arrested and pulled into a truck while on his way to the NLD office from Insein prison." The source told DVB that Nyi Nyi San is suffering from a hernia. ([7 December 2009 DVB](#))

Cyclone Nargis Volunteers

There are currently at least 30 Cyclone Nargis volunteers currently held in prison. There is no news to report in December.

Journalists, Bloggers and Writers

There are currently at least 41 journalists held in prison. A report released by New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists in December found Burma to be one of the worst countries in the world for journalists, while an Irrawaddy article detailed the challenges faced by formerly detained journalists in Burma.

10 December 2009

Freelance journalists under fire in Burma

Burma continues to be one of the world's largest prisons for journalists, according to a media watchdog that warns of a global increase in the jailing of freelance media workers. Burma joins China, Iran, Cuba and Eritrea as the five worst of 26 countries worldwide that imprison journalists, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said on Tuesday. Five of Burma's nine imprisoned journalists, whom generally come under the banner of 'political prisoners', are freelancers, according to CPJ. These include renowned comedian Zarganar, who was sentenced to 59 years in prison (later commuted to 35 years) in November 2008 after giving interviews to foreign media in which he was critical of the Burmese junta's response to cyclone Nargis. Zaw Thet Htwe, who worked with Zarganar in filming the aftermath of the cyclone, was also sentenced to 19 years in prison. Burmese blogger Nay Phone Latt, who was imprisoned for 12 years after posting caricatures of Burma's ruling generals on his website, was also listed by CPJ, along with former BBC stringer Ne Min, who is serving a 15 year sentence. The group also highlighted the case of Burmese cameraman "T", who worked for DVB in filming the award-winning documentary, 'Orphans of Burma's Cyclone', and now faces up to 15 years in prison. "Journalism is so dangerous in Burma, one of the world's most censored countries, that undercover reporters such as "T" are a crucial conduit to the world," said CPJ. Burma ranked 171 out of 175 in the World Press Freedom Index 2009, released annually by Paris-based media watchdog, Reporters Sans Frontieres. CPJ had also named Burma as the "worst country to be a blogger" in a report released in April. ([10 December 2009 DVB](#))

Detained Journalists Can't Go Back to Old Jobs

Journalists who have been arrested and questioned by the Burmese military regime say they are unable to return to their jobs because they have lost the support of their former employers due to pressure from the government. Thant Zin Soe, the editor of "Foreign Affairs" (FA) magazine, was arrested by Burmese authorities in October and later released without charge. He said he has been unable to return to his former job on the magazine. Living Color media group, the publisher of FA, has not made a decision about rehiring Thant Zin Soe, said an editor of the media group. Editor Kyaw Kyaw Than of "Weekly Eleven" journal and Eint Khine Oo, reporter of "Eco Vision" journal have also been let go from their media groups. Analysts said that most leading media groups will not rehire journalist who are arrested and detained by the government under the pressure—both directly and indirectly—from the Burmese Press Scrutiny and Registration Division of the Ministry of Information that oversees press censorship. An owner of a media group in Rangoon said, "Burmese authorities have made it clear they don't want detained journalists rehired or their writing published. The authorities monitor the publications carefully and as a result most articles by these journalists are rejected. ([10 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Women

There are at least 178 women currently held in prison. In December, Tin Tin Htwe became the 143rd political prisoner to perish in Burma's prisons. Tin Tin Htwe was 38 years-old, and was arrested for her role in the 2007 Saffron Revolution.

30 December 2009

Democratic Party starts poll work

Women members of the Democratic Party (DP) have begun organizational work for the elections in some townships in Rangoon Division. An official from the DP headquarters based CEC said that they had started organizational tours in Twante, Thone Gwa, Seikgyi Khanaungto, Kyimyindine, South Dagon, North Dagon, South Okkalapa, Yankin townships, totalling eight townships. "We conducted door-to-door visits in these townships and most of our work was done in my home in South Okkalapa Township. We distributed the work among former Democracy Party members and sympathisers. The organizational work started since we established our party," DP Organizational Work In-charge Tin Tin Mya (65) said. Some personnel from the Rangoon Police Special Branch (SB) monitored their organizational tour. They reportedly went to the houses which party members visited and made inquiries. But they did not harass anybody. ([30 December 2009 Mizzima](#))

24 December 2009

Dissident Dies in Prison

Tin Tin Htwe, who was arrested during the 2007 Saffron Revolution, died in Insein Prison hospital on Wednesday night, according to Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPP), a Thailand-based organization working for the rights of political prisoners in Burma. Tin Tin Htwe, 38, from Bahan Township in Rangoon, reportedly died of a heart condition. Her neighborhood, located within a kilometer east of Shwedagon Pagoda, was the scene of the first deadly crackdown during the Saffron Revolution when security forces fired on Buddhist monks. She was arrested on Sept. 26, 2007, accused with 14 others of hurling stones at riot police. She was charged under sections 332 (hindering public servants from carrying out their duties) and 294 (obscene acts and songs in public), and released on bail. In November 2008 she was sentenced to three years and three months with hard labor, according to AAPP. She was incarcerated in Pegu Division's Tharrawaddy Prison in 2008

before her recent transfer to Rangoon's Insein Prison hospital due to her deteriorating health. ([24 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

