Speaking Truth to Power
*The Methods of Nonviolent Struggle in Burma*
by Aurélie Andrieux, Diana Sarosi and Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan

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Speaking Truth to Power
The Methods of Nonviolent Struggle in Burma

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with a foreword by
Jody Williams,
1997 Nobel Peace Laureate

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THE GOAL OF THIS PUBLICATION is to introduce the general reading public to the methods of strategic nonviolent political struggle and to document examples from a country which endures military rule. The use of active nonviolence is generally only known, vaguely, through human rights reports, when they report on the extraordinarily long prison sentences activists receive when captured. Exactly what means the activists employ, and why they are confident that it will make a difference, and their continued acts of resistance within the prison system, are not generally known.

Frequently Burma is only portrayed as a situation of human rights abuse, and clearly abuse of rights by the military authorities is widespread. We were drawn to documenting the depth of the tactics of nonviolence used by activists within Burma, which demonstrate their absolute rejection of military rule, by reading deeply through human rights and news reports produced in large numbers over the past 15 years. These reports revealed a vast number of individual or small group acts of resistance and defiance, both in the capital, and in other areas of the country.

In the sections titled Nonviolent Resistance and Nonviolent Counteroffensive, we give examples of over 34 different nonviolent methods which they employ. They fall under the broad categories: Protest Actions (saying what they are against); Constructive Programs (launching the alternative to the current situation) and Actions of Non-Cooperation (withdrawal of their permission to be ruled by the current regime).

Use of nonviolent methods in Burma has a high price. Arrest, interrogation and imprisonment, frequently for 10 years or more, follow acts perceived as critical of the current regime. While clearly a violation of a person’s rights under the UN Declaration to nonviolently express a political opinion, there are few countries on the planet today where ordinary people consistently pursue political change through nonviolent methods for more than a decade in the face of extreme persecution and loss of freedom. In our opinion, civil disobedience, as currently practiced in North America or Europe, would crumble as a form of political expression if its practitioners were routinely placed under lengthy prison sentences, in deprived and impoverished conditions which can be accompanied by torture or hard labor in Burma.

Immediately following the military junta’s refusal to accept the popular mandate given to pro-democracy parties in the 1990 elections, the National League for Democracy, co-founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD pledged
to pursue a path of seeking power by nonviolent means. Their adversary in this struggle is a military regime which has raised one of the largest standing armies per capita in Southeast Asia, and which has imported sophisticated police and crowd control equipment by neighboring China. However, nonviolent methods are something the military junta does not understand how to overcome. Each violent and repressive measure undertaken by the military regime simultaneously reveals them to be an oppressor. Burmese activists have earned enormous sympathy internationally due to the transparently unjust nature of the military rule. Nonviolence is a weapon, which by its nature reveals the truth. The military junta calls itself the State Peace and Development Council, however, their need to continually suppress and stifle dissenting views of people nonviolently rejecting their activities reveal that there is no peace.

The international community has a responsibility to support active nonviolent struggle against repression. All who value freedom and justice and nonviolent resolution of dispute have an obligation to use the freedoms which are available to them to support those who have few freedoms and seek justice through nonviolent means. International solidarity is a key link in the great chain of active nonviolence. This report is one contribution by some individuals who have more freedom to the international nonviolent struggle for a less violent world.

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AUNG SAN SUU KYI, General Secretary of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and recipient of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, is both symbol and reality. She is a symbol to the world of non-violent struggle for change. She is the reality of non-violence in the face of brutal repression of the people of Burma by the military junta. While she is the most renowned of those who believe an alternative future is possible for her country, she is not the only person there to undertake non-violent action to defy and resist military rule. No one person, no matter how valiant, can bring about change alone.

Individuals and groups, within and outside the country, have applied numerous nonviolent direct action methods to try to bring about dialogue between the ruling military junta and the democracy movement, and bring about a process of democratization. This report describes such efforts.

On 18 February 2003, I was able to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi at her home in Rangoon. She had been freed from house arrest in May 2002. At that time, there was hope this would signal steps toward a democratic government in Burma. But in our meeting, she noted there had been no dialogue between her party and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Regarding the continuing stalemate, Aung San Suu Kyi was absolutely clear that “there is no way for the SPDC to escape dialogue” if there is to be a peaceful transition to democracy in her country.

Three months later, in May 2003, she began a tour to the north of the country to strengthen her party, and to mark the one-year anniversary of her release from house arrest. The SPDC could not tolerate ever increasing public gatherings at her stops and
again fell back on the use of violence to remove her from the public eye, leaving several close party members dead, more imprisoned, and some fleeing the country.

While ordinary people in Burma continue to seek non-violent change, the military has been unable to liberate itself from its reliance on violence. The NLD, is a legal political party in Burma, and has never been banned. None the less, its General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi, and her colleague, NLD Deputy Chairman U Tin Oo have remained under house arrest since May 2003. The NLD launched a public petition in late 2004 calling on the authorities to release Suu Kyi. By February 2005 almost a half a million people living in Burma had added their names to that call. This simple act of signing a petition is punishable under the military junta’s numerous draconian decrees, and people who have previously circulated petitions requesting political change or challenging decisions of the junta have paid the price of imprisonment for their actions.

The petition campaign inside Burma continues to grow, virtually ignored or unknown outside the country. Just as the 1990 election showed massive popular support for democratic governance, this petition shows popular condemnation of the seizure and detention of Burma’s Nobel Peace Laureate. For every person who risks signing a public petition, there are many more who are supportive but cannot yet risk such an action. Despite these risks it is inspiring that ordinary people continue to be willing to take them to try to bring about peaceful change. This report documents their courage and their actions that call for peaceful change.

International action to support the voices for nonviolent change in Burma are vital. Aung San Suu Kyi was emphatic about this when I met her at her home. She said “Many times the regime set out to destroy us. It was only internal pressure (popular resistance) and external pressure (international solidarity) which prohibited them from doing so.”
The international community must voice its unambiguous support for the Burmese call for Aung San Suu Kyi’s immediate and unconditional release, and further increase its pressure on the SPDC to engage in full and open dialogue with the NLD to transition to democracy in the shortest term possible. It has been thirteen years since the NLD won overwhelmingly mandate to rule in national elections in Burma, and it has been thirteen years since the military dictatorship has been denying that mandate.

In our February meeting, Suu Kyi was clear that her party continued its call for the strengthening of economic sanctions against the military regime, that all further investment should cease in the country and tourists should boycott the dictatorship by postponing visiting until democracy is established in the country. Burma’s neighbors, instead should firmly support the democratic movement within the country.

If the international community is serious about supporting and developing nonviolent means of resolving political problems, it must unite in showing its will to support the nonviolent movement for change within Burma, and applying nonviolent but coercive sanctions on the dictatorship - politically and economically - until it cedes power to those who earned it legitimately at the ballot box.

*Jody Williams*
1997 Nobel Peace Laureate

Washington DC
26 November 2005
WIN MYINT, WIN MYINT AND KYAW SAN WIN, three students who had decided to stroll down to a small teashop opposite their campus on the night of March 12, 1988 in Rangoon, would never have guessed what would follow their wish to listen to a tape of their favourite Shan folk singer. The events that shook Rangoon for the next seven days took people around the world by surprise, but even more so, Burma’s rulers.

In the previous four years, popular uprisings had been taking place across Asia, starting with Kwanju in South Korea followed by the People’s Power overthrow of the Marcos regime. The events in that little teashop that night culminated in widespread popular demonstrations of public frustration against the rulers of Burma. The three students above were assaulted in the tea shop by the son of the chairman of the local People’s Council who did not fear police arrest. Other students were indignant when they heard that the perpetrator would not be touched by the police or punished. What began as a minor protest by a few students turned into a major confrontation between the students and police, and resulted in dozens of casualties. News of the deaths, beatings and detentions mobilized the residents of Rangoon. Within days, thousands had gathered in the capital distributing leaflets and proclaiming, “We want democracy! Down with the Ne Win regime! Down with the one-party system!”

By chance or fate, it was that summer that Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burma’s independence hero, Bogyoke Aung San, had returned to Burma to care for her ailing mother. She was called on to speak at a pro-democracy rally and her impact on the democracy movement became manifest through her uncompromising insistence that violence should not be used to bring about political change. Ordinary people from all walks of life became inspired to join a nonviolent resistance to the one-party system and demand democracy through nonviolent means. In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for 11 of the past 16 years, was recognized for her steadfast commitment to nonviolence with humanity’s highest honour for peacemakers, the Nobel Peace Prize.
The popular uprising resulting from the above events led to the transfer of power to the armed forces from the former regime which was forced to retire from formal office. The military also acknowledged popular pressure for democracy and sought legitimacy through an open election. This, however, was not to be. On 27 May 1990, the military junta allowed multi-party elections for the first time in 30 years. The National League for Democracy won over 80% of the seats, yet they have been forbidden to pursue their legitimate role as rulers of the country. Despite the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi had already been placed under house arrest by that point, NLD members met at Gandhi Hall in Rangoon on 29 July 1990 where they adopted the Gandhi Hall Declaration. In this declaration, the members recognized that a democratic environment had to be realized before any democratic government could be formed in order to ensure a smooth and peaceful transition. Such an environment is impossible unless people enjoy the freedom of publication and other forms of expression. The NLD stated that sincere dialogue is the only way to fulfill the people’s aspiration for democracy: “We hope that solutions will be found by a frank and sincere discussion with good faith and with the object of national reconciliation based on mutual respect between the National League for Democracy and the State Law and Order Restoration Council...In holding such talks: (a) frankness, sincerity and natural respect, (b) national reconciliation, (c) practice of peaceful means and (d) general harmony without hard feelings are essential policies which must be observed.”

Although there have been sporadic demonstrations within Burma for decades, since the 1988 uprising the people of Burma have shown immense courage and unity in their nonviolent struggle for democracy. Despite severely repressive conditions, people within the pro-democracy movement – students, writers, members of political parties and ordinary people within Burma – continue to resist the military regime by nonviolent methods and to call for change. The military junta’s insistence that they are legitimate rulers, simply maintaining law and order, is combined with a continual need to suppress and stifle dissenting views.
GANDHI LAID THE FOUNDATION for the use of nonviolence in political struggles in his campaign for India’s independence. The Indian liberation struggle demonstrated that nonviolence is not a passive or unplanned response to conflict but rather involves strategic and active engagement with the conflict situation.

Nonviolence seeks to overthrow all relationships based on violence, oppression and the unfair domination of some over others. Activists using nonviolent methods seek to resolve conflicts at their source, taking the needs of all parties into account rather than to defeat or annihilate the opponent. The ideal goal is to persuade the adversary that all parties have more to gain by cooperation and mutual respect than by persevering in discord and violence. However, if that is impossible, the removal of the oppressor through nonviolent methods will be pursued.

Outcomes based on violent coercion preclude the possibility of achieving a resolution of the underlying causes of conflict as they suppress the needs of certain parties involved and usually result in further violence. Gandhi’s method of satyagraha (literally, truth force) is an empowerment process whereby no one party is the sole winner or loser; instead nonviolence opens the possibility for antagonists to arrive at a ‘meeting of minds.’ Gandhi believed that nonviolence must ruthlessly ‘reveal the truth’ while simultaneously maintaining compassion for the adversary. He practiced a form of political struggle that attacked the structures of a system of oppression rather than the people within the system.

I object to violence...
because
when it appears
to do good,
the good is only
temporary,
the evil it does is permanent.
-Mahatma Gandhi

the nature of nonviolent struggle
Principled and Pragmatic Approaches to Nonviolence

Gandhi’s approach to nonviolence is called the principled approach, and incorporates the philosophy of non-harm as a way of life, rather than solely as a tool for dealing with conflicts. This approach to nonviolence is more than a moral decision not to inflict suffering on the opponent. There is an understanding that the means and ends to achieving one’s goals are indivisible. Violence cannot be used to bring about peace. Only through nonviolent methods can one attain a nonviolent result. Fundamental to the principled approach is recognition that both parties have needs, which have to be resolved. Therefore, there is a dedication on the part of the activist group to pursue problem-solving negotiations to achieve a solution equally beneficial to both parties in the conflict.

Several political struggles in the world today, particularly in the western democracies, but also in some recent large liberation struggles such as the actions by Solidarity in Poland in the early 1980s, use what is called the pragmatic approach to nonviolent struggle. Pragmatic activists use nonviolent methods only because they believe they are the most effective means of confronting oppression under the circumstances, or because the use of violence is not a realistic option and/or is seen as counter-productive. Pragmatic activists employ nonviolent methods as only one of several possible methods with which to respond to the conflict situation. A firm decision to reject violence in any and all situations may not have been made by the group, and pragmatic activists do not usually incorporate a philosophy of non-harm into their way of life.

