

## **Burmese military cruelties - The international community must act NOW!**

[timteamclearinghouse]

*"When democracy is restored and the people are free, the Burmese democracy movement would gladly welcome visitors to Burma. However, any concerned people who care about Burma should wait for the time to visit Burma. Visiting Burma under the prevailing conditions will only help the military junta to remain in power. With more than 40 percent of the national budget every year spent on maintaining Burma's large armed forces and welfare of the country completely ignored, tourists' money can just perpetuate the vicious cycle of repression, poverty and crisis in Burma."*

From the Statement on Tourism by the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB),  
<http://www.ncgub.net/staticpages/index.php/Tourism>

Dear colleagues and friends,

Again the brutal Burmese military regime rounds up peaceful protesters; it tortures, kills and commits the most appalling human rights abuses. Even the Buddhist monks who led the recent rallies have not been spared from the atrocities. Like in 1962, 1974 and 1988, last month's merciless crushing of the mass uprising shows once again that the Burmese generals are determined to cling on to power and enslave its people. Any moral appeals and condemning statements directed to the junta to end the repression and to pave the way towards genuine democratization have proven futile. Anger and despair are mounting among freedom fighters and people with common sense over the world's failure to stop the Burmese regime's excesses and to save the Burmese population from the ongoing agony and misery.

In this Clearinghouse issue on Burma, we are starting out with a commentary by Indian journalist Satya Sagar on the 'global government hypocrisy' before we zoom in on tourism-related issues in Burma.

Hypocrisy also features prominently in the tourism industry. Given the political turmoil, visitor arrivals are down in Burma, but as *Bangkok Post's* tourism analyst Don Ross notes, "Officially, tour operators will talk up their business claiming minimum cancellations in Burma. It does not suit them to acknowledge that the Burmese honey pot will no longer deliver profits". He explains that Burma tours are particularly lucrative "because most European tour operators officially are not allowed to have direct business contacts with Burma. They leave it in the hands of their sub-agent or joint venture partners based in Bangkok to sell the Burma content of a Southeast Asia tour. If challenged, the major tour operators, with headquarters in the EU, will say they are not doing business with Burma."

Political and business leaders - in Southeast Asia and elsewhere - do not seem to care about economic sanctions and the tourism boycott; rather they expect Burma to be "back to normal" soon. Ross writes, quite cynically, "By mid-January, a tourism delegation from Burma will stand next to their ASEAN colleagues at the 2008 Asean Tourism

Forum, here in Bangkok... Ministers will stand for the official photograph clutching hands in a show of solidarity that has marked the ASEAN story since its inception. Then they will sit once more and the chairman, Thailand's minister of tourism and sports, will declare that there is nothing so healthy as ASEAN tourism that bounds forward from strength to strength." [sic!]

In this situation, it is of utmost importance to keep up the tourism boycott to Burma and to demand that foreign tourism-related companies will be effectively taken to task for their support of the quasi-fascist Burmese regime. It is a positive sign that human and labour rights organizations worldwide are now renewing and intensifying their campaigns against all business operations with Burma. Along with political and economic sanctions from the international community, the tourism boycott can help to bring down the dictatorship, which perpetuates repression and terror.

Yours truly,  
Anita Pleumarom  
Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (tim-team)

#### CONTENTS:

- #1 Global Government Hypocrisy on Burma, Commentary by Satya Sagar, The Irrawaddy, 2 Oct. 2007;
- #2 Burma crackdown sends tourism into tailspin, Agence France Presse, 14 Oct. 2007;
- #3 Crackdown hits Burma tourism, Reuters, 10 Oct. 2007;
- #4 Pressure builds on Thai firms over Burma, The Nation, 17 Oct. 2007;
- #5 Diverging views in the Burma tourism debate, The Nation, 9 + 14 Oct. 2007;
- #6 Britain's unions call for tourism boycott of Burma, Agence France Presse, 3 Oct. 2007;
- #7 Federation of Trade Unions – Burma: Sanctions - Now! Burma Campaign UK, 12 Oct 2007.

