

BURMA HUMAN RIGHTS YEARBOOK 2007  
**CHAPTER 8**

**FREEDOM OF BELIEF AND  
RELIGION**

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change ones religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest ones religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”*

- Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights



## 8.1 Introduction

Burma has been listed as one of 11 nations designated as “*countries of particular concern*” by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and has been on the list since the Commission was set up in 1998. Although Burma has no official state religion; the military authorities have since their inception promoted Theravada Buddhism, and marginalised other religions.

According to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) almost 90 percent of the Burmese population practice Buddhism, with Christians comprising six percent of the population and four percent practicing Islam. However, the U.S. Department of State believes that these statistics underestimate the proportion of non-Buddhist people in Burma, which they claim could be as high as 30 percent of the population. Moreover, Muslim leaders have estimated that approximately 20 percent of the population is in fact Muslim. Other religions practiced in Burma include Hinduism, Animism and Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

In Burma, there is some association between religion and ethnicity. Buddhism is the main religion of the majority Burman ethnic group and of the Shan, Arakanese and Mon ethnic minorities. Christianity is the principal religion among the Kachin, Chin and Naga ethnic groups. Christianity is also practiced widely among the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups although many Karen and Karenni practice Buddhism. Islam is widely practiced mainly in Southern parts of Burma, and particularly in Arakan State, where it is the main religion of the Rohingya ethnic minority.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout 2007, the SPDC continued to monitor the meetings and activities of all religious organizations subjecting them to extensive restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. In theory, all religious organizations are required to register with the SPDC. However whilst ‘genuine’ religious organizations are nominally exempt from the requirement to register with the SPDC, in practice only registered organizations can buy or sell property or open bank accounts. Throughout the year, the SPDC refused several requests for religious meeting or festivals, and subjected all religious publications, including sermons, to control and censorship. The SPDC also prohibited religious minority groups from constructing new places of worship and in some cases destroyed existing places of worship.<sup>3</sup>

Buddhism has long been synonymous with Burman nationalism. Successive military regimes have used Buddhism as a political weapon and as a tool to suppress its non-Buddhist opponents. The ancient expression “Buddha Bata, Myanmar Lumyo” which means, “To be Myanmar is to be Buddhist” is a concept that is at the heart of SPDC philosophy. The SPDC has embarked on a policy of creating a single national identity based on the policy of ‘one race, one language, one religion’ assimilating all ethnic minority groups into mainstream Burman society. The SPDC has actively promoted Buddhism over other religions. To this end, the Ministry of Religious Affairs includes the Department for the Protection and Propagation of Sasana (Buddhist teaching). Buddhist doctrine remains part of the state mandated curriculum in all SPDC run elementary schools. Furthermore, the SPDC continued to fund two state Sangha universities in Rangoon and Mandalay to train Buddhist monks under the control of the state-sponsored State Monk Coordination Committee. Although there were no reports of forced conversion of non-Buddhists, the SPDC did apply pressure on students and poor youth to convert to Buddhism. Advancement in the military and public sector remained largely dependent upon being a Buddhist throughout 2007. Religious affiliation remained a requirement on identification cards that citizens and permanent residents of the country are required to carry at all times.<sup>4</sup>

In 2007, Christians and Muslims continued to face difficulties in gaining permission to construct or repair religious buildings. There were also reports of Christian symbols being destroyed. Whilst, in most parts of Burma, Christian and Muslim groups are permitted to build small churches or mosques with informal approval from local authorities, when local authorities or conditions change, these approvals are often retracted. In some cases, authorities have even demolished existing buildings. The Ministry of Religious Affairs Ministry has stated that permission to construct new religious buildings “depends upon the population of the location.” Nevertheless, the SPDC sponsored the construction of Buddhist pagodas, often on the past site of destroyed Christian or Muslim buildings, in areas where the Buddhist population was nominal. Moreover, the SPDC authorities often forced local Christians and Muslims to make donations of food, money and labour towards the construction of these pagodas.<sup>5</sup>



A Buddhist monk passes a 106-year-old Christian Church in downtown Rangoon, 7 February 2007. [Photo: AP]

The SPDC not only promotes Buddhism at the expense of minority religions, but also seeks to control and restrict the activities and expression of the Buddhist clergy itself. Whilst there are over 400,000 Buddhist monks, including novices, within Burma, only nine state endorsed monastic orders are permitted to function. These nine legal orders are placed under the central control of the SPDC sponsored Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (SMNC). The 1990 Sangha Organization Law criminalized all independent monastic orders. Violation of this law is punishable by immediate public defrocking, an action which is considered highly disrespectful and contrary to Buddhist belief.<sup>6</sup>

In 2007, the junta attempted to utilise its influence over the monkhood to tightly control the activities of monks within the country. The SPDC subjected the Sangha to restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of association. Members of the Sangha were not allowed to preach sermons relating to politics and were prohibited from being members of political parties.<sup>7</sup> However, in September 2007, for the first time since 1988, Buddhist monks throughout Burma participated in countrywide pro-democracy protests. Activists started protesting in mid-August, after the SPDC increased fuel prices by about 500 percent. Buddhist monks soon joined the protests due to harsh living conditions imposed on the people of Burma, and therefore the monks, who rely upon donations for survival. On 5

September 2007, violence was used by the SPDC to quell peacefully protesting monks in Pakokku. When the SPDC refused to issue an apology for its violent crackdown in Pakokku, the (newly established) All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), called on all monks to boycott the regime by refusing to accept alms from persons associated with the SPDC. Under the monks' code of discipline, the Vinaya Pitaka, the boycott was formally agreed upon and announced in assemblies. This was the third time in Burma's history that such action was taken by Buddhist monks, since only under the most compelling moral circumstances will a monk refuse alms that have been offered. The act precluded the military leadership and members of their families from making merit - a very important part of Buddhist spiritual and religious life. Protests continued until late September, when the SPDC used "excessive and disproportionate lethal force" in its crackdown on the protestors, including monks.<sup>8</sup> Several protesting monks endured beatings and shooting by SPDC personnel and some died as a result of the violence. Moreover, the violence/crackdown continued with several monasteries raided and monks disrobed, arrested and tortured for their involvement in the pro democracy protests.

In September 2007, a National Convention of SPDC appointed delegates completed 14 years of talks laying out principles to be enshrined in a new constitution. According to the basic principles laid down for the new constitution, citizens have the right to worship and practice their religions subject to "law and order, public health and the Constitution". The constitution recognises the unique position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the majority of the citizens of Burma, and restrictions are placed on any economic, financial, political or other secular activities associated with religious practice. The state also reserves the right to initiate action against any religion that "misuses" their position to "monopolise" the political system and "create hatred between religious organizations and divide them", if such behaviour is deemed a "threat".<sup>9</sup> These provisions clearly provide ample room for the continued restraint of religious freedom, surveillance and oppression of religious minorities, as well as continued state interference in the practice of Buddhism.

## 8.2 Religious Discrimination against Christians

In 2007, Christians continued to face serious abuses of religious freedom by the SPDC. In January, the UK based human rights organisation Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), released a report which cited a document entitled "Programme to destroy the Christian religion in Burma." The document opened with the line "*There shall be no home where the Christian religion is practised,*" and laid the foundation for eradicating Christianity, including arresting and imprisoning anyone caught evangelizing the Christian faith in Burma. However, the SPDC denied authorship of the document.<sup>10</sup>

In 2007, it remained illegal to import translations of the Bible in indigenous languages, and the SPDC restricted imports of Burmese Bibles to 2,000 per year.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the SPDC prohibited certain Christian terms because they were similar to Buddhist Pali terms. Further, passages of the Old Testament have sometimes been objected to, as it is believed that they approve the use of violence against non-believers.<sup>12</sup>

Public proselytizing remained prohibited in many areas, and the authorities sometimes denied applications for residency permits of known Christian ministers attempting to move into a new township. In May 2007, a Christian preacher and his disciple were sentenced to two years imprisonment for crossing the India Burma border, after returning from a Christian evangelical trip without permission from the Immigration Department.<sup>13</sup> There were also reports of local authorities confiscating National Identify Cards of new converts to Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Promotions within the military were generally contingent upon the candidates being Buddhist. Christian military officers who sought to rise to a rank above that of Major were encouraged to convert to Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Buddhist soldiers were offered promotion if they married Christian women, as this would likely lead them to converting to Buddhism.<sup>16</sup>

In most areas, Christian groups continued to have trouble obtaining permission to buy land and build new churches. The SPDC sometimes refused permission on the basis that the churches did not possess proper property deeds. In February 2007, the SPDC ordered villagers in Mong Yawng Township, Shan State, to pull out concrete posts that had been erected to build a new church in place of an old one.<sup>17</sup> Whilst access to official land title is extremely difficult due to the country's complex land laws and government title to most land, similar Buddhist projects did not experience these difficulties. In Rangoon and Mandalay, authorities allowed constructions of new community centres by various Christian groups only if they agreed not to hold services there or erect Christian signs.<sup>18</sup>

Christian Churches continued to be pressured into displacement under the SPDC township extended construction program. A Baptist Church in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, was confiscated, along with the pastor's home on the order of the Northern Commander Major General Ohn Myint on this basis.<sup>19</sup> Authorities in Rangoon also closed several house churches, as they did not have proper permission to hold religious meetings. Other house churches remained operational only after paying bribes to local officials.<sup>20</sup> SPDC authorities also demolished churches. In February 2007, a church in Monghpyak, Shan State, was demolished by the SPDC,<sup>21</sup> and in March, the Prison Charity Foundation office in Rangoon, which provided support and preached the Christian religion to prisoners in Burma, was raided and shut down by SPDC forces after refusing to remove the word 'Prison' from its title.<sup>22</sup>

In all areas, the SPDC continued to demand written permission for any gathering of more than five persons outside of a Sunday service, forcing many churches, Bible schools and Christian-operated orphanages underground. Permission was regularly denied or received only through bribes.<sup>23</sup>



The most overt and violent persecution against Christians in Burma occurred in ethnic states, where Christians make up a majority proportion of the population; Chin State, Kachin State, Karen State and Karenni State.<sup>24</sup>



A Christian pastor examines the post-fire remains of his church after it was attacked and burnt down by SPDC forces in Karen State. [Photo: Dang Ngo]

## Chin Christians

Christianity is a central element of Chin identity, with about 80 per cent of Chins subscribing to the Christian faith. Thus, they have been central targets of the SPDC's 'Burmanisation' policy. Whilst there were no reports of forced conversions in 2007, the SPDC continued to institute policies designed to engineer conversions to Buddhism. Chin families were offered incentives, both monetary and material, as well as exemption from forced labour, if they converted to Buddhism. There were also continued reports that SPDC authorities offered financial and career incentives to Buddhist soldiers who marry Chin Christian women. Local human rights organisations also continued to report that under the guise of offering free education to children, SPDC authorities attempted to convert children to Buddhism without their parents' permission or knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the year, the SPDC continued to deny permission for the construction of new churches, with Chin Christians reporting that they have been denied this right since 1997 in certain parts of the state. However some newly built churches were evident in several parts of the state.<sup>26</sup> In May 2007, the construction of a memorial church in Matupi Township was ordered to cease by SPDC forces despite building permission previously given.<sup>27</sup>

The SPDC continued to construct Buddhist pagodas throughout Chin State, often forcing Chin Christians to contribute money or labour to their construction. In January 2007, a group of Christians from Matupi Township were forced to construct a Buddhist pagoda with their own supplies and labour and were even forced to work on Sundays.<sup>28</sup> Also, in February 2007, the SPDC collected money from Chin Christian churches in order to buy land for a graveyard half of which was reserved for the burial of Christians and the other half reserved for the burial of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and others.<sup>29</sup>

In 2007, the SPDC also began to openly monitor and inspect the activities of churches and Christians in Chin State, by recording names of church leaders and all items used in the church. It was reported that this was an attempt to find out whether people were going abroad without permission.<sup>30</sup>

On 25 January 2007, representatives from Chin and Kachin ethnic groups met for the first time with a U.K. Foreign Office Minister, namely the Minister of Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ian McCartney, and were able to raise concerns about violations of religious freedom in Burma.<sup>31</sup>

## Kachin Christians

As with the Chin population, the vast majority, an estimated 90 per cent, of ethnic Kachin are Christians.<sup>32</sup> In 2007, Kachin state saw a two-fold increase in the presence of the SPDC army, which led to more human rights violations including land confiscations, forced labour and sexual violence.<sup>33</sup> CSW reported that the SPDC continued to oppress the Kachin through widespread use of forced labour, forced relocation, rape and religious persecution.<sup>34</sup>

Since the Northern commander Major General Ohn Myint arrived in Kachin State in 2005, the SPDC has been increasingly prohibiting Christian religious movements and construction. This continued in 2007.<sup>35</sup> Major General Ohn Myint ordered heads of village administrators to remove all Christian crosses at the entrance to villages.<sup>36</sup> In May 2007, a Kachin Christian Cross was demolished in Sumptra Bum Township by SPDC forces, despite previously being given permission from the Township Administrator to build the cross.<sup>37</sup> In January 2007, the construction of a women's vocational school building by the Kachin Baptist Church, in Kachin Zu village of Myitkyina Township, was banned by the SPDC Myitkyina Municipal Office, due to lack of permission from the SPDC Ministry of Religious Affairs.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, approval for church meetings and events has to be obtained from the SPDC, however, such permission was frequently denied or delayed.<sup>39</sup>



A Christian church at Nam Lam, Kachin State. [Photo: R.W. Hughes]

Kachin Christians continued to be subjected to conversion activities and discriminatory treatment by SPDC authorities, such as rewards for conversion to Buddhism, exemption from forced labour, lower prices for basic foodstuffs, and greater educational opportunities including free schooling for children at Buddhist monasteries.<sup>40</sup> Christian students from Kachin tribes; the Jinghpaw, Lisu and Rawang, were forced to convert to Buddhism when the SPDC opened a Na-Ta-Hla (Border Region Ethnic Nationalities Development) School in Putao Township, offering free education and accommodation to locals. To attend the school, students had to worship and bow before Buddhist Pagodas, and mention Buddhism as their original faith on their application form.<sup>41</sup>



Authorities also continued to construct Buddhist shrines in Christian communities, where few or no Buddhists reside, as well as coerce Christians into forced labour to carry bricks and other supplies for the construction of the shrines.<sup>42</sup>

## Karen Christians

The SPDC increased attacks on villagers in Karen state in an attempt to drive them from their traditional land and relocate them to areas controlled by the junta aligned Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).<sup>43</sup> In areas of Karen State under the control of the DKBA, Christians continued to be persecuted for their beliefs with unverified reports that DKBA authorities continued to expel villagers who converted to Christianity.<sup>44</sup>

## Persecution of Christians - Partial list of incidents for 2007

In January 2007, Lieutenant Colonel San Aung, commander of SPDC tactical command #2 stationed at Matupi Township in Chin State, ordered 14 villagers from 7 surrounding villages to construct a Buddhist monastery in the south-west of Matupi Township with their own supplies and labour. According to a report by the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC), all villagers were Christians and were not given a day of rest to practice their faith.

