World’s longest-running War (60 years)

War resulted from denial and dispute of ethnic rights.

Civil war now focused on Eastern Burma. However, “ceasefire” areas also suffer from abuses and exploitation. Military actions targeting civilians:

• Systematic sexual violence against ethnic women
• Torture, arbitrary detention & extra-judicial killings
• Destruction of food crops & planting landmines around ricefields
• Forced relocation of civilians to be used as forced labor
Cost of Militarization

- Military spending estimated at 40% - 45% of public expenditure. 400,000 people in the armed forces (most child soldiers in the world).
- Institutional manipulation, decay – judiciary, press, civil service
- Deprivation of basic services – education, health
- Rampant corruption
- Intensification of military oppression targeting ethnic civilians
- Conditions that support local crime syndicates
Poor country or poor governance?

- Burma is rich in natural resources: oil, gas, teak, gems, gold, etc.
- July 2006: Senior General Than Shwe’s daughter received wedding gifts worth USD $ 50 MILLION
- Burma ranked as most corrupt (alongside Somalia)
Impacts on People

- 4th worst for child malnutrition IN THE WORLD (UNICEF)
- 2nd worst to North Korea in terms of censorship – internet freedom worse than Vietnam & China
- Domination of economy & widespread extortion by military denying livelihood to families.
- Over 90% of population live on less than $1 a day.
- Displacement worsening: 76,000 in past year, 25,000 facing starvation. UNESCAP warns that active conflict zones could widen. more than 3,000 villages destroyed in 10 years = 1 million displaced.
- Rising inflation (30%). Fuel increase 800% in 2005, 100-500% in 2007.
Impacts on Region

- Drug & crime syndicates based in Burma have become stronger.
- More drug production & trafficking (opium, heroin, methamphetamines).
- More people being trafficked.
- More refugees, asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants (2 million or more)
- More disease.
- More danger of war.
- EMBARRASSMENT.
- Instability in Burma ➔ regional instability
China & India now biggest obstacle to democracy in Burma. (Biggest democracy + biggest communist states).

Their support enables regime to commit greater atrocities & mismanagement.

Burmese regime’s oppressive rule is causing more internal & external instability.

Instability threatens economic and security interests of neighboring countries.

All negative impacts will affect China & India – they are starting to get worried.

Drug flows to China & India mirror trafficking routes of people & trade.
DRUGS

- Burma continues to be the main amphetamine producer in Southeast Asia and the second largest opium producer in the world.
- People living in border areas in Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, China, and India are at risk of drugs & accompanying disease from Burma.
ASEAN’S LEVERAGE ON BURMA

- Relies on petrol & diesel from Malaysia & Singapore. (Military is largest consumer of fuel).
- Relies on trade with ASEAN for 51.3% of foreign exchange revenue - Thailand alone accounted for 48.4% in 2005/06 (gas: 43%).
- Relies on Thailand and Singapore as biggest sources of new FDI - 98.61% in past 2 years (05-07)
ASEAN’S LEVERAGE ON BURMA

- Relies on Singapore’s financial services to store & move the wealth that they drain away from Burma.
- Indonesia’s membership of the UN Security Council, the body most feared and respected by the SPDC.
- An ASEAN freeze or even slowdown on economic, material and diplomatic support will shepherd the regime to political dialogue and the achievement of genuine reforms.
- Action should include a temporary freeze on large Burmese-held bank accounts and other financial assets in Singapore pending money-laundering review.
VULNERABLE

Despite sitting on immense natural resources & assuming the blanket support of China, India & Russia, the Burmese regime is vulnerable.

ECONOMIC

- Oil and gas revenue from the large deposits will not be forthcoming until actual delivery.
- The regime faces financial shortages due to its own mismanagement and irresponsible spending priorities (new capital, weapons purchases, etc)
- Flight of domestic capital is a problem
VULNERABLE

DIPLOMATIC:

- Unconditional support from China, India & Russia must not be assumed.
- China & Russia became serious targets for blame after January UN Security Council veto – pressure points are serious deterioration since veto, September crackdown, Beijing Olympics.
- Tide of public opinion starting to shift approaches – all options are back on the table
- Presidential statement from UNSC.
WHY NOT SANCTIONS?

