



WLB, HREIB, NY-Forum, AKSYU, ABFSU - FAC Statement on 20th Anniversary of 8888 Pro-democracy uprising

Date: August 8, 2008

Today marks the 20th anniversary of the historic "8888" pro-democracy uprising in Burma. During this uprising, all ethnic people of Burma collectively stood against a 26 year-old one-party authoritarian rule by the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). The BSPP, under the leadership of Ne Win, effectively deteriorated the country's socio-economic development rescinding democratic and human rights for all citizens.

The 8888 democracy uprising ended the 26 year-long domination of the BSPP government rule. In spite of severe repression and indiscriminate killings by the military regime, new leadership emerged from the struggle for democracy and human rights. These new leaders included well-known national leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, renowned ethnic leaders, student leaders, dedicated democracy activists, National League for Democracy (NLD) and other political parties and independent unions. The Burmese people also appointed their true representatives to lead the country during the 1990 general elections.

After the bloody crackdown of the 1988 people's uprising and under the 20 year of rule a new breed of military dictatorship – first called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and later named State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) - the country's economic, social, education and health sectors continue to deteriorate. These sectors are now among the lowest in the world.

The new regime has repeatedly attempted to crush the results of the 1990 general elections - one of the more fruitful results of the 1988 popular uprising. Moreover, during these years, the regime demolished political parties and independent organizations through various false indictments. Additionally, the regime has incarcerated many popular leaders, including ethnic leaders, student leaders and democracy activists, many of whom have been given lengthy prison terms under various charges. The regime uses the "divide and rule" strategy upon the ethnic ceasefire groups which has created tension and even violent assassinations among the ethnic leadership.

The junta troops with their chauvinistic attitudes have committed rapes and other acts of brutal sexual violence against ethnic women and girls. They have forced many ethnic populations to become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have to hide in remote and mountainous areas as well as landing in refugee camps in neighboring countries, to be free from military persecution. Furthermore, the junta leaders and its cronies control major shares of the economy and the country's natural resources while unjustly exploiting them to strengthen its military power and dominance.

Now, 20 years after the 8888 uprising, we have reached a turning point in Burma's politics. The SPDC has turned its back on national reconciliation efforts and has unilaterally adopted a constitution which favors the prolongation of military dominance. Despite repeated international and local calls for assistance to cyclone hit populations, the junta inhumanely neglected and blocked aid while insisting that the referendum carry on in its efforts to approve the unilateral constitution. The junta now cleverly plans to vitalize the military-dominated constitution with a new round of elections in 2010.

We in this statement stand together and see the junta's attempt to vitalize their constitution as a major threat to the people of Burma, which will further annul the results of the 1990 general elections. Furthermore, it assures that neither citizens' rights, democratic rights nor ethnic rights will be fulfilled, inhibiting ethnic group's aspirations of equality of a genuine federal union in Burma. The constitution only allows a few elites of the military to enjoy absolute power and economic privileges. Therefore, we call upon the people of Burma to work jointly to stop the military-dominated constitution from materializing - a crucial responsibility for democracy and peace loving people and citizens who aspire a genuine federal union.

We believe Burma will lack democracy, peace and basic privileges - including a right to a genuine federal union - unless we abolish the military dictatorship. In this moment, we believe that there is a crucial need for an emergence of a common strategy for a subsequent to end military rule in Burma struggle. This can be achieved by reviewing our weaknesses in the 1988 uprising and also the past twenty-years. We must continue our fight for freedom and democracy by firmly holding onto the spirit of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising. On this particular occasion, while paying our respects to those heroes who sacrificed their lives in the 1988 pro-democracy uprising and throughout the democratic struggle, we reaffirm our vow to strive in the unfinished struggle until there is no military rule in Burma, and do so in cooperation with other democratic forces and ethnic people of Burma.

Long live the spirit of the 8888!

Down with the military dictatorship!

*We shall overcome in the struggle for democracy, peace
And a genuine federal union in Burma!*