18 December 2009

Prisoner suffering from neurological disorder

Than Than Htay, who is currently detained at Insein Prison in Rangoon, is reportedly suffering from a neurological disorder that has left her unable to walk or stand. Further information is not available at this time. (18 December 2009 AAPP)

2 December 2009

Prayer activists face sedition charges

Four women, including an opposition party politician, have begun a trial in Rangoon in which they face charges of sedition after praying for the release of political prisoners in Burma. The defendants have been held in Rangoon's notorious Insein prison since their arrest on 3 October. They were known for organizing weekly prayer ceremonies for detained activists, journalists and politicians, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Their lawyer Kyaw Ho said the four were charged with section 505(b) of the penal code (disturbing public tranquility) for handing a Buddhist prayer book to an abbot in Magwe division. One of the women, Naw Ohn Hla, is a member of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party. "We will question the prosecution witnesses to find out how strong their evidence is and will also find a witness of our own," said Kyaw Ho. The charge carries a maximum sentence of two years. It has been used to imprison a number of perceived dissenters, including journalist Eint Khaing Oo, who was recently honoured with the Kenji Nagai journalism award. The abbot involved in the incident was yet to testify. The two prosecution witnesses are both senior police officials from the government's Special Intelligence Bureau, and a deputy police chief who seized evidence. In June, two members of the prayer group were handed sentences of one and a half years each after holding a prayer ceremony at a pagoda near to Rangoon division's Twante township. The prayer campaign has been running for more than five years, and has been subjected to frequent intimidation by police in Burma. ([2 December 2009 DVB](#))

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 December.

Labour Activists

There are currently at least 44 labour activists held in prison. In December, the junta continued to target complainants to the International Labour Organization (ILO), when it handed two farmers 7-year sentences, and another farmer a 2-year sentence, all for their roles in land disputes that were reported to the ILO.

23 December 2009

Central court accepts appeal letters from 12 detained farmers

Burma's central court accepted appeal letters from 12 farmers, including Than Soe, who are currently detained in Thayet Prison in Magwe Division. The farmers were originally arrested and sentenced for their role in reporting land confiscation to the ILO. ([23 December 2009 DVB Burmese](#))

11 December 2009

Two farmers handed 7-year sentence

Two farmers involved in a land dispute in Burma which was taken up by the ILO were yesterday given seven-year prison sentences. A relative of Nyan Myint and Thura Aung, father and son from Aunglan in central Burma's Magwe division, said the two were sentenced on charges of misappropriation and damages to public property. Their case had been taken up by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Rangoon, which has a mandate to deal with land dispute cases in Burma. The Burmese army in 2007 confiscated farmland belonging to the two farmers, but following intervention from the ILO, it was returned earlier this year. In August, however, the two were accused of cutting down a eucalyptus tree on the land, and subsequently arrested. According to the relative, who spoke to DVB on condition of anonymity, the trees had however already been damaged. He said that it was likely the sentencing stemmed from complaints the two filed to the ILO. The ILO has acknowledged that, despite having an agreement with the Burmese government that complainants will not be harassed, there is a risk of retribution. According to the relative, the family of Nyan Myint and Thura Aung will not appeal the sentencing. "This is the ILO's job to deal with and we believe they will carry on with what they need to do – we are not filing the appeal," he said. ([11 December 2009 DVB](#))

8 December 2009

Farmer Myint Maung sentenced to 2 years for land confiscation dispute

On 8 December 2009, farmer Myint Maung was sentenced to 2 years in Thayet prison for reporting a land confiscation case to the ILO along with 11 other farmers in Aunglan Township, Magwe Division. Myint Maung acted as the leader of the 12 farmers involved in the ILO case, and all twelve farmers have now been arrested and sentenced. Myint Maung's arrest also represents the 19th overall arrest in Aunglan Township for reporting land confiscation to the ILO. ([8 December 2009 DVB Burmese](#))

Students

There are currently at least 286 students held in prison.

There is no news to report in December.

Lawyers

There are currently at least 11 lawyers detained in prison.