-----  
[http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=8848](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=8848)  
The Irrawaddy, October 2, 2007

#### GLOBAL GOVERNMENT HYPOCRISY ON BURMA Commentary by Satya Sagar

As the Burmese military brutally cracks down on a popular citizen uprising demanding democracy the question on many minds is—so what is the world going to do about it?

From the trend visible so far the answer is simple—nothing at all.

Nothing, that is, beyond the usual condemnations and pious appeals for "peaceful dialogue" and the posturing at international forums in support of the Burmese people.

Nothing more, that is, than dispatching a lame duck UN envoy to negotiate with the

paranoid Burmese generals. Negotiate what? Funeral services for the innocent victims mowed down like rabbits on the streets of Rangoon?

It is not that nothing can be done at all—to begin with, how about kicking the illegitimate military regime out of the UN seat it continues to occupy and replace it with the country's elected government-in-exile? Why should Burma continue to be a member of Asean or for that matter, by default, also of the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM?

What about international sanctions on foreign companies doing business in Burma—including dozens and dozens of Western companies apart from those from Asia? Why should large oil companies like US-based Chevron, the Malaysian Petronas, South Korea's Daewoo International Corp or French Total continue to be involved in Burma without facing penalties for their support of one of the world's most heinous dictatorships?

The answers to these elementary questions are quite elementary too—it is Burma's abundant natural resources and investment opportunities that really matter. Which government really gives a damn for corralled Burmese citizens desperately battling a quasi-fascist regime that is open to foreign enterprises and shut to its own people?

Following the bloodshed in Burma the new French President Nicholas "Napoleon" Sarkozy, for instance, grandly called on French companies to freeze all their operations in Burma. Close on his heels Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner clarified, however, that the French oil giant Total, the largest European company operating in Burma, will not pull out for fear they will be "replaced by the Chinese."

Gordon Brown, the British prime minister, also expressed "outrage" at the Burmese government's despicable behavior but was mum about UK companies merrily investing away in Burma. Between 1988 and 2004, companies based out of British territories invested more than £1.2bn in Burma, making Britain the second largest investor in this supposedly ostracised country. The sun it seems has not only set on the British Empire but—on its way out—also deep fried the conscience of its politicians.

The most predictable rhetoric of course came from US President George Bush who while announcing a slew of sanctions on Burma's military leaders incredibly said, "I urge the Burmese soldiers and police not to use force on their fellow citizens."

Wait a minute, that is what the Burmese soldiers and police are trained and paid to do—shoot fellow citizens—so what was the point Bush was trying to make? As usual only he and his Maker—from whom he claims to take instructions directly—knows.

Bush could have maybe uttered better chosen words but none of it would have been credible coming from a man with a record of war mongering and mass killings in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bush regime's systematic destruction of international human rights norms have robbed it of the right to lecture even something as low as the Burmese junta about anything. A sad situation indeed.

What about Burma's old friends like Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia who in a surprise indictment of their fellow Asean member expressed "revulsion" at the use of deadly force against innocent civilians? Their statement was welcome no doubt but comes at least two decades too late to be of any real meaning.

Burma's military rulers have already milked the dubious Asean policy of "constructive engagement" for what it was worth to shore up both their regime at home and claw their way back to recognition abroad. In the early 90s when the Burmese generals were really down and out, it was Asean that offered them succour and friendship while chastising those who called for democracy in Burma as being ignorant of "Asian values."

All this leaves China and India, two of Burma's giant neighbors, who have showered the Burmese junta with investments, aid and the sale of armaments, and the world now expects them to use their "influence" over the generals.

China's active support for the Burmese regime is not surprising at all for a country with its own sordid record of suppressing democratic movements at home and shooting civilian dissenters. I don't, however, think the Chinese are really worried about Burmese democracy triggering off another Tiananmen-like event in their own country—not immediately at least and not as long as China's consumerist boom keeps its population hypnotised.

