

Opinion

Lawyers call for criminal accountability for SPDC regime

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The Burma Lawyers Council and the Global Justice Centre urge the United Nations Security Council to take all actions necessary to stop the murders of innocent people in Burma and hold the military junta commanders criminally accountable.

This includes authorising peacekeeping forces and creating an independent commission of inquiry to investigate ongoing crimes. Violence is a tool of the military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), to retain control over the people of Burma who are prisoners, not citizens. The latest massacre in Burma must be the last; no more impunity for criminal actions such as the massacre of people in the 1988 popular uprising and of supporters of pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in 2003 in Depayin.

It is the obligation of the international community to stop the junta from using murder, torture and rape as tools to maintain power. The Security Council has an obligation to act under its Chapter VII mandate to maintain international peace and security, as well as UNSCR 1674 on the Responsibility to Protect, UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Genocide Convention.

Crimes perpetrated by the Burmese military leaders should not be buried under the rubric of human rights violations, but called what they are: war crimes, crimes against humanity and potentially even genocide. The perpetrators listed below should be held criminally accountable by the international community. Commanders who are responsible under international criminal law for ordering the recent heinous crimes against peaceful protestors in Burma include:

Than Shwe, chairman, State Peace and Development Council and commander-in-chief, Tatmawdaw; General Kyaw San, Minister of Information; Colonel Tint San (Infantry No 16); Major Ye Zaw Zaw (Infantry No 16)

Janet Benshoof, Global Justice Centre

U Aung Htoo, Burma Lawyers

Bangkok

End the bloodshed, or you will pay dearly

The Adolph Hitler of Burma, Than Shwe, is killing Buddhist monks and other innocent people. An absolute bloodbath may be imminent. The response of the world:

UN Security Council: We're concerned. Please exercise restraint. We'll send Gambari.

US: A mild increase in sanctions. Not ready to force divestment by ChevronTexaco, much less intervene.

Europe: Might increase our current, minimal sanctions.

Japan: Might suspend aid.

China, India and Singapore: Concerned.

Thailand and Asean: Not even concerned.

Russia: It's no one's business.

This is 2007. It is unbelievable that the savagery that is now being perpetrated in Burma is allowed to happen. Dictator Watch and many others warned that this would happen. It could have been prevented, but it wasn't. It has to be stopped, now. We demand that the US intervene. The situation in Burma is in the US's direct national interests. To assist people in the difficulties that the Burmese now experience, and who clearly want our help, is what we stand for. We must help, militarily. President Bush: use the CIA and NSA to locate Than Shwe and then send in a predator drone to end his reign of terror. Other than the SPDC, China bears the most blame for what is now happening.

To the dictators: we will do everything humanly possible to destroy both your Olympics and you. You support genocidal psychopaths. Monks are killed with your guns. You will pay.

Roland Watson, Dictator Watch

Bangkok

Burma will become Asean's looking glass

Prediction: at this moment, China is likely buying time (via veto of the pathetically futile UN condemnation resolution) to allow more time to broker an exit settlement with the generals in Burma and vested external parties.

This popular human uprising, aided by technology, must also resonate to China's old-school Tiananmen core. Now, with the Beijing Olympics upcoming, Burma's generals have become a public relations liability for China, thus are comparatively expendable.

The de-facto employers of the generals - the many nations that colluded over recent years for slices of petroleum rights and telecommunications - also have an interest in delaying an end to this inhuman regime, simply to protect and divide their spoils prior to intervention.

Meanwhile, as priority back-room deals are likely being brokered, what are a few more bodies worth? Not much apparently.

In the broader picture, Asean now will be belatedly forced by the public and the world to turn a very long bend in what has been a very long road. This won't amount to atonement, rather, simply and finally, confronting Burma's tyrant generals, once and for all. And about bloody time. Next: Zimbabwe, North Korea, Darfur. When, not if.

Daniel

Bangkok

Expel junta from regional association

The Asean Declaration states that the aims and purposes of the association are to accelerate regional economic, social and cultural growth and to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter.

With due respect, I opine that Asean's expression of revulsion over the Burmese crackdown on monks and citizens who purely express their dissatisfaction at price rises is not sufficient and not in accordance with your Declaration.

In the name of our Lord Buddha, peace and justice, I plead with all members of Asean to review your consciences and immediately take action to expel Burma from the organisation. Show to the world that this grouping is real and cares about the rights of our fellow men. Express to China and Russia your dissatisfaction on their uses of veto on resolutions condemning the junta. You will walk tall thereafter.

Songdej Praditsmanont

Bangkok

China fears for the Olympics and its pocket

If China, the biggest supporter of the Burmese junta, does not use its power and influence to control the thugs in Rangoon, the world must start a campaign now to hurt the Chinese nation - and that's in its pocket and social standing.

Free-thinking and moral people throughout the world should threaten to start a campaign to boycott the 2008 Olympic Games. If those free-speaking people began this movement, the Chinese would listen. Why? They don't want to lose money; and more importantly they don't want to lose face in the eyes of the world.

Like the peaceful demonstrating Buddhist monks of Burma, a peaceful boycott of the Olympics would hurt the Chinese government and demonstrate that the days of "do as I say and not as I do" are over. The Burmese junta wants to retain the status quo and the Chinese don't care as long as their trade flourishes, using the Burma corridor for its exports.

Embarrass the Chinese and they will act.

Stephen J Bell

Bangkok

Isaan helps Bangkok dig its own grave

In the return of Thai politics to the Dark Ages, a point of light is the withdrawal of Aree. Why? In the last few weeks I've read various letters about democracy in Thailand. Highbrow quotations and beautifully worded sentences about necessary conditions for a functioning democracy are mere tautologies. We all know that the quality of a democracy depends on the quality of its stratum and freedom of expression. This is the same as saying "it is dry, we need rain". But how to make rain is the question.

The Isaan people voted for Thaksin because of his politics. The general opinion in Isaan is: "all governments are corrupt, also Thaksin's, but his government is the only one that let money trickle to our level, so we will vote for him".

Politicians don't spend tens of billions of baht on vote-buying when it won't give them the desired result. How to eliminate this cancer? Establish village councils. Very positive examples do exist at this moment, but Aree torpedoed this idea.

This bumbling, incompetent government owes it to the Isaan people to do something beneficial for them. Isn't it ironic that, thanks to this government, the cry for a return of Thaksin is stronger as the Isaan people feel neglected again in a deteriorating economic situation?

Egon Wout

Bangkok

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