15 December 2009

Sixteen political prisoners denied lawyers

Restrictions have been placed on the permits of lawyers representing 16 political prisoners at a trial in central Burma, while family members have been barred from entering the courtroom. It is not known what the accused, who are active campaigners for the release of political prisoners in Burma, are being charged with. The sister of one of the accused, Venerable Nanda Wuntha, said that her brother is facing seven charges. Another relative of one of the defendants said that court officials had instructed the 16 to hire lawyers from the proxy government organisation, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), at a cost of 200,000 kyat (\$US200), although none had complied. "They are speeding up the process to sentence them but they have not been sentenced yet because we are having a problem with lawyers," said the sister of Myo Han. She added that only two of the four lawyers put forward by families of the defendants have been allowed to represent them. "Only

[lawyers] U Myint Thwin and Kyaw Soe Lin were accepted,” she said. “We have to wait until they come out [of the courtroom]. Only then will we know for certain whether they get the permission or not,” she said. Restrictions on lawyers representing opposition members and witnesses testifying for the defence are common in Burma. ([15 December 2009 DVB](#))

Individual Activists

News in December was centered on developments concerning the treatment and trial of activist and naturalized US citizen, Nyi Nyi Aung. Arrested in September at Rangoon’s international airport, Nyi Nyi Aung staged a hunger strike in December to protest the treatment of prisoners throughout Burma, leading to a delay in his trial as a result of his fragile state of health. Additionally, numerous reports emerged detailing the torture that Nyi Nyi Aung had faced while incarcerated, culminating in reports that he had been moved to a military dog cell in late December. The United States, as well as several international organizations and members of parliament from around the world have expressed dismay with regard to Nyi Nyi Aung’s treatment, and urged the junta to release the detained lifelong pro-democracy activist.

29 December 2009

Burmese-American charged with another case

US citizen Nyi Nyi Aung standing trial in Insein Prison was charged with yet another case today, this time by the Immigration Department, his lawyer said. He is facing trial in three cases in Rangoon South District court sitting inside Insein prison. During today’s hearing the Botataung Township Immigration Department filed another case against him. “Another case was filed against him today under section 6(3) of the 1949 Immigration Act, for making a wrong statement and entering with his ID. The Botataung Township Immigration Department Officer lodged a direct complaint in court. The court will pronounce its views on this complaint on 1 January 2010,” his lawyer Nyan Win said. The defence lawyers argued on the first three cases on 29 December on behalf of their client Nyi Nyi Aung a.k.a. Kyaw Zaw Lwin (40) on whether he should be formally charged by the court as the public prosecutor had accused in the indictment or the charges dropped. Today’s trial was attended by the Vice-Consul from the US Embassy in Rangoon. ([29 December 2009 Mizzima](#))

Court Postpones Jailed US Citizen's Trial

The Burmese court hearing the case against Nyi Nyi Aung, the detained Burmese-born American Citizen and democracy activist, has postponed his trial to Jan. 1 in order to decide charges against him. Speaking to The Irrawaddy on Tuesday, Nyan Win, one of two lawyers representing Nyi Nyi Aung, said the court heard the case for one hour from 10 a.m. before announcing the trial was to be postponed. The Burmese authorities arrested Nyi Nyi Aung on Sept. 3, accusing him of using a forged Burmese identity card and illegally importing currencies into the country. Nyi Nyi Aung's Aunt, Khin Khin Swe, said the Burmese authorities were allowing relatives and representatives from the US embassy in Rangoon to see him once each every two weeks, but family members were barred access following his initiation of a hunger strike in early December. Nyi Nyi Aung’s case has attracted national attention from groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, in response to allegations of torture and ill treatment while in detention. ([29 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

23 December 2009

Nyi Nyi Aung Tortured: Freedom Now

In a letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture on Tuesday, legislative counsel Beth Schwanke and Jared Genser, president of Washington-based Freedom Now, accuse Burmese authorities of torturing Kyaw Zaw Lwin, a.k.a Nyi Nyi Aung. In the joint letter to Manfred Nowak, the UN Special

Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, Schwanke and Genser said: “We write to request urgent action in the case of Kyaw Zaw Lwin (Nyi Nyi Aung) detained in Burma's Insein Prison.” In addition to prior incidents of torture, Mr. Aung’s current confinement in a military dog cell has left him subjected to almost constant barking. Mr. Aung has reportedly been enduring this treatment since at least December 7, 2009. “Freedom Now believes that this treatment rises to the level of torture or, at a minimum, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, given its duration and interference with his ability to sleep, and requests your urgent assistance,” they said. Freedom now asserts that following Nyi Nyi Aung’s arrest, he was subjected to torture including food and sleep deprivation for seven days, beatings, and denial of medical treatment. It is assumed that the initial torture was carried out by the Burmese Special Branch, who first arrested him. Freedom Now believes that recent incidents have been carried out by Insein Prison officials. Describing the methods of torture used, Freedom Now believes that he is “only allowed to go to the bathroom on a tray kept in his cell,” and is “allowed out of his cell once a day to wash his face.” Additionally the barking dogs lead to extreme sleep deprivation. ([23 December 2009 Mizzima](#))

22 December 2009

Detained US citizen moved to ‘dog cells’