The villages were:

1. Valangte;
2. Valangpi;
3. Koe-La;
4. Vapung;
5. Leisin;
6. Thi Boei; and
7. Vangkai.<sup>45</sup>

In January 2007, construction of a women's vocational school building by the Kachin Baptist Church in Kachin Zu village of Myitkyina Township in Kachin State, was banned by the SPDC Myitkyina Municipal Office, due to lack of permission from the SPDC Religion and Home Ministries.<sup>46</sup>

In January 2007, the SPDC called on all pastors in Gangaw Township, Magwe Division, to sign a pledge stating they would stop worshipping in churches in Gangaw Township. It was reported that the authorities were forcing people to sign a blank piece of paper, after which it was speculated that the authorities would write a statement about stopping Christian worshipping.<sup>47</sup>

In February 2007, the SPDC openly began monitoring and inspecting the activities of churches and Christians in Chin State, in order to find information about pastors and whether people were going abroad. The SPDC recorded the names of church leaders and all the items in use in the church. The Baptist Church, the largest Christian church in Burma, was particularly targeted.<sup>48</sup>

In February 2007, the chief of Mongyn Sub-Township of Mong Yawng Township in Shan State, ordered villagers to pull out concrete posts that had been erected to build a new church in place of the old one.<sup>49</sup>

In February 2007, SPDC forces collected 9 million kyat from all 50 Chin Christian churches of Kalay in Sagaing Division, in order to buy 30 acres of land for a graveyard, purchased from 6 civilian landowners. The total amount of money collected from the churches was not

officially announced to the church members. Of the 30 acres, half was reserved for the burial of Christians and the other half was reserved for the burial of Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and others.<sup>50</sup>

In February 2007, a Christian pastor was arrested after writing a letter to Senior General Than Shwe urging an end to the persecution of Christians.<sup>51</sup>

On 16 February 2007, SPDC forces collected lists of all Christian, Muslim and Buddhist leaders and teachers in Myitkyina Township in Kachin State.<sup>52</sup>

On 23 February 2007, a Christian church in Monghpyak, between Kengtung Township and Tachilek Township in Shan State, was demolished by the SPDC.<sup>53</sup>

On 4 March 2007, Dr. Joseph's Prison Charity Foundation office in Rangoon was raided and shut down by local SPDC forces. According to Dr Joseph, they ordered the Prison Charity Foundation to remove the word "Prison" from its title and call the foundation "Charity Foundation". The Prison Charity Foundation refused to erase the word Prison from its title and was therefore closed. The foundation, formed in 1992 in Hakha Township, Chin State, had provided support to about 25,000 prisoners, in 21 out of Burma's 115 prisons, since its creation. Assistance provided by the foundation included visits to prisons and labour camps and donating clothes, religious books, medicine and food to inmates. Prison Charity Foundation members also prayed for and preached the Christian religion to prisoners. When the office was closed down, the Rev. Dr. Joseph was away travelling; however his wife and children were taken into custody. After his wife and children were released, his arrest was ordered by the SPDC. As a result Dr Joseph and his family fled to Malaysia. Remaining members of the Prison Charity Foundation were forced to sign agreements that they would not participate in Christian worship or gatherings.<sup>54</sup>

In April 2007, SPDC forces refused to allow Akha Christians from Thailand, attending a 4 day festival at Zion village in Mongkoe Tract, Tachilek Township in Shan State, to stay at the festival overnight. The festival was organised by the Akha Baptist League in Kengtung Township, Shan State, to celebrate the centennial of the Akha ethnic groups' conversion to Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

On 30 April 2007, after continued pressure for displacement of the church since 2005, leaders of the "25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bumsan Baptist Church", a Kachin Baptist Christian Church in Muse Township, Shan State, sent a letter to SPDC border authorities. The SPDC has ordered the removal of their church, as it is situated in the 105<sup>th</sup> mile Trade Zone, officially opened by the SPDC in 2006. However, in 2006 the SPDC built a Buddhist pagoda, costing kyat 70 million, within the Trade Zone near the church. The church leaders stated that they would not remove the Church as long as the Buddhist pagoda remained in the Trade Zone.<sup>56</sup>

In May 2007, a Baptist Church compound in Pang Mati Quarter in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State, was confiscated by the order of Northern Commander Major General Ohn Myint, as part of the SPDC's township extended construction program. On 13 May, the house of the church pastor was demolished during the church's regular worship service.<sup>57</sup> The church was promised land in another area, however, as of 28 May 2007 the church had not received any official response from the SPDC.<sup>58</sup>

On 3 May 2007, the construction of a memorial church by the Thatdun Baptist Church, in Matupi Township, Chin State, was ordered to cease. The order was given by Mr. Ngahour, Secretary of the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC), despite the Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Aung Ko, previously having given clearance for the construction proposal.<sup>59</sup>

On 4 May 2007, it was reported that a Christian preacher Mr. Tu Rin Tun (40) from Kawthaung Township, Tenasserim Division, and his disciple, Mr Min Phyo (18), from Monywa Township, Sagaing Division, had been sentenced to 2 years in prison. They were charged with crossing the India Burma border without permission from the Burmese Immigration Department. It was reported that they were coming back from a Christian evangelical trip to Mizoram State. Prison authorities demanded kyat 400,000 (US\$ 320) from the prisoners' relatives to prevent shifting them to concentration camps. The relatives had already paid kyat 100,000 (US\$ 80) in bribes to the prison authorities..<sup>60</sup>

On 15 May 2007, a concrete Kachin Christian Cross, situated on Htoi San Mountain, near Sumptra Bum Township, Kachin State, was forcibly demolished by SPDC forces, following a public new cross ceremony. The Township Administrator, U Soe Myint Thein, had ordered the Roman Catholic residents of Sumptra Bum Township to pull down the cross, which measured 4 feet wide and 18 feet high, despite having given them permission to build the cross earlier in 2007. The construction cost of the cross was over 4 million kyat (US\$ 3.252). According to a local resident, the Catholics had been under pressure by the township authorities to sign a cross re-destruction agreement. However the Catholics had refused and stated that they would not demolish the Mountain Cross whatever pressure was put on them..<sup>61</sup>

On 18 June 2007, it was reported that the SPDC had threatened a Christian publisher with 12 years' imprisonment unless he stopped publishing books on Christian theology. He had previously been detained three times, but reportedly intended to defy the warning..<sup>62</sup>

Also, on 18 June 2007, it was reported that the SPDC had restricted imports of Burmese Bibles to 2,000 a year..<sup>63</sup>

On 3 October 2007, it was reported that the junta had closed Christian schools in Rangoon indefinitely, in an attempt to prevent students joining anti junta demonstrations led by monks. The Myanmar Institute of Theology, a Protestant Christian Seminary in Insein Township, Rangoon Division, was closed on 1 October 2007..<sup>64</sup>

On 27 November 2007, it was reported that junta intelligence agents prohibited regular development programmes of Christian churches under the Kachin Baptist Convention in early November 2007. Further, Myitkyina District Baptist Convention and Sanpya Baptist Church in Tatkone quarter in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State were regularly checked by the Military Affairs Security Unit, the SaYaPa..<sup>65</sup>

## 8.3 Religious Discrimination against Muslims

Burma's Muslims, most of whom follow the Sunni sect of Islam, comprise 4 per cent of the Burmese population and live mostly in northern Arakan State. The majority of Muslims in Arakan State are known as 'Rohingya', and speak a Bengali dialect. (For more information on the Rohingya see sub section below). A second group of Muslims in Arakan State are known as ethnic Burman Muslims.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the Rohingya who are not recognized as legal citizens by the SPDC, Burman Muslims are generally recognised as legal citizens, although they are often forced to pay large bribes to the authorities to receive National Registration Cards and passports.<sup>67</sup> Citizens are required to indicate their religion on official documents such as passports and identity cards, and it has been reported that being categorised "Muslim" on such cards often lead to harassment by the authorities.<sup>68</sup>

In 2007 Muslims continued to experience difficulties obtaining birth certificates. A local official in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, reportedly issued a verbal order in 2005 prohibiting the issuance of birth certificates to Muslim babies born in the area. In Rangoon, Muslims can usually obtain birth certificates for newborns, but local authorities have refused them to place the names of the babies on their household registers.<sup>69</sup>

The SPDC continued to discourage Muslims from enlisting in the military, and Muslim military officers who sought promotion beyond the rank of major were encouraged to convert to Buddhism. Some Muslims who wished to join the military reportedly had to list "Buddhist" as their religion on their application, though they were not required to convert.<sup>70</sup>

Muslim men applying for Temporary Residence Cards (TRCs – granted instead of citizenship) were required to submit photos without beards. Moreover, the SPDC did not allow Muslim government employees, including village headmen, to grow beards, and dismissed some who already had beards during 2007.<sup>71</sup>

In 2007, Muslims continued to be required to obtain advance permission from township authorities before leaving their hometowns. Muslims residing in Rangoon were allowed to visit beach resort areas in Thandwe Township, Arakan State, but could not return without permission from the Regional Military Commander. Muslims residing outside of Arakan State were often barred from return travel to their homes if they visit other parts of Arakan State.<sup>72</sup> In February 2007 U.N. Special Rapporteur Paula Sergio Pinheiro, expressed concerns about the strict restrictions on freedom of movement that prevails in Burma and in particular those imposed on the Muslim minority.<sup>73</sup> In March 2007, the responsibility for handling travel permits was transferred from the local PDC to the Department of Immigration.<sup>74</sup> There were reports of Muslims being required to pay bribes in order for permission to be granted. In March, 20 Muslims from Arakan State were ordered to pay bribes to the Department of Immigration in return for permission to travel to Rangoon for medical treatment.<sup>75</sup>

Forced relocations of Muslim communities continued throughout 2007. Relocations were accompanied with demands for forced labour. Those forced to move were poorly compensated if at all with authorities forcing contribution of money, food, labour and building materials from those relocated.<sup>76</sup> In June 2007 NaSaKa authorities confiscated over 100 acres of farmland from Muslims in Arakan State in order to build a pagoda. The farmers depended on the crops produced from the land for their income.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Muslim newcomers to Thandwe Township, Arakan State were not allowed to reside or buy property in the township. Further, Muslims are not permitted to reside in Gwa or Taungup Townships in Arakan State.<sup>78</sup> These townships have since 1983 been declared "Muslim free zones," effectively barring those arriving after this date from residing in the area.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout the year, there were reports of the SPDC preventing Muslims from building new mosques, renovating existing mosques or re-building ones previously destroyed.<sup>80</sup> Historical mosques in areas including Moulmein Township, Mon State and Sittwe Township, Arakan State, continued to deteriorate because authorities would not allow routine maintenance. In early 2007, Muslims in Arakan State repaired a mosque that had been severely damaged in a storm. When the authorities discovered this, they destroyed the repairs that had been made to the mosque.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, since August 2006, ten members of a committee from five mosques continued to be detained in police custody in Buthidaung Township in Arakan State, without being formally charged. It was alleged by the NaSaKa that five mosques had been built illegally with the approval of the committee.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, on 28 March 2007, the DKNR ordered the demolition of a mosque in Kawpraw village in Karen State.<sup>83</sup>

Buddhist doctrine remains part of the state mandated curriculum in all SPDC run elementary schools, although they can opt out of instruction in Buddhism and sometimes did. However, all students of SPDC run schools are required to recite a Buddhist prayer daily. Some schools allowed Muslim students to leave the room during this recitation, while others forced them to recite the prayer.<sup>84</sup>

Muslims were frequently refused permission to hold gatherings to celebrate traditional Islamic holidays. In 2007 many Muslim families in Arakan State could not celebrate the religious festival *Eid al-Adha* due to the high price of sacrificial animals. This was due to an order by the SPDC that cattle for the festival could only be purchased from Maungdaw Township. Those who sacrificed cattle during the festival were forced to pay 1,000 kyat to the SPDC as contribution to their welfare fund.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, in some parts of Arakan State, authorities cordoned off mosques, effectively prohibiting Muslims from worshipping. The SPDC also restricted the number of Muslims allowed to gather in one place. For example, in satellite towns surrounding Rangoon, Muslims are only allowed to gather for worship and religious training during the major Muslim holidays.<sup>86</sup> There were also reports of SPDC authorities ordering Muslims in Rangoon Division to write pledges promising they would not hold public gatherings or preach in homes.<sup>87</sup>



A damaged mosque after the junta instigated an anti Muslim riot. [Photo: unknown]