Power and Nonviolence

Generally, legitimacy and violence are understood as opposites, seeing that where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Rule by legitimacy is based on popular consent, whereas rule by sheer violence comes into play when popular legitimacy is absent or lost. Power based on legitimacy is vibrant, constantly moving and transferable. Illegitimate political elites are fully aware of this predicament and constantly exert control over a population in order to protect their self-interests, usually by a self-proclaimed and feigned mandate, backed up with an ever present threat of violence.

The power inherent in nonviolent struggle is sometimes not readily apparent due to the misperception that rulers are all-powerful or the belief that power flows from the top to the bottom. Power is reciprocal and nonviolence is based on a theory of power constructed on a single principle: all power—personal, institutional, social, political, or economic—depends ultimately on the obedience, consent and/or cooperation of those over whom the power is wielded. People are the source of all power.
Oppressive groups or individuals must make constant public displays of their power, since it is actually the ruler who has a greater need for the agreement of the ruled, as they can withhold cooperation and consent at any time. The ruler has the capacity to mobilize certain sources of coercive power in order to manipulate consent and enforce the obedience of the ruled. Ultimately, however, rulers depend on popular acceptance or the submission and obedience of the population, and the cooperation of institutions within society. Consequently, nonviolent action aims to empower and mobilize popular withdrawal of the obedience and cooperation necessary for the ruler to maintain that power.

**Strategic Nonviolent Campaigns**

For Gandhi, a system of oppression derives its strength and durability from two interrelated sources: 1) the victim's illusion that his/her oppressor is all powerful and that he/she is powerless and 2) the victim’s incapacity for action. Accordingly, those wishing to change the system must act at two levels: 1) help the victim see through the illusion of powerlessness and 2) build up his/her self-confidence and capacity for concerted action.

Nonviolent action comprises a group of techniques and strategies by which groups of people can wield their power effectively - a process by which people rediscover and then mobilize their forgotten social power. Hence, it is the task of the nonviolent strategists to empower people and to make them aware of the dependency relationship between rulers and ruled.

A strategy of nonviolent defense intends to alter the opponent’s will to carry out their oppressive policies and practices and to undermine their power to do so. The power of the opponent depends on the level of support that their strategy commands within their own society and its allies. A strategy to undermine the power of the opponent should seek to alter the will of key social groups, within both the opponent’s constituency and within any group allied with the opponent.

Once people have become aware that the sources of the ruler’s power are not a ‘fixed quantum,’ they can set about designing strategies and tactics that strike at the ruler’s points of greatest vulnerability. What makes nonviolent action effective is its capacity to cut off the sources of an opponent’s power, rather than combating the final product of these sources.

When organizing or planning a nonviolent strategy, an opponent’s sources of power must be examined. Blocks which keep people from actively resisting injustice must be analyzed. Rationales and common beliefs which obscure the reality that choices
are open to the populace must be identified. Then, acting in a disciplined and determined manner, activists can utilize nonviolent action for the foundation upon which to build a new society.

**Constructive Program**

A comprehensive strategy of nonviolent offense requires a community of empowered individuals and, in turn, it should help to create one. A constructive program is central to that strategy. A successful nonviolent campaign should offer positive alternatives to the current situation. Gandhi defined the inclusion of actions that build a positive alternative as constructive programs. Ultimately, nonviolent offense requires the reconstruction of the personal, social, economic, and political life of each individual.

The constructive program requires work at two levels: 1) for the individual, it attempts to increase ‘power-from-within’ through the development of personal identity, self-reliance and fearlessness; and 2) for the community, it means the creation of a new set of political, social and economic relations. For example: maintenance of one’s cultural institutions and practices in cases of assimilation, the creation of parallel government structures, and work to generate international support for dialogue.

A successful transition to a new society will be achieved by a combination of nonviolent coercion, accommodation, conversion and persuasion. These activities should translate into a high level of cohesion and activity among those allied to the cause. This will win over neutral uncommitted third parties and arouse doubts among those opposed to the movement.
A CAMPAIGN OF NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE should consist of two components: the nonviolent resistance and a counteroffensive (see page 23). It is the duty of the nonviolent resistance to consolidate the power and will of the people to resist aggression and to enable the oppressed group to find the strength and determination to defend itself against the oppressor. Strengthening people’s power and will is accomplished by mobilizing all key social sectors. These groups can include women’s and labour organizations, students, religious bodies, artists, ethnic and religious communities, media organizations, elders and other important and identifiable sectors of the community.

Nonviolent action, sometimes called nonviolent direct action, is a set of techniques by which people can resist aggression without resorting to violence. Nonviolent action does not avoid conflict but rather systematically organizes people’s social power effectively. After identifying the activist sectors, this chapter will focus on two categories of nonviolent action: 1) protest and persuasion and 2) noncooperation.

Protest and persuasion form a class of nonviolent methods that represent mild to complete opposition or persuasion beyond purely verbal expressions. These methods include public demonstrations and marches, the use of posters or graffiti and politically-charged rallies to motivate popular discontent and nonacceptance of the current situation.

Protest and persuasion prepare the way for acts of noncooperation – the deliberate withdrawal of cooperation with oppressive regimes. These methods include strikes, boycotts, non-payment of taxes and licenses, walkouts from legislative bodies, and the
deliberate violation of particular ordinances or prohibitions that are believed to be morally objectionable while simultaneously undermining the authority and appearance of legitimacy of the power elite.

The military junta in Burma exercises a very high degree of oppressive control which includes extreme violence. These actions reveal that its fear of losing control over the population is omnipresent. Within Burma, resistance to military rule has been of a widespread nature for much of the last two decades, but particularly since the regime’s dismissal of the results of the 1990 elections. Nonviolent actions are carried out by individuals and small groups in spite of the consequences of facing lengthy and difficult imprisonment or even death. Ordinary people have exhibited an undaunted determination to call for democracy and the freedoms that come with it. Students, members of the clergy, artists, journalists and other individuals have refused to be silenced despite the threat of violence or brutality and have shown persistence in applying nonviolent methods.

**Activists Sectors**

**Student Sector**

Student activists have been an essential driving force in the struggle for democracy. Frequently forced to organize underground since the military takeover in 1962, they played a significant role during the popular uprising of 1988. Students organized the first nonviolent protest against the regime by mobilizing a group of 4-5000 for a march in Rangoon in March of 1988. University campuses around the country have been settings for continual protests. Despite the danger, students continue to form unions and small groups in order to mobilize the population and produce anti-junta materials such as leaflets, posters, audiotapes and other methods of non-official popular communication. During the 1990 election period, student activists played an important role in campaigning for the NLD (National League for Democracy) and other democratic parties, educating voters and identifying exploitation and injustice. The December 1996 and September 1998 protests, both in Rangoon and on university campuses around the country, resulted in the closure of the universities until July 2000 to contain the student ‘threat’.

**Political Sector**

It was in the context of the aspirations which led to the 1988 uprising that the NLD was formed. Led by U Aung Gyi, U Tin U and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, its aim was the achievement of genuine democracy embracing the rule of law and a constitution that would guarantee basic rights. By 1990, it had grown into a party of over 2 million
members and received 80.8% of the contested seats in the 1990 elections. The parties allied to the ruling interest won only a few seats. The military refused to convene parliament and transfer power.

These elections gave a legitimate mandate to the NLD which, since then, has consistently called for the implementation of the election results. Since its last statement of late 2004, the NLD is calling on the military regime to: 1) release all political prisoners including its Vice Chairman U Tin U and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; 2) allow the NLD to operate freely and reopen all offices country wide; 3) implement the results of the 1990 election and 4) initiate tripartite dialogue with political parties and ethnic nationalities.

NLD members in Rangoon continue to hold periodic educational seminars, political meetings and party events. They have issued numerous statements which document the mistreatment of NLD members and have worked with ethnic political leaders to establish the Committee Representing the People’s Parliament to represent the 1990 Parliament until it can officially convene. The party has remained active. In November 1995 it boycotted some sessions of the National Convention and was expelled. In some towns, NLD members set up temporary offices in their homes to continue activities. Many party leaders have been arrested and remain in detention and many of their offices have periodically and illegally been forced to close. Yet the party’s celebration of its 16th anniversary on 27 September 2004 was attended by approximately 500 NLD members, supporters and diplomats in Rangoon.

Religious Sector

The religious community constitutes another key social sector within the nonviolence movement. In 1988, an independent monks’ union emerged to support the pro-democracy movement. Buddhist monks and nuns have engaged in actions of protest and noncooperation in response to the military sector’s seizure of power. In August 1990, monks in Mandalay and other towns in central Myanmar participated in a religious boycott, “overturning the bowl”—a refusal to accept alms from military personnel and their families or to preside over religious ceremonies for members of the military, such
as funerals. The boycott marked the second anniversary of the 1988 demonstrations and sought to pressure the regime into recognizing the 1990 election results.

Although comprising a much smaller percentage of the overall population than the Buddhist community, the Christian and Muslim communities have also participated in the struggle for democracy. Protestant Christians have an extensive lay organization, with church-based women's groups, youth groups and oversight committees. Many of these have links with international Christian groups. Despite frequent restrictions a number of Christians have found ways to attend meetings abroad to educate people about the situation in Burma and to encourage solidarity among international church groups. The Muslim community has undertaken actions such as religious boycotts in order to defy the military regime and to mobilize world-wide awareness of the situation in Burma.

Women's Sector

The 1988 democracy movement brought greater participation of women in politics. Thousands of women joined mass protests, signifying the largest number of women participating in politics since 1962. Women have taken leadership roles in student groups and political parties. During the 1990 elections, 84 out of 2296 candidates were women and fifteen women were elected to Parliament. The junta has responded by arresting women for many different political crimes. Women have been arrested for participation in nonviolent demonstrations and for campaigning that is perceived by the junta as a threat to its authority.
Media Sector

In 2004, Reporters Without Borders ranked Burma near the bottom (165th out of 166 countries) for press freedom. Articles in the registered media must be approved by the regime’s censorship board and there is a range of restrictive publication laws. However, activists of all types generate independent media and independent opposition media publications are printed and/or distributed surreptitiously in the country. These include journals, magazines and alternative newspapers which reveal social and economic conditions, unofficial videos of documentaries of Burma and foreign news, and audiotapes of public speeches of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Artist Sector

Artists in Burma, as in most countries, employ their creative skills as a medium for nonviolent protest. Writers, poets, cartoonists and editors continue to produce political art and they also meet at teashops to discuss their work and the issues of the day. Dr. Ma Thida, a popular author of short stories and several novels, was arrested in 1993 for distributing prohibited literature and was subsequently banned from publishing further novels. San San Nwe, a writer, was arrested in 1994 for ‘fabricating news’ for foreign media and embassies as well as distributing documents produced by expatriate groups.

Acts of Protest and Persuasion

Formal Statements

Formal letters and statements of protest by influential persons in a society can be powerful and launch or inspire forces of dissent. Pro-democracy activists within Burma voice their opposition to the authorities through letter writing. One letter that had considerable impact on the popular uprising of 1988 was written by Aung Gyi, who had been dismissed as a brigadier general for writing a letter in 1987 to Ne Win criticizing his economic policies. He again wrote a letter to Ne Win in June 1988 speaking out against the human rights abuses that had occurred earlier that year. It was the first time that a person from within the military ranks had openly opposed military rule. As a result of that letter, students and other activists were reassured and inspired to begin writing leaflets and setting up activist groups.
Letters of grievances written by a wide range of people have expressed dissatisfaction with the authorities, calling for tripartite dialogue between the ruling authorities, the NLD and the ethnic nationalities; demanding the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; protesting the junta’s actions; campaigning for the reopening of NLD offices and/or urging an investigation of the Depayin incident. In August 2003, several NLD MPs wrote to General Than Shwe urging him to set up a commission to investigate the Depayin incident and calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Opposition groups have made use of petitions to show the ruling regime that people across the country demand reforms. More than 800 women members of the Pegu Division of the NLD sent a petition on 5 March 2004 to General Khin Nyunt demanding the immediate release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and those who were detained in connection with the May 30 Depayin Incident. On July 19, 2004, the 57th Martyr’s Day in Burma, the NLD began circulating a nationwide petition calling for the release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin U as well as the reopening of all NLD offices. Despite close surveillance from the military regime, half a million people have signed the petition since then.

Public statements openly oppose or condemn actions or policies seen as oppressive. NLD officials have made public statements protesting the restrictions put on their party, as well as criticizing the junta’s disregard of the 1990 election results. Saw Naing Naing, an elected NLD representative, was sentenced to 21 years imprisonment in 2000 in connection with a NLD statement calling for the lifting of restrictions on the party. Aung Myint, a journalist, was arrested the same year for issuing a statement when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the NLD were held under house arrest. The statement called for political freedom and the lifting of restrictions on the NLD and its leaders. In September 2000, Tun Myint was arrested for distributing a press release announcing the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and asking that sanctions against NLD party leaders be dropped.

