

HUMAN RIGHTS YEARBOOK

BURMA

1998-99

This book is dedicated to the countless citizens of Burma who have sacrificed their homes, their freedom, and their lives to lifting the veil of terror that shrouds the truth in Burma today.

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For further information, please contact:
U Thein Oo (Coordinator) and Aung Myo Min (Director)
HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION UNIT

P.O. Box 14, Ngam Wong Wan Post Office
Nonthaburi 11001, Thailand
E-mail: kyaw@ksc15.th.com

or

NCGUB INFORMATION OFFICE
815, Fifteenth, NW. Suite 910
Washington, DC. 20005.

Tel: (202) 393-7342, (202) 393-4312

Fax: (202) 393-7343

E-mail: ncgub@igc.apc.org

**Views expressed in this book are not necessarily those of
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Acknowledgement

Although people's representatives had been elected through free and fair elections in Burma in 1990, parliament has not been able to convene because the military dictatorship is brazenly and systematically violating the fundamental rights of the people.

The popular democratic uprising that began in August 1988 had resulted in the '8888 Uprising' which spread through the whole country. But under the brutal, cruel and power-hungry military clique, the people of Burma are still not able to enjoy their fundamental rights. In their fight for democracy and human rights, hundreds of Burmese people had sacrificed their lives and thousands had lost their property and livelihood. Thousands are still languishing in jails. But their struggle for freedom has not stopped. The struggle, in fact, is continuing in all forms and from all quarters, and will continue in one way or another until their rights are fully realized.

In the ten years spanning 8888 and 9999, neither the fundamental rights of the Burmese people nor democracy and ethnic rights have improved. They have, on the contrary, grown worse. In addition to the 200-plus people's representatives who had been elected through free and fair elections, more than 2000 members of opposition parties and activists — the majority of whom are from the NLD — are unjustly, unlawfully and lawlessly detained in prisons and interrogation centers, intimidated and tortured in various manners by the military intelligence. This clearly shows the extent of violation of democracy and human rights in Burma.

Not only there is no rule of law in Burma, there is no independent judiciary. Hence, during last year, the military controlled court, using unjust laws had summarily sentenced Daw San San, a woman parliamentarian and NLD member, to a lengthy 25-year imprisonment. Some student leaders were likewise given long sentences of up to 45 years. The only crime that they had committed, as the military had accused them of, was struggling and fighting for the restoration of human rights and democratic development in Burma through non-violent and peaceful means.

Ten years is a sufficiently long period for correctly assessing something. The UN has, for many years in a row, passed resolutions in connection with Burma. In this year's 55th UN Commission on Human Rights resolutions, it had been assessed that the military currently ruling Burma were systematically violating human rights. In the light of this, a question arises as to whether the civilized international community is not taking any action against the military dictatorship which is grossly and systematically abusing human rights. UN resolutions should not just be on paper and discarded to the wind. Actions corresponding to the resolutions should be taken.

The military authorities are engaging in activities more abominable than ethnic

cleansing and genocidal wars being conducted in some other parts of the world. A large number of Burmese citizens, particularly those from the ethnic minorities, continue to flee to neighbouring countries.

As the UN turns fifty, the civilized world has come to accept in more serious terms that human rights have no national boundaries. However, in South East Asia, particularly in Burma, the slogans “Asian Values” and “Non-interference in each other’s internal affairs”, are being interpreted to suit one’s interest, leaving room to define human rights as merely a right that respective governments allow their citizens to enjoy under certain circumstances. This yearbook documents some of the innumerable human rights abuses committed by the military regime in Burma in 1998-1999.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Norwegian Burma Council for their unwavering support in making this Report possible. In addition, I would like to thank all the ethnic organizations and the many individuals who supported this project. Sincere thanks also to all those people who helped prepare this book for publication, and many individuals whose names cannot be mentioned but whose contribution cannot go unnoticed. The very existence of the Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) would not have been possible without the assistance of these friends of Burma. The emergence of the HRDU has given me a greatly satisfying opportunity to work closely with organizations that are noble and just and have a profound sympathy for the people of Burma. I wish to put on record my profound gratitude to the KHRG, KIC, HRFOM, MIS, SHRF, SHAN, CHRO, ABSDF, Burma Issue, Images Asia, ALTSEAN Burma and the Burma Relief Center for their enthusiastic assistance and cooperation for the publication of this book. I also would like to express my gratitude to the Euro-Burma Office which generously assisted the publication of this book.

May the world continue to take heed that the people of Burma, fifty one years after independence, are still living in stark fear under a military dictatorship because there is no rule of law and because gross human rights violations are being committed nationwide everyday. We feel that it is time the United Nations implemented the resolutions it has adopted in connection with Burma for several years in a row at the United Nations General Assembly.

Thein Oo
Minister for Justice (NCGUB) and
Coordinator
Human Rights Documentation Unit