

Joint Statement delivered by Mr. Rafendi Djamin on behalf of International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Centre for Organization Research & Education (CORE), People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WIPLF)

7th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar / Follow-up to Special Sessions

Thursday, 13 March 2008

Mr. President,

We wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the Special Rapporteur for his diligent work over the past six years. We deeply regret, however, that his efforts have brought very little improvements to the human rights situation in Burma. After all the years of depression under the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the visit of the Special Rapporteur to Burma in November 2007 was an encouraging sign for the people in Burma, even if he was prevented from carrying out the full fact-finding mission that the situation demanded. However, we are disturbed that the Special Rapporteur has been unable to return to the country since then.

We are deeply concerned that the Council's resolutions S-5/1 and 6/33 have not been implemented by the SPDC. People in Burma continue to suffer from killings, rape, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrest and detention, which particularly target on human rights defenders.

Regarding the September crackdown, resolution 6/33 mentions the role of the SPDC to "[...] investigate and bring to justice perpetrators of human rights violations". We regret that to date, there has not been any investigation conducted by the law or state agencies in Burma. We are troubled over the fact that there is still a long journey for the people in Burma to reach justice.

Mr. President,

We would like to reiterate our call to the Human Rights Council that the improvement of the human rights situation in Burma must be the top priority and not be diverted by any political manoeuvre by SPDC. We urge the Council to establish a permanent presence in Burma to undertake sustainable and comprehensive human rights monitoring and protection. We demand that the newly appointed Special Rapporteur should carry out a visit to the country at the earliest opportunity, with the full backing and support by the members of the Council and SPDC's regional partners. We also insist that the thematic mandate holders seek to visit Burma.

We urge China, India, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to take the lead by pushing the SPDC to cooperate with the Council. As the ASEAN Charter includes the establishment of the ASEAN human rights body, ASEAN can no longer hide behind the outdated notions of non-interference, but must face the grave human rights violations taking place in the region. We demand that ASEAN initiate a commission of enquiry on the September crackdown.

We call upon the SPDC to refrain from violating the rights of their own citizens, release all political prisoners, and to engage in the process of political reconciliation.

Finally, Mr. President and Mr. Special Rapporteur, we would like to take this opportunity to ask the Special Rapporteur what exactly prevented him from carrying out a follow-up visit to Burma, and whether there has been any progress on having dialogue between the SPDC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). And we do look forward to hearing his views on how to strengthen the mandate on the situation of human rights in Burma, for improvement of the human rights situation on the ground.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
246 Times Square Building, 12 Fl., Room 12-01, Sukhumvit Road, Between Soi 12-14,
Khlong Toei, Khlong Toei, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
Tel: +66-(0)2-653-2940 (Ext. 601) Fax: +66-(0)2-653-2943
<http://www.forum-asia.org> / una@forum-asia.org