

Long March & Hunger Strike for Freedom and Democracy in BURMA

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Day 3 of Hunger Strike

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- Continuing their effort to bring freedom, democracy, and human rights to the people of Burma, the seven Hunger Strike campaign activists have spent the last three days at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in front of the United Nations.
- The activists endure this second journey mostly by meditating (the activists' first journey was the 180-mile Long Freedom March). In front of them is a picture of a barbed wire jail cell. In the cell a lady is smiling bravely and peacefully -- she is none other than Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's democracy movement.
- During the daytime the United Nations area in Manhattan bustles with activity as world leaders resume General Assembly meetings. Passers-by, including heads of state and other dignitaries and diplomats rush by the activists hurriedly en route to the United Nations. However, whenever any of these officials glimpse Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's picture, they stop and gaze at her respectfully.
- In the image that rests in front of the activists, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seems to be saying from her locked jail cell, "Please help the people of Burma in their struggle." Heeding the image's powerful plea, passers-by often approach the activists to learn about the Hunger Strike campaign and to offer words of encouragement.
- Beneath the photo of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, there are other images showing the Burmese Army's brutality against peaceful demonstrators during the 1988 uprising. These images show the cruel and brutal nature of Burma's military regime.
- The images reveal to the outside world the truth about the regime's ongoing and systematic repression of the people of Burma. Passers-by were visibly affected by the images documenting the regime's brutality -- photos of a young, bloodied and dying student, photos of monks being beaten, and photos of an unarmed civilian pleading with the soldiers not to shoot at the peaceful demonstrators all drew the attention of on-lookers and news and media representatives.
- It's time for the United Nations to decide whether it, as a world body, is going to listen to and accept the lies of the military junta or listen to the voices of the people of Burma who are still suffering under the junta's bloody rule. The regime's wanton disregard for human rights and dignity is documented in recent reports published by the United Nations itself. It is time, now, for the United Nations to act decisively to help the voiceless people of Burma.
- "Whenever I think of the people who died in the 1988 uprising, or in the Depayin massacre, I feel a deep sadness," said Ko Khin Zaw, one of the activists, "I feel that, we, who are alive, should do something for them. That is the reason for my participation in this campaign." The 51 year old, who had to flee Burma after the Depayin massacre, was a member of the National League for Democracy (Mandalay North West Division). After arriving in the United States, he gave testimony and an eyewitness account of the Depayin massacre, twice in Washington D.C, three times in New York, and also at the Senate halls in North Carolina and Philadelphia.
- Ko Khin Zaw added that he's not used to fasting and that he's suffering from hypertension and is anemic. "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said do not procrastinate in doing what has to be done, so I'm doing this for my fallen comrades and the people of Burma. As long as I'm alive I will fight to the end."
- National League for Democracy member U Tin Ngwe said that although he has not eaten for three days he is not hungry. Having undergone an eye operation in 2002, U Tin Ngwe was to have had a second follow up operation on the 23rd of September. He cancelled the operation in order to participate in the Hunger Strike campaign. Missing her grandfather, U Tin Ngwe's four-year-old granddaughter from Portland pleaded for his return. U Tin Ngwe, however, has no plans to leave the Hunger Strike campaign. Even though he loves his granddaughter dearly, he feels that the welfare of his country should have first priority over family ties.
- The sacrifices of Ko Khin Zaw and U Tin Ngwe exemplify the determination of the Hunger Strike participants to bring the plight of the people of Burma to the attention of the world. During the course of the day, the activists proclaimed, "Long live the people of Burma and the peaceful demonstration we are embarking on."
- *(At the same time in Bangkok, Thailand, 23 activists from Burma staged a hunger strike in front of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The Thai authorities arrested them, but the brave activists are continuing their hunger strike in jail. All of the activists from the Hunger Strike campaign salute those people from Bangkok for their courage, determination, and love of the mother country. Pictures from the Hunger Strike campaign as well as letters of support and encouragement received from people and organizations from around the world can be seen at <http://longmarchandhungerstrike.odfb.org>)*