The Burmese-born US citizen detained in Rangoon’s Insein prison has been moved to the prison’s notorious ‘dog cells’ where inmates are held in solitary confinement, often in appalling conditions. Kyaw Zaw Lwin, also known as Nyi Nyi Aung, was moved following his nine-day hunger strike, which ended on 15 December, his aunt told DVB after visiting him Sunday. “Now he is spending time alone in a small cell in the dog ward,” said Khin Khin Swe. “He is not allowed to talk to anyone or go anywhere apart from two outing sessions a day.” She added that US embassy diplomats and Kyaw Zaw Lwin’s lawyer, Nyan Win, were present during his court appearance last Friday, but were not allowed to talk to him. Khin Khin Swe believed this was punishment for the 40-year-old’s hunger strike. “He asked for the embassy to make it possible to see him and the lawyers to meet with him before 29 December [the date set for the next court hearing],” she said. According to Bo Kyi, joint-secretary of the Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPP), who himself spent time in Insein’s dog ward during his seven-year sentence, the cells usually measure 10 feet by 10 feet and little light enters. “The dog cells are very isolated. Sometimes guards do not allow inmates to shower for two weeks,” he said. There will be many restrictions on him. Depending on the situation, prisoners can be put in the punishment [stress] positions, but we don’t know if this applies to him.” The US embassy has said that it continues to pressure for consular access to Kyaw Zaw Lwin, but so far the government has not responded. The last time an embassy official met with him was on 3 December. ([22 December 2009 DVB](#))

19 December 2009

US Congressmen Urge Release of Activist

In an unprecedented move, 53 US congressmen have written a letter to Burmese junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe urging the release of Kyaw Zaw Lwin (aka Nyi Nyi Aung), a Burma-born US citizen who has been on a hunger strike in a Burmese prison since Dec. 4. “We urge you in the strongest possible terms to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Aung and allow him to return to the United States,” the congressmen said in a letter to Than Shwe. The letter was sent to the military strongman through the Burmese embassy in Washington. “Based on information relayed by the US embassy in Rangoon, it appears that Mr. Aung’s detention and trial is inconsistent with both Burmese and international law,” said the congressmen led by Howard Berman, chairman of the powerful House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The letter, dated Dec. 17, was signed by congressmen from both the Democratic and Republican parties. ([19 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Burmese-American detained in Rangoon ends hunger strike

A detained Burmese-American appeared weak and thin as he made a court appearance Friday in Burma's main city, Rangoon. Burmese-born pro-democracy activist Kyaw Zaw Lwin, better known as Nyi Nyi Aung, was arrested in September on charges of forgery and violating foreign currency laws. Attorney Nyan Win said he had little time to speak to his client during his brief court appearance, but that he learned the prisoner had ended his nearly two-week hunger strike. Nyi Nyi Aung's lawyers say he was hoping to visit his ailing mother, who has been detained because of her own political activities. His next expected court appearance is December 29. ([19 December 2009 VOA](#))

12 December 2009

US Seeks Access to Detained Dissident

The United States on Friday sought immediate consular access to American national Kyaw Zaw Lwin (aka Nyi Nyi Aung), who is currently on a hunger strike in a Burmese prison and whose health is reported to be deteriorating. "We have heard reports that Kyaw Zaw Lwin has been on a hunger strike since Dec. 4. We are pressing for immediate consular access to him," US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told The Irrawaddy. "We understand that Kyaw Zaw Lwin's Dec. 11 court hearing was postponed. No new date has been announced. Burmese authorities said that the postponement was due to concerns about his health," Kelly added. The US Embassy in Rangoon has been granted consular access to Kyaw Zaw Lwin six times since his arrest on Sept. 3, most recently on Dec. 3. In addition to this, US consular officers have been present at all eight of his court hearings. Meanwhile, US Sen. James Webb, who traveled to Burma earlier this year to secure the release of another US citizen imprisoned by the Burmese junta, urged the regime to grant Kyaw Zaw Lwin all rights guaranteed under international law. Webb expressed concern about news reports that Kyaw Zaw Lwin had been mistreated during his detainment and that he is being denied regular access to US consular visits. "In the interim, I urge the government in Burma to afford Kyaw Zaw Lwin all the rights guaranteed under international law," said Webb, who serves as chairman of the East Asia and Pacific Affairs subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. On Friday, Kyaw Zaw Lwin's Washington-based international counsel, Beth Schwanke, said that she was "extremely concerned" about the "seriously deteriorating" condition of his health. A well-known democracy activist, Kyaw Zaw Lwin was arrested by the Burmese authorities on Sept. 3 while entering the country in an attempt to visit his mother, also an imprisoned democracy activist, who has cancer. Initially accused of national security violations, he is now accused of using a forged Burmese national identity card, despite being the holder of an American passport. He is also accused of failing to declare currency at customs, although he was arrested before entering customs, Freedom Now said. Freedom Now said he is currently on trial for these violations and is being detained in Burma's notorious Insein prison. ([12 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

11 December 2009

US citizen was 'visiting cancer sick mother'

The Burmese-born US citizen standing trial in Burma on charges of fraud had flown to the country to visit his mother, who is sick with cancer, his wife wrote today in The Nation newspaper. ([11 December 2009 DVB](#))