## Discrimination against the Rohingya

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group residing in the northwestern part of Arakan State in Burma. They number approximately 800,000. During 2007, the Rohingya ethnic minority group continued to experience the harshest forms of legal, economic, educational, and social discrimination. The SPDC continued to deny citizenship status to the Rohingya because their ancestors supposedly did not reside in Burma at the start of British colonial rule, as required by the country's 1982-citizenship law. The Rohingya themselves and several historians, on the other hand, argue that their presence in the area since 1824 predates the British arrival by a number of centuries. As the Rohingya are not recognised as a national minority group, they are treated as illegal foreigners and not even issued Foreign Resident Cards (FRCs), effectively rendered stateless. In March 2007 the SPDC gave Temporary Resident Cards (TRCs) to approximately 35,000 Rohingyas in Arakan State. The UNHCR estimated that only 650,000 of the approximately 800,000 Rohingyas possessed TRCs.<sup>88</sup>

On 2 April 2007, the UNHCR issued a statement from five U.N. Special Rapporteurs and an Independent Expert, calling on Burma to address discrimination against members of the Rohingya. They urged the SPDC to repeal or amend the 1982 Citizenship Law to ensure compliance of its legislation with the country's international human rights obligations. The statement said that the denial of citizenship *"has seriously curtailed the full exercise of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and has led to various discriminatory practise ... As a consequence, thousands have fled to neighbouring countries, in turn creating complex humanitarian situations in the region"*.<sup>89</sup>

The SPDC has been systematically reducing the Rohingya population, and engaging in ethnic cleansing in predominantly Muslim Arakan State, by resettling hundreds of ethnic Burmans there through the creation of "model villages".<sup>90</sup> This has led to the displacement of thousands of Muslim Rohingyas. NaTaLa villagers have been relocated to and resettled in northern Arakan by confiscating farms from Rohingyas.<sup>91</sup> In Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung Townships of Arakan State, over 50 model villages have been built since 1990.<sup>92</sup> It was reported that many model villagers have been unable to obtain regular income generating employment in their model villages and therefore struggling for daily survival.<sup>93</sup> It has been reported that a total of 2,692 families have relocated to Northern Arakan State from Burma proper. According to a government report, the new settlers consist of 6,211 males and 6,128 females.<sup>94</sup>

As a general rule the SPDC did not grant permission to Rohingya to travel from their hometowns for any purpose; however, permission was sometimes granted when a bribe was paid.<sup>95</sup>

Restrictions regarding marriage have also been imposed on the Rohingyas, who are required to submit an application to the SPDC to get permission before marrying.<sup>96</sup> Since 1988 the SPDC has continued to permit only three marriages per year per village in the Rohingya townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships in northern Arakan State, which requires the approval of the Regional Military Commander.<sup>97</sup> During 2007 there were reports of military officials from NaSaKa demanding bribes from between 10,000 to 100,000 kyat from Muslim communities in rural areas to issue permission for wedding ceremonies. They also demanded the provision of food, including cows, goats, chickens and ducks in order for a ceremony to proceed without interruption from the NaSaKa.<sup>98</sup>

In 2007 Rohingyas continued to be denied access to state run schools beyond primary education, as the SPDC reserved secondary schools for citizens. As a result, Rohingyas were unable to obtain employment in any civil service positions. Instead of a diploma,



Rohingya high school graduates were given a sheet of paper that stated they would be granted a diploma upon presentation of a citizenship card, that which they can never obtain. Furthermore, Muslim students from Arakan State who finished high school were not given permits to travel outside the state to attend college or university.<sup>99</sup>

## Persecution of Muslims - Partial list of incidents for 2007

On 1 January 2007, the Islamic festival *Eid al-Adha* was held, however many Muslim families from Arakan State could not celebrate the festival, due to the high price of sacrificial animals. It was reported that the NaSaKa authorities ordered the Muslim community in Maungdaw Township to celebrate the festival with cattle purchased from Maungdaw Township only and not from other townships. This caused the price of cattle in Maungdaw Township to rise significantly during the festival season.<sup>100</sup> Further, the TPDC Chairman of Maungdaw Township ordered the township residents to give the skins of sacrificial cattle to SPDC authorities for 400 kyat per skin, while it was being sold at 25,000 kyat on the open market. It was also reported that people who sacrificed cattle during the festival were forced to pay 1,000 kyat to the SPDC as a contribution to their social welfare fund.<sup>101</sup>

On 21 January 2007, NaSaKa authorities resettled about 55 Buddhist families on land belonging to 3 Rohingyas of Longa Daung village in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State. NaSaKa authorities confiscated about 37 acres of arable farmland from the three Rohingyas, who were:

1. Abu Ahamed, son of Noor Hussain;
2. Ahamed, son of Sayed Noor; and
3. Mostafa, son of Khasim Ali.<sup>102</sup>

On 25 January 2007, it was reported that SPDC authorities were ordering Muslim residents in the Dagon Myothit South Township, Rangoon Division, to sign statements agreeing not to hold public gatherings or preach in homes. The statement said that discussions on Islam could “*harm the stability of the township*”.<sup>103</sup>

Also on 25 January 2007, police detained and tortured for 3 days, and later fined a Rohingya man because he refused to give over his cattle he used to plough land previously confiscated from him by the authorities. The man, Nural Ullah, son of Jafor Ahammed, of Saykan Para village in Buthidaung Township, in Arakan State, was reportedly set free after he paid a bribe of 30,000 kyat to the police.<sup>104</sup>

On 29 January 2007, it was reported that SPDC forces had forced several Muslim households in the village of Taungbro in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, to relocate to make way for the construction of new houses for model villagers from Burma proper. NaSaKa authorities demolished 22 houses in the Muslim village and constructed 120 new houses for the model villagers. No compensation was paid to the owners of the houses. As a result, several of the families fled to Bangladesh for refuge.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, 300 carpenters from Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships in Arakan State were forced to construct the 120 houses in the model village. This resulted in the carpenters having to cancel contracts with local people, leaving the construction of local houses incomplete.<sup>106</sup>

On 1 February 2007, SaRaPa forces accompanied by police destroyed about 30 houses belonging to Rohingya villagers of Ward No. 3 and 4 in Taungbru Left in Maungdaw Township in Arakan State in order to build a model village for settlers from central Burma. Also on 1 February, SaRaPa forces began forcing villagers from 11 nearby villages to build the model villages for new settlers. Each village had to provide 50 villagers to cut the hillside to build the model villages. About 550 villagers were engaged in the forced labour. The

villagers were provided 500 kyat a day per person as wages despite the daily labour rate being between 1,000 and 1,500 kyat per day in the open market. On 10 February, the Tactical Operational Commander of Buthidaung Township visited the area and ordered the concerned authorities to stop the building of the model village. On 14 February, the Western Command Commander ordered the villagers whose homes had been destroyed to rebuild their homes again and indicated that some compensation would be paid to them for their lost property.<sup>107</sup>

On 2 February 2007, it was reported that NaSaKa authorities photographed families in Arakan State claiming to be keeping a check on the Rohingya ethnic group population. Rohingya families were made to pay 1,500 kyat per family to have their photo taken. Further, the NaSaKa authorities, accompanied by Immigration officials went door to door checking Rohingya families. If a family member was absent it was reported that the NaSaKa would delete that person from their list, making them a permanent foreigner. Villagers were forced to pay 500 kyat for each new born to be included on the family list and to delete names of those persons who had died.<sup>108</sup>

On 8 February 2007, a man was killed in Kyauktaga Township, Pegu Division, when a bomb exploded inside the compound of the Jamil Mosque. The *New Light of Myanmar* claimed that he died when the time bomb he was planting inside the Mosque's brick wall exploded.<sup>109</sup>

On 8 March 2007, Immigration officials ordered 20 Muslims from Thandwe Township in Arakan State to pay bribes of up to 20,000 kyat for permission to travel. The Muslims sought permission to travel to Rangoon for medical treatment.<sup>110</sup>

On 24 March 2007, a clash broke out between NaTaLa villagers from Shwe Yin Aye, near Maungdaw Township in Arakan State, and the local Muslim community in Nyaung Chaung. The model villagers were said to have been looting chickens and vegetables from a house in the Muslim village. Both sides attacked each other with swords, sticks and slingshots. At least 50 persons were injured in the clash, including a Muslim religious leader, with 32 persons, 24 NaTaLa villagers and 8 Muslim villagers, hospitalised in critical condition. Many local Muslim villagers fled their homes after the incident due to fear of action by the NaSaKa authorities.<sup>111</sup>

On 26 March 2007, NaTaLa villagers and Muslim villagers involved in the clash on 24 March attended the Maungdaw police station to file separate complaints concerning the incident. Colonel Thein Htay, commander of the Buthidaung based Military Operation Bureau visited the village the same day to conduct investigations into the incident. The police reportedly arrested two persons over the incident.<sup>112</sup>

On 27 March 2007, the military held a meeting with villagers from six Rohingya villages in Buthidaung Township in Arakan State, concerning new model villages that would be built for new settlers on paddy fields. SPDC forces confiscated paddy fields belonging to the villagers. No compensation was paid to the Rohingya for their farmland. The following villages were affected:

1. Maung Nama;
2. Magh Bill;
3. Kwan Daine;
4. Yet Nyo Daung;
5. They Kin Manu; and
6. Washille Para.<sup>113</sup>

On 28 March 2007, the DKBA ordered the demolition of a mosque in Kawpraw village, a small fishing village in Karen State. Reportedly, the leader of the DKBA, Sayadaw of Myain Gyi Ngu had a dream that there was a pagoda buried under the mosque and therefore ordered the mosque to be destroyed.<sup>114</sup>

On 29 March 2007, Amena (42), a Rohingya woman from Nyaung Chaung village tract, south of Buthidaung Township in Arakan State, was gang raped, tortured and killed by personnel of the NaSaKa.<sup>115</sup>

On 4 April 2007, settlers from Burma proper were brought into the sub-town of Taungbro, in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. According to various reports, there were 120 families comprising between 447-663 persons. Rohingya villagers were forced to build 120 houses for the settlers. Tin sheets and wood for the construction of the houses were provided by SPDC authorities. It was also reported that the settlers would receive a number of possessions including three cattle and two acres of farmland from the junta authority. In addition, nearby villagers were forced by the NaSaKa to provide 3,000 kyat per family for food for the settlers.<sup>116</sup>

On 7 April 2007, police from Nyaung Chaung station forced Liala Begum (18) from Nyaung Chaung village in Buthidaung Township in Arakan State, to walk around 3 villages without clothes, save for a '*Tami*' covering her privates, for marrying without the authorities' permission. Liala Begum and Mohamed Island (23) had earlier applied to the NaSaKa for a wedding permit, however they were not granted permission because they were unable to pay the necessary bribe. As a result, they married secretly with the permission of their parents. When the VPDC Chairman complained about the punishment given to the girl he was reportedly threatened by the authorities.<sup>117</sup>

On 15 April 2007, a drunken SPDC army official shot and killed Gisu Hoke, a 21 year old Muslim in Aung Tha Bray village in Maungdaw Township in Arakan State.<sup>118</sup>

On 15 April 2007, a 22 year old Rohingya man, Osman, son of Abu Soban from Thapy Taw village in Maungdaw Township in Arakan State, was detained and tortured by the NaSaKa for 8 days on the accusation that he was in love with a girl. The VPDC Chairman intervened attesting to the boys' good moral character. He was subsequently released on 22 April 2007.<sup>119</sup>

On 26 April 2007, Zahid Hussein (24), son of Habi Hussain, and Shonjida Begum (19), daughter of Mohamed Saltan, from Kwan Daine village in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, received permission to marry after a bribe was paid to the authorities.<sup>120</sup>

On 5 May 2007, it was reported that a 10 day Rohingya wedding ceremony, of bridegroom Zaw Naing, son of Shom Shu, and bride Hla Hla Aye, daughter of Abdul Hoque, was held in Maungdaw Township in Arakan State without disturbance or obstacles from the junta. The parents of the couple are said to be close aides of the authorities.<sup>121</sup>

In June 2007, VPDC Chairman U Nay Naing seized 1.6 acres of arable farmland from Mostafa Khatun, wife of Mohamed Ullah, from Maung Nama village of Buthidaung Township, Arakan State. Mostafa Khatun had inherited the land from her father Fazal Karim, and was ordered by the village chairman to abandon the land or pay 20,000 kyat to the chairman. The land was seized as she was not able to pay. Mostafa Khatun and her four children depended on the land for their survival.<sup>122</sup>

On 20 June 2007, NaSaKa seized 210 acres of arable farmland from Rohingya farmers of Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, in order to resettle NaTaLa model villagers brought in from Burma proper. Most of the land, 140 acres, was seized from Shwe Zarr Village tracts,

while 70 acres of land was seized from Ashika Para, Maungdaw Township. The owners of the farms were forbidden from ploughing the fields for paddy.<sup>123</sup>

On 25 June 2007, personnel from NaSaKa area #9 of Buthidaung Township confiscated over 100 acres of paddy fields owned by Arakanese Muslims in Tinmay Village, Arakan State, in order to build a pagoda. The villagers depended on crops produced from the fields for their income.<sup>124</sup>

In July 2007, the NaSaKa destroyed a newly renovated mosque in Bawli Bazaar village, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. Although the authorities had refused permission for the mosque to be renovated, the villagers had carried out the renovations in June 2007. Chairman of the Mosque Committee, Mohamed Yahaya and the Imam, Maulana Kafayet Ullah, were both arrested but were released after paying 450,000 kyat to NaSaKa.<sup>125</sup>

On 3 July 2007, Md. Jamil, son of Jubir from Mostabis Para village in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, was arrested by SaRaPa for marrying Noor Bahar, daughter of Abdul Zabar, without permission two years earlier. Jamil was released the following day after paying 40,000 kyat to a SaRaPa officer.<sup>126</sup>

On 26 July 2007, a Rohingya couple, Maung Maung Tin, son of U Hla Tin, and his pregnant wife Ma Khin Khin Aye, daughter of Shamsu, from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, fled to Bangladesh for fear of arrest, torture, extortion and imprisonment. The couple had married two years prior, although they had been denied permission to marry as they could not fulfil the demand of the authorities.<sup>127</sup>

