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Burma: 20 Years of Suffering

ARTICLE 19 adds its voice to those around the world that are today commemorating the events of 8888.

“It is highly ironic and sad that on this commemoration date, the Chinese government – which is Burma’s principal international supporter and backer - should open the Beijing Olympics, which purports to be promoting human dignity.” said Dr Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director.

“We will not be celebrating on 8808. Instead, we should remember the people that lost their lives, those that were imprisoned or exiled, and those that are still imprisoned today...”

On the 8th day of the 8th month of the 88th year in the twentieth century, protests in Burma reached a peak with millions of participants toppling long-time dictator Ne Win.

Unfortunately a new group of generals snatched power from the hands of the people and crushed the protests killing an estimated 3,000 people.

During this period Aung San Suu Kyi became the figurehead of the protests and helped form the National League for Democracy – a “crime” that has left her illegally imprisoned for thirteen of the past eighteen years.

Fellow democrat U Win Tin has been imprisoned the longest at nineteen years and is now 78 years old.

Anticipating that the anniversary may spark new protests on the Burmese streets, news reports state that there is heavy military and police presence on every main road. There are also over 3,000 dissidents in prison with many more exiled abroad and the number is growing.

Just yesterday Burmese comedian Zarganar appeared in the infamous Insein Jail special court and was charged with “creating public unrest” for daring to raise money for the victims of cyclone Nargis and not giving it to the military for “redistribution”.

“Another sad day for the world. The international community, particularly China and India, should hang their heads in shame for allowing twenty years of humiliation and

torture of the Burmese people” said Dr. Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information: please contact Oliver Charles, oliver@article19.org, +44 20 7278 9292
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.