

Myanmar

Response to Information Request Number:	MYN98001.zny
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Subject:	Myanmar: State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)/ State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)/ National League for Democracy (NLD)/Burmese Dissidents
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	SLORC/SPDC/NLD/Lists/Passports/PoliticalOpposition/Dissident/Prisons/Torture

Query:

In Burma, now Myanmar, are there lists of people to be arrested by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), now the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)? Also, if a high profile dissident was on the list of people to be arrested by SPDC, is it likely that the dissident would exit Myanmar with a passport validated and stamped by the SPDC?

Response:

State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), currently named State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)

SLORC's establishment on September 18, 1988, after Burmese protests and pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon was announced by General Saw Maung, Commander-in-Chief. SLORC's mission was to eliminate all forms of internal dissent or rebellion. On September 19, 1988, the SLORC ordered massacres and a coup d'etat of power. One of the first goals, after the establishment of power, was to expand the Tatmadaw or the SLORC officers to 321,000, almost double the 1988 size. Another goal was to procure arms and increase intelligence capabilities.

On November 15, 1997, the SLORC announced a reorganization to SPDC. Currently, the SPDC is smaller than the SLORC with younger officers and Cabinet members. The more corrupt SLORC members and the Cabinet retired. The Tatmadaw is now the permanent military government. (*Jane's Intelligence Review* 1 March 1998)

The National League for Democracy (NLD)

In 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of NLD, the opposition to SPDC, and Nobel Peace prize winner led pro-democracy demonstrations that resulted in up to 10,000 people murdered, and the imprisonment, torture and forced exile to Thailand of others. Confident of a victory after the killings, SLORC soldiers decided to hold a May 1990 election, in which the NLD won a landslide victory with 80% of the seats contested. SLORC, refusing to acknowledge the NLD victory, arrested thousands of NLD workers and imprisoned those attempting to form a government. SLORC refused to form a new government until a new Constitution was drafted. A national Constitution drafting convention is still being organized and gains public support because the SPDC bribes people to attend, and fines them for absences. (*Asian Survey* 1 June 1997) According to Suu Kyi, human rights violations have

worsened under the SPDC. She is quoted as saying, "There is no justice in Burma today. There is no rule of law. Anybody can be arrested at any time on any pretext and be given the maximum sentence possible and nobody would be in a position to protest." (Japan Economic Newswire 2 April 1998)

Treatment of SPDC Dissidents

SPDC-run jails, notably Insein, are well known for brutal treatment of inmates, especially NLD members. (Inter Press Service 13 November 1996). Political prisoners or "troublemakers" are often sent to Thayawaddy and Myin Chan prisons, which are equally appalling. (Inter Press Service 29 August 1997)

According to Simrin Singh in an article entitled, "Burma-Human Rights: Insein Prison, A Political Prisoner's Nightmare," "Insein...is a black hole where political dissidents are thrown in after sham trials, often subjected to third degree torture and even killed or allowed to die for want of basic medical care." (Inter Press Service 13 November 1996)

U Kyi Maung, Deputy Chairman of the NLD, was arrested in October 1996 and taken directly to Insein. Under international pressure, he was released in a week. (Inter Press Service 13 November 1996)

Leo Nichols, Honorable Consul for Scandinavian Countries in Burma, died in Insein prison in 1996. (Inter Press Service 13 November 1996)

Saw Win, an elected member of Parliament and NLD member, died August 7, 1998, of unknown causes in Thayawaddy prison. (Japan Economic Newswire 15 August 1998)

U Hla Than, an elected member of Parliament suffered from AIDS and died in Insein prison in 1996. (Inter Press Service 6 August 1997)

U Tin Shwe, a human rights lawyer and writer, died of heart disease on June 8, 1997 in a Rangoon hospital. Supporters note that inadequate medical attention while he was in Insein prison is the reason for his death. (Inter Press Service 6 August 1997)

The following 8 prisoners of conscience were highlighted in 1998 by Amnesty International to mark the 10th anniversary of Burmese military repression (M2 Presswire 13 August 1998):

U Ohn Myint was rearrested in February 1998 for helping to produce a history of the student movement.

U Win Tin's sentence was increased, while in prison, for allegedly attempting to smuggle a letter about poor prison conditions out of Insein prison to the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar.

Daw San San, a NLD Parliamentarian, was arrested for the discussion of actions if the SPDC refused to cede power to the NLD, and organization of a party meeting.

Dr. Zaw Min, a medical doctor, was arrested.

Daw San San New, a writer, was arrested.

Moe Kalayar Oo, a philosophy student, was arrested.

U Win Htein, a senior NLD official, was arrested.

Maung San Hlaing, a bodyguard of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was arrested.

In addition, pro-democracy activists, such as Ye Teiza and 12 other imprisoned students had political tattoos removed by crude, painful procedures with the possibility of contracting AIDS. (The Boston Globe 11 January 1998)

According to the 1997 Amnesty International Report, "more than 1,000 political prisoners arrested in previous years, including 68 prisoners of conscience and hundreds of possible prisoners of conscience, remained in detention. Almost 2,000 people were arrested for political reasons during [1997], among them at least 23 prisoners of conscience. Although most were released, at least 175 were still detained without charge or trial at the end of [1997]. No political prisoners arrested in previous years were released." (RefWorld Amnesty International Report 1997)

Burmese Government Lists

In 1996, in order to hinder attendance at a 3 day NLD rally, the Burmese government detained 195 opposition activists, and in an editorial concerning the detainees in the New Light of Myanmar newspaper stated, "You will be home when the time comes. If you are reasonable you will be back home. If you are stubborn, you will not." (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 24 May 1996)

Since Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest in July 1995 (The Toronto Star 5 March 1997), the SPDC has detailed lists of the excursions of Ms. Suu Kyi, known to them as Mrs. Aris, since her husband's name is Briton Michael Aris. The list notes her activities of visiting her mother's grave with her son and attending a friend's birthday party. (Asia Week 21 November 1997)

NLD Lists

Lists of NLD detained members are developed by the NLD and submitted to the SPDC, with a request for release. (Japan Economic Newswire 21 August 1995)

Passports and Illegal Entry

According to Danish writer, Mogens Osterhammel, in a 1997 article entitled, "Reflections On a Visit to Burma," passport control is "protracted and painful." He states, "painful, in the sense of having to bribe officials and porters with cigarettes and money in order to ensure that the ordeal is not as protracted as it could be." Up until recently, Burmese laws prohibited any Burmese from conversing with a foreigner. Currently, conversation is punishable by jeopardizing Burmese family safety by the military intelligence, but chances are taken when officials can bribe foreigners. (Asian Survey 1 June 1997)

In a letter to the Editor of The Nation magazine, reference is made to "bad politics" in the Thai immigration office. The writer states that her friends endured jokes from Thai immigration officers about their country and leaders, and that their passports were disrespectfully thrown over the counters at them by immigration officials. (The Nation 17 August 1996)

However, passport control for NLD members is handled very seriously by the Burmese military junta. Reports indicate that the junta requests that the Thailand military arrest any Burmese dissident who illegally crosses the border. The dissidents are kept in detention until trial. (Agence France-Presse 27 November 1997)

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