

To

Date: 3 November 2010

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Honorable Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

Subject: Petition to the Government of India to Review its Policy on Burma

Honorable Prime Minister,

We, civil society groups in India, are submitting this petition to you ahead of and in relation to the upcoming elections in Burma on 7 November 2010 which have been proposed by the military regime as a clear attempt to entrench and legitimize military rule in Burma. We most strongly urge your government to not endorse Burma's military regime's sham constitution and elections, as they will only lead to the entrenchment of military rule in Burma, and to instead lend your support to the three benchmarks that we list below towards bringing about peace and stability in Burma.

In short, the proposed "elections" will enact the 2008 Constitution, which not only contains many undemocratic measures including giving the military effective veto power over decisions made by the new parliament and government, but also depriving people of their basic human rights by stipulating "exception clauses," and preserving draconian laws that explicitly prohibit freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Thus, this constitution is designed to keep the dictatorship in power and will not bring any new freedom to the people of Burma.

Furthermore, the election cannot be free and fair under the present situation. Democracy activists in Burma have been imprisoned, intimidated, tortured and put to death for demanding justice, peace, human rights and a democratic government. Presently, there are over 2,200 political prisoners in Burma, including Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, recipient of Jawaharlal Nehru's Award for International Understanding, who has been under house arrest for 15 of the past 20 years and is being barred from participating in this year's elections.

The main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is left with no other choice under the entirely unfair election laws imposed by the military regime except to denounce this election.

We, Indian civil society groups, have endorsed the persistent call on the military regime by Burmese pro-democracy groups to meet the following three benchmarks, which are essential for bringing about peace and stability in Burma:

1. All political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Khun Htun Oo and Min Ko Naing, must be released before the elections.
2. Inclusive dialogue with key stakeholders from all pro-democracy groups and all ethnic nationalities must be convened, including a comprehensive review of the 2008 Constitution.
3. Systematic human rights abuses and criminal hostilities against ethnic groups, political

activists, journalists, and other civil society organizations and individuals must be stopped.

At this point in time, when Burma is in a critical situation, and especially now that India has been elected to the UN Security Council, we believe that India must use its political and moral authority in the region and globally to play a crucial role in the process of national reconciliation and restoration of democracy in Burma. The first and minimum requirement is that the Government of India must not endorse and thereby recognize Burma's military regime's sham constitution and elections, as they will only lead to the entrenchment of military rule in Burma. The second is support for the above benchmarks.

We stand firmly in solidarity with the peoples of Burma, and we earnestly urge the Government of India and the All India Congress Committee (AICC) to join with the UN and the international community in taking concrete action to secure the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ensure genuine democratic change in Burma.

Sincerely,

Indian civil society groups

1. Pradeep Esteves, Context India, Bangalore
2. Jai Sen, CACIM - India Institute for Critical Action:Centre in Movement, New Delhi
3. Nava Thakuria, Journalists' Forum Assam
4. Wilfred Dcosta, Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF)
5. Saheli
6. Lenin Raghuvanshi-Peoples' Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR)
7. L.Lam Khan Piang, Zomi Human Rights Foundation, Delhi
Cell
8. J. B. Oli, Independent Human Rights Activists, New Delhi
9. Vishal Arora, Freelance Journalist
10. Johnny Kadunsin Ruangmei-Nagaland
11. James Pochury
12. Sushmita Kashyap, Independent Researcher

13. Malavika Karlekar
14. Hiranmay Karlekar
15. Sushovan Dhar, Activist
16. Artax Shimray, Activist
17. Jatin Desai, Focus on the Global South, India
18. Yogendra Yadav, Senior Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
19. Sanjay Gathia
20. Ashok Choudhary NFFPFW
21. Leo Fernandez, Independent IT Consultant
22. Vijayan MJ, Delhi Forum
23. Manju Gardia, Programme for Social Action
24. Rahsida Bee, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh
25. Syed M Irfan, Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh
26. Safreen Khan, Children Against Dow Carbide
27. Rachna Dhingra, Bhopal Group for Information and Action
28. Shivangi Gangwar, Law Student
29. Aniket Alam, Senior Assistant Editor, Economic and Political Weekly
30. John Ishavaradas Abdallah, Executive Director World Without Borders Interfaith Sufi Ashram
31. Sikha Ghosh
32. Shruti Upadhay
33. V Rajagopal, Assistant Professor, Department of History
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad
34. Jayanti Alam, Fellow, MAKAIAS, Kolkata & Teacher, M.A.in Human Rights, Calcutta University

35. Rohan D'Souza, Assistant Professor, Centre for Studies in Science Policy, School of Social Sciences, JNU

36. Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Director, Social Development Foundation