On 29 July 2007, another recently married Rohingya couple, Nural Islam, son of Rashid, and his pregnant wife Majuma Khatun, daughter of Shamsu Baser, from Taung Bazar, Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, fled to Bangladesh for fear of arrest, torture, extortion and imprisonment. The couple married in July 2006, without having received permission from the authorities. The couple had applied, but the authorities had been a delay in giving the permission.<sup>128</sup>

On 12 August 2007, it was reported that SPDC authorities had allocated 5 million kyat for the construction of a new model village in Shwe Yin Aye, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, to house settlers from Burma proper. The model village was to include 120 houses, 15 water tanks and 120 toilets,<sup>129</sup>

On 15 August 2007, 30 model villagers with sticks and swords attacked a local Muslim community working on paddy farms in Taungbro, a sub-township of Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. The model villagers had reportedly attacked after being refused permission to fish on the farm. Seven persons sustained injuries in the attack and were treated at Maungdaw hospital. The next day, Colonel Aung Gyi the commander in charge of NaSaKa headquarters visited the village and spoke with leaders of the two communities to seek a peaceful resolution to the problem.<sup>130</sup>

On 22 August 2007, further conflict arose between NaTaLa and Rohingya villagers in the Taungbro Sub-town Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. NaTaLa villagers had reportedly asked Rohingya villagers to plough their fields, which the Rohingya villagers had refused. The NaSaKa had given the fields to the NaTaLa model villagers, after confiscating this land from the local Rohingya community. It was reported that NaTaLa villagers beat some Rohingya villagers when they refused to plough the land. Moreover, the NaTaLa villagers made a complaint to the Western Command Commander Brigadier General Maung Shien regarding the incident.<sup>131</sup>

In September 2007, Muslims in Rangoon and Mandalay claimed to have been banned from praying at their local mosques in large groups. On 17 September 2007, it was reported that local mosques were banned from airing the daily call to prayer on loudspeakers during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. The authorities were also said to require Muslims to seek permission to worship in private houses during Ramadan.<sup>132</sup>

On 21 September 2007, NaSaKa arrested Nurul Naque (70), son of Bodiur Rahaman and Nurul Islam, (65), son of Gulal, from Taungbro Right village of Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. The two men were arrested in front of a mosque after Esha prayer, on the allegation that they were preparing to go to Bangladesh. They were later released, but asked to provide 135 litres of diesel to the NaSaKa who threatened with further arrest if they did not comply. To avoid arrest they complied with the demands and provided diesel for the NaSaKa.<sup>133</sup>

On 23 September 2007, Hasina (22) daughter of Mohammad Salam of Migalagyi (Fran Pru) village in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, jumped into a lake with her son, whilst NaSaKa were checking family members who did not have permission for marriage. She was pulled out of the lake and taken into custody overnight. She was released the following day on the payment of 50,000 *kyat*.<sup>134</sup>

On 25 September 2007, the Muslim community joined in a peaceful anti junta protest by monks in Sittwe Township, Arakan State. It was reported that over 1,000 Muslim persons, both male and female, marched the streets of Sittwe Township together with monks and other demonstrators.<sup>135</sup>

On 13 October 2007, it was reported that the junta had ordered at least 1 person in each family from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, to attend a government backed rally on 14 October or face punishment. *Eid Mubarak*, a Muslim religious festival was also to be celebrated on 14 October 2007.<sup>136</sup>

On 20 October 2007, NaSaKa extorted money from the mosque committee in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, because the committee had refused to demolish 3 mosques and an orphanage as ordered by NaSaKa on 1 October. The commander of the Shab Bazaar NaSaKa camp in Maungdaw Township had ordered Zaydan village, Sapara village and Panirsara village to demolish their mosques, and Shab Bazaar village to demolish their orphanage. The NaSaKa commander received a total of 410,000 *kyat* from the heads of each mosque and orphanage:

1. Nur Boshier, son of Omar Meah of Zaydan Para (90,000 *kyat*);
2. Md. Ayub of Sapara (50,000 *kyat*);
3. Molvi Hamid, son of Abul Kasim of Shab Bazaar (200,000 *kyat*); and
4. Abdur Rashid of Panirsara (50,000 *kyat*).<sup>137</sup>

On 12 November 2007, it was reported that security forces beat Muslims who supported and participated in the anti junta demonstrations in September 2007. There were reports of USDA soldiers beating a young Muslim man with batons and kicking him. It was also reported that at least 30 Muslims had been hospitalised after being assaulted during the protests, and more than 100 had been detained. According to the 88 Generation Students group, at least 7 Muslims in Rangoon were charged with inciting state unrest by supporting the anti junta protests.<sup>138</sup>

On 1 December 2007, it was reported that Johora Begum, daughter of the late Abul Hashim, from Maung Nama Alay Rwa village in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State died of a heart attack while being abducted from her home by VPDC Chairman Zubair, son of Moulvi Siddique of Maung Nama village. The victim's relatives complained to the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the TPDC Chairman, the District Peace and

Development Council (DPDC) Chairman and the headquarters of NaSaKa. No action was taken against the VPDC Chairman. One of the complainants was Amina Khatoon, wife of Mohamed Amin, from Maung Nama village in Maungdaw Township. In retaliation the VPDC Chairman Zubair went to the home of Amina Khatoon, and planted a mobile phone inside her house. Amina Khatoon was then arrested for possession of a mobile phone, and detained at NaSaKa Headquarters in Gyikan Pyin, Maungdaw Township, where she was tortured by NaSaKa officers.<sup>139</sup>

On 6 December 2007, SaRaPa officers in Bawli Bazaar village tract, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, forcibly collected 1,000 kyat from each household for the renovation of the Wet Kyan Pagoda, which was to be used for a 3-day Buddhist festival. Money was extorted from Rohingya and Arakan villagers who were also forced to participate in the festival.<sup>140</sup>

On 10 December 2007, NaSaKa officers opened fire on a smugglers boat in the Bay of Bengal, which was carrying more than 46 head of cattle, killing 6 cows and wounding others. The cattle were being taken from Burma to Bangladesh for the annual Muslim festival *Eid-ul-Azha*.<sup>141</sup>

On 20 December 2007, it was reported that a joint local and foreign NGO distributed sacrificial meat to Burmese refugee camps in Teknaf, including the Nayapara camp and the Kutupalong camp, for the Muslim festival *Eid-ul-Azha*.<sup>142</sup>

On 21 December 2007, the Muslim festival *Eid-ul-Azha* was celebrated peacefully in Arakan State. NaSaKa in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships initially prohibited the Rohingya community from sacrificing animals during the festival, but later gave permission for animals to be sacrificed in exchange for money and meat from the animals.<sup>143</sup>

On 28 December 2007, U Hla Myo Kyaw, the Deputy District Chairman of Maungdaw Township District Council, Arakan State, issued an order to all village chairmen in Maungdaw Township that sacrificing cows during the Eid religious festival would attach a tax of 2,000 kyat per cow and was not allowed without permission.<sup>144</sup>



## 8.4 SPDC Promotion of and Control over Buddhism

In 2007, the junta continued to show a preference for Buddhism through its official publications and state-sponsored activities, including donations to monasteries and support for Buddhist missionary activities. State-controlled media often portray SPDC officials paying homage to Buddhist monks, offering alms at pagodas, officiating at ceremonies to open new pagodas or restore existing ones, and apparently organizing voluntary "people's donations" of money, food, and unpaid labour to build or renovate Buddhist religious places of worship. State-owned newspapers consistently feature Buddhist scriptures on the cover page.<sup>145</sup>

While the SPDC promotes Buddhism above other religions, it also tightly controls the religion and curbs any opposition among the Buddhist population. Although the number of Buddhist monks, including novices, in Burma number more than 400,000, the SPDC continued to prohibit any organisation of the Buddhist clergy other than the nine state recognised monastic orders under the authority of the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (SMNC). The 1990 Sangha Organisation Law criminalised all independent monastic orders, following the boycott of alms for soldiers by monks in Mandalay;<sup>146</sup> In 2007, the regime continued to monitor monasteries, and subject clergy to special restrictions on speech and association.<sup>147</sup>

The Department for the Perpetuation and Propagation of the Sasana are responsible for administering the SPDC's relations with Buddhist monks and Buddhist schools. The SPDC continues to fund two state Buddhist Sangha universities in Rangoon and Mandalay, which train Buddhist monks under the control of the SMNC. The SPDC also funds the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University (ITBMU) in Rangoon, which opened in 1998. The purpose of the university is "*to share the country's knowledge of Buddhism with the people of the world,*" and the main language of instruction is English. The SPDC also funds another university which is intended to teach non-Burmese citizens about Theravada Buddhism.<sup>148</sup>

Throughout 2007, the SPDC continued its attempt to restrict the activities and expression of the Buddhist clergy. Monks were prohibited from preaching political sermons or making public statements critical of SPDC policies. Monks were eligible to be tried in military courts for "activities inconsistent with and detrimental to Buddhism".<sup>149</sup> Monks were also not permitted to join political parties. The SPDC maintains that it is contrary to the ethical code of Theravada Buddhism for a monk to be involved in politics. Moreover, since 1995 the SPDC has prohibited any member of a political opposition party from being ordained as a monk or religious leader. On 22 March 2007, authorities detained Htin Kyaw, an activist who staged a solo protest in front of a busy market in Rangoon, calling for freedom of religion. He had earlier been denied to serve as a monk at a monastery in the North Okkalapa, and consequently protested the denial of his religious freedom to become a monk. Htin Kyaw had also taken part in earlier demonstrations against deteriorating economic and social conditions. Rangoon authorities enforced the 1995 prohibition and forbade the abbot of a monastery in North Okkalapa in Rangoon to ordain Htin Kyaw.<sup>150</sup>

The SPDC has on several occasions used criminals dressed as monks to infiltrate the opposition. The SPDC is said to have used criminals dressed in monks' robes in the Depayin incident in 2003, and is also said to have made similar efforts during the 2007 September protests.

In 2007 the SPDC continued to harass Buddhist worshippers who prayed for Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. On 15 May 2007, authorities in Rangoon detained more than 30 Buddhist worshippers when they attempted to pray at pagodas for Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. The U.S. Department of State reported that as of 31 July 2007, the worshippers remained in prison. Furthermore, the SPDC harassed a group of

Buddhist worshippers who visited the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon every Tuesday, the day of the week that Aung San Suu Kyi was born. They prayed at the Tuesday pillar for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the release of all political prisoners in Burma. USDA members frequently tried stop the group from entering the pagoda's grounds and forced them to pray outside the entrance. Local authorities again allowed the group access to the pagoda after Naw Ohn Hla, the worshippers' spokesperson, protested to pagoda authorities and wrote letters to SPDC leaders. However, authorities ordered the pagoda janitors to throw buckets of water on the platform around the Tuesday pillar so that the worshippers would have to kneel in water when praying. They also played music full volume through loudspeakers in an attempt to drown out the sound of the group's prayers. Despite this harassment, the worshippers continued to pray every Tuesday. In May 2007, more groups began holding Tuesday prayers at different pagodas calling for Aung San Suu Kyi's release upon expiration of her detention order on 27 May 2007.<sup>151</sup> On 17 May 2007, the 88 Generation Students group called on the SPDC to take action to stop using so called civilians to threaten and attack peaceful Buddhist worshippers.<sup>152</sup>

The decreasing standard of living in Burma is affecting the livelihoods of monks, who are dependent on food donations from the public for their survival. Moreover, the monasteries, traditionally seen as support bases for the poor and destitute, are increasingly unable to cater for the poor seeking shelter and provision of food. As contributions from laypersons are not sufficient to provide for both the monks and the poor, monasteries have increasingly had to turn monks away.<sup>153</sup> In August 2007, this situation further deteriorated, when the SPDC removed subsidies of fuel and natural gas prices, causing the retail price of fuel to increase by up to 500 per cent. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Paula Sergio Pinheiro reported that during the first days of the monks' protests in Rangoon the lay population of Burma was requested to keep separate from the demonstrations and not to chant political slogans, reinforcing that the monks' actions were a response to social and religious grievances.<sup>154</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 11: The Saffron Revolution – The 2007 Pro-Democracy Movement).

