

How far is Burma from
Myanmar?

Union of Burma

- Gen. Aung San declares the Union of Burma independent from Britain on January 4, 1948;
- 676,552 square kilometers; bordered by Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, Thailand, Andaman Sea
- In 1960's considered the rice bowl of Asia
- Teak, jade, pearls, rubies, sapphire, oil, gas, rich soil, dense forest
- Just over 50 million people; 89% Buddhist; 2/3 Burman; ethnic nationalities marginalised

Union of Myanmar

- Under military dictatorship since 1962 (BSPP); military coup of State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1988; name change to State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997
- Changed its name to Union of Myanmar
- Joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1998

Union of Myanmar

- Closed society since 1962 (slowly opened from 1998)
- 60% of population live in extreme poverty
- Absolute power and riches to military (big businesses, corruption, drugs; black market; illegal trade)
- One in ten babies die before the age of 5
- Only salaries of military and government are increasing
- Schools are closed from time to time

Union of Myanmar

- Gross human rights violations: no basic freedoms (expression, assembly, academe, vote)
- 2,100 + political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
- Military operations: burning villages in ethnic nationalities areas; seizure of farmers' crops and livestock
- Military licensed to rape women and girls
- 70,000 child soldiers
- Forced labor for infrastructure, military portage, military construction
- People displaced from communities
- Cross-border refugees and undocumented migrants prone to trafficking and further exploitation in other countries

Struggle for Free Burma

- Ethnic nationalities have waged wars to assert self-determination and protect their communities
- Students and youth taking to the streets in 1970's; popular uprising in 1988 brutally crushed by military in August 8, 1988
- National League for Democracy (NLD) and other democratic opposition won 81% victory in 1990 elections; parliament was never convened
- Call for tripartite dialogue constantly ignored by military and not pushed by the international community

Struggle for Free Burma

- Saffron Revolution of 2007 (after a 500% increase in fuel prices) calling for dialogue and national reconciliation meted violent crackdown by the military including violent attacks on monks and monasteries
- International and local relief for the victims of cyclone Nargis in 2008 restricted by military

How do we get to a free Burma from the present Myanmar?

- If all the political prisoners are released and there's no fear of arrest and detention for speaking one's mind
- If all the children are properly nourished and educated, enjoy their child rights and not recruited to the military
- If no woman or girl is sexually assaulted or discriminated
- If no ethnic nationality live in fear of being attacked or displaced and marginalised

How do we get to a free Burma from the present Myanmar?

- If people are free to express themselves, peaceable assemble and demonstrate without threat of abduction and punishment
- If no one person is forced to provide unpaid labor against will
- If people live at peace and in abundance, enjoying the fruits of their labour as they manage their resources well
- If people are allowed to exercise their right to choose who will govern them and how

How do we get to a free Burma from the present Myanmar?

- If all the countries stop trading with military-owned businesses; if banks freeze military assets abroad
- If ASEAN will work for the monitoring of human rights in Burma under the ASEAN charter and human rights body
- If UN Security Council passes a binding resolution to force military junta to a dialogue and democratization process

How far is Burma from Myanmar?

Not far if we work together in
solidarity with the people of Burma
in their struggle for human rights
and democracy

Solidarity for Free Burma

- Ethnic nationalities, Burma diaspora and movement inside Burma in constant dialogue and coordination
- Solidarity movement outside Burma linked with all the different groups
- Solidarity groups in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Australia, Pacific, Asia

Solidarity for Free Burma

- **Burma Partnership** - covers Asia-Pacific; with lots of Burma groups from outside and from inside; country-based advocacy networks supporting Burma, doing campaigning in own countries, public information, lobbying, capacity building for Burma partners
- **Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma** – around Southeast Asia doing campaigning, capacity building, advocacy and lobbying the ASEAN
- **Asia-Pacific Solidarity Coalition** – former APCET members expanding its mandate to build solidarity for Burma, Aceh, West Papua, Mindanao and South Thailand

Solidarity for Free Burma

- Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) – Southeast Asia
- ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus – composed of parliamentarians from Southeast Asia lobbying the ASEAN and UN

Timor Leste Solidarity for Burma

“The time has come for more forceful and creative ways of fighting for democracy in Burma.

“If the international community can freeze funds and assets held by individuals allegedly linked to violent extremist groups, there must be an equal moral and political will to target those who hold hostage an entire nation and have committed mass rape and murder against innocent people.

“Having followed developments in Burma for well over 20 years and seen numerous failed attempts at politely and pragmatically couching the ruling military to show restraint and engage its own people in meaningful dialogue, I believe this is the next practical escalation in making the generals pay the price for the war they have imposed on their own people.”

- H.E. President Jose Ramos Horta, 19 August 2009

Timor Leste solidarity for Burma

The current events in Burma remind us, Timorese, starkly of the struggle for human rights we went through in our recent history. We never forget the international solidarity shown in the past around the world for the plight of the Timorese. We know that the use of violence and oppression never leads to genuine lasting stability and peace. The voices of the Burmese people urgently need to be heard.

- signed by 13 TL NGOs and individuals, September 27,
2007

*“Please use your liberty to
promote ours.”*

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Free Burma Now!
A luta continua!

Thank you very much