In fact, the Chinese, pragmatic as they are and conscious of protecting their many investments in Burma, may also be among the first to actively topple the Burmese junta if they feel that the tide of protests for democracy is about to win. Their future position on Burma will surely seesaw like a yo-yo depending which cat, black or white, is catching the mice.

Of all the countries around the world, the most shameful position is held by India, once the land of the likes of Mahatma Gandhi but now run by politicians with morals that would make a snake-oil salesman squirm. India likes to claim at every opportunity that it is "the world's largest democracy" but what it tells no one, but everyone can see, is that its understanding of democracy is also of the "lowest quality."

Why else would the Indian government for instance send its Minister for Petroleum, Murali Deora, to sign a gas exploration deal with the military junta in late September just as it was plotting the wanton murder of its own citizens. In recent years, India, among other sweet deals, has also been helping the Burmese military with arms and training—as if their bullets were not hitting their people accurately enough.

It was not always like this though. The "idealist" phase of India's foreign policy approach to Burma dates from when Indian Prime Minister Nehru and his Burmese counterpart U Nu were close friends and decided policies based on trust and cooperation. After U Nu's ouster in a military coup in 1962, successive Indian governments opposed the dictatorship on principle.

At the height of the pro-democracy movement in 1988, the All India Radio's Burmese service for instance had even called General Newin and his men "dogs" (very insulting to dogs of course). With the coming of the P.V.Narasimha Rao government in 1992, it is India that has been wagging its tail all along.

The "pragmatic" phase of Indian foreign policy toward Burma since the early 90s meant throwing principles out the window and doing anything required to further Indian strategic and economic interests. An additional excuse to cozy up to the military junta was the perceived need to counter "Chinese influence" over the country.

In all these years, however, there is little evidence that India's long-term interests were better met by "amoral pragmatism" than the "muddled idealism" that had prevailed in the past. In fact, what emerges on a close examination of current Indian policy is that, for all its realpolitik gloss, the only beneficiary is the Burmese regime itself.

Take the myth of India countering China which, according to Indian defense analysts, has in the last two decades gained a significant foothold in Burma, setting up military installations targeting India and wielding considerable influence on the regime and its strategic thinking. They say that India's strong pro-democracy stand in the wake of the 1988 Burmese uprising provided a window for countries like China and Pakistan to get closer to the Burmese generals.

Indian and other defense analysts, with their blinkered view of the world as a geo-political chess game, forget that the then Indian government's decision to back the pro-democracy movement was not a "mistake" born out of ignorance, but an official reflection of the genuine support for the Burmese people among Indian citizens.

The second myth that propels the Indian foreign ministry to woo the Burmese generals is that by doing so India can get Burma's support in curbing the arms and drugs trafficking that fuel the insurgencies in the Indian Northeast. This argument assumes that the Burmese junta is both willing and able to control the activities of Indian ethnic militants and Burmese drug traffickers along the border. In the case of drug trafficking from Burma, there is reason to be worried—groups close to the regime benefit directly from the trade.

Through its current policy the Indian government has achieved none of its strategic aims in Burma and instead alienated Burma's pro-democracy movement and its millions of supporters worldwide. While sections of the Indian population are apathetic or ignorant about their government's policies towards Burma, their silence does not imply approval.

India is not a democracy because of the benevolence of its elitist politicians, bureaucrats and "defence analysts," but despite them and because of the strong abhorrence of dictatorship of any kind among the Indian people. It is high time that the Indian government respected the sentiments of its voters and stopped misusing the term "national interests" to support Burma's military dictators.

As for the Burmese people themselves, what the world's willful impotence in dealing with their brutal rulers indicates is that ultimately they will have to achieve democratic rule in Burma entirely on their own strength.

The people of the world will of course support them in whatever way they can, but to expect governments around the globe to help topple the Burmese military regime is as unrealistic as asking the regime to step down on its own. There is no option but to keep the struggle going.