Aung San Suu Kyi addresses a crowd during her national tour in May 2003.
Many citizens in Burma have risked hardship to hear or circulate *taped copies of speeches* made by pro-democracy leaders, especially Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. After modest contact between the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the NLD was initiated by the U.N. Special Envoy, a degree of political space seemed to open up. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, freed from a second term of house arrest, embarked on a political trip upcountry in 2003 to re-establish several NLD offices and activities. Prior to her arrival, authorities would warn the population not to welcome the NLD leaders or Suu Kyi. Nonetheless, people gathered in the thousands to hear her and other NLD leaders speak. Displays of support included putting their headlights on, honking horns, or shouting “*Long live Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*.” Many of her speeches were recorded and circulated within the country and smuggled abroad. Khin Kyu, along with her brother Ko Sein was convicted for distributing videotapes of Suu Kyi’s speeches and for possessing imported video-copying equipment without official permission. Khin Ma Than and her husband U Shwe Myint Aung, who sent abroad a videotape of Suu Kyi’s speeches were consequently arrested.

**Communication with a Wider Audience**

*Production or distribution of opposition literature* is the most common and necessary nonviolent technique in any struggle. Its aim is to communicate with and mobilize the oppressed. Opposition literature contains pro-democracy ideas, blocked or banned material from abroad and other material central to the nonviolent struggle. In Burma, opposition literature has been widely produced and circulated since the popular uprising in 1988. According to Bertil Lintner, in the summer of 1988 “Rangoon alone had almost 40 independent newspapers and magazines full of political commentaries, biting satires and witty cartoons ridiculing the ruling elite and the former Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) government.”

In general, opposition literature denounces or exposes the policies and practices of the ruling junta, or supports the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi. Some literature is produced by pro-democracy groups in exile and then smuggled into Burma; some of it is created within the country. Aung Zin Min published articles and poems in support of the student demonstrations of
1996 in *New Style* magazine.27 Myint Thein, a teacher and journalist in international relations, wrote articles for several magazines such as *Ah-twe-Ab-myin, Shwe Wut Hmone, New-ni and Thaung-pyaung-btway-la*, in support of the students’ movement.28 Sein Hlaing published an article entitled “What’s going on?” in the magazine *Yin-Kyae-Mu* (Cultural) as well as satirical poems ridiculing the military junta.29 Ohn Kyaing, aka Aung Wint, a writer on democracy, was convicted for publishing “The Three Paths to Obtain Power” in an opposition publication. He also published pamphlets condemning the authorities’ attack on a group of five monks in August 1990 during which three demonstrators were shot.30 Ma Myat Mo Tun recorded defamatory letters and documents on a computer disc and sent articles to “Kyit Pyaing” journal published by an expatriate group.

Another widespread form of nonviolent resistance is the distribution of democracy movement materials, even though the activist is seriously persecuted when captured. Yan Aunt Soe was arrested in 1998 for distributing leaflets for student associations and the NLD.31 In June 2003, a group of students distributed political leaflets in Rangoon demanding detailed inquiries into the Depayin incident.32 Ma Myint Soe, Ko Zaw Zaw and U Htay were arrested in September 2003 for distributing leaflets which were critical of the military junta’s proposed ‘roadmap to democracy’.33 Aye Aung has been detained since September 1998 for distributing leaflets requesting the convening of the elected parliament.34 On 10 December 2004, youth members of the NLD marked International Human Rights Day by distributing booklets of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in busy parts of Rangoon.35 On 19 June 2005, Aung San Suu Kyi’s 60th birthday, a group of youths distributed leaflets honouring and praising the democracy icon from a bus.36

*Fighting peacock: symbol of resistance*
Symbolic Public Acts

The use of symbols is a widespread popular and culture-specific technique of showing support for a political cause. Symbols which have been used by democracy activists in Burma include the display of flags and certain colours are employed to motivate or arouse deep emotions. The most powerful symbol of the movement is the display of portraits of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or her father, Aung San, which is frequently done during protests. Also the colours yellow and red generally symbolize the pro-democracy movement and people have displayed red flags or pictures of the fighting peacock in defiance of the military. On 16 January 2003 two nuns, Than Htay and Thin Thin Oo, held up red flags with a flying peacock on them and a photograph of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in front of Rangoon City Hall, while shouting slogans calling for the authorities to lower the price of commodities such as rice and cooking oil and handing out leaflets calling for progress in political dialogue between the regime and the NLD. They received a 13-year sentence. In 1999, two sisters, Tin Win Kyi and Tin Tin Aye, were arrested and received 5 years imprisonment because they wore yellow T-shirts with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s photo on them.

Activists within the pro-democracy movement have worn certain combinations of traditional clothing to show their affiliation. On National Day in 2003, 100 youth members of the NLD gathered wearing traditional pinni jackets and Kachin longyis, the unofficial uniform of the NLD. Additionally, 5 university students were arrested on 13 March 2004, Burma’s Human Rights Day, for wearing traditional pinni jackets. Nan Khin Htwe Myint, an elected NLD representative from Hpa-an was briefly detained while on her way to Rangoon to attend the Union Day celebrations held by the NLD. Her car was stopped and searched.
Afterward she discovered that some of her traditional Karen ethnic clothing, which she intended to wear for the public event to show broad support for the NLD, was missing.⁴¹

**Prayer and worship** may be conducted in such a way that the participants, by their religious acts, express moral condemnation or political protest. In November 2003, NLD members and their supporters in Aung Lan celebrated the traditional Buddhist mass donations festival, Bon Kathein, by offering 1000 oil lamps and prayers at pagodas and temples for their imprisoned leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴² On another occasion, around 100 NLD members convened a prayer meeting to mark the first 100 days after the Depayin incident.⁴³

**Public monuments** have been erected to honour people engaged in the struggle and to pay tribute to their endeavour. During the mass strike in the summer of 1988, a large number of people had been killed by the junta in the North Okkalapa district. Subsequently, people built a concrete pillar to commemorate their friends and relatives. This pillar measured 8 feet and 8.8 inches in height to correspond with the historic date, 8.8.88, on which the strike began.⁴⁴ An old union flag predating the current regime was placed on top and every day people came to lay down wreaths and fresh flowers. Another similar monument was built in front of the Rangoon General Hospital where many of those wounded by the military during the democracy uprising were cared for.

**Demonstrative funerals**

Funerals of activists are used in many cultures to feed emotions of moral outrage, especially in the case of slain activists. Regardless of the cause of death, they present an opportune time to gather, especially in repressive circumstances where groups larger than a certain number are prohibited. Demonstrative funerals have been used on several occasions by the democracy movement. In 2002, a memorial service was held in October for U Aung May Thu, the chairman of the Minn Hla township NLD office who had died in prison in September.⁴⁵ About 20-30 locals and NLD members attended the ceremony. In September 2002, a memorial service was held to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Ma Win Maw Oo who was shot dead in September 1988.⁴⁶ Ma Win Maw Oo was 13 years old when she was shot. The picture of two students carrying her bloody body was printed in *Time* Magazine at the time and aroused world interest and sympathy for the pro-democracy cause in Burma.

**Satire and Music**

Political humour can be a powerful method when it becomes an act of public political protest. A very popular Mandalay act, The Moustache Brothers (Lu Zaw and
Pa Pa Lay, used comedy and satire as a way to describe the world around them, and express their non-acceptance of military rule. In 1996, they performed on Independence Day at the invitation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi before thousands of people outside her home in Rangoon. During the show, Pa Pa Lay cracked a joke at the expense of the junta, portraying the junta’s cooperatives as thieves and singing a comic song about the generals. They were arrested, sentenced and after seven years in a hard labour camp, were only released due to a widespread and sustained campaign by the international community. Although, the brothers are no longer allowed to perform in public, they continue to show their loyalty to the pro-democracy movement by performing in their home and conducting interviews with foreign journalists. The humorist, Zagana, entertained his audiences with biting sketches in front of the Rangoon hospital.

**Songs and music** can be powerful means of protest. During the 1988 mass strike, on street corners all over the capital, popular rock bands and singers played and sang for the demonstrators who marched past chanting slogans. Until this day, people continue to sing songs such as the national anthem or anti-junta songs during demonstrations.

**Public protest**

Public protest is carried out by one or many people. It seeks to communicate non-acceptance of the current situation, policy or practices to the oppressor groups and their allies. This form of nonviolent action also serves to embolden the general population and has frequently been used by individuals and groups within Burma.

Numerous activists have staged solitary protests in Burma. Dr. Salai Tun Than, dressed in his academic robe, staged a solitary protest in front of the city hall in Rangoon in December 2001. There, he distributed copies of a petition letter he had
written demanding political reform. In his letter, he called upon the ruling military to hold multi-party general elections within one year under ASEAN and UN supervision. He further urged the military to kill him if they refused to meet his demands: “It is better to die than to live under the military regime.” He appealed to the armed forces and police to join the people instead of killing them. On the evening of 18 August 2002, Thet Naung Soe, a final-year law student, staged a peaceful solitary protest in front of Rangoon City Hall about economic and social conditions in Burma. He was holding a banner of red cloth with a flying peacock on it which is another symbol of resistance. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s former bodyguard, Tun Lin Kyaw, staged a solo protest in Rangoon on 14 December 2004. He wanted to express his opposition to the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by the junta. In another instance, Ohn Than staged a one-man protest on 21 September 2004 outside the UN offices in Rangoon holding a poster which said: “UN should help convene the parliament based on the result of the 1990 election.” He also distributed a paper in English and Burmese which outlined his own roadmap for Burma asking the UN to recognize the Committee Representing the People’s Parliament (CRPP).

Street protests occur within Burma. On 24 August 1998, students in Rangoon led an open street protest against the authorities, in part to commemorate a previous street protest by students in 1996. Over 1000 students gathered to support a pro-democracy rally, where they
gave out leaflets backing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s vow to convene a parliament. The protest coincided with the end of a thirteen-day roadside strike by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, after being blocked by the military. A month later, 400 students staged a sit-in at the Institute of Technology to protest the military junta’s actions against earlier arrested protesters.

In December of 1998, 270 students demonstrated in support of the CRPP in Rangoon. Reports by the exiled student organization, ABSDF, alleged that thirty high school students had been arrested after staging a protest in Mergui calling for democratic reform and an end to military oppression and economic hardship. The protesters called for support for an uprising on “Four Nines” day 9-9-99, to commemorate the previous pro-democracy demonstrations on 8-8-88.

Despite a ban by the authorities, commemorative celebrations of special events such as National Day, Martyrs’ Day, as well as the anniversaries of the 1990 election victory and the founding of the NLD frequently become the date for public gatherings and peaceful protest. At the NLD founding celebration in 2001 over 500 sympathizers came together to show their support of the party. In September 2003, a ceremony for the 15th birthday of the NLD was attended by 300 people at Chauk Htat Gyi Pagoda in Rangoon. The abbot of the pagoda, U Sawana delivered a sermon with examples from the life of Buddha and encouraged NLD members to stand firmly by their beliefs and continue their duties. The 83rd anniversary of National Day in 2003 turned into the biggest gathering since the Depayin incident. Closely watched and videotaped by security officials, 100 NLD members wearing peach-colored pinni jackets with badges showing a fighting peacock gathered peacefully at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon determined to make a pledge in front of the monument to strive for democracy. A celebratory ceremony was held at the home of the NLD divisional organizing committee member Daw Win Mya Mya for the 57th anniversary of Burma’s Independence on 4 January 2005. Speeches and discussions at the ceremony were led by two famous poets and authors Ko Lay and Kyi Aung and the event was attended by 200 people.