8 December 2009

Detained US citizen on hunger strike

The Burmese-born US citizen currently detained in a Rangoon prison on charges of fraud is staging a hunger strike, his aunt has said. Kyaw Zaw Lwin, also known as Nyi Nyi Aung, has met with his family on several occasions since he was arrested upon arrival at Rangoon International Airport on 3

September. He is being charged with carrying false identification and excessive amounts of the Burmese currency, the kyat. His aunt told DVB yesterday that he had begun a hunger strike in his cell in Insein prison. "He looked very weak and pale when I saw him so I asked if he was OK and he told me he was on hunger strike," said Su Su Kyi. "He said he was doing it in a protest against the government's imprisoning of many young people under various unfair charges, and oppressing them with no rights. She added that he was also protesting the Burmese junta's failure to initiate dialogue with the opposition, and for an end the military dictatorship. ([8 December 2009 DVB](#))

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Much attention in December was directed at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's latest legal appeal of her three year sentence, which was later commuted to 18 months of house arrest. Following the dismissal of Suu Kyi's first appeal, she and her lawyers moved to appeal the conviction to Burma's Supreme Court. After a series of preliminary hearings, the court accepted the appeal on 21 December, and will hear closing arguments in early 2010.

23 December 2009

Suu Kyi's brother lodges house complaint

Burma opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's proposal to renovate her Rangoon house-cum-prison has been met with resistance from her estranged brother, who claims part-ownership. The legal representative for Aung San Oo yesterday lodged a complaint at the Rangoon city mayoral office against the renovation of the disputed lakeside house where the opposition leader has been kept under house arrest for 14 of the past 20 years. Aung San Oo had urged the mayor to block any renovation work on the house, which was approved by government authorities earlier this month, Suu Kyi's lawyer, Kyi Win said. An attempt on Monday by Aung San Oo's lawyer, Han Toe, to file the complaint at Rangoon Divisional Court was postponed by judges who said it could conflict with Suu Kyi's ongoing appeal against her house arrest. Although renovation of the house is prohibited under some existing laws, Kyi Win said that in Suu Kyi's case, the local authorities had given the go-ahead on security grounds, adding that "the house has really aged and it needs a work of renovation." ([22 December 2009 DVB](#))

22 December 2009

Burmese court will hear Suu Kyi appeal

Burma's top court yesterday accepted an appeal against the house arrest of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. "A divisional court has recognised that the 1974 basic constitution no longer exists, yet the verdict on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is passed under that [constitution's] law," said lawyer Nyan Win. "We argued that the restriction order given under the specific law is illegitimate, and thus so is the verdict based on that restriction order. We emphasised that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi did not committed any crime." He said a counter argument was made by attorney general's office director, Khin Cho Ohn, in favour of the government, and it was also accepted by the court. "[The prosecutors] argued that there was no official order statement on abolishing the 1974 constitution and that the opening chapter of the 2008 constitution only said that the 1974 constitution was 'terminated' but not 'abolished'," he said. "But in our opinion, whether it said 'terminated' or 'abolished,' the meaning is that the law cannot be used anymore." He said an appointment to hear closing arguments from both sides is yet to be set, but that it may take around six weeks. A retired senior civil servant from Rangoon told Reuters, on condition of anonymity, that the verdict was "purely political issue and the order to free her will come from Senior General Than Shwe, not from the Supreme Court". A "goodwill" interjection on behalf of the junta leader following her initial sentencing to three years in

prison forced the courts to commute the sentence to 18 months' house arrest. "I think her release will come when the regime feels confident enough," he added. ([22 December 2009 DVB](#))

21 December 2009

Suu Kyi lawyers appeal sentence at top Burma court

Lawyers for Burma's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi argued an appeal against her extended house arrest sentence on Monday at the country's supreme court. During the morning hearing in Rangoon, which lasted roughly one-and-a-half hours, Suu Kyi's legal team argued that her conviction was legally unsound, according to her main lawyer Kyi Win. The judges said they would decide later Monday whether to allow the case to proceed further, he told AFP. If they do allow it, the prosecution team will be called to argue against the appeal at a later date. ([21 December 2009 DVB](#))

17 December 2009

U.S. applauds NLD meeting

The United States welcomed the 16 December meeting between Aung San Suu Kyi and ailing NLD leaders, and urged the military government to participate in open dialogue with Suu Kyi and the NLD. ([17 December 2009 VOA Burmese](#))

16 December 2009

Suu Kyi meets with party leaders

Suu Kyi met with NLD Chairmen Aung Shwe and central executive committee members U Lwin and U Lun Tin. The meeting was in response to a letter Suu Kyi sent to the SPDC, in which she stated her desire to meet with the NLD leaders in light of their ailing health. ([16 December 2009 DVB Burmese](#))

14 December 2009

Suu Kyi's lawyers request meeting with detained NLD leader

Lawyers for detained NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi have put forth a request to the SPDC to meet with their client to discuss Suu Kyi's upcoming appeal proceedings scheduled to take place on December 21st. ([14 December 2009 DVB Burmese](#))

