

13 November 2006

Dear Representatives to the United Nations Security Council,

ARTICLE 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression, welcomes the first UN Security Council formal discussion on "The situation in Myanmar" held on 29 September 2006. This is an important and necessary first step in addressing the grave abuses of human rights in Burma. It is not, however, sufficient and we now urge you to take action with a view to the adoption by the Security Council of a binding resolution on Burma.

The UN Security Council has a responsibility to secure peace and security among nations pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The 2005 report, *Threat to the Peace: A Call for the UN Security Council to Act in Burma*, commissioned by former Czech President, Vacláv Havel and South Africa Archbishop Desmond Tutu, assessed the situation in Burma against the criteria used by the UN Security Council to determine whether intervention is necessary. The report concluded that, uniquely in the case of Burma, all the criteria were met whereas only most of the criteria had been met in previous cases of UN intervention, such as Afghanistan, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Given the seriousness of the situation in Burma, it is clear that the UNSC must adopt an immediate and binding resolution on Burma.

As an international human rights organisation dedicated to the promotion of freedom of expression and access to information worldwide, ARTICLE 19 is especially concerned by the extremely severe restrictions on freedom of expression in Burma. All forms of information gathering and dissemination are subject to strict government control; publishing unauthorised material can lead to imprisonment. Even the Internet is controlled; only the elite are given full access while the few Internet cafes that are available are closely monitored by the authorities.



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Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, honorary board member of ARTICLE 19, who has come to symbolise the fight for democracy and free expression in Burma, has spent a total of eleven years under house arrest. Her health is now said to be declining, notwithstanding which she has reportedly been denied medical care. Suu Kyi's commitment to freedom of expression has been recognised internationally; she is the winner of both the Nobel Peace Prize (1991) and the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought (1990).

A key demand in a UN Security Council resolution on Burma should be the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners of conscience in Burma. The resolution should require a comprehensive review of the laws and practices currently in place which restrict freedom of expression, and call for the restoration of respect for human rights and the holding of democratic elections for a new government.

Yours sincerely,

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cc.

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