On 28 August 2007, military authorities summoned senior monks in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, to a meeting at the Arakan State administration office. Major General Than Tun Aung who was in charge of the regional military headquarters in Sittwe Township, called on the senior monks to prevent monks from protesting soaring fuel prices, in accordance with religious law.<sup>155</sup>



Riot police block a Buddhist monk's path to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon in September 2007 at the height of the Saffron Revolution protests. *[Photo: Stringer/Reuters]*

On 30 August 2007, it was reported that the junta issued warnings to Buddhist monks involved in the protests over fuel and essential commodity prices. In Rangoon and Mandalay, the junta told abbots to control their monks and novices in the temple and stop their involvement in the protests.<sup>156</sup>

On 5 September 2007, continuing protests reached a turning point when the junta fired gunshots over the heads of protesting monks and beat monks in Pakokku Township, Pegu Division. There were reports that up to 10 monks were tied to electricity poles and beaten with rifle butts and bamboo sticks. At least 3 monks were injured. There were unconfirmed reports that one monk died.<sup>157</sup> In response to the violence used against monks the newly formed the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA) demanded an apology from the SPDC, a reduction in commodity and fuel prices, the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and a dialogue between the SPDC and the NLD. The ABMA sought this apology by 17 September 2007 otherwise it warned that monks would hold "*patam nikkujjana kamma*", a boycott of alms offered by members of the junta. The deadline was politically symbolic as 18 September is the anniversary of the 1988 coup that brought the junta to power.<sup>158</sup>

No apology was forthcoming from the SPDC and on 18 September 2007 the ABMA issued a statement calling on monks to "*desist in accepting alms from persons associated with the government*". Under the monks' code of discipline, the Vinaya Pitaka, the boycott was formally agreed upon and announced in assemblies.<sup>159</sup> This was only the third time in Burma's history that the Sangha has taken such drastic action.<sup>160</sup> This is a very strong act, as it excludes the military leadership and members of their families from making merit - a very important part of Buddhist spiritual and religious life. Only under the most compelling moral circumstances will a monk refuse alms that have been offered. That same day Rangoon's "barefoot rebellion" began. Protests throughout Burma marked the start of a nation-wide boycott and campaign against the junta in response to its unwillingness to apologise for the crackdown by soldiers on protestors in Pakokku Township and accede to the demands of the ABMA.<sup>161</sup>

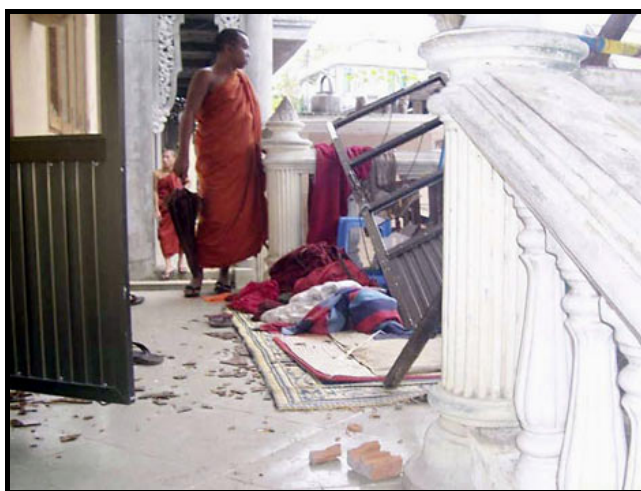
This was not the first time that Buddhist monks have participated in demonstrations in Burma. Monks were actively involved in the pro democracy uprising in 1988 of which the then State Law and Order Restoration Council launched a crackdown in which monasteries were raided and about 300 monks were disrobed and imprisoned.<sup>162</sup>

On 24 September 2007, the SPDC issued its first warning after a month of demonstrations, saying that it was prepared to crack down on the Buddhist monks at the heart of the protests. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, appeared in a televised segment on the SPDC-operated MRTV channel, denouncing the protests as the work of "international and external destructionists." He told senior Buddhist clerics to rein in the tens of thousands of monks who had participated in the protests and warning monks not to break Buddhist "rules and regulations", indicating that otherwise action would be taken against the monks according to law.<sup>163</sup>

On 26/27 September, security forces began raiding monasteries and arresting monks in Rangoon and throughout Burma. The most violent raid took place at Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery, where up to 200 monks were arrested and there were reports that one monk was killed during the raid.<sup>164</sup> On 28 September 2007, the SPDC declared "no-go zones" around 5 Buddhist monasteries, including the Shwedagon and Sule Pagodas.<sup>165</sup> As the crackdown continued, security forces raided monasteries, detaining thousands of monks. UN Special Rapporteur Sergio Pinheiro reported that from 26 September to 6 October 2007, security forces raided 52 monasteries across the country, looting the possessions of monks and beating and arresting them in large numbers.<sup>166</sup> Detained monks were taken to detention centres, de-robed and ordered to leave their monasteries and return to their hometowns.

Monks who managed to escape detention were also forced to return to their hometowns as their monasteries were either occupied by SPDC forces or locked up.<sup>167</sup> In addition, many monks fled to the Bangladesh and Thai borders to escape arrest. (For more information, see Chapter 14: The Situation of Refugees).

The involvement of monks in the protests is of deep significance as monks have a unique moral standing in Burma and have, since colonial times, been at the core of political uprisings. Further, the decision of the monks to invoke a boycott of alms from members of the SPDC and their families was a powerful signal to the primarily Buddhist leadership. Buddhist life in Burma revolves around gaining “merit” through ones actions. The giving and receiving of alms is considered one of the most meritorious of acts and is a fundamental expression of religious piety. The monks’ alms boycott denied the SPDC the ability to gain merit from those participating in it. The boycott was a challenge to the SPDC’s image as protectors of the Buddhist clergy and their right to rule a Buddhist nation. It was an open act of defiance rarely seen in Burma.<sup>168</sup>



The aftermath of the raid on Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon  
[Photo: AFP]

## Control and Oppression of Buddhists - Partial list of incidents for 2007

On 2 January 2007, officials at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon detained activist Ko Tun Tun of Nyaungdon in Maubin Township, Irrawaddy Division, after he attended a prayer meeting for political prisoners. At the meeting he had worn a t-shirt bearing the image of general Aung San and shouted politically sensitive prayers. He was released by the SPDC from a psychiatric institution on 5 January 2007.<sup>169</sup>

On 16 January 2007, according to various reports, between 200 and 400 USDA members and special police clashed with pro-democracy supporters during weekly prayers for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. Those praying, who were led by Naw Ohn Hla, former member of the NLD, were driven out of the pagoda precincts. According to one of those praying, authorities had summoned 10 members of USDA from each township in Rangoon division in order to drive them out of the pagoda. The USDA group was reportedly led by Nyein Wai, the head of North Okkalapa township branch and Htut Wai, head of Thingyankyun branch. One of those praying, Than Zaw Myint, who was injured during the incident, attempted to file a report at Bahan police station but the police refused to register a case.<sup>170</sup>

On 23 January 2007, about 30 pro-democracy activists were soaked with water by about 700 pro-regime supporters and special police during a weekly prayer meeting at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. The volume of the loud speakers from a nearby donation centre was also turned up in an attempt to disturb the campaigners.<sup>171</sup>

In February 2007, a Buddhist monk, aged about 35, was arrested at Noonbu outpost on the Indian Burma border with nine bronze Buddha statues. The monk was said to have brought the statues from Mandalay in order to sell them to Buddhist communities in Bangladesh. It was reported that he was forced by SPDC troops to de-robe outside of a monastery and without the presence of elder monks, in contravention of Buddhist principles, so that he could be interrogated about his involvement in the smuggling of the statues.<sup>172</sup>

On 6 February 2007, a group of politicians and pro-democracy activists were again doused with water by pagoda officials while attending a regular prayer meeting for political prisoners at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. It was reported that for the previous 3 weeks the activists had been harassed by pagoda security guards and officials.<sup>173</sup>

On 20 February 2007, USDA members and pagoda security personnel surrounded and threatened to beat pro-democracy prayer goers at Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. The situation ended without violence as prayer goers left the pagoda.<sup>174</sup>

On 26 February 2007, local authorities imposed travel restrictions on Buddhist monk U Tha Ganda, from Taungup Township, Arakan State, because he was distributing booklets on the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights to local villagers in Kha Rai village in Taungup Township. The authorities restricted him from travelling anywhere outside of his residence at the monastery.<sup>175</sup>

On 17 March 2007, authorities cancelled a religious ceremony near Theingyi Market in Rangoon. The ceremony was to be held in honour of Htin Kyaw, an anti-regime protestor, becoming a monk. It was cancelled on the same day as it was to be held.<sup>176</sup>

On 22 March 2007, activist Htin Kyaw (44) was detained by police after he staged a solo protest in front of a market in Rangoon, calling for freedom of religion. Htin Kyaw protested as a result of not being permitted to serve as a monk at a monastery in Rangoon. This was the fourth time in a month that Htin Kyaw was detained for protesting.<sup>177</sup>

In May 2007, it was reported that the TPDC Chairman of Khawzar Township, Southern Mon State, U Kyaw Moe, had ordered a reading session of Buddhist teachings (Damma Jark) in Mon language to be changed into Burmese.<sup>178</sup>

On 1 May 2007, a group of pro-democracy activists were ordered to leave the Maha Muni Pagoda in Mandalay by about 4 monks for fear that they would disturb other people.<sup>179</sup>

On 9 May 2007, a two day assembly of Shan monks was held at the Shan State Army (SSA) main base of Loi Taileng. SSA South leader Colonel Yawd Serk told the assembly that Shan monkhood "*should remain refuge for different sections of the Shan society and stay above politics.*"<sup>180</sup>

On 15 May 2007, police and USDA members arrested 39 pro-democracy activists on their way to Buddhist temples to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. About 28 activists led by labour rights activist Su Su Nway, were arrested on their way to Kyauk Daw Gyi Pagoda in Insein Township, Rangoon Division. During the arrest, law student Kyaw Kyaw was beaten by police and USDA members.<sup>181</sup> On 13 July 2007, families of prayer campaigners still under detention called for their release. The U.S. Department of State reported that as of 30 June 2007, the following prayer campaigners remained in custody:

1. Ko Aye Naing;
2. Ko Thant Zin Myo;
3. Ko Saw Kyaw Min; and
4. Ko Phyo Wai Lynn.<sup>182</sup>

On 15 May 2007, by a group of people calling themselves “the people” seized Ye Myat Hein, a Buddhist bachelor student from West Rangoon University, Hta Tapin Township, for conducting prayers at Kyaukdawgyi Pagoda, Insein Township, Rangoon Division. Ye Myat Hein was still missing in June 2007, when 23 fellow university students sent a letter of appeal to the head of the junta demanding that the immediate revelation of the whereabouts of the missing student.<sup>183</sup>

On 16 May 2007, at least 15 more activists, including youth members of the NLD were arrested on their way to the Kyaikalo Pagoda in Mingaladon Township, Rangoon Division, to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Around 30 men in civilian dress, believed to be members of the local authority, forcibly removed the prayer goers from the site. They were taken to Kyaik Ka San interrogation camp to join those arrested on 15 May 2007, but were later released due to insufficient room in the interrogation centre.<sup>184</sup>

On 16 May 2007, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order that denied the license extension of 24 civil organizations, including various Buddhist groups.<sup>185</sup>

On 19 May 2007, 3 activists were arrested on their way to a temple in central Rangoon to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>186</sup>

On 20 May 2007, about 100 activists were prevented from entering a pagoda in Rangoon to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The activists were forced to pray outside the pagoda, where they were trailed and photographed by plain clothed police.<sup>187</sup>

On 21 May 2007, authorities arrested HIV activist Phyu Phyu Thinn following her involvement in the prayer campaign for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>188</sup>

On 25 May 2007, military authorities arrested 6 NLD members of Rangoon Division after they went to pagodas in Rangoon to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The arrestees included Ma Yin Yin Mya from Bahan Township, and Ko Htin Win from Dagon Myothit South Township.<sup>189</sup>

On 25 May 2007, 30 members of the NLD praying for the release of Aung San Suu Ski at the Kyaukhtutgyi Pagoda in Rangoon were interrupted by a group of about 15 members of USDA and *Swan Arr Shin*, shouting anti-Suu Kyi slogans. As the NLD members attempted to leave the pagoda, they were met by a second group of USDA and *Swan Arr Shin* members. It was reported that Lae Lae Win Swe, Secretary of Tamwe USDA led the military team of attackers.<sup>190</sup>

On 27 May 2007, more than 500 pro-democracy activists, led by 88 generation student leaders, were blocked by about 100 supporters of the junta and police as they marched to Shwedagon Pagoda from the Rangoon NLD office to hold a prayer vigil for Aung San Suu Kyi's release. The activists, marking the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NLD's 1990 election victory,



gathered at the NLD headquarters to call for national reconciliation and the release of all political prisoners in Burma. The junta supporters are said to have shouted abuse at the activists for about 15 minutes with one NLD member being dragged away by them. The rally ended peacefully and the activists returned to the NLD headquarters to hold a mass prayer vigil there instead. After the protest ended it was reported that military authorities arrested at least 7 pro-democracy NLD activists in Rangoon and that 3 NLD members were abducted from Maggin monastery.<sup>191</sup>

On 29 May 2007, political activist Ko Tun Tun was arrested by officials after attending a regular prayer meeting at Shwedagon pagoda. Ko Tun Tun was interrogated for two days before he was released.<sup>192</sup>

On 11 June 2007, pagoda management personnel stopped more than 20 female activists from conducting a prayer vigil for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi at the Thanlyin-Kyaikgaug Pagoda in Rangoon.<sup>193</sup>

On 11 June 2007, 5 women members of Zeegone Township NLD in Pegu Division were attacked with catapults by 3 unidentified males, on the Rangoon-Pyay highway, upon returning from Mya Thein Than Pagoda after praying for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The incident was witnessed by a special branch police officer who did nothing to prevent the attack. Daw Khin Wyne approached the local authorities after the incident to seek protection but was denied assistance and told to stop going to pagodas to pray for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>194</sup>

On 13 June 2007, it was reported that the number of pilgrims visiting the largest temple in Sittwe Township, Arakan State has decreased due to questioning from 5 police at the temple as to why they come to the temple. They had been maintaining a presence at the temple to prevent prayer campaigns for Aung San Suu Kyi's release.<sup>195</sup>

On 1 July 2007, Buddhist monk U Dhamma Tharmi (42) from Yaykha monastery in Madaya Township, Mandalay Division, was arrested by SPDC authorities and detained in Mandalay Prison for publicly criticizing the National Convention and protesting against the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>196</sup> The monk had allegedly travelled to three different locations in Mandalay carrying placards calling for Suu Kyi's release.<sup>197</sup>

On 13 August 2007, it was reported that a Buddhist monk, U Indaka, aged about 30, from Zaydi Daung monastery in Rathidaung, 20 miles north of the Arakan state capital Akyab, was arrested by NaSaKa while illegally visiting Bangladesh without a passport. The authorities took the monk to Myomo monastery in Maungdaw Township in Arakan State in handcuffs; where he was de-robed by the abbot in accordance with Buddhist principles.<sup>198</sup>

On 19 August 2007, an order was issued by Mayaka, the Thanlyin Township administrator, to monasteries in Thanlyin, Rangoon "*not to allow monks to venture outside at night*".<sup>199</sup>

On 28 August 2007, following demonstrations, monks at Gandayone and Alodawpyi Monasteries in Sittwe Township, Arakan State received a letter from the State Mahanayaka Committee (the official council of monks in Rangoon), ordering monks not to leave their monasteries between the hours of 9pm and 4am.<sup>200</sup>