9 December 2009

Suu Kyi meets with Liason Minister

Aung San Suu Kyi met with Liason Minister Aung Kyi on 9 December. The reason for the meeting and topics discussed are unknown, however, some believe the meeting to be in response to Suu Kyi's letter to Senior General Than Swe earlier in 2009. ([9 December 2009 VOA Burmese](#))

4 December 2009

Court agrees to hear Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal

Burma's Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal against the extended house arrest of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, an official said. The Nobel laureate, 64, was ordered to spend another 18 months in detention in August after being convicted over an incident in which a US man swam to her lakeside house. A lower court rejected an initial appeal in October. ([4 December 2009 DVB](#))

2 December 2009

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi ranked 26th among 100 Top Global Thinkers

Detained Burmese Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has ranked 26 on an annual table of ‘100 Top Global Thinkers’, released yesterday by the US-based Foreign Policy magazine. The magazine, the brainchild of influential American political scientist Samuel P Huntington, commended Suu Kyi’s principles of nonviolence and “for being a living symbol of hope in a dark place”. “Taking inspiration from Mohandas Gandhi and Buddhist principles of nonviolence, Aung San Suu Kyi built a mass movement in opposition to the Burmese junta and has spent 14 of the last 20 years under house arrest since winning a general election in 1989,” it said. The news was poignantly welcomed by colleagues and compatriots inside Burma. “I can say that it is for Daw Suu’s philosophy that we are able to stand and face the military rule with nonviolence for more than 20 years,” said National League for Democracy (NLD) spokesperson Nyan Win. I’m happy to hear this news; I think she deserves it.” ([2 December 2009 DVB](#))

Key International Developments

December began with the reassignment of the UN Special Envoy on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, to Darfur. Veteran Indian diplomat, Vijay Nambiar, will succeed Gambari as the UN’s point person in Burma. In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, US President Barack Obama singled out Burma amongst several other nations, warning of ‘consequences’ in response to acts of tyranny and oppression. Later in the month, the US clarified its new policy of engagement with Burma, stating that engagement must be accompanied by results. On the economic front, lauded Columbia University economist and former World Bank Chief, Joseph Stiglitz, delivered an analysis of the Burmese economy and growth prospects. Stiglitz stressed inclusive economics, responsible natural resource policy, and development. Additionally, influential magazine *The Economist* classified Burma as a high risk country for social unrest during the coming year.

30 December 2009

Burma Very High Risk: The Economist

Military-ruled Burma is one of 22 countries in the world that is at very high risk of social unrest in the coming year, according to influential magazine *The Economist*. According to a chart coined “Global Tinderbox” published on Monday by the UK-based magazine, Burma and 21 other countries are at a “very high risk” of social unrest in 2010 while 52 countries are classified as “high risk.” only 37 countries are ranked at a “low risk of unrest.” Burma is joined by neighbors Bangladesh and conflict-ravaged countries in South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. The rate of development in Burma, which is rich in natural resources, is one of the worst in the world. The United Nations Development Programme has warned that most people in Burma survive on less than \$1 a day. “But poverty alone does not spark unrest— exaggerated income inequalities, poor governance, lack of social provisions and ethnic tensions are all elements of the brew that foments unrest,” *The Economist* said. Burma is ranked as the third most corrupt country in the world after anarchic Somalia and war-torn Afghanistan, according to Berlin-based Transparency International. Burma is scheduled to hold a general election in the year ahead. ([30 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

PM Gordon Brown Hoping To Help Burmese People Regain Their Future

English Prime Minister Gordon Brown has written a letter to Burmese pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi in which he says the UK will continue to do everything possible to push for change in Burma. In the letter, Gordon Brown calls for free and inclusive elections in Burma next year and urges the Burmese regime to engage Aung San Suu Kyi in a genuine dialogue on democracy. The

letter has been handed to the Burmese authorities by the British Embassy in Rangoon – the formal channel by which messages to Aung San Suu Kyi are passed.. ([30 December The Gov Monitor](#))

28 December 2009

Gov reshuffle a ‘diplomatic offensive’

Around 30 high-ranking Burmese embassy officials have been reshuffled in what could be a diplomatic offensive prior to 2010 elections, said a former military intelligence officer. Also included in the reshuffle are 12 directors of Burma’s foreign ministry, while Burma’s ambassador to Washington has changed. But the move could also have something to do with the current trial of former senior army officials, Win Naing Kyaw and Thant Zin Kyaw, who are being tried on charges of leaking state secrets, said the former intelligence officer. ([28 December 2009 DVB](#))