WHILE TRADE & INVESTMENT INCREASED:

- Corruption, Mismanagement INCREASED.
- Militarization, weapons acquisition INCREASED.
- Spread of disease, Drug production INCREASED.
- Displacement, refugees, migration INCREASED.
- People’s welfare DECREASED.
- Education retention DECREASED.
Regime & cronies dominate formal sector - more reliant on international markets & financing.

Most people depend on the informal sector, subsistence agriculture, migrant remittances.
WHY NOT SANCTIONS?

- In 1997: FDI was US$279.9 million. By 2005/6 it had reached $6,065.7 million - an increase of 2,067%. [1]
- But GDP increased by only 75% in 10 years. [2]
- 1997: 300 kyat=1 USD, in 2007 1,350 kyat=1 USD (lost value by 350%)
- Money lost through corruption, mismanagement, bad priorities.

WHY NOT SANCTIONS?

• Regime claimed sanctions hurt people. People now know that is not true.

• Domestic boycotts launched last month inside Burma.

• Monks have called for arms embargo.

• New sanctions target individuals & their businesses (incl foreign citizens).
UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- UNSC Campaign increasing internal & external pressure.
- SPDC very afraid of the SC – the minor “breakthroughs” have been in response to SC.
- Effects are worsening deteriorating morale – more desertions – increased by 8% last year
- SPDC assuming China’s indefinite veto
MORE PRESSURE NEEDED!

• ASEAN, international pressure, including sanctions & UN Security Council campaign, squeezed regime and sharpened internal tension in the regime.

• Need to transform isolation/engagement debate into strategy to deploy pressure & persuasion in consistent, effective way.

• Indonesia & ASEAN must have courage to use their position to insist Burma delivers reforms. Regime sees ASEAN as too “soft”, therefore not serious.

• Taking a firm line will also generate more respect from China and India.
SOLUTIONS

- Here: Adopt the statement & publicise it.
- Commit to protection of migrants & asylum-seekers.
- Support & allow cross-border assistance.
- Support & allow exiles & refugees to access vocational & political training.
- Open up space for discussion & debate on sanctions & other non-military options.
- Explore & consider mechanisms that can be used in future to resolve similar problems in region.
SOLUTIONS

2006: NLD offered to recognize regime as transitional authority if Parliament convened.

2007: MPs proposed drafting committee to salvage NC & regime Roadmap

“The military regime often accuses the National League for Democracy of inflexibility. We have done everything we can to try to bring about a dialogue that will help us find solutions to the problems of our country. It is the military regime that is opposed to dialogue.” 16

“... we have a saying in Burma it’s very, very difficult to wake somebody up who is pretending to be asleep. ... sometimes I cannot but wonder if they are pretending not to understand what we have been saying all along: that we have genuine good will towards the Burmese Military.”20
Genuine reforms through genuine dialogue & partnership is main goal. Power-sharing still an option:

- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on a possible coalition government with the ruling military junta: “We are keeping all our options open. It is very important never to say never in politics.”

- NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo also said: “there will be a compromise, a give and take,” regarding power sharing.

2006: NLD offered to recognize regime as transitional authority if Parliament convened.

14 Nation (17 Feb 98) Suu Kyi: Never Say Never
15 Nation (16 Feb 98) NLD Ready to Share Power, Says Suu Kyi
People of Burma continue to resist, if only for their survival. Activists have been doing much more with much less.

Consistent pressure is needed to back up courageous actions of Burmese people.

If ASEAN does not use pressure now, at this critical time, the Burmese junta will do its usual 'one step forward two steps back' dance at the ASEAN Summit in Singapore next month.

Consistent pressure & commitment to monitor is essential, to ensure a durable solution.
FOR MORE INFO:

www.altsean.org
www.kmsub.org
www.unscburma.org

Thank you!
Chezutinbade!
Khapkhunkhaa!
Terima Kasih!

ALTSEAN-BURMA