



Mae Tao Clinic

P.O Box 67, Mae Sot, Tak 63110, Thailand

865 Moo 1, Intarakiri Road., Tha sai Rouard, Mae Sot, Tak Province- 63110

Tel: (055) 563-644/ Fax: (055) 544-655, email: win7@loxinfo.co.th

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF BURMA

By Dr Cynthia Maung

Since the 15th of September monks in Burma have been leading an increasingly powerful and peaceful revolution by holding mass protests and demonstrating their opposition to the military regimes actions by showing the upturned alms bowls, refusing alms from the military regime and its supporters. On September 24th up to 100,000 people, monks, students and civilians held the biggest demonstration since those of 1988.

Since the brutal military crackdown in 1988, the people have been living under a regime which has imposed untold hardships on the people of Burma. War and widespread abuses of civilians by the Burmese military regime have driven at least 1 million to live as internally displaced persons and 350,000 into forced relocation camps. Another 150,000 live in nine official refugee camps in Thailand while perhaps another 2 million work as migrant workers, most of them without documents. Those who remain at home struggle to provide enough to feed their families. The recent increase in fuel prices has left the already destitute population destitute.

The current demonstrations clearly show that people's hope for a peaceful country and goal of a stable and democratic country have never gone from their hearts. During the last 19 years, I have been observing and participating with the people of Burma as they have been learning peaceful strategies for achieving their goals, and strengthening their commitment to political change in Burma. Groups, organisations and individuals have committed themselves to learning about dialogue and justice, in order to bring about peaceful change. At the same time the people's movement inside and outside of the country has become more coordinated and mutually supportive. There is much more understanding between those inside and outside of the country than there was in 1988. The demonstrations today are the manifestation of a movement that has been growing. Given the totalitarian conditions that all people live under this is truly remarkable and the courage and bravery of the people of Burma must not be ignored. Action must be taken in response to the strength of the people's desire for peace.

I urge the armed forces of Burma to reflect the courage of their fellow citizens by not committing any acts of violence against its people and to join them in the non violent struggle for change in the country.

The SPDC must release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, allowing them to participate in the country's political process for reform. The SPDC should also stop using the Union Solidarity and Development Association as a cover for their

secret police tactics. Members and leaders of the USDA should show their strength by joining in unity with the people of Burma to foster a new culture of hope and unity..

Urgent intervention is needed right now, from ASEAN, the international community and the UN Security Council for political reform. This is the only way to prevent the violence and bloodshed which will have a serious impact on regional security.

International support is needed for the facilitation of tripartite dialogue and reconciliation between the military, political opposition groups including ethnic groups and those living in exile in the border areas of the country.

For the people of Burma, it is time for us to resolve our differences. Religious leaders, professionals, politicians, civilians, students, and people of all ethnicities, we all are responsible for reaching the common goal of a homeland where we can live together peacefully. We must take action if we are to realise our dream of peace and unity. We must be ready to work together to rebuild a country which will fully realise the reason for our years of struggle for peace, diversity, democracy and human rights for all.

In Solidarity,



Dr Cynthia Maung
Director of Mae Tao Clinic
Thai Burma Border

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