On 5 September 2007, up to 600 monks in Pakokku Township, Pegu Division marched in a peaceful demonstration over high fuel and commodity prices. The monks marched from a monastery on the west side of Pakokku Township and were supported by more than 10,000 civilian bystanders. It was reported that uniformed soldiers, police, USDA members and *Swan Arr Shine* broke up the protest. Several monks were bashed and warning shots were fired at the protestors. It was reported that up to 10 monks were tied to electricity poles and

beaten with rifle butts and bamboo sticks. At least 3 monks are said to have been injured with one monk, U Sandima, sustaining head injuries. A number of monks were arrested.<sup>201</sup>

On 6 September 2007, head monks of several monasteries in Pegu Division were warned by the junta against staging protests and ordered to pass information on demonstrations to the military.<sup>202</sup>

On 9 September 2007, a meeting was held between junta officials and senior monks in Pakokku Township, Magwe Division, where reportedly 30,000 kyat per monk was offered by the junta as compensation for monks who were beaten and disrobed in recent protests. However, no apology was offered. In attendance at the meeting were SPDC Military Affairs Security Chief Lieutenant General Ty Myint and Minister of Religious Affairs Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung.<sup>203</sup>

On 12 September 2007, it was reported that the junta limited the monks' alms rounds to one hour, and ordered a curfew at some monasteries due to the increased tension between monks and authorities. Further security was also set up around several monasteries.<sup>204</sup>

On 15 September 2007, more than 100 monks from 5 monasteries Henzada Township, Irrawaddy Division fell ill with food poisoning after eating fish offered to them from a wealthy devotee. More than 20 of the monks had to be hospitalised. Rumours spread that the monks had been deliberately poisoned, however a monk from the Moe Kaung monastery confirmed that food poisoning was "the most likely suspect."<sup>205</sup>

On 18 September 2007, authorities closed all entrances to the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon, minutes before about 400 monks arrived to launch the campaign to refuse alms to the military.<sup>206</sup>

On 24 September 2007, the junta issued its first warning after a month of anti junta demonstrations, saying that it was prepared to crack down on the Buddhist monks at the heart of the protests. The junta's Minister of Religious Affairs, Brigadier General Thura Myint Maung, told senior Buddhist clerics to rein in the tens of thousands of monks who had participated in the protests indicating that otherwise action would be taken against the monks according to law.<sup>207</sup> The Minister warned Burma's monks not to break Buddhist "rules and regulations" in a televised segment on the SPDC-operated MRTV channel.<sup>208</sup>

On 24 September 2007, it was reported that almost 200 monks were dismissed from their monasteries for taking part in the protest marches against.<sup>209</sup> It was also reported that 30 monks from Wun Tho monastery were sent back to their home towns by abbot U Wuntha for taking part in the protests.<sup>210</sup>

On 25 September 2007, 300 monks from Kachin State were arrested when local authorities raided monasteries in Myitkyina, Bamaw and Moenhyin Townships in Arakan State.<sup>211</sup>

On 25 September 2007, abbot U Thilavantha of Yuzana Kyaunghtai monastery in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State was arrested for his involvement in anti junta protests. He died in Myitkyina hospital on 26 September 2007 from injuries he received when he was beaten by junta soldiers and security forces. It was reported that junta authorities forced the pathologist to record the cause of death as heart disease.<sup>212</sup>

On 26 September 2007, police and soldiers at barricades at the east gate of Shwedagon Pagoda used tear gas to disperse crowds and beat at least 30 monks and 50 civilians who were taken away in military vehicles.<sup>213</sup> DVB, an exiled radio station, reported that 1 monk was killed and several others injured.<sup>214</sup> It was reported by Human Rights Watch that

National Police chief Major General Khin Ye personally supervised the brutal arrests, beatings and killings of monks at the Shwedagon Pagoda on 26 September.<sup>215</sup>

On 26 September 2007, authorities arrested 4 monks and 4 laypersons at the Maggin Monastery in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division. They were held at the Government Technology Institute in Insein Township. Two of the 4 monks, Sayadaw U Indaka and U Nandiya and 2 of the laypersons were released on 8 October 2007.<sup>216</sup>

On 26 September 2007, monk U Sandar Vaya was arrested at midnight for participating in an anti junta demonstration in Rangoon that day. He was incarcerated with 500 other monks and 200 civilians in a single room of the Government Technology Institute in Insein Township, Rangoon Division, measuring 9 metres by 21 metres. Each person was given 1 bowl of drinking water in the first 2 days of incarceration, where not allowed to wash and had to go to the toilet in a plastic bag. They were provided with 1 meal per day at 2pm, even though the monks' Buddhist vow only permits them to eat before noon. Moreover, the monks were forced to disrobe and put on civilian clothing. It was reported that more than a dozen monks died. The authorities began to release the prisoners from 4 October 2007 on the written undertaking that they would never participate, encourage or watch any future anti junta protests. U Sandar Vaya was released on 5 October 2007.<sup>217</sup>



Buddhist monks march through Burma's former capital Rangoon in September 2007. [Photo: AFP]

On 26 September 2007, at least 200 monks were arrested at Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division, when junta forces from LIB #77 raided the monastery. It was reported that 1 monk died. The Pyanya Dana School run by the monastery for children from poor families was forced to close because of the raid. In November 2007, UN Human Rights Rapporteur Paulo Sergio Pinheiro visited the monastery during his November 2007 trip to Burma and reported that he found it empty of monks. The monastery's deputy abbot, U Ottama, was released from detention on 14 December 2007 and returned to the monastery. A further 90 monks were released from detention on 15 and 16 December 2007 and allowed to return to the monastery, including abbot U Yaywata.<sup>218</sup> On 18 December 2007, it was reported that junta authorities continued to maintain tight security around the monastery despite the release of the monks. People going into the monastery for prayer were only allowed to enter the monastery after strict security check by members of the SAS and USDA.<sup>219</sup>

On 27 September 2007, monasteries were raided, tear gas was released, guns were fired and monks and civilian protestors were beaten by junta authorities in Rangoon.<sup>220</sup>

On 27 September 2007, junta troops raided Buddhist monasteries in Rangoon. Dozens of monks were beaten and arrested. One monk was said to have been killed.<sup>221</sup> The raids included:

1. Up to 200 monks and 40 civilians were arrested after an attack by the military at Ngway Kyar Yan Monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division. The incident started after 3 trucks with soldiers were refused entry to the monastery by monks. A fight broke out with both sides throwing bricks at each other for about 20 minutes. The soldiers crashed through the gate of the monastery and subsequently used bamboo sticks to beat monks, civilians, women and children inside the monastery. Shots were also said to be fired by the soldiers;
2. About 500 monks were also arrested at Moe Gaung Monastery in Yankin Township, Rangoon Division after security forces forced themselves into the monastery;<sup>222</sup> and
3. At the Maggin monastery in Rangoon, where HIV patients are cared for, 4 monks were beaten and arrested by junta soldiers.<sup>223</sup>
4. The Pinnya Ramika monastery in Botataung Township, Rangoon Division was raided. More than 100 Shan monks were instructed to assemble at the mess hall after which they were piled onto trucks and taken to the Mingaladon military prison outside Rangoon. The monks were interrogated and some were beaten. About 70 of the monks were released on 4 October 2007.<sup>224</sup>

On 27 September 2007, security forces at Shwedagon Pagoda beat Ashin Gawthita, a 28-year-old monk from Maggin Monastery.<sup>225</sup>

On 27 September 2007, 4 people, including a Buddhist monk were shot and wounded during the junta's crackdown on anti junta protestors near the Sule pagoda. They were taken to the Rangoon General Hospital. On 2 October 2007, it was reported that government officials moved the monk to an unknown location.<sup>226</sup>

On 28 September 2007, in an attempt to stop anti-regime demonstrations led by monks, the junta declared "no-go zones" around 5 Buddhist monasteries, including the Shwedagon and Sule Pagodas.<sup>227</sup>

On 28 September 2007, 4 donation boxes were stolen from the Sakyamuni Buddha image located in the Lawkanada pagoda compound in Sittwe, Township, Arakan State. The donation boxes were said to contain an estimated 200,000 kyat donated by pilgrims to support the maintenance of the pagoda.<sup>228</sup>

On 29 September 2007, military troops attempted to raid Shwe Nyaung Pin Monastery in Insein Township, Rangoon Division. It was reported that residents of the area surrounded the monastery in an attempt to protect it.<sup>229</sup>

On 29 September 2007, 4 monks from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, 2 from Aungbala monastery and 2 from Myoma monastery, were arrested for taking part in the anti junta demonstration in Sittwe Township, Arakan State on 18 September 2007. It was reported that they had planned to flee to Bangladesh through Sittwe and Maungdaw townships, Arakan State. One of the monks, U Indri Ya (23), from Myoma monastery, was forced to disrobe and was produced before the Maungdaw District Court on 8 October 2007. He was prosecuted under a section of Act 6, 143 and 505 for creating instability and organising the people in assembling against the junta.<sup>230</sup>

On 30 September 2007, at least 3 monks from monasteries in Thaketa Township, Rangoon Division were killed when junta authorities raided their monasteries.<sup>231</sup>

On 30 September 2007, DVB released footage of a dead monk floating face down in a pool of water in Pazundaung Township, Rangoon Division. It was believed that the monk died as a result of the anti junta protests.<sup>232</sup>

On 1 October 2007, it was reported that the junta banned the annual ritual of the donation of commodities to monks in Mudon Township, Mon State, due to the monks involvement in the anti junta protests in Rangoon in September 2007. The festival was to begin on 4 October 2007. The authorities allowed the festival to be held in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State just 2 weeks prior.<sup>233</sup>

On 1 October 2007, Arakanese monk and former president of the Arakan Young Monks Union, abbot U Kawwidda from Thatka Thila Zaya Thidi Pati Pahtan monastery in North Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division, was arrested by the junta for leading the anti junta protests in Rangoon in September 2007.<sup>234</sup>

On 1 October 2007, junta soldiers from IB # 225 in Mong Ton Township, Shan State arrested Reverend Sorinda of the Tripitaka monastery for criticising the junta's violent crackdown of the anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>235</sup>

On 1 October 2007, U Kowida, former president of the Arakan Young Monk Union, was arrested by the authorities at Thaka Thilar Zaya Thidi Padi Padan monastery in North Dagon Township, Rangoon Division. He was reportedly kicked from the third floor of the monastery and fell to the ground floor sustaining severe injuries. Property worth 30 million kyat was also stolen from the monastery by the authorities. As of 6 November 2007, U Kowida's family had not received any information about his whereabouts or his condition.<sup>236</sup>

On 2 October 2007, a plan by novice monks to protest in Taung Dwingyi Township, Mandalay Division, was foiled by senior monks and authorities. The monks had gathered at Phayagyi pagoda but were pressured by members of the Swan Arr Shin and USDA not to protest.<sup>237</sup>

On 2 October 2007, it was reported that in Myitkyina and Bhamo Townships, Kachin State, 4 monks were killed and more than 200 monks were arrested in midnight raids by the authorities. It was reported that monks who did not participate in the anti junta protests were released.<sup>238</sup>

On 2 October 2007, it was reported that authorities released 90 of the 400 monks detained in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State since 25 September 2007 after a midnight raid on monasteries. The monks were released at Wuntho monastery, the Abbot of which is elected by the junta, and were refused permission to return to their own monasteries.<sup>239</sup>

On 3 October 2007, 5 monasteries in Rangoon Division were raided and 36 monks were beaten and arrested by junta soldiers. The soldiers were looking for monks said to have participated in the anti junta protests in September 2007. The monasteries raided included Shwetaungpaw, Dhammazaya and Sandilayama monasteries in South Okkalapa Township and Zayawaddy and Pannitayama monasteries in North Okkalapa Township.<sup>240</sup>

On 3 October 2007, junta security forces raided the Maggin monastery in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division, and arrested 8 monks, including U Nandiya the 80-year-old acting head monk of the monastery, and civilians. The monastery was left empty after the raid but reopened the following week after the release of some of the monks and civilians who had been arrested in the raid.<sup>241</sup>

On 4 October 2007, it was reported that monks across Burma were continuing to refuse alms from members of the junta and their families. The authorities also banned the public from donating food to monks.<sup>242</sup>

On 5 October 2007, police raided La Raung Win Kyung monastery at midnight in an attempt to arrest Abbot U Thone Dara, who had led anti junta demonstrations in Sittwe Township, Arakan State in September 2007. The monk escaped arrest.<sup>243</sup>

On 5 October 2007, it was reported that 4 monks studying in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, had returned to Bangladesh. The monks had been studying religious literature in Burma, but were forced to return to their homeland after the authorities ordered the closure of all Buddhist religious schools at monasteries in Sittwe Township, following the anti junta demonstrations in September 2007.<sup>244</sup>

On 5 October 2007, monasteries in Rangoon were ordered not to accommodate monks, apart from abbots, old monks and young novices, due to the anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>245</sup>

On 5 October 2007, it was reported that USDA members and senior monks in Meiktila Township, Mandalay Division, had ordered student monks and novices to return to their homes immediately in a bid to prevent them from organising further anti junta protests.<sup>246</sup>

On 6 October 2007, at least 2 unnamed monasteries in Rangoon were raided by the junta.<sup>247</sup>

On 6 October 2007, a monk was arrested in Dagon Myothit South Township, Rangoon Division for reading a cartoon.<sup>248</sup>

On 7 October 2007, the dead bodies of 3 monks were found under a bridge near Thaketa Township, Rangoon Division.<sup>249</sup>

On 8 October 2007, it was reported that the bodies of 2 unidentified monks were found by villagers in Min Chaung Creek near Sittwe Township, Arakan State.<sup>250</sup>

On 8 October 2007, the junta run newspaper *The New Light of Myanmar* published an account of raids on monasteries by the junta in Rangoon. It alleged that weapons including knives, an axe, slight shots and a bullet were found along with alcohol, pornographic material and anti junta literature. The ABMA rejected the allegations.<sup>251</sup>