Satya Sagar is a writer, journalist and video maker based in New Delhi. He can be reached at [sagarnama@gmail.com](mailto:sagarnama@gmail.com)

-----  
[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Intl\\_Business/Myanmar\\_crackdown\\_sends\\_tourism\\_i  
nto\\_tailspin/articleshow/2456805.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Intl_Business/Myanmar_crackdown_sends_tourism_into_tailspin/articleshow/2456805.cms)  
Agence France-Presse, 14 Oct 2007, 0720 hrs IST

## BURMA CRACKDOWN SENDS TOURISM INTO TAILSPIN

**BANGKOK:** Burma's deadly crackdown on pro-democracy protests has sent its nascent tourism industry into a tailspin, forcing travel operators to deny claims they are lining the pockets of the ruling junta.

Up to 100,000 people led by Buddhist monks took to Rangoon's streets in September, and at least 13 people died when the military government violently broke up the demonstrations.

The crackdown has reignited calls for a visitor boycott, as supported by detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi who has urged tourists to stay away until the military leaves power.

Industry officials say many foreigners have already cancelled trips, while airlines have slashed the number of flights to the main city Rangoon.

"We are going to be taking a bath in profitability terms," said John Watson, head of Diethelm Travel, whose company temporarily suspended services to Burma last month but has since encouraged visitors to return.

Groups rallying behind Aung San Suu Kyi, the only Nobel peace prize winner currently in detention, argue that tourism dollars only help the nation's cash-strapped rulers stay in power.

"All they are doing is propping up the regime," said Owen Tudor, head of the international relations department for Britain's Trades Union Congress (TUC), an umbrella labour group.

"That's not responsible tourism," he added. Some, like Ken Scott of Bangkok-based travel firm ScottAsia Communications, say a tourism stoppage on such an isolated country does little to hurt the government but deprives Myanmar's [Burma's] people of desperately needed jobs.

"Any move towards a boycott is, frankly, irrelevant," Scott said. "It won't hurt the junta," which makes most of its money from Myanmar's [Burma's] natural resources, he added.

Both Scott and Watson fear those harmed most by a tourism meltdown in Burma will be local workers catering to travellers.

According to the London-based World Travel and Tourism Council, more than 1.3 million jobs, or six per cent of the nation's total, depend on the sector.

Burma is already one of the least visited countries in Asia. About 630,000 foreigners came to Burma in 2006 and spent roughly 164 million dollars, according to official figures, but that number includes cross-border traders and others making short trips from neighbouring countries.

The UN's World Tourism Organisation in Madrid says only 264,000 foreign holidaymakers visited the country last year, up 13.5 per cent from 2005. In Asia, only Bhutan and Bangladesh had fewer visitors.

The biggest groups of tourists came from Thailand, China and Japan, but travel officials in all three countries indicated a huge drop in demand.

Flights from Bangkok have been halved because there are so few passengers. Beijing-based China Youth Travel Service, which sells package tours to Myanmar, said it has had no interest in the country since last month.

"As far as I know, we are the only one who provides this product, and we don't have any scheduled trips planned," said deputy manager Han Kui.

Japan's JTB Corp, the nation's biggest travel agency, has suspended Burma tours until at least October 31, following guidance from the foreign ministry.

Hotels in Rangoon are swamped with cancellations even as the peak tourism season kicks off this month, when the dry season starts and the weather turns more comfortable.

"(Business) has dropped and we are hoping it will pick back up," one Rangoon hotel operator told AFP.

Supporters of the boycott insist that their campaign is about driving home a message to the military, which has ruled Burma for 45 years.

"It's a lot about the symbolism of the issue," TUC's Tudor said. "It should be relatively easy (for companies) to pull out of operating in Burma" due to the small volume of visitors, he added, using the country's former name.

But for Watson, whose company has operated in Burma since 1996, it is not that simple. He has 61 employees in four offices in Burma depending on his firm for their livelihoods.

"Burma has been a profitable venture for us and we stand to lose a great deal of money in the next 12 months," he said.