Buddhist monks have taken advantage of religious ceremonies and teachings to express their dissatisfaction with the rulers. Ashin Pandita, a monk from Mandalay, climbed up to the pagoda’s scaffolding at an Hti-raising ceremony held on 1 August 2001 in Mandalay and delivered a sermon criticizing the prevailing economic and political situation to fellow monks and guests. On another occasion, 1000 monks and over 500 guests gathered at the Masoyein Monastery in Mandalay for a sermon focused on the ‘Ten Duties of Kings’ (Dasa-raja-dhamma) contained in Buddhist literature, within which many critical comparisons with the incumbent regime were made.
Support for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is widespread among the populace. This was regularly demonstrated by the large attendance at the series of talks she gave in front of her house after her first period of house arrest was lifted in 1995, as well as by the size of the crowds which gathered to hear her during the party-organized tours in 2002-2003. Whenever possible, hundreds of people gather at her residence to wish her well for her birthday. In September of 2003, Daw Suu Kyi had to undergo surgery. NLD leaders and youth wing members from various states, divisions, and townships converged on Rangoon, passing through restrictions and roadblocks, to gather in front of the Royal Asia Private Hospital to pray for her health and to deliver presents. On 11 October, about 50 NLD youths went to Daw Suu Kyi’s residence to pay respects to her on a ‘religious occasion’ but were prevented from reaching her residence by the military. The youths attempted this meeting in order to demonstrate that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was under formal arrest and not “simply resting at home” as claimed by the generals. Youth members of the NLD have been holding prayer meetings every week since the beginning of 2004 for the release of all political prisoners including their leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The prayer is held at the ‘Tuesday corner’ of the Shwedagon Pagoda because Tuesday is the day she was born. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s 60th birthday in July 2005 was widely celebrated throughout the country. At the NLD headquarters in Rangoon, hundreds had gathered to witness the release of 10 doves and 60 coloured balloons. The celebrants wore yellow ribbons and sent dishes of paratha nan and chicken curry to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi via the soldiers on guard.

**Acts of Non-Cooperation**

**Strikes**

Strikes, recognized world-wide as a nonviolent method for voicing labour grievances, have been widely applied by nonviolent social movements. A nation-wide general strike was launched in Burma on the 8th of August in 1988. Known as 8.8.88, it began at 8 minutes past 8 am when dockworkers in Rangoon port walked out and
were soon followed by hundreds of thousands in nearly every town across the country. A euphoric and peaceful atmosphere prevailed throughout the day until the army opened fire on demonstrators. It was followed by another general strike on August 22nd in order to force the military rulers to resign. Hundreds of thousands of protesters brought the city of Rangoon and its air and rail transport to a halt and held daily mass demonstrations including hunger strikes to press for democracy. Partly due to this action, the military junta was forced to promise multi-party elections.

**Hunger strikes** have been conducted on several occasions to press for changes to current conditions. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi went on hunger strike in July 1989 in support of jailed colleagues. She only ended the 12-day strike when the regime assured her that the political prisoners would not be maltreated. In September of 1990, students at Insein Prison staged a hunger strike calling for better prison conditions as well as rights for all

### Understanding Hunger Strikes

Hunger strikes are high profile, life threatening and controversial political acts (see more on pages 29-30). Some prisoners who feel they have no other method of protest have used the hunger strike with the aim of obtaining certain changes or strongly voicing certain demands. Hunger strikes can fail to meet their aim when the proposed action exceeds the ability of the target to change a situation. For example, a warden of a prison might only have the ability to change prison conditions, but no authority to release prisoners or change the political state of the country. In the cases cited above, some prisoners were able to negotiate better prison conditions with wardens. However, as the number of prisoners joining the hunger strike grew, and the demands increased to a level which were beyond the prison, the wardens felt threatened and subsequently put an end to the strike by violent means.
political prisoners. The wardens were willing to concede better prison conditions. However, because the prisoners continued their hunger strike in order to achieve their political demands of democratic reforms, they were severely beaten and tortured by the wardens. At Tharawaddy prison in May of 1998, Aung Kyaw Moe, who died as a consequence, staged a hunger strike together with several other inmates demanding the release of political prisoners whose prison terms were over. Kyaw San staged a hunger strike in June of 1998, also at Tharrawaddy prison and succeeded in getting more water and an agreement that the cells would be opened during the day. Kyaw San was released in the end of 2004 but rearrested in March of 2005 upon which he staged a month-long hunger strike to protest his innocence, but to no avail. Moe Kyaw, Aung Soe Min and Kyaw Nyunt ended a four-day hunger strike after the prison authorities returned confiscated books and granted them permission to read new books. A one-week long hunger strike staged by several prisoners at Bassein prison in September 2003 ended in ten of them being shot and 150 others being moved to other prisons. The prisoners had demanded the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, the implementation of the results of the 1990 election and better living conditions. In November of 2003, Daw May Hnin Kyi was arrested in connection with the Depayin incident and subsequently carried out a three-day hunger strike to press for her release from detention. This action succeeded. However, a hunger strike by 18 prisoners in Insein in May 2005 to protest inhumane conditions inside prison resulted in tightened security, more oppressive rules, beatings and torture.

**Political Boycotts**

Political boycotts involve refusals to continue the usual forms of political participation under the existing conditions. In Burma this method has been used to attempt to pressure or persuade the SPDC to move toward meaningful dialogue with the NLD and the non-Burman ethnic nationalities. The SPDC has attempted to ignore and impede any input by these groups in the drafting of a new constitution, one of the factors which led the NLD to boycott further
participation in the National Convention since 1995. It was joined in boycott by eight other political parties. By withdrawing their participation, this boycott by nine political parties who received a total of 90.9% of parliamentary seats in the 1990 elections, denied legitimacy to the process. The NLD has consistently made it clear to the ruling authority that it is ready to compromise and join talks as soon as the junta is open to genuine dialogue. The boycott continued through the relaunched National Convention in 2004 and 2005.

**Religious Boycotts**

A religious boycott is a refusal of the religious community to continue or conduct normal religious activities with the oppressor. It therefore signifies withdrawal of support and cooperation with the oppressor. As was mentioned earlier, monks in many parts of Burma, but particularly in Mandalay, have used this tactic to express their unhappiness with the ruling authorities. U Zawtipala, a highly respected senior monk within Burma, called for a dialogue between the regime and Aung San Suu Kyi in late 1999. When the regime rebuked his offer, monks insisted that the regime begin a political dialogue with the CRPP by 25 May 2000, threatening, and later carrying out, boycotts of alms. As a result, 10 monks in Mergui were arrested in May 2000 for having refused to accept alms or give religious sermons outside their monastery. In November 2003, Buddhist monks refused to accept the donations of the ruling authorities in protest at the harsh treatments, exploitation and abuses by the military regime.

In 1997, during the Islamic feast of Eid-ul-Adha, Muslims in Burma refused to cut up goat and cow meat to protest against systematic persecution. The aim of the demonstration was to show disapproval of the military junta by withdrawal from the annual traditional rite. This action was undertaken in order to persuade Muslims worldwide to boycott the military junta.

**Civil Disobedience**

Civil disobedience is deliberate, open and peaceful violation of particular laws, regulations, decrees, orders and the like which are believed to be illegitimate. Examples of this type of heroic nonviolent action are numerous throughout Burma.

Win Tin, the renowned journalist detained since 1989, has consistently refused to sign a letter of resignation from the NLD in exchange for his freedom. He is accused of being a “leftist” politician who urged the NLD to adopt a civil disobedience campaign, quoting the works of philosopher Henry David Thoreau and the example of Mahatma Gandhi. According to a former political prisoner, he constantly kept up peaceful resistance to the authorities’ orders and often discussed politics with his
cellmates. While being held in one of the prison kennels, in 1995, Win Tin made a speech celebrating Burma’s national day.

In Sagaing Division in August 1996 and again in November the military issued an order to a homeowner who had put up a NLD signboard to take it down. Both times the owner refused. U Ohn Maung of the NLD Bagu Division refused to refrain from political activities. In 2003, after having been detained with 35 of her colleagues following the May 30 Depayin incident, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi refused release from prison unless the other prisoners were set free as well.

Tax resistance is another technique of civil disobedience. Say Phat was accused in 2000 of instigating farmers not to pay an onerous rice tax to the authorities. Aye Mint, the NLD secretary of the Bago Division, assisted farmers who were trying to boycott the paddy quota they were obliged to sell to authorities.

Also, people within Burma have shown resistance to military service. A sixteen-year old interviewed by the *Irrawaddy*, told his story of having deserted the army as he could no longer bear the brutality of gang raping and beating villagers. He said that he had been disciplined more than 20 times for not following orders to take part in the beating of villagers which resulted in his receiving beatings himself.
THE SECOND COMPONENT of a nonviolent struggle is the counteroffensive. Use of nonviolent methods simply as a defensive reaction does not generate a nonviolent struggle. Social movements, or individuals, without a counteroffensive strategy and plan of action remain passive – they can only follow or react to events orchestrated or led by the adversary, leaving the adversary in control of the situation. A cohesive nonviolent strategy should put the nonviolent struggle on the offensive, giving the initiative to the nonviolent practitioner.

The counteroffensive has the twin strategic goals of altering the will of the adversary to conduct the aggression, and undermining their power to do so. This can be done either by offering the opponent certain concessions that will satisfy their needs without forfeiting the needs of the oppressed or, if that fails, by nonviolently coercing the opponent elite to participate in a problem-solving process. This can be done by subjecting them to a series of strategically focused nonviolent action campaigns.

Nonviolent intervention is a class of methods that transform the situation by disrupting or uprooting the existing status quo or by providing preferred alternatives to the established behavioral patterns, policies, relationships, or institutions that are considered unacceptable. The creative part providing alternatives is what Gandhi refers to as the constructive program. These methods aspire to build positive alternatives to the current situation. Without a constructive program, a transition to a just and democratic society will remain a distant goal. Transition periods are characterized by extreme uncertainty and can consequently quickly erode into violent conflict. During the struggle itself, political, economic and social practices as well as institutions that foster cooperative and supportive relations must be put into place. In order to have

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*Those who make peaceful revolutions impossible make violent revolutions inevitable.*  
- J. F. Kennedy
optimum effect, the counteroffensive must engage all social sectors on all sides of the conflict. It is imperative to actively engage as many people as possible in positions within governments, the media, business, academia, religious groups and non-governmental agencies as well as the general public.

Pro-democracy activists inside Burma have applied various tactics to seize the initiative and to build positive alternatives. They must make use of every window of opportunity to organize or set up alternative institutions and practices as well as to inform the international community and engage it in their struggle. Ultimately, the military junta has proved incapable of containing popular aspirations. Through the actions listed below, common people reveal their hope for an alternative future and their belief that it is possible and will come about so long as they continue to work towards it and refuse to give in.

**Nonviolent Intervention**

*Self-exposure to the Elements/Interjection*

The willingness to undergo suffering in order to change the heart of the adversary is an action that clearly reflects Gandhian methodology. Although this willingness has been demonstrated in various forms of actions, it is often not understood that success in this type of action requires a pre-existing relationship between the actor and the opponent. For example, fasting undertaken by unknown individuals in front of an embassy is unlikely to have a transformative effect on the embassy, as there is usually no pre-existing relationship between the activists and the ambassador. However, while this type of action might not have an effect on the ambassador, it may powerfully affect observers more than the intended target. The willingness to undergo or expose oneself to some form of suffering to change another’s behavior can be extremely powerful when it involves equals. During the demonstrations in Rangoon in August of 1988, after several days during which military action was taken against unarmed civilians, such an action was undertaken by a young courageous individual. While the crowd of protesters was facing the soldiers, their guns at their ready, a 14-year old boy strode towards the soldiers holding an unusually large peacock flag. As he stepped up to one of the soldiers, he unbuttoned his shirt and bared his chest to the challenge of the bullets. The boy and one of the aiming soldiers faced each other for a moment and then the soldier lowered his gun. The boy waited motionless for another minute and when nothing happened, the crowd surged forward cheering and waving banners and demonstrations continued for days. In this case, the action was successful as it involved equals. The boy and the soldier were young people face to face caught up in a struggle of consciousness.¹
CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM

Generating Alternative News

Although people are very much aware of the danger of harassment and retribution, they may still contact foreign journalists, and give interviews to international media. In September 2004, two writers, Ludu Sein Win and Dagon Tayar, were targeted in the state press for giving interviews to Voice Of America and Radio Free Asia. 2 Khin Maung Swe, initially arrested in 1990 for supporting the formation of a parallel government, was rearrested in 1992 for contacting diplomats and foreign journalists and giving them documents produced by anti-junta groups. 3 Maung San Hlaing was arrested following meetings with foreign journalists whom he allegedly provided with information regarding the military’s use of torture. 4 In 1997, Daw San San was arrested for conducting an interview with the BBC on the NLD boycott of the National Convention. She is one of the few women elected as a Member of Parliament in the 1990 elections. She had given her name in the interview and supplied a list of MPs who had been arrested despite being aware that this action would result in her arrest. She had been arrested in 1991 and received an amnesty in 1992 with the condition of not engaging in any political activities. 5 San San Nwe, a journalist, novelist and political activist, was sentenced to 10 years for sending anti-junta reports out of the country to be broadcast and for being in contact with the government in exile. 6 Amyotheryei Win Naing, an active politician in the National Politicians Group which urges the junta to adopt political reforms and release political prisoners, regularly writes for regional publications such as the Bangkok Post and The Irrawaddy from his Rangoon home. Burmese language short-wave news services interview him frequently, when political stories break within the country. 7 In February of 2002, Myo Myint Nyein, a magazine editor who received the press freedom award by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, spoke to BBC upon his release from a 14-year jail term. 8 In the interview he accused the prison authorities of misleading international envoys. He explained that the authorities relaxed restrictions on the prisoners ahead of such inspections allowing them to talk to each other and move around freely. Once the envoys had left, the strict rules were re-imposed and prisoners were only allowed to leave their cells for 15 minutes a day.