25 December 2009

UN General Assembly Resolution Condemns Burma

The United Nations General Assembly on Thursday strongly condemned “the ongoing systematic violations of human rights” in Burma and called on the military regime to undertake a transparent and inclusive review of the 2008 Constitution. A UN press release said the non-binding resolution expressed deep concern at restrictions on effective and genuine participation of all stakeholders in the country, including the representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD), in a genuine process of dialogue and national reconciliation. It also noted that the procedures established for the drafting of the Constitution resulted in a de facto exclusion of the opposition from the process. The 192-member General Assembly adopted the resolution by a vote of 86-23 with 39 abstentions. While the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, South Africa and Switzerland were among the countries in favor of the resolution, China, India, Russia and North Korea, together with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) members Malaysia, Laos and Vietnam, voted against it. Four other Asean countries—Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand—abstained, as did Norway. The resolution also urged the Burmese regime to immediately and unconditionally release opposition leader and Nobel peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and free more than 2,000 other prisoners of conscience. The Burmese ambassador to the UN, Than Swe, rejected the resolution, calling it highly politicized. He said Burma was on track towards a “smooth transition” to democracy and was actively preparing for multi-party elections next year. ([25 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

23 December 2009

SPDC rejects Quintana’s visitation request

UN Special Rapporteur Thomas Quintana’s recent request to the SPDC to visit Burma for the second time in 2009 has been rejected. ([23 December 2009 RFA Burmese](#))

22 December 2009

US Message to Burma: 'Engagement' Must Bring Results

The Burmese junta could face tougher US financial sanctions if Washington's new policy of direct engagement with the regime fails to produce results. That's the message contained in recent remarks by legislators in Washington and US diplomats in Asia. It was also highlighted in a report by an Associated Press correspondent, who said: “The Obama administration has already a powerful economic weapon if talks with Myanmar [Burma] fail to achieve democratic reform: pressuring banks to avoid doing business [with the Burmese regime.]” The agency report said the US Congress had already approved powers enabling the Administration to act against banks doing business with Burma. The Administration's new policy on Burma links sanctions with direct engagement. The

Burmese regime has, in effect, been served notice that sanctions will continue as long as no progress is scored in the contacts now taking place between US and junta officials. This “carrot and stick” policy is the subject of wide discussion among US diplomats in Southeast Asia. Some senior US diplomats in the region told The Irrawaddy recently that if the junta generals believe engagement with Washington is giving them legitimacy they are totally wrong. One diplomat said if the engagement policy produces no results within one year, further US actions are possible. Some critics of the new policy point out that a similar approach followed by the US toward North Korea for more than 15 years had failed to prevent Pyongyang’s nuclear program. The US diplomat, however, pointed out that the situation in Burma is different than North Korea, and that Washington policy makers understand that engagement must bring results. ([22 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

18 December 28, 2009

Indian Diplomat to Succeed Gambari

The United Nations will appoint a veteran Indian diplomat, Vijay Nambiar, as its new special envoy to Burma, replacing Ibrahim Gambari, according to a report on Dec. 14 by New York-based Inner City Press. The UN has not made any official statement regarding the appointment. In early December, Ban announced that Gambari will be reassigned as joint special representative of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur in January. Gambari was repeatedly criticized by Burma experts and the Burmese opposition during his mission to Burma. Nambiar, 66, has been the chief of staff under UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon since January 1, 2007, and was previously under-secretary-general and special adviser to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Prior to joining the UN, Nambiar served the Indian government as head of the National Security Council Secretariat, and in 2002-04 was India's permanent representative to the UN in New York. Nambiar also served as Indian ambassador in Pakistan, China, Malaysia, Afghanistan and Algeria. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1976. Two days after Cyclone Nargis slammed southwestern Burma on May 2-3, 2008, Nambiar met with Burma's UN ambassador, Kyaw Tint Swe, and discussed grant allocations from the UN's US \$500-million Central Emergency Response Fund. After the meeting, the military junta agreed to begin airlifting relief material and life-saving drugs to the cyclone-ravaged Irrawaddy delta. ([18 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

17 December 2009

‘Economics and politics inseparable’

Nobel Laureate Prof. Joseph Stiglitz said Burma needs an all inclusive economic process in order to achieve stability and security as “Economics and politics cannot be separated.” Prof. Stiglitz was speaking at a forum on “Restoring Burma as the Rice Bowl of Asia”, organised by the Burmese government and the United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), on Monday. “For Myanmar [Burma] to play a role on the world stage – and to achieve true stability and security – there must be widespread participation and inclusive processes. This is the only way forward for Myanmar [Burma],” he added. According to a UN Press release on Monday, the former World Bank Chief said Burma has a large opportunity for development and that it should take a comprehensive approach. He urged the Burmese government to promote access to appropriate agricultural financing, take measures to boost access to seeds and fertilizers, dramatically boost spending on health and education, and create well-paid jobs in construction of rural infrastructure in order to stimulate development and raise incomes and spending. Prof Stiglitz, however, said, while Burma’s revenues earned from the sales of oil and gas can help open up a new era, if they are not wisely used, the opportunities would be wasted. Prof. Stiglitz also noted that well-functioning institutions were critical to success and that Burma could learn from the mistakes made by other resource-rich countries. The American economist was visiting Burma at the invitation of UNESCAP.