"If we were only in it for the money, we would withdraw now, wait for more profitable times and come back," he added.

-----  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSBKK12706620071010>  
Reuters, Wed Oct 10, 2007 4:00pm EDT

## CRACKDOWN HITS BURMA TOURISM

By Aung Hla Tun

RANGOON (Reuters) - Last month's pro-democracy protests in Burma and the military junta's ruthless and bloody crackdown have hit tourism hard, with some hotels slashing prices by 80 percent to try to attract visitors, industry insiders said.

"There has been a steep drop in foreign arrivals -- both businessmen and tourists -- since the protests reached a climax in the last week of September," a manager at a Rangoon-based travel agency said on Wednesday.

Most hotels had more than halved their rates, the manager said, but occupancy levels were below break-even point, a reflection of the international outrage at last month's crackdown on monks and civilians in which at least 10 people were killed.

According to the Myanmar Times, a semi-official business weekly, the up-market Savoy Hotel has axed its prices to just \$20 a night compared to a normal high season rate of \$110.

"Business has been very bad. Most of us have been out of job for weeks," said one English-speaking tour guide -- one of more than 4,000 licensed in the former Burma, under military rule for the last 45 years.

"It is not just because of the seasonal factor. We had a lot of cancellations. A number of clients failed to show up."

Even before the unrest, tourism was in a parlous state, a reflection of the dire economy and the calls by many, including detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, for

people to stay away to keep tourist dollars out of the generals' pockets.

Burma says it had 192,000 tourists in the year to March 2007. By contrast, neighboring Thailand expects around 13 million foreign visitors this year, and even war-scarred Cambodia is aiming for 2 million.

Airlines have also been hit by the protests and the army's ruthless response, pictures of which were beamed around the world within minutes, in large part due to advances in technology since the last major pro-democracy uprising in 1988.

Then as many as 3,000 people are thought to have died.

Domestic flight schedules had to be altered because of curfews imposed on Rangoon and Mandalay, the two main cities, and even unaffected flights were half empty.

One businessman who flew in from Singapore last week on an Air Bagan Airbus capable of carrying more than 200 passengers said there were only about two dozen people on board. Air Bagan is owned by Tay Za, a tycoon known to be close to the junta.

Making matters worse, the generals have just decreed that from October 15, domestic airlines will have to fly daily to Naypyidaw, their half-built and sparsely populated new capital 240 miles north of Rangoon -- even if the planes are empty.

"It will make losses even bigger since these airlines are not commercially viable at present," one travel agent said.

-----  
[http://nationmultimedia.com/2007/10/17/national/national\\_30052742.php](http://nationmultimedia.com/2007/10/17/national/national_30052742.php)  
The Nation, October 17, 2007

## PRESSURE BUILDS ON THAI FIRMS OVER BURMA

A growing number of human and labour rights organisations in Europe are calling on Thai companies to cease their business operations with Burma as a way to step up pressure on its military regime, criticised as being one of the world's biggest human-rights violators.

According to Chanin Donovanik, president of the Thai Hotels Association (THA) and owner of the Dusit International hotel chain, at least two non-governmental organisations from Europe have written to Thai companies asking them to stop doing business in Burma.

Chanin did not say how the THA would respond to the request but admitted the recent bloody crackdown had affected business in Burma and the hotel industry was not excepted.

He said the THA was taking a wait-and-see approach. Any major decision would have to wait until the situation returned to normal.

Thai companies that have been hit hard by the disturbances include the Baiyoke Group and Thai Airways International, observers said.

"The hotels are empty at the moment," Chanin said.

Octavio Gamarra, senior vice-president of Dusit International, said the group's management contract with a hotel in Rangoon, the Dusit Inya Lake, would terminate at end of this year. The group has not yet decided whether to withdraw the management, but is closely monitoring the situation. Dusit has been managing the hotel for nearly five years.