Listening to Banned Radio Broadcasts

The most important sources of self-education and uncensored information are four foreign-based radio stations broadcasting in Burmese: the BBC, the Voice of America, the Democratic Voice of Burma and Radio Free Asia. People listen to these stations to learn what is
happening not only abroad but in their own country. Although listening to foreign broadcasting stations is a regular occurrence, the risk of arbitrary repression exists, as the news is unofficial and therefore illegal. In January 2000, a 70-year old man named Than Chaung was sentenced to two years imprisonment for playing the Voice of America at high volume in his coffee shop.  

Organizing News Coverage for Prisoners

On his release in 1997 after seven years in prison, Zinn Linn related “The Unknown Story of the Twenty Four” about a free press movement inside the prison between 1992 and 1996. He wrote: “We initiated discussions so that everyone as well as every party could assist each other in getting organized for the future struggle. We believed that unity alone would safeguard and secure our aim for the restoration of democracy. That is why we knew that we shouldn’t fail to keep up to date on outside political developments.” For this reason, jailed members of various opposition parties within Burma had decided to set up a Joint Action Committee consisting of five subcommittees: 1) The Committee to Protect Political Prisoners’ Rights, 2) the Committee for Convening Political Ceremonies, 3) the Media and Information Committee, 4) the Hand-written Periodicals Producing Committee and 5) the Medical Assistance Committee.

The Media and Information Committee was responsible for smuggling journals, magazines, papers and writing materials into the prison and even succeeded in getting two 8-band pocket size radios for the prisoners. This way, the prisoners received updates from TIME and Newsweek as well as Burmese newspapers and periodicals. The prisoners would then exchange their political views and publish them in hand-written ‘magazines.’ In addition, the detainees persuaded the wardens in charge to allow them to chat with the incoming prisoners so as to receive up-to-date information about the struggle outside. Zinn Linn explained that without these

AAPPB display showing a method which prisoners employ to exchange messages.
news and information sources, most of the political prisoners would have “become depressed and would have lost sight of their political destination.”

**Reclaiming History**

Selective versions of history are common to most oppressive societies. The ruling authorities offer a version of history which seeks to legitimize their claims and pre-publication censorship assures alternative versions to the ‘official truth’ are repressed. Ko Aung Htun was sentenced to a total of 17 years because he had written a history of the student movement in Burma.11 Active in the 1988 protests and with the help of others – U Thar Ban, U Hla Shwe, Ko Khun Sai, Dr. Maung Maung Kyaw and Ma Su Su Win – he published a six volume series entitled “The Book I Want to Write the Most”.12 The book documented 90 years of the student movement in Burma and provided information about student political prisoners. All members of the group had been leading student or political activists at different points in Burma’s recent history.13 Friends and supporters generally circulate these materials under great risk. Ohn Myint, an NLD adviser was arrested in February 1998 for helping to write and distribute this history of the student movement. A teashop owner was arrested in 1998 for distributing the uncensored student history prepared by Aung Tun.14

**Parallel Political Organizations and Institutions**

In September 1988, the junta passed a law, Order 2/88 according to which people are not permitted to gather in groups of five people or more in public.15 To carry out many of the activities described in this report, numerous political parties as well as student, women, ethnic, and worker organizations defy this ordinance. Through underground meetings, these organizations plan their resistance activities. Despite the fact that the NLD and associated parties face continuous harassment and temporary bans, many people continue to support the parties that were elected in 1990. Nineteen ethnic minority political parties won seats in the 1990 election, with the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy taking 23 seats and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) 11.16 Before the elections both parties, along with 19 other ethnic based parties, formed the United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) which collectively won 66 seats and continues to work closely with the NLD. Leaders of the ALD are active in promoting good working relations between the NLD and ethnic parties and supported the founding of the CRPP (Committee Representing the People’s Parliament).

In August 1998, the NLD announced its intention to convene parliament in line with the 1990 election results. The ‘threat’ by the elected parliamentarians to directly assume their lawful responsibilities led to mass arrests by the military regime. Those
who escaped arrest launched the CRPP on 16 September 1998 as a parallel parliamentary authority. Its creation was a direct challenge to the legitimacy claimed by the military junta. The CRPP is chaired by Aung Shwe, and at that point, had ten members supported by 251 elected representatives from several parties.\(^\text{17}\)

Since its inauguration, the CRPP has annulled all laws promulgated since 18 September 1998, and has thus called for the release of all political prisoners. It increased to an 18-member body and continually urges dialogue between the junta and the NLD, as well as the convening of parliament according to the 1990 election results. The 16 September 2004 statement requested the junta to “1) immediately release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin U and all political prisoners; 2) restore all political parties that participated in the 1990 elections and permit them to perform their political duties without any illegal restraints; 3) allow all citizens the freedom to participate in politics without fear and intimidation and 4) allow freedom of speech and freedom of the press.”\(^\text{18}\)

Members of the CRPP are constantly under risk of detention. Aye Tha Aung of the ALD, representing four ethnic political parties in the CRPP, was detained for over 2 years on the charges of violating publication and emergency laws.\(^\text{19}\) He had written articles on ethnic issues in CRPP bulletins and met ethnic minority representatives to discuss a political dialogue with the regime. Nevertheless, the members of CRPP continue to make public statements voicing their consistent request for dialogue between themselves and the junta and have set up committees to conduct research on social and economic issues to be disseminated and used in future policymaking. The CRPP also issues foreign policy statements. In January 2000, the CRPP endorsed the Mine Ban Treaty stating that it would “recommend to the People’s Parliament, when it is convened, as a matter of immediate national concern, accession” to the treaty.\(^\text{20}\)

The establishment of the CRPP is significant because it provides the people of Burma with a concrete alternative to the military rule. The junta’s reaction to the CRPP indicates that the junta perceives the CRPP as a serious challenge to its power and a constant reminder of the military regime’s lack of a legal mandate. That the junta has not been able to denounce the CRPP as an illegal organization, but has instead called for its dissolution as a condition for dialogue, further demonstrates the CRPP’s legitimacy.
**Compiling Lists of Prisoners and Human Rights Violations**

Compiling lists of prisoners and human rights violations for international dissemination is an extremely risky activity. Numerous people have been willing to take that risk. “The Unknown Story of the Twenty Four” related earlier details 24 prisoners who were tortured and received prolonged sentences for their act of informing the world about human rights abuses within the junta’s prisons. Through the cooperation of several committees, it was possible to collect data on human rights abuses in the prisons. This information was compiled in a report by U Win Tin, a former editor of the Hantharwaddy newspaper who has been jailed since 1989. This report was sent to Mr. Yozo Yokota, then UN Special Rapporteur for Burma, in July 1995. This report was a major embarrassment for the junta. After 6 months of investigation, using severe methods of torture, it re-sentenced 24 inmates who took leadership roles in smuggling out the human rights report.

**Challenging the State Legally**

In 2004, for the first time, six cases of direct complaints by individuals concerning illegal extraction of forced labour were brought to the courts. Most of the cases did not lead to an initiation of proceedings or even to recognition of a situation of forced labour. In two cases complainants were actually sentenced to six months imprisonment for defamation in addition to imprisonment for their refusal to carry out forced labour. But Su Su Nway, on behalf of the villagers from Htan-Manaing and Mya-Sanni, defied the bullying actions of her local authorities and successfully sued them for coercing the villagers to take part in forced labour. On 31 January 2005, the township court passed prison sentences of 16 and 8 months on local officials, thereby establishing the first historic court decision for forced labour practice in Burma. When asked if she was worried by the intimidation, Su Su Nway answered: “I sued them because I wanted to come forward as a guide for the people of the country who have been subjected to forced labour practices. If I’m assassinated thus and have to go to prison, I regard myself as the martyr for my people and country…and I have decided to fight on thus.”

**Communicating with the International Community**

Democracy activists understand the importance of international support for their struggle. They have therefore used many means to convey their suffering and desire for democracy abroad. Official statements of the NLD are sent abroad, translated, printed and disseminated to the United Nations and its Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other concerned entities. Many exiled activist groups translate and publish the letters, statements and messages of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD once they reach the outside.
Shein along with Maung Thein Lin was imprisoned in connection with the collection of videotaped evidence of failing rice crops that were sent to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and later to the UN Commission on Human Rights to show that farmers were being forced by the junta to work on agricultural projects. In January 1998, 18 students were arrested for handing a letter of protest against the military regime to the UN Special Envoy, Alvaro de Soto. In August of 2000, U Thaung Sein, U Soe, U Par Lay and U Pu were arrested for attempting to help a political prisoner, U Wine San, a local NLD leader. The four men tried to contact the ICRC who had been visiting political prisoners. After the Depayin incident in 2003, 225 NLD youth wing members signed and sent a petition letter to the UN Security Council and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, on the 15th anniversary of the 18 September coup d'etat, asking them to urgently intervene in the continued human rights violations and help implement the results of the 1990 elections.

On 30 September, the NLD youth also sent an open letter to ASEAN. In this letter, they urged ASEAN members to take a stronger stance to encourage a political dialogue and to deal constructively with the people and the opposition in Burma.
SOLIDARITY ACTION UNDERTAKEN by elements of the international community directly assists and strengthens the pro-democracy movement’s nonviolent action campaign. Prior to the 1988 uprising and the 1990 elections, Burma was not of much international concern. As a result of the military seizure of formal power, Burma lost the talents of many people who fled the country and dispersed across the world. Through their efforts Burma is now under scrutiny. An increasingly concerned solidarity community now exists and people around the world have been moved into action by the clear “just cause” of the pro-democracy movement in Burma. Support campaigns have sprung up in many countries to assist the pro-democracy movement. Governments and international organizations have sought to put pressure on the junta to reform.

Constructive Program in Exile

Many of the activists who have fled Burma and sought refuge in neighbouring countries have set up organizations there in order to promote political change in Burma. Their efforts focus on international advocacy and lobby activities on democratization and human rights. A complete list of these organizations is too extensive for this report. However, a few examples are given below to exemplify some of these organizations’ activities.

Exile Political Institutions

The National Council of the Union of Burma and the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma constitute the broadest representation of groups
from Burma. The NCGUB was formed in December 1990 following the regime’s refusal to convene Parliament and the severe crackdown on the NLD and other political parties. The NCGUB, consisting solely of MPs popularly elected in the 1990 elections, will be dissolved once democracy and human rights are restored in Burma. Other pro-democracy activists formed the NCUB which has become the largest coalition of anti-junta groups. The NCUB was formed in 1992 and is comprised of ethnic nationality opposition groups, such as the Karen National Union, a variety of political parties, the National League for Democracy-Liberated Area (an organization distinct from the NLD, formed in 1991 by NLD members in exile) and elected MPs.

Although the NCGUB is not a decision-making body, it supports the pro-democracy movement by disseminating information from within Burma. Through it, the international community has access to NLD and CRPP statements and resolutions. At times, the NCGUB has represented the NLD at international events. Every year, the NCGUB publishes the Burma Human Rights Yearbook, documenting human rights violations within Burma, which is then sent to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly and other international entities.

**Radio and Television Broadcasting**

Establishment of a short-wave radio, an alternative to state-controlled media, is a viable nonviolent strategy. The Democratic Voice of Burma has broadcasted from Oslo since 1992 and started to broadcast satellite TV into Burma on 28 May 2005, the first ever free and independent Burmese language TV channel. For the last two years, DVB has been collecting news and information directly from people within the country. A dozen news reporters stationed close to the news sources in Burma and neighbouring countries, send daily reports via voice to their Oslo office. DVB News reports on human rights violations and includes a people’s forum for listeners to express their opinions. DVB has set up units which monitor activities of the regime and reveal information otherwise withheld. Plans by the regime to eliminate the opposition movement are sometimes discovered and reported.
**Compiling Prisoner Lists/Human Rights Violations**

The act of compiling lists of prisoners and human rights violations is done to relay the reality of the situation of the people of Burma to the international community and thus to generate support in the international arena. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma (AAPPB), located in Thailand near the border with Burma, was set up in 2000 by former political prisoners. Apart from supporting political prisoners with food and medicines, AAPP also monitors the situation in jails and work camps all over the country and assists families of political prisoners to visit their detained family members. The organization tries to keep track of all political prisoners, currently estimated by AAPP at some 1500, and campaigns for their release. They publicize arrests, conditions and life stories of imprisoned activists and provide information to Amnesty International, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch and others. In addition, they assist former political prisoners with their mental and physical rehabilitation from torture and isolation and help those who have fled Burma to find refuge in third countries.