On 8 October 2007, it was reported that the junta banned traditional festival donations to monks on Full Moon Day at Three Pagodas Pass. Checkpoints were also closed to prevent people travelling to Three Pagodas Pass for the festival.<sup>252</sup>

On 8 October 2007, it was reported that junta authorities disrobed 8 monks from Sittwe Township, Arakan State for their involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>253</sup>

On 8 October 2007, it was reported that after the crackdown on anti junta protestors, junta authorities collected the names of young monks studying in monasteries in Arakan State. Young monks from urban areas of Arakan State were also sent back to their hometowns.<sup>254</sup>

On 8 October 2007, SPDC soldiers raided Maggin monastery in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division, for the fourth time since the anti junta protests began in September 2007. A computer, some unidentified documents and a small amount of money was taken.<sup>255</sup>

On 9 October 2007, junta authorities ordered all monasteries in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, to return student monks to their homes and not allow more than 10 monks to stay in any one monastery. Myoma Kyung and Laraung Won Kyung monasteries refused to follow the order.<sup>256</sup>

On 10 October 2007, SPDC soldiers imposed restrictions on worship at the Hla Rwa Win monastery in Sittwe Township, Arakan State. Riot police had been watching the monastery from 4 October 2007. The second senior monk of the monastery, Sayadaw U Thun Tara (45), was accused of playing a leading role in the anti junta protests in September 2007. He fled the monastery on 1 October 2007 to avoid arrest. On 4 October 2007, 5 other monks from the monastery were driven away from the monastery on the accusation that they participated in the anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>257</sup>

On 10 October 2007, U Ithiriya a 28-year-old monk from Sittatukha monastery in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, was sentenced to 7 ½ years imprisonment for his role as a leader in the anti junta demonstrations in Sittwe Township. On 26 December 2007, it was reported that his health had deteriorated since he was moved from Sittwe prison to Buthidaung prison. According to reports from his family, prior to being moved he was severely tortured by junta intelligence officers in an interrogation cell in Sittwe prison. He was also refused the right to meet with family members since his incarceration.<sup>258</sup>

On 11 October 2007, it was reported that local junta authorities collected a list of all monks from every village and township in Kachin State for the Kachin SPDC office.<sup>259</sup>

On 14 October 2007, about 200 monks studying at Ought Bago monastery in Moulmein Township, Mon State, left the monastery after learning that soldiers from IB # 22 intended to arrest them for their involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>260</sup>

On 14 October 2007, it was reported that monks and NLD members from Mohnyin Township, Kachin State involved in the September 2007 anti junta protests were held in detention centres in Hobin Township. Prisoners already detained at Hobin detention centre were transferred to a detention centre in Mohnyin Township to make room for the political prisoners.<sup>261</sup>

On 16 October 2007, a local police team from Kachin State began a search of monasteries; interrogation of monks and collection of guest lists, at monasteries in Bhamo Township, Kachin State. This was the third time the monasteries had been raided since the junta's crackdown on anti junta protestors.<sup>262</sup>

On 16 October 2007, it was reported that SPDC authorities refused monks permission to travel from Kawthaung Township, Tenasserim Division to Ranong town in Thailand.<sup>263</sup>

On 16 October 2007, it was reported that according to the *New Light of Myanmar*, raids on 18 monasteries resulted in the arrests of more than 2,000 anti junta protestors, including 513 monks, 1 novice, 167 men and 30 women.<sup>264</sup>

On 17 October 2007, it was reported that U Indriya (26), a monk from Sait Ta Thula monastery was sentenced to seven and a half years imprisonment for his involvement in anti junta protests in Sittwe Township, Arakan State. He was arrested in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State. He was reportedly going to be sent to a forced labour camp.<sup>265</sup>

On 17 October 2007, it was reported that after the anti junta demonstrations in Myitkyina and Bhamo Townships, Kachin State, the junta restricted the movement of monks, by checking travel documents and asking for reasons for travel.<sup>266</sup>



On 17 October 2007, NaSaKa raided Fet Wai Chaung Wra Ma and Taw Kung monasteries in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, in search of 2 monks, including Painya Thami. The monks' had reportedly come from Rangoon en-route to Bangladesh to escape arrest for their involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>267</sup>

On 18 October 2007, it was reported that 4 monks, including Sayadaw Thihlasara of Yuzana monastery in Yuzana quarter, died of serious head injuries after being beaten by junta personnel during night raids upon monasteries in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.<sup>268</sup>

On 18 October 2007, it was reported that Kachin State Commander Major General Ohn Myint offered bribes of millions of kyat to several monasteries in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State in order to prevent further anti junta demonstrations by monks.<sup>269</sup>

On 23 October 2007, it was reported that about 200 monks from Shin Phuu and Ye monasteries in Moulmein Township, Mon State, were arrested in Thaton Township, Mon State, after they were ordered to return to their homes following the anti junta protests in September 2007.

On 25 October 2007, 12 Bangladeshi monks were deported by NaSaKa to Bangladesh, making the total number of Bangladeshi monks deported from Burma after the crackdown on pro democracy protestors, 27. The monks arrived safely at their homes in the Chittagong Hill Tract area.<sup>270</sup>

On 29 October 2007, authorities in Moulmein Township, Mon State, assisted by the USDA, started investigations into monks and protestors involved in anti junta protests in September 2007, based on photographs taken of the protests. They also invaded monasteries and searched monks they believed could be identified through the photographs. No monks were arrested.<sup>271</sup>

On 29 October 2007, U Indra Panya and U Magindar from the Alodawpyih Dama Sariya monastery, fled to Bangladesh after authorities pursued them for their participation in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>272</sup>

On 30 October 2007, it was reported that 4 monks from Ye monastery in Mudon Township, Mon State, were interrogated, beaten and arrested by authorities for their involvement in the anti junta protests in Moulmein Township in September 2007.<sup>273</sup>

On 31 October 2007, it was reported that Daw Khin Waing, chairperson of the NLD in Zigon Township, was interrogated for 21 days in Tharyarwaddy Jail. She became a nun on 26 October 2007, was threatened by the junta on 27 October 2007 and forcibly dressed into civilian clothing on 28 October 2007.<sup>274</sup>

On 1 November 2007, township authorities in Pakokku Township, Magwe Division met with monastery administrations from 5 monasteries and ordered them to urge monks not to participate in any further anti junta protests.<sup>275</sup>

On 2 November 2007, it was reported that police, TPDC and USDA members had been monitoring the Myoma monastery in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State since 27 October 2007. The junta alleged that monks from other towns were residing in the monastery and that monks from the monastery had assisted monks involved in anti junta protests in September 2007 to cross the Burma Bangladesh border.<sup>276</sup>

On 2 November 2007, 3 monks, U Nadiya, U Painya Thiha and U Nada Ka were arrested by Bangladesh border security at Teknaf, when returning home to Bangladesh from Burma. They were charged with illegally entering Burma. The monks had earlier been arrested by NaSaKa in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.<sup>277</sup>

On 4 November 2007, junta authorities arrested Abbot U Gambira, leader of the ABMA, in Singaing Township, Mandalay Division, for his participation in anti junta protests in September 2007. He was accused of masterminding the protests and charged with treason. He was arrested after a month in hiding and on the same day that an article he wrote about the protests appeared as an editorial in the Washington Post. U Gambira's father U Min Lwin was also arrested at the same time. His brother Kyaw Kyaw, secretary of the NLD in Pauk Township, Magwe Division, had been arrested in Rangoon on 17 October, as an exchange while U Gambira was in hiding; however he was not released when the abbot was arrested. U Gambira's mother, sister and 2 brothers were also detained and interrogated before he was arrested. U Min Lwin was released from New Mandalay prison on 3 December 2007.<sup>278</sup>

On 5 November 2007, it was reported that police officers were ordered to open fire on monks participating in anti junta protests in Moulmein Township, Mon State in September 2007.<sup>279</sup>

On 5 November 2007, U Khaymarwuntha a monk from Zantila Kamahtan monastery in Dagon Myothit South Township, Rangoon Division was arrested for his involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007, despite the junta's claims to United Nations special envoy Ibrahim Gambari on 6 November 2007 that arrests in relation to the protests had ceased.<sup>280</sup>

On 7 November 2007, Ashin Sein Tita a monk from Arr Kaung monastery in Kawkareik Township, Karen State arrived at the Thai Burma border town of Mae Sot after escaping arrest by the junta and the DKBA. He fled Kawkareik Township 2 weeks earlier for fear of arrest over his involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>281</sup>

On 7 November 2007, U Seindiya, a senior monk from Aung Kaung monastery in Kawkareik Township, Karen State, arrived at the Thai Burma border after an attempt to escape arrest by junta authorities. He was wanted for leading monks in anti junta protests in September 2007. He fled when his monastery was raided by troops from the SPDC and DKBA.<sup>282</sup>

On 15 November 2007, U Sanda Wara, an ethnic Arakanese monk from Aung Dhamma Pala monastery in Dagon Township, Rangoon State was beaten and taken from his monastery when USDA members, township PDC officials and police officers raided the monastery. U Sanda Wara was responsible for looking after 700,000 kyat intended for Full Moon Day festivals. He was taken to Kaythara Rama monastery in Lay Daung Kan village while the officials returned to Aung Dhamma Pala monastery to search for the money. The officials reported that they had only located 200,000 kyat. When U Sanda Wara accused the officials of stealing the money he was taken away by the authorities.<sup>283</sup>

On 15 November 2007, U Than Rama, a monk from Tayzar Rama Kaman Htan monastery in Sittwe Township, Arakan State, was arrested for his involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007, during a raid on his monastery. He was assaulted by police during the arrest.<sup>284</sup>

On 16 November 2007, it was reported that junta authorities had banned Dhamma VCD's by two senior Burmese monks, U Nyanithara and U Kawvida, as they were interpreted as being critical of the junta's crackdown on the monk led anti junta demonstrations in September 2007.<sup>285</sup>

On 18 November 2007, Burmese rapper G-Tone was arrested by police after showing a religious tattoo, 2 hands clasped in a prayer position holding prayer beads, to the crowd he was performing for at the Mya Yeik Hotel in Bahan Township, Rangoon Division. Police assaulted audience members when they reacted angrily to the rapper's arrest.<sup>286</sup>

On 19 November 2007, it was reported that monks from rural areas in Burma were banned from entering Rangoon unless they possessed recommendations from their doctor for medical treatment. About 50 monks from Arakan State were refused entry into Rangoon upon the authorities checking their recommendations.<sup>287</sup>

On 23 November 2007, it was reported that an annual Buddhist ceremony scheduled to be held from 22 to 26 November 2007 in Dagon Myothit South Township, Rangoon Division was postponed after organisers refused to pay 40,000 kyat to junta authorities for troops to be mobilised for the event.<sup>288</sup>

On 24 November 2007, about 800 people, including NLD members, veteran politicians, political activists and members of the public attended Full Moon Day celebrations at Maggin monastery in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division. Soldiers from IB #66, who were involved in the crackdown on anti junta protestors in September 2007, were placed around Kyaik Kasan pagoda near the monastery during the celebrations.<sup>289</sup>

On 27 November 2007, the junta ordered the closure of Maggin monastery in Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division, which housed HIV/AIDS patients for treatment. Those living in the monastery including monks, novices and HIV patients were ordered to leave the precincts. The order was signed by the TPDC, who said they were acting on orders from senior administration. An appeal against the decision of the junta to close the monastery, was sought by 2 monks from the monastery, however their appeals were refused, with senior monks saying they were helpless against the decision of the state authorities.<sup>290</sup> The monastery was officially closed on 29 November 2007, forcing the 2 senior monks, 6 novices and 2 laymen who lived in the monastery to take shelter at the Kaba Aye pagoda. Authorities transferred 6 HIV patients to Wai Ba Gyi infectious hospital in North Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division. Maggin monastery had been raided by junta soldiers 4 times since the anti junta demonstrations in September 2007.<sup>291</sup> On 2 December 2007 the authorities arrested a lay person, Aung Zaw Win, when he inquired about the fate of the evicted monks.<sup>292</sup>



Maggin Monastery in Rangoon. This monastery was the site of one of the many SPDC army raids on Buddhist monasteries throughout the country during September 2007. [Photo: *The Irrawaddy*]

On 28 November 2007, it was reported that junta authorities in Thandwe Township, Arakan State, conducted riot control training inside the compound of the Lay Myat Hnar pagoda. The exercise was conducted by police who trained junta employees and civilians in riot control. The training began on 19 November 2007 and was scheduled to run for 30 days.<sup>293</sup>

On 28 November 2007, monks refused to perform a funeral blessing for the late Maung Maung, a senior Swan Arr Shin leader from Phaw Kan ward in Insein Township, Rangoon Division. Maung Maung was said to have passed on orders to assault monks involved in anti junta protest in September 2007.<sup>294</sup>

On 30 November 2007, junta troops blocked the Thati Phatan monastery in Mogok Township, Mandalay Division, fearing that the 400 monks who had gathered to accept alms by residents would assemble to pray or march in protest to Chanthar Gyi pagoda. Roadblocks were also set up en route to the monastery. Local junta officials had visited the monastery several times on 29 November 2007 in attempts to persuade the head monk U Thu Nanda not to hold the offering.<sup>295</sup>

On 3 December 2007, it was reported that U Nandiya, the 80 year old acting head monk of Maggin monastery, was under pressure to return to his home town Myothit Township, Magwe Division. U Nandiya had been the temporary head monk at the monastery since the arrest of his son, the previous abbot. Since the closure of the monastery on 27 November 2007, he was staying at an agricultural monastery in Yankin Township, Rangoon Division.<sup>296</sup>