According to Kasikorn Research, Thai-run hotels in Burma include those of the Baiyoke hotel group, the Novotel at Mandalay, the Andaman Club on Song Island (opposite Ranong province), the Golden Triangle Paradise Resort and the Myanmar Allure Hotel in the border town of Tachilek, which is adjacent to Chiang Rai's Mae Sai district.

-----  
<http://nationmultimedia.com>

The Nation 9 + 14 October 2007

## DIVERGING VIEWS IN THE TOURISM DEBATE

### *I. Tourism helps Burmese poor, not ruling junta*

By Han Win, Bangkok

Most tourists would think twice about going to Burma these days. Think again. It's time to go now! Rest assured that the government would get along just fine without busloads of tourists traveling around the country. Their business dealings with China, Thailand, and India are now more than enough to sustain their cash flow. But without tourists visiting the country, locals who depend upon tourism are facing the prospect of little or no income for the rest of the year. Those affected include people working in hotels, restaurants, gift shops, and travel agencies, as well as trishaw and horse-cart drivers, and freelance vendors.

Some people say tourists should boycott Burma – 'don't visit a country that's run by an evil junta. Why put more money in their pockets?' But I disagree with that mindset. I think we should flood the country with more tourists. The more eyes and ears the better; the more cameras clicking the better; the more helping hands the better. Yes, a proportion of your tourist dollars will go to the government; paying some fees and taxes are unavoidable to a certain extent. But savvy travelers can control where, how much, and how they spend their money, and they do much to funnel cash directly to needy people, families, orphanages and monasteries.

Despite the recent crackdown, Burma remains a very safe country for tourists to visit. It's a country with sights, customs and charms that will totally captivate you. It is an incredible scenic country, populated by incredible friendly and caring people. They absolutely want more tourists to visit. And they need you to visit soon Isolation and further sanctions will only serve to penalize the poor populace.

## *II. Tourism in Burma not an issue with junta in power*

By Sondej Praditsmanont

Please allow me to challenge Han Win's logic in pleading for the return of tourists to the beautiful and captivating Burma.

First, he says that boycotting the country does not hurt the junta's pockets but hurts those poor Burmese involved in tourism. That is definitely correct, since the junta has been pocketing the national wealth without giving to the poor. But even with the "busloads of tourists" in Rangoon and Mandalay, the world's insensitivity to the cruelty of the generals will perpetuate their rule.

Second, he says that more tourists with "cameras clicking" would serve as eyes and ears of the rest of the world. Yes, thank you for the advice. One Japanese journalist did just that and got shot by a soldier at point-blank range, as captured on video.

Third, he argues that savvy travelers could use their money to help needy people, including those at monasteries. I doubt whether I could even get near some of the temples to make a donation. The last time I was in Rangoon as a tourist, the guide told me that we had just passed Aung San Suu Kyi's house. He did not even allow me to see the house because soldiers guarding it could arrest him just for pointing. By doing so he could have possible faced charges of violating the country's security laws.

Fourth, he says, "despite the recent crackdown, Burma remains a very safe country for tourists to visit." That was not a crackdown but more like murder of the innocent.

Finally, he argues that not visiting Burma would penalize the Burmese poor. Sir, you should not direct us to visit your country while it is fraught with fear and cruelty and ruled by bullies with no sense of human decency. Rather you should direct your attention to ways of getting rid of the junta and their cronies, and preventing them from robbing your nation and depriving the poor of their rightful ownership of their country. That is the only way to help not only the tourism industry but to return your entire nation to its previous glory and prosperity.

-----  
[http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/world/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=92183](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/world/view_article.php?article_id=92183)  
Agence France-Presse, 03 October 2007

**BRITAIN'S UNIONS CALL FOR TOURISM BOYCOTT OF BURMA**

LONDON -- Britain's main trades union alliance called Tuesday for a boycott of tourism in Burma and for travel guide publishers Lonely Planet, just bought by the BBC, to drop its book on the country.

"The people that know the country the best -- its trade unions and the Burmese democracy movement -- want the world's tourists to stay away from Burma," said Brendan Barber, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

"The Lonely Planet book currently suggests that Burma is a perfectly acceptable holiday destination," Barber added.

