STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 78TH ANNIVERSARY OF BURMA'S NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED ON THE 10TH WANING DAY OF TAZAUNGMONE, (1360 B.E.) 13 November 1998

Statement 107 (11/98)

1. The 10th waning day of tazaungmone (1360 B.E), the 13 November 1998, is the 78th anniversary of the National day of Burma. This landmark in the history of Burma's independence came about not only because of the 1920 Students Strike by the university students who objected to the University Education Act. It was an act of disobedience in the struggle to uproot the existing oppressive colonial system. It is also a landmark that signalled the beginning of a resistance movement by students and the youth that was opposed to imperialist and fascist systems for the purpose of finally achieving freedom and independence.

2. The National League for Democracy values and appreciates the students, monks, and citizens who played a park in the national movement and struggle for independence. We also are convinced that the principle purpose of the 1920 national movement was to achieve democracy and human rights.

3. However, although independence was obtained it is most distressing to see that not only are freedom, justice and equality further away from the people of Burma, but we on the verge of loosing democracy and basic human rights. More than, there is no guarantee or hope for the attainment of basic human rights and a genuine high standard of education and health. That is why the National League for Democracy is constantly and continuously striving and demanding democracy and human rights. Only when a genuine democratic system is established, basic human rights can be guaranteed and we can be successful in reaching our goals.

4. It is normal for youth to want change and clamour for new, open and accountable conditions in politics, commerce, and social welfare and to actively demonstrate their needs. These activities should be responded to by the authorities by consolation to achieve resolutions that will bring about advancement, peace and stability in the country.

5. It was the students who nobly played a leading role in the 1920 colonial era students strike, the 1963 students strike, and the 1938 students and oil workers strike. Because of their strong and far reaching activities in the 1920 students strike the colonial education
was successfully overturned and many national schools and even a national college (temporary) were established. It was these national schools that produced our national leaders and martyrs, architects of our independence, Bogyoke Aung San and other gallant warriors.

6. Today, the role of the youth and students is diminishing because the spirit of leadership in them is broken and crushed. Education is relegated to the trash heap. The attitude of the authorities to "turn a blind eye and push into the jungle" has resulted in deterioration and devastation. With no education, and a circumscribed role for the youth and students, the nation will be faced with a bleak and dim future. "Of all the strengths, education is the greatest". It should be remembered that "genuine education creates people with character while spurious education is for the benefit of one individual or one group of one class of people and to produce people that can be manipulated to serve them." A country cannot prosper and advance in any way when it is depleted of academics and skilled professionals. Also, there can be no advancement politically or socially. Closure of schools has brought about this situation.

7. Not appreciating the importance of the youth; being void of feeling of human compassion and empathy; the high cost of education; the minimising of students position and role; closure of schools for years; failure to settle amicably the demands of students but arresting, beating and persecuting them whenever demonstrations occur; discrimination against the students population and only cultivating and showing favour to a few are some of the factors and practices that should not happen. This destroys the fabric of society and is in no way good for the future of the country.

8. No one can deny that the closure of the universities for such a long period of time is a great loss to the students and the country. The National League for Democracy is fully aware of this and for this reason the Committee representing the Pyithu Hluttaw in its Notification Number 2 resolved that it would recommend to the Pyithu Hluttaw that the University Act be reviewed and revised.

9. On 24 August 1998, the Rangoon University students and on 2 August, 1998, the Rangoon Institute of Technology students conducted peaceful demonstrations relating to their dissatisfaction with the education system. The National League for Democracy in its statement 44 (9/98) dated 4/9/98 emphatically declared and advised the authorities not to use force and that instead of arresting the students they should listen to the demands of the students and with a spirit of understanding resolve the conflict amicably.

10. The crisis that Burma faces to day in the different sectors of commerce, education, and social welfare cannot be settled compartmentally because they are all related. We believe that all these
problems have come about because of the political system and for the sake of unification a political settlement in which all the nationalities can participate openly and genuinely is the only way for finding a solution.

11. It is totally wrong to believe that the difficulties, problems, differences, dissatisfactions that have arisen the political, commercial and social welfare sectors of the country can be eradicated by arrests, confinement, imprisoning, intimidating, and placing restrictions. These are methods that will never achieve resolutions, and will never achieve advancement.

12. If there is a desire for individual advancement and for the country's advancement, the perceptions that one has and the perceptions that one's group has adopted must be discarded. the thinking and the thinking process must be changed. One must be able to reason and accept beneficial outcomes. Actions that are not performed honestly can be compared to eating rice that is not properly cooked. They will not only produce unacceptable outcomes but will confuse the situation and cause suspicion. Only those resolution that satisfy both sides will be beneficial for both.

13. It must be accepted that the building of a society that will prosper and a country that will advance must be by " cooperation ". Construction should be by " cooperation and not confrontation ".

14. Differences in opinion should not be seen as opposition or a means of working against a person. A differing viewpoint should not be seen as insubordination. One must learn to respect another person's opinion and work through the differences so that a beneficial outcome can be reached.

15. The desire to arrest, imprison, and restrict people because of the country's problems must be extricated and replaced with a reasoning, pure and mature mind that will honestly cooperate and impartially consult and resolve disputes. We can start with a valuable clean page in the history books and nobly and courageously resolve to work towards a resolution. Only then will the country advance forward.

16. Today, all of us have an obligation to the 1920 student and the heroes of the national movement who won our independence. Accepting this responsibility we should join hands and unite with the National League for Democracy in the struggle against the illegal and unjustifiable subjugation of the people and to free ourselves from this political system and establish a stable and prosperous country that practices genuine democracy. We call upon all citizens to unite with us and shoulder this responsibility equally and march towards the goal of genuine democracy.
Central Executive Committee  
National League for Democracy

Rangoon  
13 November 1998.