The Shan Women’s Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation, via reports, other communications and participation in UN and other regional and international meetings, provide a channel for women who have been raped and sexually abused by the military to reveal that the junta is allowing its troops institutional impunity to commit rape during its field operations. These women have come forward to witness and tell the truth despite a lack of protection and the stigma attached to rape in their own communities. Attempts by the regime to block the flow of information on reports of sexual violence have not been successful. Accusations and reports continue to reach the border and are being documented by these organizations to be disseminated throughout international organizations and governments.
As a result of international pressure following the publication of reports of sexual violence, the regime felt compelled to conduct an investigation into the findings of the report and invited UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, to visit Shan state. However, it was never quite the “appropriate time” and the visit never happened. Pinheiro has raised the issue of rape and sexual violence in Burma in each of his reports to the UN General Assembly in 2002 and 2003, whereupon the Assembly included the issue in the 2002 and 2003 resolutions “On the Situation of Human Rights in Burma” and several other ethnic nationality women’s groups have documented rape and sexual violence in their regions.

**Solidarity by the International Community**

**Protests and Demonstrations**

As broader global awareness increased, individuals from different parts of the world have felt called to undertake nonviolent actions on behalf of the pro-democracy cause. On 8 December 2004, 82-year old US citizen Joseph Theodore Moynahan conducted a peaceful solo protest in Rangoon. James Mawdsley, a British-Australian human rights activist, was detained and deported after he handcuffed himself to railings outside a Rangoon school chanting anti-government slogans. In September 1999, Mawdsley was sentenced to 17 years of solitary confinement in Burma for distributing 500 anti-government leaflets. A Brit, Rachel Goldwyn, was arrested in September 1999 after shackling herself by the ankles and calling for civil rights in front of a crowd of students in Rangoon. On 8 August 1998, 18 foreign nationals – one Australian, two Filipinos, three Indonesians, three Malaysians, three Thais, and six US nationals – were arrested for distributing leaflets in Rangoon. The leaflets commemorated the 10th anniversary of the 8 August 1988 violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement.

Solidarity demonstrations have requested democratic change and the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and usually take place annually on historic dates such as 8 August or 19 June, or Women of Burma Day. On 19 June 2003, people in 15 countries held demonstrations both to celebrate Daw Aung San Suu
Kyi’s birthday and to commemorate the victims of the May 30th attack. Likewise, on 8 August 2003, people in Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, Bangladesh and the UK organized protests to mark the 15th anniversary of the suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations.

Petitioning

In the spring of 2001, Amnesty International stepped up its world wide campaign for the release of prisoners of conscience. Activists collected signatures, sent appeals, and organized events with other organizations and trade unions in an effort to improve human rights. During the week of 16 July 2001, Amnesty International activists across the Asia-Pacific region sent thousands of signatures to the junta calling for the release of prisoners of conscience and for human rights reforms. In this genuine demonstration of regional solidarity, ordinary people from India, to Malaysia, to South Korea signed petitions which were delivered to diplomatic representatives in the region, marking the high point of a four-month campaign on human rights in Burma. This action combined with the Amnesty International visits and mounting international pressure resulted in the ensuing release of 41 prisoners.

Monitoring Human Rights Conditions

Amnesty International was one of the first international organizations to report on the human rights situation in Burma. In May 1988 it published a 71 page report documenting the army’s responsibility for summary executions, torture and rape in frontier areas, and for forcing villagers to act as porters and to walk ahead of troops as human mine-detectors during campaigns against ethnic insurgents. Since then, Amnesty International has persistently reported, lobbied and called for urgent action to protect human rights in Burma.

The ICRC first established its presence in Burma in 1986 but suspended its prison-visiting activities in 1995 due to lack of cooperation from the junta. As a result of EU threats to implement a total boycott, and after considerable negotiation with the military regime, the ICRC resumed its visits to prisons in 1999. It now has some 358 staff around the country, working from five bases. Since 1999, delegates have been making regular visits to Burma’s prisoners, monitoring prison conditions through private interviews conducted with detainees. They have visited prisons, labour camps, agricultural camps and road building sites in Burma which has had a positive impact on conditions there. The ICRC offices provide financial assistance to 500-600 families per month to visit their family members in prison. Out of some 5500 detainees registered by the ICRC since 1999, about 3000 are still detained.
Meeting Authorities to Promote Human Rights

As part of its above-mentioned world wide campaign for the release of prisoners of conscience, Amnesty International went to Burma to meet ministers and senior officials in the prison and public services from 30 January to 8 February 2003. Issues discussed with the junta were the continued imprisonment of 1200-1300 political prisoners, the immediate release on humanitarian grounds of 19 prisoners, as well as submissions of detailed prisoners’ lists of prisoners with recommendations for release. As a result of that visit, several prisoners were released and limited improvements for prisoners took place. They were able to receive reading materials and were allowed increased social interaction. Amnesty International visited Burma for a second time from 2-19 December 2003 to specifically urge the junta to investigate of the Depayin incident and to follow up on the organization’s recommendations regarding the administration of justice in Burma.

Since 1991, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted annual resolutions condemning Burma’s human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings, use of torture, sexual violence and the destruction of livelihoods. Recommendations to facilitate a proper transition to democracy have been put forward. UN Special Envoy, Mr. Razali Ismail and Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the Special Rapporteur on Burma of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, have been trying to convince the military junta to engage in dialogue with the NLD and with representatives of ethnic groups. Mr. Razali has visited Burma 12 times and was perceived as a catalyst behind a modest level of dialogue between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the military regime commencing in October 2000. However, a Security Council response to Burma is needed to offer leadership on a unified international approach to the deteriorating situation in Burma.

Banning Forced Labour

Since the 1960s, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has urged the regime to stop the use of forced labour. In October 1995 the regime informed the UN that it had issued directives prohibiting the practice. However, these were not made public
and the use of forced labour continued. In 1997 the ILO established a Commission of Inquiry on Forced Labour in Myanmar whose report was published in July 1998. The regime’s failure to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry led to a decision by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2000 to invoke Article 33 of the ILO Constitution, which could result in boycotts across the globe by trade unions and other entities. In November 2000, just before the ILO Governing Body was scheduled to discuss activating the decision, the SPDC strengthened the legal order banning forced labour. The ILO was not convinced, and the Article 33 measures were activated. In October 2002, one month before an ILO Governing Body Meeting, the SPDC permitted the ILO’s representative to begin work in Rangoon. Since then, the ILO-Burma relationship has been one of small concessions ‘coincidentally’ exacted before meetings of the ILO Governing Body. In 2004 the relationship between the regime and the ILO was again under pressure after the ILO learned that three people had been sentenced to death in November 2003 for contacting the organization. Pressure from the ILO in early 2004 forced the regime to first commute the sentences to life imprisonment for one prisoner and three years in jail for the other two and later release. As the regime started to take some actions against complainants, the ILO reaffirmed the measures against Myanmar in March 2005, a step which was made more explicit and reinforced by the ILC in June 2005.

**Advocating Economic Boycott to Pressure the Junta into Dialogue**

The Burma Campaign UK created a ‘dirty list’ of 79 British or foreign companies with ties to Burma, many of which are involved in the tourism sector and launched a divestment campaign against British American Tobacco (BAT). BAT’s subsidiary in Burma is Rothmans of Pall Mall Myanmar, a 60/40 joint venture with the regime that has contributed at least US $16 million in taxes to the junta. As a result of a joint effort by the UK government, trade unions and the Burma Campaign, BAT pulled out of Burma in November of 2003. The Burma Campaign, along with other groups, also succeeded in getting Premier Oil, Triumph International and most major UK retailers out of Burma.

In October 2002, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) published a list of corporations that operate in Burma, have business relations with Burma, have been in direct contact with SPDC officials or promote tourism in the country. By April 2004, over 650 companies had received a letter, signed by the General
The impact of sanctions

Sanctions diminish the regime’s international credibility and legitimacy. Properly applied, sanctions can deny further gains for those currently benefiting from the SPDC’s corrupt policies, which can then generate greater domestic pressure for economic reforms. The majority of Burma’s civilian population is dependent upon the informal economy, including subsistence level activity, which would be minimally affected by sanctions. Sanctions are needed to create significant ‘moderate’ voices within the regime. In order to persuade them to favour reforms, these officials need to be hit where it hurts, in the pocket and in their international reputation.

Sanctions levied in a consistent manner by a majority of foreign governments and organizations can have three effects:

1. Reduce SPDC’s financial resources, which will make financing the military difficult. It will reduce waning business confidence, creating a sense of urgency for reforms.
2. Increase the international political commitment to the realization of political and economic reforms. This will make associating with the generals an unpopular measure and place serious pressure on allies to pressure the SPDC to reform.
3. A clear and dignified expression of moral support for the people of Burma and their movement for democracy. These measures will provide them with more political leverage to negotiate with the SPDC in lieu of armed resistance.


Secretary of the ICFTU, by the Chair of the Global Union Federations General Conference and by the General Secretary of Trade Union Advisory Committee, drawing attention to the ILO decision and to the publicly available information indicating that the company has links with Burma. In the letter, these organizations requested that the companies sever their links. Over 100 companies have so far replied with some of them denying their involvement, some of them admitting their presence, some of them defending their activities as beneficial to the people of Burma and some of them asking to open a dialogue about their Burma links. Some companies have withdrawn from Burma and/or are in the process of doing so.
International Recognition of the Pro-democracy Movement

The Nobel Peace Laureate Campaign for Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma was created as a cooperative effort of individuals and organizations from throughout the world who believe in human rights and democracy to support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma. Part of this campaign was a visit, for the first time, by a Nobel Peace Laureate to Burma. Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate and co-laureate of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, represented by its Coordinator Liz Bernstein, visited Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her residence in Rangoon in February 2003 to discuss what type of support they could offer to her. She carried personal messages of support from fellow Nobel Peace Laureates Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Oscar Arias, Joseph Rotblat, Norman Borlaug, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan Maguire. Jody Williams later outlined steps the international community should take based on her meeting with Burma’s Nobel laureate in the regionally influential magazine the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and in other opinion-editorials.

The two-CD benefit “For the Lady: Dedicated to Freeing Aung San Suu Kyi” was released in October 2004 in a bid to help fund efforts to free Burma of oppression. It includes such artists as U2, Sting, R.E.M., Indigo Girls and Paul McCartney. The album features a song in Burmese written by a jailed student democracy activist. The proceeds will go to the US Campaign For Burma, which has put together the project. By the time the album was released the junta had already banned it.
Official Government Actions to Pressure the Junta

Governments can become a part of a nonviolent campaign, and should be acknowledged when they do, as it strengthens use of nonviolence as a norm. International policies towards Burma remain limited and continue to be contradictory but some governments have shown particular concern about the crisis in Burma and its consequences. Some governments have demonstrated their commitment by supporting sanctions and by pressing the military regime to hold a pragmatic dialogue with the opposition groups and to respect the outcome of the 1990 general elections. Aung San Suu Kyi has called on the international community to implement sanctions against the SPDC to force it to the negotiation table and towards substantive political reform.39

Starting in the 1990s, the EU has adopted a Common Position on Burma and has implemented several sanctions against the military government, including an arms embargo, a visa ban for high-ranking SPDC members and their families, and a freeze on the funds held abroad by such persons.40 In 1997, the Union decided to suspend trading benefits to Burma under the Generalized System of Preferences program effectively excluding Burma from participation in EU–ASEAN discussions. The EU also objected to Burma’s entry into ASEAN, and all high-level EU-ASEAN meetings were subsequently cancelled, until a compromise was reached in 1999.41 An ultimatum was issued to the junta in October 2004 to release Suu Kyi, cease harassment of the NLD, and to take steps to allow for genuine debate in National Convention.42 As the regime failed to respond, the European Union strengthened its sanctions regime with a ban for European companies to invest in Burma’s state companies.

The US government reacted to the suppression of the popular uprising in 1988 by imposing an arms embargo and suspending all foreign assistance. Since 1997, it has barred all new US investment into Burma and banned entry visas for leading figures of the military junta due to the lack of democratic reform, continuing human rights abuses and the lack of cooperation from the regime to combat the growing drug problem.43 In response to the Depayin incident, in July 2003 Congress passed the Burma Freedom and Democracy Act which imposes an import ban on goods from Burma, expands the existing visa ban to include government officials, freezes the assets of SPDC and USDA officials in the US and reiterates opposition to bilateral assistance as well as new assistance from international financial institutions.44 The US government has repeatedly urged other nations to follow suit. Because of sanctions by the EU and the USA, the junta has no access to support from the IMF, World Bank and other financial institutions.45

Although statements by regional Foreign Ministries are indicative of a quiet but continuing desire among ASEAN states for change in Burma, ASEAN action on Burma, in line with its policy of non-interference, has remained limited.
courts have the authority to adjudicate such claims.