"But people would be less likely to visit the country if there were no guidebook to help them decide where to go.

"The BBC should stop promoting holidays to Burma and withdraw the Lonely Planet book immediately."

BBC Worldwide, the commercial arm of the broadcasting organization, announced on Monday that it had bought the travel guide publisher, Lonely Planet.

The Lonely Planet website already sets out the arguments for and against visiting the country.

Last week's pro-democracy demonstrations led by Buddhist monks brought an estimated 100,000 people on to the streets in Burma.

But the military regime's crackdown left at least 13 dead and more than 1,000 arrested, say international observers.

According to World Tourism Organization figures, 264,000 tourists visited Burma in 2006.

The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that tourism in Burma has generated a billion dollars (700 million euros) for the country, which represents 6.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

-----  
<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/pm/weblog.php?id=P305>  
Burma Campaign UK, 12 Oct 2007

#### FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS – BURMA: SANCTIONS – NOW!

The Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (FTUB) wishes to express its gratitude to all trade union organisations around the world who have displayed tremendous support for the just cause of Burma's workers and general population in the terrible events which have hit our country over the last few weeks. The response which national trade union

centers and the Global Union Federations, as well as many of their regional and local branches and chapters have given to the ITUC's repeated calls for International Days of Actions on Burma has overwhelmed our members and sympathizers in Burma and abroad. It constitutes a precious encouragement in our struggle. Your moral, political, humanitarian and material support, your determination to keep the candle of freedom and democracy alight for us while the generals are attempting to throw the cover of darkness over their misdeeds, provide a source of inspiration for all of Burma's working men and women, monks, students, democracy activists and ordinary people.

We have observed how, throughout dozens of countries on all continents, workers have joined in pickets, demonstrations, vigils, protest marches, letter-writing campaigns and countless other acts of solidarity. We have been thrilled by the ITUC and ETUC's calls for a meaningful strengthening of European Union sanctions and for the adoption of a ban on investments and an obligation for EU-based companies to disinvest from Burma and cease their business links with our country: these links benefit only the junta, never the people! These calls by international and European unionists for a strengthening of economic pressure on the generals are fully in line with what we at the FTUB have been advocating for over 15 years! We urge all unionists in democratic countries around the world to support these demands and call on their governments and parliamentarians to put real pressure on the SPDC and to demand from entrepreneurs – including, where necessary, their own employers – to withdraw from co-operation with the junta. We salute and thank the unions, like France's CGT coordination body within the TOTAL Group, who have called on their own employer to quit Burma, or those who are prepared to call on their own pension funds to withdraw from multinationals doing business with our country. Please understand: trading with Burma benefits only the military!

To all of you, we say: "Do not believe those who claim that sanctions against the junta will hurt the people! Remember South Africa!". If sanctions do not hurt the generals, then why on earth are they demanding, as a precondition for talking with her, that our national, democratically-elected leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, drop her call for economic sanctions against the regime? Daw Suu's party, the NLD has just rejected these SPDC's demands, which have not changed for years. FTUB fully supports the NLD's line and asks you to support it as well. We know that this will be used against us by the regime, which will once more portray us as terrorists, intent on destroying the nation. They are lying: the only weapons used in the democracy movement are the guns turned by the army against the people, guns bought with the huge benefits deriving from international investments and trade.

To the unionists of the world, we say: "We are fighting for our parents, for our children, for their children and for our own survival. They will not scare us into submission or surrender! Our cause is just and it is simple: Burma's people are not less able or deserving of living in democracy than any other people in the world. With your help, we will win! And, as was said many years ago by Daw Suu: Please use your own freedom to defend ours!"

-----

NOTE: The articles introduced in this Clearinghouse do not necessarily represent the views of the Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (tim-team).

---

**NOTE: Articles introduced in this section of [www.ecotonline.org](http://www.ecotonline.org) do not necessarily represent the views of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT).**