

The Elders: Aung San Suu Kyi verdict is a gross travesty of justice

Desmond Tutu: “Right and wrong matter. This decision is wrong.”

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders – a group of eminent global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela – have called on ASEAN, the European Union and the United Nations Security Council not to accept the verdict and sentence delivered today in Burma against their fellow Elder, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Daw Suu Kyi was found guilty today of violating an internal security law and breaching the terms of her house arrest after an American, John Yettaw, swam uninvited to her house in Rangoon. She was sentenced to three years in prison by a court, but the sentence was immediately reduced to 18 months’ house arrest by order of the military government.

The Elders say that the entire trial of Aung San Suu Kyi and her companions has been a gross travesty of justice. Her incarceration for the past six years under house arrest was found to be illegal in both domestic and international law by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Any conviction based on allegations of violating that house arrest is therefore invalid.

Elders’ chair, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu urged the international community not to accept the verdict and says that returning Daw Suu Kyi to house arrest is not a concession.

“This is a moral universe. Right and wrong matter. This decision is wrong. We must not allow the government of Burma to convince the world that they are making concessions in relation to Aung San Suu Kyi by returning her to house arrest instead of prison. This is not a concession – it is a manipulation of an illegal process. It must not be accepted by any government, ASEAN, the EU or the UN.” – Desmond Tutu.

The Elders said that the trial was a further attempt to exclude Aung San Suu Kyi from any political process, particularly the elections due in Burma in 2010.

They have joined others in calling on ASEAN, the EU and UN to press Burma’s military leaders to release all political prisoners and begin an inclusive national process to review and amend the 2008 constitution, to allow participation by the National League for Democracy and other parties in the 2010 election and also admit international observers to supervise the 2010 election process.

PHOTOS: The Elders always keep an empty chair for Aung San Suu Kyi at their meetings. High resolution photos are available at The Elders [Flickr](#) photostream.

ABOUT THE ELDERS: The Elders are an independent group of eminent global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela, who offer their collective influence and experience to support peace building, help address major causes of human suffering and promote the shared interests of humanity.

The Elders are Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson, Desmond Tutu (Chair) and Muhammad Yunus. Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

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