This case is an enormous victory for a group of people who have literally risked their lives to tell their stories to the world. These villagers have shown the world how to hold a mighty transnational company accountable. The plaintiffs said that what they wanted from this case was for the truth about Unocal to come out, for the world to understand that Unocal knew about the forced labour and torture routinely used by soldiers on their behalf and Unocal chose to go ahead and benefit. Now this truth has come out. No longer can there be any doubt that Unocal’s involvement in Burma is morally reprehensible.

Source: Earthrights International which was part of the litigation team, see http://earthrights.org/unocal/index.shtml

DOE vs. UNOCAL

This case has set a historic victory for human rights as the plaintiffs sued a large American oil company for human rights abuses including rape, murder, and forced labour – and won. The company agreed to compensate the 14 surviving plaintiffs. The plaintiffs are Burmese peasants who suffered a variety of egregious violations at the hand of the Burmese army units that were securing the pipeline route. In a landmark decision in 1997, a US federal district court in Los Angeles agreed to hear Doe vs Unocal and concluded that the corporation and their executive officers can be held legally responsible under the Alien Tort Claims Act for violations of international human rights norms in foreign countries and that US courts have the authority to adjudicate such claims.

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Source: Earthrights International which was part of the litigation team, see http://earthrights.org/unocal/index.shtml
in July 2003, following the Depayin massacre, ASEAN, which Burma joined in 1997, issued an unprecedented rebuke of a member state when it called on the SPDC to release Aung San Suu Kyi.\textsuperscript{46} Then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad took the hardest stance calling for a strong and coordinated ASEAN response and even suggesting the expulsion of the regime as a last resort.\textsuperscript{47} The fact that Burma is supposed to takeover chairmanship of ASEAN in 2006 has aroused some concerns within member governments. The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus which consists of 400 individual memberships from ruling and opposition parties in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand was formed to put pressure on ASEAN nations to press for changes in Burma. In March of 2005, the chairman of AIPMC, Zaid Ibrahim, announced that unless the military regime releases Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally and pursues democratization efforts, the chairmanship should not be granted as ASEAN could lose its credibility and relevancy.\textsuperscript{48} On 26 July 2005, Burma’s ruling authorities gave up their right to take up the chairmanship of ASEAN.
THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN BURMA has been fortunate to have a strong and inspiring leader. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been acknowledged internationally through the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her steadfast commitment to nonviolent principles in her speeches and actions. Daw Suu Kyi has promised the people of Burma she will work for the movement for democracy until the goal is achieved. Because of her commitment and her belief in nonviolence, people inside and out have dedicated their lives to support the pro-democracy movement by nonviolent means, even if it means enduring extreme violence. On numerous occasions,

*It is not power that corrupts but fear.*
*Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it, and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.*

- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lady

THE PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN BURMA has been fortunate to have a strong and inspiring leader. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been acknowledged internationally through the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her steadfast commitment to nonviolent principles in her speeches and actions. Daw Suu Kyi has promised the people of Burma she will work for the movement for democracy until the goal is achieved. Because of her commitment and her belief in nonviolence, people inside and out have dedicated their lives to support the pro-democracy movement by nonviolent means, even if it means enduring extreme violence. On numerous occasions,
Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters have shown their willingness to go to jail and face unknown consequences rather than cease their attempts to restore civilian rule.

**Speeches**

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had resided outside Burma prior to 1988. However, her family name and her commitment to democracy and respect for human rights quickly moved her to the centre of Burma’s political struggle. She gave her first major speech on 26 August 1988 at the Shwedagon Pagoda and she has since then regularly spoken in public. People from all over the country came to listen to her speeches. Despite army harassment, they soon embraced and followed her commitment to struggle for democracy through nonviolent means as demonstrated by the numerous examples listed in this report. Every speech and public statement made by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi represented an active violation of the government ban on opposition meetings and activities. Aside interviews given to foreign press, many events involved the presence of the army. Each event provided an opportunity to spread her message of nonviolence and human rights to a wide audience including the army.

Her first speech set out the principles of personal commitment, discipline, unity, nonviolence and the restoration of human rights. In this speech, Daw Suu Kyi’s unshakeable commitment to nonviolence was clearly evident. She called for the movement to be united and disciplined in accordance with rightful principles – “to demonstrate for multi-party democracy through peaceful and disciplined means, to restrain from creating divisions, to use the strength of the movement for what is right, and for people to demonstrate clearly and distinctly their capacity to forgive”.

She explained to the crowd that “undisciplined strength or strength which is not in keeping with right principles can never lead to beneficial fruition. … At this juncture when the people’s strength is almost at its peak we should take extreme care not to oppress the weaker side. That is the kind of evil practice which would cause the people to lose their dignity and honour.” Throughout all the speeches that followed, Daw Suu Kyi continued to emphasize these principles, and thereby reaffirmed and strengthened people’s commitment to nonviolent social change.

After a decade of struggle, much of it spent in detention, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi manifests an extraordinary commitment to nonviolence. During a live interview with Daw Suu Kyi after her release in 2002 involving phone questions from listeners, one of the callers questioned whether the use of violence is acceptable to bring about the end of long-term political suffering. Daw Suu Kyi replied that she did not believe that the end justified the means: “I think the means have to be right as well. Because if you choose the kind of methods that will eventually distort your goal, then you will have
wasted all your efforts. I think it is better to take a little bit more time to make a little bit more effort in order to achieve your goal in the way in which it should be achieved, that the benefits you reap might be long-term in nature.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi explained in her essay In Quest of Democracy that the junta claims the concepts of democracy and human rights are un-Burmese and people are undeserving of the principles they entail. She goes on to contradict their propaganda and writes: “That just laws which uphold human rights are the necessary foundation of peace and security would be denied only by closed minds which interpret peace as the silence of all opposition and security as the assurance of their own power.” In order to provide the people with peace and security, she insists that “rulers must observe the teaching of Buddha. Central to these teachings are the concepts of truth, righteousness and loving kindness. It is government based on these very qualities that the people of Burma are seeking in their struggle for democracy.”

Decades of repression and overt violence has cultivated a climate of fear in Burma. To Daw Suu Kyi the ‘freedom from fear’ stands out as both a means and an end – people must liberate their own minds from fear and apathy to build strong and democratic institutions. Daw Suu Kyi reminds people again and again that “democracy…is not ‘given’; it is earned through courage, resolution and sacrifice.” In her thinking, the demand for fearlessness is a general demand for all of us. Throughout all these years, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has demonstrated her freedom from fear through courageous acts, proving her belief that “hope and optimism are irrepressible.”

**Actions**

From mid-August 1988 to mid-July 1989, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi began to make her distinctive position known — by an open letter to the ruling authorities, in speeches to public meetings and demonstrations, by the formation and leadership of the NLD, and during her tours of the country. The NLD founding statement espoused the principles set out in Daw Suu Kyi’s first speech. Her campaign tours throughout the country as the General Secretary of the NLD not only set up centres for the party but
encouraged people to overcome the habit of fear. Her commitment persuaded other organizations and parties also to espouse her principles. In an interview with *Asianweek* in October 1988, the leaders of the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), which is closely associated with the All-Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), announced their abandonment of armed struggle in favour of cooperation with parties advocating non-violent means.\(^{11}\)

Initially the junta overlooked her violation of order 2/88\(^{12}\) but as she moved around the country, larger and larger crowds assembled. The junta reacted by warning people to stay away from rallies and began personal attacks. These attacks had the result of making her speak out more directly. During a rally of 30,000, a little later, she vowed that her party was going to continue its campaign of civil disobedience against unjust laws: “What I mean by defying authority is non-acceptance of unlawful orders meant to suppress the people.”\(^{13}\) Nonetheless, her rejection of ‘legal sanctions’ was orderly and she continuously counseled students and others against organizing possibly unruly mass gatherings, or attacking the military and government unfairly explaining that “democracy doesn’t just mean demonstrations” nor does “freedom of speech mean freedom to abuse anyone you feel like abusing.”\(^{14}\)

An unplanned incident which became iconic of Aung San Suu Kyi as a symbol of courage took place in April 1989. An army captain stopped Daw Suu Kyi and other campaigners at gunpoint, threatening to open fire should they advance.\(^ {15}\) Daw Suu Kyi told her companions to step aside and wait while she took the road alone. It was her instant decision that only one life must be put at risk, and that life must be hers alone. This act of unshakable courage and total commitment moved an army major on the sidelines to intervene and reverse the order.

Later that same year, as the anniversary of the August uprising approached and memorial celebrations were held, the military opened fire on a crowd of people. As tensions built up, memorial services were called off in order to save lives. The military then invited Daw Suu Kyi to commemorate the date of her father’s assassination with them. When she refused, the military put her under house arrest and prohibited her from running in the elections. In response to her house arrest Daw Aung San Suu Kyi demanded to be transferred to Insein jail to be kept under the same conditions as other supporters. When this request was ignored, she began a hunger strike, only accepting water, which lasted for 12 days. She only relented when the military assured her that other arrested activists would be treated humanly.

Seven years passed until Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released in July 1995, and even then her freedom of movement remained severely restricted. This was demonstrated when Daw Suu Kyi and a group of NLD officers planned to go to
Mandalay in January 1996 to testify in the case of the Moustache Brothers. The train eventually departed from the station leaving behind the carriage in which they were sitting. Due to these restrictions, Daw Suu Kyi was unable to venture much into public; however, the public came to her. Every Saturday afternoon at 4pm, she mounted wooden stairs behind the iron gate of her house and talked for an hour. Her weekly gate talks drew huge crowds. Video and audiotapes of these talks circulated by hand throughout the country. In June of 1996, the junta banned criticism of its rule. This ban effectively outlawed public addresses by the NLD and Daw Suu Kyi, who nonetheless defied the ban and continued public talks.

Harassment escalated and in 1998, Daw Suu Kyi, along with other NLD colleagues were blocked from traveling outside Rangoon several times. In August 1998, a standoff between her and the military, who were blocking an attempt to visit a nearby party office, lasted 13 days. Due to a lack of food and water, Daw Suu Kyi’s health deteriorated. In December of 1999, she was addressing a crowd in western Burma when authorities turned a fire hose on the crowd. In the panic, Daw Suu Kyi climbed up on the fire truck and asked people to stay – they did. She publicly reprimanded the authorities telling them not to bully the people. In September 2000, as a result of another roadside standoff, where the NLD entourage set up tents and waited nine days to continue their journey and tasks, the military placed Daw Suu Kyi under house arrest again and did not release her until 19 months later.

International condemnation, pressure and final agreement by the junta to UN mediation led to the ‘unconditional’ release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest on 6 May 2002. This was combined with an agreement to grant her freedom of
movement. As soon as Daw Suu Kyi was released she began an extensive tour of the country, traveling to many states and townships between June 2002 and April 2003, giving speeches and re-opening NLD offices. Wherever her entourage arrived, thousands of people were waiting to greet her and wish her well despite warnings by the junta to ignore her visits. The military and its USDA proxy sometimes blocked entrances into towns or organized violent anti-opposition rallies. Daw Suu Kyi thanked her supporters for their discipline: “When we first came into town, I was so proud of the people because you did not use force or violent means to deal with the protests against us. And I honour your tolerance. People today have shown what real strength is. Real strength does not involve violence.” Her impact on the people aroused such fear in the junta that it might lose power that it finally carried out a serious attack on her entourage on 30 May 2003.

Daw Suu Kyi has been under arrest ever since. The authorities, very conscious of her continuing power to influence events, has offered to release her on condition that she agrees to forsake her campaign for human rights and leave Burma. She has not deemed this offer worthy of reply, despite the very real personal danger in which she remains.

“But she has already succeeded...don’t you see? She has torn masks from the generals’ faces...She has shown them limits of what she is willing to do...and these limits have imprisoned them too...she haunts them unceasingly, every moment...she has robbed them of words, of discourse. They have no defence against her but to call her an imperialist...which is laughable...when in fact, it is they who invoke the old imperial laws and statues to keep themselves in power. The truth is that they’ve lost and know this...this is what makes them so desperate...the knowledge that soon they will have nowhere to hide...that it is just a matter of time before they are made to answer for all that they have done.”

