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## UN Urged to Act as Burmese Protestors Attacked and Arrested

As reports confirm today's attacks on and arrests of peaceful protestors by the Burmese military regime, ARTICLE 19 has written to the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council urging them to pass resolutions calling on the regime to respect human rights and to put in place a process leading to democratic elections.

*"The UN must act urgently to address the deteriorating situation and blatant human rights abuses before they spiral into a repeat of the events of 1988."* said Dr Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19. *"The regime has redoubled its already considerable efforts to control the flow of information to the international community but, due to the perseverance of brave individuals in Burma, some reports are still getting out. The UN has an obligation to support the people of Burma in their struggle for human rights and democracy. A failure to act decisively now would be a betrayal of the founding principles of the UN, which reaffirm the fundamental rights and dignity of all people."*

On the evening of Tuesday, 25 September, the military regime imposed a 60-day 9pm-5am curfew in the two main cities of Rangoon and Mandalay, and a ban on gatherings of more than five people. This is a blatant abuse of the people's right to freedom of expression given the peaceful nature of the protests, the absence of any threat to public order and the object of the protests, which is to promote democracy. The protestors' defiance of the ban has today been met with arrests and beatings of hundreds of monks, nuns and other civilians. Furthermore, according to our information, the leader of the National League for Democracy and ARTICLE 19 honorary board member, Aung San Suu Kyi, was moved on Sunday 23 September to the notorious Insein prison from her previous situation of house arrest.

ARTICLE 19 notes that the already highly repressive controls on freedom of expression which were in place prior to the demonstrations have been tightened through the imposition of more stringent internet blocks, slowing and shutting down of internet servers, tapping and cutting off cell phones and restrictions on both journalists' movements and their reporting on the protests. As of 2.56pm today in Burma, most Rangoon internet cafes had reportedly shut down due to impossibly slow internet connections. Individuals in Burma have, often at great personal risk, made valiant attempts to maintain a flow of information about their situation to the international community but these measures have further limited their ability to do so. The regime has therefore been at least partly successful in casting a blanket of secrecy over the country and we are extremely concerned about what actions it may take protected by the impunity that this will promote.

The preamble to the UN Charter sets out lofty goals for the organisation, including "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small" and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The people of Burma are attempting to assert their fundamental rights, which have been flagrantly repressed since the present military regime took over in 1990. It is time for the UN to stand up for the values which inspired it, and to take a firm stand with the people of Burma and against the gross abuses being perpetrated upon them. To fail to do so would call into question the very purposes for which the UN was created.

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For a copy of the letter to the UN Security Council, go to: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/burma-unga-letter.pdf>  
And to the UN General Assembly: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/burma-unga-letter.pdf>
- For more information: please contact Catrina Pickering, Programme Officer, [catrina@article19.org](mailto:catrina@article19.org), +44 207278 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.