On 3 December 2007, it was reported that in the first press conference since the junta staged a crackdown on protests in September 2007, Burma's Information Minister, Brigadier General Kyaw Hsan, described the protests as the work of "bogus" monks organised by exiled dissidents and the United States, saying they were "trivial" for the country. He said "*It is found with sound evidence that ex-convicted bogus monks got joined with anti-government groups inside and outside the country.*" He said the junta would stick to its own self-styled "road map" to democracy.<sup>297</sup>

On 3 December 2007, Burmese Police Chief Khin Yi defended the closure of the Maggin monastery at a press conference in Naypyidaw. Khin Yi said the monastery had been shut down on both law enforcement and religious grounds. Khin Yi said that Maggin monastery had played an important role in the monk-led demonstrations in September 2007. He also said that the monastery continued to pose a threat to national stability and order.<sup>298</sup>

On 3 December 2007, it was reported that 12 Bangladeshi monks, all aged around 25, fled from Rangoon and Sittwe Township to Maungdaw Township, Arakan State during the first week of November 2007, in an attempt to return to Bangladesh after being forced out of their monasteries. They sought permission from NaSaKa, namely commander Colonel Aung Gyi, to cross the border and return home to Bangladesh but as at 3 December 2007 they had not received a response from NaSaKa.<sup>299</sup>

On 4 December 2007, the Minister for Industry Aung Thaung attempted to offer alms to monks at Seittabala monastery in Kyauk Padaung Township, Mandalay Division but his alms offer was rejected.<sup>300</sup>

On 7 December 2007, it was reported that four monasteries in Pakokku Township, Magwe Division, east, west, central and Bawde Mandi, which received government food donations, passed the offerings onto the poor, and refused to give blessings to junta officials, in continuation of the boycott against the junta.<sup>301</sup>

On 7 December 2007, it was reported that the pagoda authorities increased staffing levels at Shwedagon Pagoda, from just under 80 officers to more than 200 officers.<sup>302</sup>

On 7 December 2007, it was reported that 90 per cent of monks in Arakan State did not enrol in the government exam, in support of the ABMA boycott, despite pressure being paced by the junta on abbots for monks to participate in the exam.<sup>303</sup>

On 9 December 2007, it was reported that the junta continued to raid monasteries and arrest civilians in relation to the anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>304</sup>

On 11 December 2007, 12 young Bangladeshi Buddhist monks from Arakan State were arrested by NaSaKa crossing the Burma Bangladesh border in Teknaf. NaSaKa handed the monks to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) who in turn handed them to police in Teknaf. Police then handed them to Bandarban Whybrang Ufandita Mohateru U Shanda Banda Fayer after a meeting between police and U Shanda. Those who were handed over were:

1. Inda Kyasa (24), son of Maung Ko U;
2. Aga wang Deb (21), son of U Theing Tha;
3. Suyan Tha Hla (24), son of Mataya U;
4. U Chu Wang Na (25), son of Chocha Pra;
5. Saw Bala (16), son of Sein Nyu Zin;
6. Naidha Chara (15), son of U Cha Ba;
7. Pra Manik (13), son of Thushy Aungay;
8. Abasha (16), son of Aung Tha Bu;
9. Phyi Dita (19), son of Shwe Hla Pru;
10. Pratibala (20), son of Du Aung Pru;
11. Nai Diya (20), son of Ruli; and
12. Ba Tha Hla (18), son of Shyga Pru.

The monks were allowed to cross the border after senior monks made a statement to the authorities that they were not involved in the recent monk led anti junta demonstrations.<sup>305</sup>

On 11 December 2007, it was reported that Ashin Panyathami, an ethnic Arakan monk from the Zathilaryama monastery in Rangoon, fled to Bangladesh with 20 fellow monks following the junta's crackdown on anti junta protestors. Earlier, after being interrogated by the authorities in relation to the protests, Ashin Panyathami had returned to Arakan State, but was again forced to flee, this time to Bangladesh, upon learning that the authorities were searching for him.<sup>306</sup>

On 11 December 2007, it was reported that the abbot of Zathilaryama monastery in Rangoon, U Zarthila, had been arrested at the end of September 2007 for his involvement in the anti junta protests.<sup>307</sup>

On 17 December 2007, it was reported that the abbot of Zantila Rama monastery in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division, was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment for the offence of defaming the junta. He had reportedly defamed the junta by complaining in writing to the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Religious Affairs and the SPDC Chairman, about the seizure of 4.2 million kyat from his monastery during a raid by junta personnel in early October 2007.<sup>308</sup>

On 17 December 2007, it was reported that Abbot U Gambira, was charged with treason and sentenced to life imprisonment for his involvement in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>309</sup>

On 17 December 2007, film director Zin Yaw Maung Maung and his crew visited the Maha Gandhayon monastery in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Division, to shoot a USDA funded video intended to be broadcast on State television showing monks accepting alms. The monks refused to come out of the monastery or accept alms.<sup>310</sup>

On 17 December 2007, it was reported that 25 monks from Kaba Aye Sangha University, a Buddhist university in Rangoon, were expelled from the campus and told to return to their home monasteries as a result of their participation in anti junta protests in September 2007.<sup>311</sup>

On 21 December 2007, it was reported that Abbot Sayadaw U Tay Zaw Bartha, a 76 year old monk from Kalyarnithein monastery in Pegu Township, Pegu Division, was released from Ywar Thar Gyi psychiatric hospital in Hlegu Township, Rangoon Division. The monk had been arrested on 26 September 2007 and detained in Insein prison for a month for his involvement in anti junta protests in September. He was first released on 25 October, but rearrested by the military affairs security officers at Shwedagon pagoda 10 days later and held in Ywar Thar Gyi psychiatric hospital near Rangoon for 25 days. He was then sent to a monastery in Sakhan Gyi village, Hlegu Township, Rangoon Division, where he was detained for a further 20 days before being released. He was prohibited from returning to his monastery in Pegu Division.<sup>312</sup>

On 19 December 2007, it was reported that the junta ordered monk leaders not to accept more than 350 monks per university at two universities in Rangoon and Mandalay. Prior to this order about 450 monks were living at each University.<sup>313</sup>

On 22 December 2007, NaSaKa handed over 4 Bangladeshi monks to Bangladesh border security forces at the Maungdaw-Teknaf border point in Arakan State. The monks, originally from the Chittagong Hill Tract area of Bangladesh, had gone to Burma to study Buddhist scriptures without valid travel documents. The Bangladesh border authority sent the monks back to their native villages.<sup>314</sup>

On 23 December 2007, an annual donation ceremony held at New Masoeyein monastery in Mandalay Division, usually organised and attended by senior junta officials, took place with no input or attendance from the junta. The ceremony was attended by about 1,500 monks and 4,000 lay donors, who donated 4,000 robes and about 40 million kyat to the 3,200 monks in the monastery. The monastery was among those calling for a boycott of donations by the junta following the crackdown on anti junta protestors in September 2007.<sup>315</sup>

On 27 December 2007, it was reported that junta official Regional Commander of Rangoon Division, had ordered a ban on Buddhist *dharmma* (the Buddha's teachings) talks and seminars in Rangoon. *Dharmma* talks by the following well-known monks were cancelled:

1. U Kawthala, also known as *Dharmma Sedi Sayadaw*;
2. U Kawvida, also known as Mizzima Gon Yi Sayadaw;
3. U Nadapadi, also known as Pyu Sayadaw; and
4. U Sadila, also known as Lu Yay Chun Sayadaw.<sup>316</sup>

On 27 December 2007, it was reported that the junta ordered the closure of the Buddhist University in Rangoon.<sup>317</sup>

On 27 December 2007, it was reported that junta officials in North Okkalapa Township, Rangoon Division, cancelled at short notice sermons due to be given by 5 abbots including U Kawthala. About 4,000 people had gathered to hear the sermons.<sup>318</sup>

On 29 December 2007, it was reported that monks from Arakan State who were involved in the anti junta protests in September 2007 remained missing:

1. Sittwe Township, 22 monks, including 6 from Pathin monastery, 4 from Maniratanar monastery, 4 from Myoma monastery, 2 from La Raung Win monastery, 1 from Mo Koke Wipassana monastery, 3 from Dakkhinarama monastery, and 2 from Sitta Thuka monastery;
2. Minbya Township, 10 monks;
3. Mrauk U Township, 13 monks;
4. Kyauk Taw Township, 8 monks; and
5. Ponna Kyunt Township (6 monks).<sup>319</sup>



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Sources: *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007; *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Sources: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Sources: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006; *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Sources: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Source: *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Source: "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Paul Sergio Pinheiro, mandated by resolution S-5/1 adopted by the Human Rights Council at its fifth Special Session," Human Rights Council Sixth Session, Agenda item 4, 7 December 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Source: "The State also recognize Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animism as some Religions existing in the Union on the date of coming into force of the State Constitution," *New Light of Myanmar*, 11 January 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Sources: "Burma May Move to Abolish Christianity," Christian Broadcasting Network, 30 January 2007; "Burma 'orders Christians to be wiped out'," *Sunday Telegraph*, 22 January 2007; "Burmese Junta Denies Suppression of Christians," *Mizzima News*, 7 February 2007; "Burmese Junta Plans to Wipe-Out Christians: Report," *Mizzima News*, 22 January 2007; "Junta Forces More Crosses On Christians to Carry," SHAN, 1 March 2007; *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Sources: "Christian Publisher Threatened with 12 Years in Jail," Church Sound Service: Burma, 18 June 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Source: "Christian Preacher and Disciple Arrested in Myanmar," *Khonumthoung News*, 4 May 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Sources: "Burma May Move to Abolish Christianity," Christian Broadcasting Network, 30 January 2007; *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Sources: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007; *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007; *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Source: "Spreading the C-Virus," Witness, Release International, Issue 36, March 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Source: "Junta Forces More Crosses On Christians to Carry," SHAN, 1 March 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Sources: *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007; *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Source: "A Church Compound Was Confiscation in Myitkyina," KNG, 28 May 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Source: "Junta Forces More Crosses On Christians to Carry," SHAN, 1 March 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Sources: "Chin Prison Charity Closed by Burmese Officials," *Irrawaddy*, 30 April 2007; "Prison Charity Foundation Office Closed in Rangoon," *Khonumthoung News*, 28 April 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Sources: "Christian Publisher Threatened With 12 Years in Jail," Church Sound Service: Burma, 18 June 2007; *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and

Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007; *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Source: *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Sources: *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007; *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Sources: "More Pagodas in Chin State, Ban on Church Construction," *Khonumthoung News*, 18 May 2007; *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2007; *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Source: "TPDC Stops Construction of Church", *Khonumthoung News*, 4 June 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Source: "Seven Villages Forced to Construct Buddhist Monastery," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, 1 March 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Source: "SPDC Collects Kyat Nine Million from Churches for Graveyard," *Khonumthoung News*, 26 March 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Source: "Churches and Christians under Junta Scanner," *Khonumthoung News*, 26 March 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Source: "Chin and Kachin Delegation Holds Milestone Meeting with UK Foreign Office Minister," CSW, 25 January 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Source: "Junta Demolishes Kachin Christian Cross," KNG, 26 June 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Source: "Minorities in Burma," Minority Rights Group International, October 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Source: "Briefing: Burma: Visit to the Thailand-Burma Border 16-28 November 2007," CSW, November 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Sources: "A Baptist Church's Building is Banned by the Authorities in Kachin State," KNG, 23 February 2007; "Junta Demolishes Kachin Christian Cross," KNG, 26 June 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Source: "Maj-Gen Ohn Myint Threatens KIO," KNG, 23 July 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Source: "Junta Demolishes Kachin Christian Cross," KNG, 26 June 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Source: "A Baptist Church's Building Is Banned By the Authorities in Kachin State," KNG, 23 February 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Source: *Carrying The Cross: The Military Regime's Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution against Christians in Burma*, CSW, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Source: "Minorities in Burma," Minority Rights Group International, October 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Source: "Junta Forces Locals into Buddhism in Northern Burma," KNG, 30 July 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Source: *Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2006*, Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2007.

<sup>44</sup> Source: *International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burma*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 14 September 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Source: "Seven Villages Forced to Construct Buddhist Monastery," *Rhododendron News*, CHRO, 1 March 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Source: "A Baptist Church's Building Is Banned By the Authorities in Kachin State," KNG, 23 February 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Source: "Freedom of Worship by Christian's Under Threat in Burma," *Khonumthoung News*, 30 March 2007.

<sup>48</sup> Source: "Churches and Christians under Junta Scanner," *Khonumthoung News*, 26 March 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Source: "Junta Forces More Crosses On Christians to Carry," SHAN, 1 March 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Source: "SPDC Collects Kyat Nine Million from Churches for Graveyard," *Khonumthoung News*, 26 March 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Source: *Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom- 2007*", US Commission on International religious Freedom, May 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Source: "A Baptist Church's Building Is Banned By the Authorities in Kachin State," KNG, 23 February 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Source: "Junta Forces More Crosses On Christians to Carry," SHAN, 1 March 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Sources: "Chin Prison Charity Closed by Burmese Officials," *Irrawaddy*, 30 April 2007; "Prison Charity Foundation Office Closed in Rangoon," *Khonumthoung News*, 28 April 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Source: "Akha Christians Celebrate Centennial," SHAN, 1 April 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Source: "A Kachin Baptist Church forced to displace in Muse," KNG, 15 May 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Source: "A Church Compound Was Confiscation in Myitkyina," KNG, 28 May 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Source: *Ibid.*

- <sup>59</sup> Source: “TPDC Stops Construction of Church”, *Khonumthoung News*, 4 June 2007.
- <sup>60</sup> Source: “Christian Preacher and Disciple Arrested in Myanmar,” *Khonumthoung News*, 4 May 2007.
- <sup>61</sup> Source: “Junta Demolishes Kachin Christian Cross,” KNG, 26 June 2007.
- <sup>62</sup> Source: “Christian Publisher Threatened With 12 Years in Jail,” Church Sound Service: Burma, 18 June 2007.
- <sup>63</sup> Source: *Ibid.*
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