

To
Dr. Manmohan Singh
Honorable Prime Minister of the Government of India

27th May 2010

Dear Dr. Singh,

In 1962, the last democratic government in Burma was ousted by a military coup d'état, paving the way for over 40 years of oppression under one of the most brutal regimes in the world. Popular uprisings in 1988 led to elections in 1990, in which the people overwhelmingly rejected military rule and awarded Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy and ethnic opposition parties with more than 80% of the seats in parliament. The military never allowed them to take power, and instead imprisoned many democratic and ethnic leaders.

Earlier this year, the State Peace and development Council (SPDC, the name the junta has given itself brought in a new law requiring that political parties register for the national elections (*expected to be held later this year*) or face dissolution. A party would not be allowed to register unless it expelled members who had been convicted. The law was clearly aimed at excluding Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was convicted by the junta of violating the terms of her house arrest.

With the junta's election laws released on 8 March 2010, it is clear that the SPDC has a different strategy in place this time. In an attempt to consolidate power before the elections, it is taking systematic steps to destroy the opposition. The junta's election laws prohibit prisoners from joining political parties and running in the elections, including almost 2,200 political prisoners, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Khun Htun Oo, and other key leaders. The military regime is thereby excluding the leaders of Burma's democratic and ethnic opposition from participating in these elections. The National League for Democracy refused to re-register according to such unjust laws, showing that the junta is not conducting elections that will be free, fair or inclusive.

By now, it is abundantly clear that the kind of democracy the SPDC wants to usher in will be nothing but military rule in another grab. The constitution framed by the junta has a provision reserving a quarter of the seats in parliament for the military.

This 25% military quota is significant because any constitutional changes require 75% support, giving the military effective control over constitutional amendments. The regime is already making preparations to ensure the remaining 75% of seats will be won by proxy politicians, many of whom will simply exchange their military uniforms for civilian clothes. We have seen this most clearly with Prime Minister Thein Sein leaving his military post to lead the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Most significantly, the 2008 Constitution furthers ethnic inequality and provides no solution for Burma's ongoing conflicts. By requiring military experience for top positions and giving the Commander-in-Chief

and President power to appoint key ministers, the regime has guaranteed that ethnic political participation will be token. Instead of recognizing long-standing demands for ethnic equality and federalism, the constitution ensures the military's continued control over ethnic areas, including massive profits to be made from the rich natural resources found in these areas. The constitution also guarantees blanket immunity for the military's past crimes against humanity and war crimes against ethnic people, creating a climate of impunity where these atrocities will be allowed to continue.

On the basis of the regime's elections preparations, including its highly problematic constitution and unjust election laws, it is clear that the elections will only lead to continued instability within Burma and the region.

Burmese communities and support groups around the world are calling on international governments including the national governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to denounce the 2010 elections in Burma and reject the results unless the regime changes course. For these elections to be truly democratic, the regime must first:

1. Release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi;
2. Cease hostilities against ethnic and democracy groups; and,
3. Engage in inclusive dialogue with key stakeholders from democracy groups and ethnic nationalities, including a review of the 2008 Constitution.

We therefore would like to request you to support the real democracy in Burma, and denounce the regime's elections and not to recognize the results unless the above mentioned minimum benchmarks are met.

We are herewith enclosed the postcards signed by **(3631)** Burmese refugees residing in Delhi.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of the Ten Alliances of Burma's democracy and ethnic rights movement:

- **National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB)**
- **Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB)**
- **National Democratic Front (NDF)**
- **National League for Democracy – Liberated Area (NLD-LA)**
- **Members of Parliamentary Union (MPU)**
- **National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)**
- **Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB)**
- **Women's League of Burma (WLB)**
- **Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)**
- **Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF)**