



FOUNDERS:

Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976
Máiread Maguire, Ireland - 1976
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

united for peace with justice and equality

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
14 May 2009

Nobel Laureates Call for Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

We six women Nobel Peace Laureates—Jody Williams, Mairead Maguire, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Betty Williams and Rigoberta Menchu Tum—call for the immediate release of Burma's democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi from prison. We are shocked and appalled by the Burmese junta's imprisonment of our sister Nobel Peace Laureate. Already detained under house arrest against Burma's own laws, her transfer to Burma's notorious Insein prison is a stark illustration of the brutality and lawlessness of the regime, which now holds more than 2000 democracy activists in prison.

Aung San Suu Kyi is ill and in need of medical treatment. Her doctor, who tried to tend to her last week, was detained on Thursday, May 7, and unable to visit her. Aung San Suu Kyi's imprisonment in a prison notorious for its mistreatment of prisoners poses a significant threat to her health. We are deeply concerned for our colleague.

The people of Burma have suffered unimaginable injustices and human rights abuses over five decades of dictatorship. As a strong voice for freedom and nonviolence, Aung San Suu Kyi represents the best hope for a peaceful and democratic future for Burma. Along with the other political prisoners and activists within Burma, she must be free to do her work.

Nearly two years ago, in September 2007, a significant nonviolent movement of monks, nuns and democracy activists demonstrated against the military regime in what is now called the Saffron Revolution. The demonstrations continued for 11 days before the military started killing and arresting demonstrators, opening fire on large crowds. In response, some countries introduced new sanctions, the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) issued a statement—and the UN Security Council did nothing. The people of Burma were left alone in their nonviolent struggle against a brutal regime.

Less than a year later, the regime in Burma capitalized on a devastating cyclone to arrest still more activists and ratify a new constitution through a fraudulent referendum, held mere days after the storm. Now Aung San Suu Kyi has been put in prison. What will take for the international community to respond?

We urge the international community to exert immediate pressure on Burma to release Aung San Suu Kyi and, specifically, for the Security Council of the United Nations to issue a resolution denouncing the imprisonment. Equally important, an effective global arms embargo—and an end to the arms sales to Burma from China and Russia in particular—is more urgent than ever. Burma’s chief economic partners cannot, in good conscience, stand by while Burma’s rulers violently repress the democratic aspirations of their people and lock up those who seek nonviolent change. We strongly urge Burma’s allies in the ASEAN, and in China, to denounce Burma’s actions.

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For more information, please contact Eliza Brinkmeyer,
Fenton Communications, 202-822-5200.