Prior to his visit, critics aired doubts about the Burmese junta's desire to accept serious advice on economic reforms. ([17 December 2009 Burma News International](#))

11 December 2009

Obama Warns Dictators of 'Consequences' in Nobel Acceptance Speech

Even as his administration begins a new policy of engagement with Burma's junta, US President Barack Obama warned in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech on Thursday that oppressive regimes face “consequences” if they violate the rights of their own citizens. In his speech, delivered in Oslo, Norway, Obama specifically mentioned Burma as one of the countries where there is systematic abuse of human rights by the government and honored opposition leader and fellow Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi for her commitment to democratic reform. Acknowledging that he has adopted a policy of engagement with the Burmese junta, Obama said that “sanctions without outreach—and condemnation without discussion—can carry forward a crippling status quo. No repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door.” However, he also warned that the world could not afford to ignore threats to peace from regimes that menace their neighbors or their own citizens. “Those who seek peace cannot stand idly by as nations arm themselves for nuclear war. The same principle applies to those who violate international laws by brutalizing their own people,” he said. “When there is genocide in Darfur, systematic rape in Congo, repression in Burma—there must be consequences,” he added. “We will bear witness to the quiet dignity of reformers like Aung Sang Suu Kyi; to the bravery of Zimbabweans who cast their ballots in the face of beatings; to the hundreds of thousands who have marched silently through the streets of Iran,” Obama said. “It is telling that the leaders of these governments fear the aspirations of their own people more than the power of any other nation. And it is the responsibility of all free people and free nations to make clear that these movements—these movements of hope and history—they have us on their side. ([11 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

British govt launches innovative Burma campaign

The British government has teamed up with two prominent rights groups to highlight the story of Burma's political prisoners in a bid to pressure the ruling junta as it prepares for elections next year. Each week the British foreign and commonwealth office (FCO), in collaboration with Burma Campaign UK (BCUK), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPP), will tell the story of one of Burma's 2,100 political prisoners. “It's a sobering thought that there are so many prisoners of conscience in Burma that it would take over forty years to profile them all,” the FCO website said. Foreign office minister Ivan Lewis said in a statement that the intention is to make country's detained activists, lawyers, journalists and religious figures “more than a number. Elections in Burma will have no credibility or legitimacy until these prisoners are released.” The deputy head at the FCO's Southeast Asia division, Gill Lever, told DVB that the campaign's use of digital media, such as Facebook and Twitter, will take it to an international level. ([11 December 2009 DVB](#))

10 December 2009

Global MPs call for UN action on Burma

More than 440 Members of Parliament around the world today marked International Human Rights Day with a call for the UN to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. “Such action is long overdue,” said a letter signed by 442 MPs from 29 countries, which was sent today to UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon. It also urged a global arms embargo against the Burmese junta. The letter cited statistics released by the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) that allege the Burmese army has destroyed more than 3,500 ethnic minority villages in eastern Burma since 1996, and forced 75,000 people out of their homes in 2008 alone. “There is an urgent need for the Security

Council to address this horrific condition in Burma,” said the letter, initiated by two Japanese MPs, Azuma Konno and Tadashi Inuzuka, both members of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). ([10 December 2009 DVB](#))

2 December 2009

Gambari reassigned to Darfur

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has decided to move his point man on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, to Darfur. UN Special Envoy on Burma Gambari had been keeping a low profile for the last few months; in particular after the Obama administration announced its new Burma policy which included engagement with the military junta. Since September, the US government has had two rounds of talks with the junta, the result of which being that Gambari's role has more or less faded into the background. “The secretary-general has informed the Security Council of his intention, following consultations with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to appoint Mr Ibrahim Gambari of Nigeria as Joint Special Representative of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), with effect from January 1, 2010,” the UN deputy spokesperson, Marie Okabe, told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York. Now that Gambari is being moved from his Burma position, Okabe said that Ban will be looking for a replacement. “In the meantime, the good offices mandate is still with the secretary-general and will be continued,” she said in response to a question. Gambari, who made several trips to Burma in his capacity as the UN special envoy for the country, was not able to make any headway and convince the Burmese military junta to take steps toward the restoration of democracy in the country and protection of human rights. He was frequently denied meetings with senior Burmese generals, including dictator Senior-Gen Than Shwe, and on one trip even Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi refused to meet him. However, people close to Gambari said he was handicapped by the non-constructive role played by several of the key players in the region and his mandate itself, which did not give him enough leverage to negotiate with the Burmese leadership. ([2 December 2009 Irrawaddy](#))

Opinion Section

Opinion editorials in December revolved around the ongoing detainment of naturalized U.S. citizen Nyi Nyi Aung, and reknown economist Joseph Stiglitz analysis of the Burmese economy. Links to two 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.

Burma: Clinton Should Press for Release of Burmese-American – Human Rights Watch (18 December 2009)

Online at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/12/18/burma-clinton-should-press-release-burmese-american>

Stiglitz and the Master of Puppets – by Dr. Zarni (7 December 2009)

Online at: <http://english.dvb.no/news.php?id=3128>