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# Opening Ceremony of Advanced Internship Program in Human Rights and Law

-- Peace Law Academy --  
2009 - 2010  
Burma Lawyers' Council

On 12 February 2009, the Burma Lawyers' Council held an Opening Ceremony for its second batch of students in the Advanced Internship Program in Human Rights and Law. The Advanced Internship Program is a two-year program



focused on educating activist youth in law and related subjects. It is part of the BLC's Peace Law Academy, established in 2005.

There are twenty-five students in this year's class, thirteen women and twelve men. They represent eleven different

ethnic groups and are affiliated with several democratic organizations, both inside Burma and in exile.

## Brief Description of the Advanced Internship Program

The courses at the Peace Law Academy give a broad understanding of the legal history, concepts, statutes, case law, conventions, treaties and other important materials relevant to an understanding of the relationship between law and change in Burma. Lectures are given by experienced lawyers and professors from Burma and other countries. Students also participate in a number of practical activities such as internships at Burmese democratic organizations, law workshops, legal research, and networking, among others.



The Advanced Internship Program has four primary objectives:

- To increase to the legal capacity of Burmese activist youth so that they become capable advocates, qualified civil servants and competent leaders of civilian institutions who will practice good governance;
- To capacitate the interns to teach and train others in human rights, rule of law, civil society and other subjects essential to a future democratic Burma;
- To teach the interns how to conduct research, critically analyze laws and write academic papers of a high quality; and
- To promote the interns' understanding of civilian institution building and networking.

The aim is that, upon completion of the two-year learning period, the interns will be capable advocates ready to facilitate democratic governance in Burma.

The 2009-2010 Program has received partial funding by Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug), Human Rights Now and other individual donors.

### Activities of the Opening Ceremony

The BLC Executive Board Members, political leaders, ethnic leaders, family members and other key members of the community attended the Opening Ceremony. The Board Members and several leaders were invited to address the students. They encouraged the students to take advantage of this unique opportunity to become the next generation's leaders in the democratic transition for





Burma. Following are some of the ceremony's highlights.

(1) BLC Chairman U Thein Oo and General Secretary U Aung Htoo expressed their hopes and gave advice to the new interns. U Thein Oo told them that nothing is impossible in the world. If the students maximize their ability and quality, they will affect Burma in the future. He encouraged them to maintain their discipline throughout the entire two-year period and accept their duties with good will while maintaining good relations with the other interns. U Aung Htoo advised the students to improve their capacity and utilize what they have learned by working in their mother organizations after graduation.

(2) National Coalition for the Union of Burma (NCUB) General Secretary U Maung Maung told the students, "We are trying to be a democratic society under the rule of law in a federal system. You are coming to do a big job and you are not done after you graduate. You have to go back to your mother organizations to spread your knowledge in your society for the future Burma."

(3) National Democratic Front (NDF) Vice-Chairman U Khaing Soe Naing Aung said, "This Peace Law Academy was formed by the idea from the leaders of the movement and this school will benefit the future federal state of Burma. There is less rule of law under the military regime in Burma. If the civilian institutions are strong we can change the military in some ways. I hope the students will study very hard about the rule of law to increase the strength of the civilian institutions."

(4) National League for Democracy – Liberated Area (NLD-LA) Secretary U Myint Soe told the new students that "sometimes it is difficult to decide what is good, bad and right. We the NLD are willing to support you whenever you need help and hold hands together with you."

(5) Former AIP student Myat Myat Aung encouraged the new students. She said, "After the graduation of the first batch, many former students went back to work with their mother organizations and in others places, such as refugee camps. So I would like to suggest that you study very hard to improve your legal and political knowledge within the next two years to be able to work as the former students did after they graduated."

(6) Members of Parliament Union (MPU) Minister of Labor U Khun Myint Htun shared his experience when he had a chance to participate in the SPDC's National Convention to write a constitution. He said that "a political leader should have political and legal knowledge to be able to write a constitution." He explained that the Academy was opened in the democratic movement to prepare weapons of legal knowledge for the young people.

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