-From The Glass Palace by Amitav Ghosh
chronology of the nonviolent struggle in Burma

Demonstrations took place inside Burma prior to 1988. In the Spring and Summer of 1988, demonstrations culminated in a mass movement that has been sustained to this day. The following list of key nonviolent actions intends to highlight through key events the progression of the movement as well as its continuous commitment to nonviolence.

16 March 1988  A student protest in Rangoon against the Ne Win rule is crushed and dozens of students are murdered. The event sparks continued protests throughout the Spring calling for multi-party democracy. Universities, colleges and schools are closed.

23 July 1988  Ne Win resigns due to mounting protests against his regime. Sein Lwin appointed as new president.

8 August 1988  8888 Uprising in which tens of thousands of people peacefully take to the streets across Burma to demand genuine democracy and human rights.

15 August 1988  Daw Aung San Suu Kyi writes an open letter to the authorities offering to act as an intermediary between them and the students.

26 August 1988  Daw Aung San Suu Kyi makes her first speech in Rangoon spelling out the principles of nonviolence.

27 September 1988  Founding of the National League of Democracy with Aung San Suu Kyi as General Secretary.

December 1988 – to June 1989  NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi campaign throughout Burma, and open NLD offices. Tens of thousands of people greet them despite restrictions posed by the junta.

20 July 1989  NLD Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Chairman U Tin Oo are put under house arrest and are disqualified from running in the election.

27 May 1990  NLD wins 80.8% of contested seats but SLORC refuses to transfer power.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 July 1990</td>
<td>SLORC announces that it will continue to rule by martial law until the elected representatives write a new constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-29 July 1990</td>
<td>Gandhi Declaration: elected NLD members meet in Gandhi Hall in Rangoon to adopt a provisional constitution in order to allow for transfer of power and the convening of Pyithu Hluttaw.⁹³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 October 1991</td>
<td>Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is awarded Nobel Peace Prize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1991</td>
<td>University students hold a strike to support Aung San Suu Kyi after she is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and universities remain closed until June 1992. Even then, until May 1996 the academic year is cut short by the junta to 5 months.⁷⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1993</td>
<td>Opening of the National Convention to draw up the elements of a new constitution. The NLD agrees to participate but expresses concerns over the objective imposed on the National Convention to guarantee a leadership position for the military.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 July 1995</td>
<td>Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest and immediately begins public education and dialogue activities as well as weekly speeches outside her home.⁶¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 November 1995</td>
<td>NLD delegates walk out of the National Convention and are subsequently expelled.⁶¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1996</td>
<td>Daw Aung San Suu Kyi takes the initiative of calling a convention of the NLD. The junta responds by arresting all delegates, but the few who escape go ahead with the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1996</td>
<td>Universities are closed after continuous student demonstrations in support of the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and remain closed until July 2000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-28 September 1997</td>
<td>NLD holds its first successful party congress in years with a call for the ruling junta to enter in a political dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout 1997</td>
<td>NLD members, elected members of parliament and supporters face harassment and detention, bringing the number of elected parliamentarians in prison to 33.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1998</td>
<td>Six-day standoff between military and Aung San Suu Kyi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1998</td>
<td>Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD 13-day roadside standoff protesting her right to travel outside the capital. Over 1000 people gather to support a student pro-democracy rally in Rangoon.⁶⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The junta requires the NLD to dissolve the CRPP before starting a dialogue but NLD refuses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2000 NLD continuously demands talks but junta refuses to engage in dialogue with the NLD.

22 September 2000 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi put under house arrest for attempting to travel outside Rangoon.

2000-2002 As a result of international pressure and UN mediation efforts secret talks take place between junta and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

6 May 2002 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest and allowed to travel beyond Rangoon.


30 May 2003 Depayin Massacre and detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

30 August 2003 7-point roadmap announced by the regime to counter international pressure following the Depayin incident resulting in reconvening of National Convention; NLD boycotts National Convention.

September 2003 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi refuses to be released unless other members of the NLD leadership are released as well.

May 2004 National Convention is reconvened. The NLD and 8 other major ethnic political parties boycott it because of the regime’s refusal to amend the undemocratic objectives and processes of the convention.

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i See chapter 6 for details of her first speech.
ii For more details see chapter 6.
iii For more details see Introduction
iv Please refer to chapter 5: Resistance in Exile on history and activities of the NCGUB.
vi See: http://www.irrawaddy.org/res/uniopen.html
vii Please refer to chapter 3 ‘Political Boycotts’ for details.
ix See chapter 6 on these activities.
xii Please refer to chapter 6 for more details.
ix For a complete chronology of the talks see: http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=475&z=14
**list of acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAPPB</td>
<td>Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSDF</td>
<td>All Burma Students’ Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSFU</td>
<td>All-Burma Federation of Student Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIPMC</td>
<td>ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSPP</td>
<td>Burma Socialist Program Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRPP</td>
<td>Committee Representing the People’s Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPNS</td>
<td>Democratic Party for a New Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVB</td>
<td>Democratic Voice of Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICFTU</td>
<td>International confederation of Free Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGUB</td>
<td>National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCUB</td>
<td>National Council of the Union of Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League of Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD-LA</td>
<td>National League for Democracy – Liberated Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLORC</td>
<td>State Law and Order Restoration Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPDC</td>
<td>State Peace and Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAN</td>
<td>Shan Women’s Action Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFA</td>
<td>Radio Free Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHRC</td>
<td>United Nations Human Right Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNLD</td>
<td>United Nationalities League for democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>Union Solidarity and Development Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Voice of America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
endnotes

2 For example, that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression” (Article 19) and that “Everyone has the right
to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” (Article 21),
3 This claim has at times been questioned, especially in the case of Tibet. But even there, the forced relocation of Han Chinese
to Lhasa is dependent upon the cooperation of the Chinese people.
Civil_Society.pdf.
Brief_vol1.%20Jan05.pdf
7 The National Convention is convened by the ruling authorities and meets sporadically to draft “Detailed Basic Principles” for
a new constitution.
8 ALTSEAN, November 2004, p. 15.
9 ALTSEAN, November 2004, p. 16.
10 Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, “Burma: A Land Where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed and Detained in
11 Martin Smith, “Ethnic Conflict and the Challenge of Civil Society in Burma”, in Strengthening Civil Society in Burma:
Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999, p. 44.
12 Examples are given in section ‘Religious Boycotts’.
13 Burmese Women’s Union (BWU) and Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPPB), “Women Political Prisoners in
14 BWU & AAPPB, September 2004, p. 11.
ENGASA160062001 , p. 20. See also Online Burma Library censorship section: http://www.burmalibrary.org/
show.php?cat=348&lo=d&sl=0
19 On 30 August 2003 a military sponsored mob of up to 5000 people attacked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and supporters of the
NLD at Depayin, during a tour of the party in northern Burma.More than 100 supporters were killed, wounded or went missing.
opinion/edwilliams.php
34 Reporters without Borders, 2002.
Endnotes

58 See page
72 Lintner, 1989, p. 133.
73 Lintner, 1989, p. 165.
74 Interview with AAPPB.
92 The Irrawaddy, July 2004, p. 23.
97 AAPPB, “Women Political Prisoners in Burma”, available online: http://www.aappb.net/j_a_san_san.html
99 The Irrawaddy, Vol. 12, No. 11, p. 12.
102 His account is available at: http://www.aappb.org/article3.html
108 For complete election results see: http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/1990_elections.htm
Endnotes

123 ALTSEAN, November 2004, p. 63.
124 NCGUB website: www.ncgub.net
125 ALTSEAN, November 2004, p. 63.
126 See: http://www.ncgub.net/CRPP_NLD/index%20of%20CRPP.htm
127 Human Rights Yearbook issues are available at: http://www.ncgub.net/NCGUB/NCGUB%20Publications.htm
130 At the 10th anniversary of the DVB, Suu Kyi stated: “DVB is helping to provide freedom of information. We think that the standard of broadcasting in the DVB has improved systematically and incredibly over the past ten years.”
131 AAPPB, www.aappb.org
132 The report “License to Rape” published in June 2002 by the Shan Women’s Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation. documents 173 cases of rape and sexual violence against Shan girls and women by military troops and calls for the international community to "withhold all forms of aid to the regime until irreversible changes are made towards democratic reforms in Burma which must include a nation-wide ceasefire and meaningful political dialogue between the SPDC, Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic nationality representatives." Available at: http://www.shanland.org/HR/Publication/LtoR/license_to_rape.htm

141 For details on the Amnesty International visits, please refer to paragraph “Meeting Authorities to promote Human Rights” later on the chapter.


143 ICRC website: http://www.icrc.org/Web/En/siteeng0.nsf/lit/myanmar?OpenDocument


153 www.burmacampaign.org.uk/dirty_list/dirty_list.html


156 www.global-unions.org/burma/


158 Burma Peace Campaign: http://www.burmapeacecampaign.org/index.cfm?id=7


164 ALTSEAN, November 2004, p. 55.

166 ALTSEAN, November 2003, p. 24-30.
172 According to Order 2/88, people are not permitted to gather in groups of five people or more in public. It was issued on 18 September 1988, the day the current military regime seized power.
174 Aung San Suu Kyi, ibid, p. 196.
177 Ibid., p. 177.
178 Ibid., p. 176.
182 People are not permitted to gather in groups of five people or more in public.
186 See page
bibliography

BURMA


HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS


The Unknown Story of the Twenty-Four. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma.


Women Political Prisoners in Burma. Burmese Women’s Union and Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma, 2004

NONVIOLENCE


ORGANISATIONS/WEBSITES

Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma: http://www.altsean.org

Amnesty International: http://www.amnesty.org

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners of Burma: http://www.aappb.net

Burmanet: http://www.burmanet.org

Burma Campaign UK: http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk

Burma Peace Campaign: http://www.burmapeacecampaign.org
Committee Representing the People’s Parliament: http://www.ncgub.net/CRPP_NLD/index%20of%20CRPP.htm
Democratic Voice of Burma: http://www.dvb.no
Federation of Trade Unions: http://www.tradeunions-burma.org
Human Rights Watch: http://www.hrw.org
International Committee of the Red Cross: http://www.icrc.org
International Labour Organisation: http://www.ilo.org
National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma: http://www.ncgub.net
Reporters Without Borders: http://www.rsf.org
Shan Women’s Action Network: http://shanwomen.org/
The Irrawaddy: http://www.irrawaddy.org
US Campaign for Burma: http://www.uscampaignforburma.org
NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL was founded by Palestinian Mubarak Awad in 1989 with the intent to provide assistance to individuals, organizations and governments seeking nonviolent means to bring about social or political change.

NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL endeavors to strengthen the ability of human society to use the power of nonviolence to effect change which reflects truth, justice and the desire for human development at the personal, social, economic and political levels.

NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL believes that every culture and religion in the world contains the seeds of truth through nonviolence, and we encourage the activist of different traditions to seek nonviolent solutions that respect their cultural identities.

In order to act on this philosophy, NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL:

- Organizes training programs and strategy sessions for activists and organizers through the coordination of a pool of international resources and experts;
- Provides access to international conflict resolution specialists for groups or governments seeking alternative possibilities for peace;
- Sponsors local, national, regional and international conferences and seminars;
- Draws attention to the actions of individuals or groups which best exemplifies the principles and practices of nonviolence and conflict resolution in a major conflict situation each year, possibly through the presentation of a peace award;
- Prints and disseminates articles, newsletters, position papers and general educational materials on nonviolent methods;
- Provides public education through speakers and the media;
- Networks with other conflict resolution centers internationally to work cooperatively toward a common goal;
- Carries out other legal activities in pursuit of nonviolence and conflict resolution.

NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL is directed by an International Council which is comprised of representatives of its Offices and Programs situated in various parts of the world. Each office contributes to the overall coordination of the Nonviolence International network as a whole, but with differing responsibilities. Nonviolence International engages in specific joint activities and projects with other organizations, which may be formalized as Affiliate relationships.
This brief publication introduces the general public to the methods of nonviolent struggle being used to oppose, undermine or refuse cooperation with military rule in Burma/Myanmar.

Many reports have focused on opposition activities involving a variety of ethnic minority groups, resident within Burma/Myanmar, who have been engaged in an armed struggle against the military regime virtually since the end of colonial rule.

In contrast, this publication focuses on the population of central Burma, whose activists are associated with the political parties which won seats in the 1990 elections. These activists have waged a predominantly nonviolent campaign to assume their place in the country’s political life to which they were popularly elected, but to which the ruling military junta has prohibited them.

The types of actions these political activists undertake, and why they believe it makes a difference are not well known, both due to the lack of a common political vocabulary for journalists to report on nonviolent struggle, and due to the lack of access most journalists have to the country. We reveal in this report the story hidden behind the human rights reports—the nonviolent struggle against military rule in Burma/Myanmar.