

A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE CRISIS IN BURMA SPECIFICALLY ABOUT AUNG SAN SUU KYI, IMPRISONED STATE COUNSELLOR, AS HER ORWELLIAN FAUX-TRIAL COMMENCES

In light of the one-year anniversary of the 2021 military coup d'état in Myanmar, and due to being asked numerous times to comment in the media on the crisis, and more specifically about Aung San Suu Kyi, we wish to make a statement. These are several points we feel compelled to make at a time of increasing media manipulation and political censorship globally. And there are others, including the heroic defensive war by the population against the country's terrorist leader, Min Aung Hlaing (MAH) and his terrorist group, the State Administrative Council (SAC), aka MAH-SAC,

- Accusations that Burma's State Counsellor and Nobel Peace laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, did not speak out about the Rohingya crisis are patently false
- Accusations that Aung San Suu Kyi was both power hungry and a nationalist are also incorrect
- Aung San Suu Kyi and her government were misrepresented in the media to the point of a calculated smear campaign
- More airtime was given to the spectacle of a fallen icon than to the interests of the country she represented, and this had a direct detrimental impact on the peace process
- The National League for Democracy (NLD) policy of national reconciliation was not taken into account when levelling criticisms, giving a confused picture without context
- NLD efforts to tackle the Rohingya crisis were deliberately ignored to create more newsworthy stories
- The UN consistently pursued its own agenda to the detriment of Myanmar's emergent democracy, as attested to by both Britain and France during an emergency UN meeting

Accusations that Aung San Suu Kyi didn't speak out on the Rohingya crisis are categorically incorrect. She spoke out publicly on many occasions. What she *did not* do was take the side of the Rohingya, which is what the Western press demanded of her. Why this demand was made is unclear, although it should be obvious that it serves various political agendas, not least the need to save face after decades of bombing Muslims.

It is our view that the Rohingya simply served as a vessel for the appeasement of our collective guilt and as an opportunity for reparative moral grandstanding. They were a handy token in country most people are unfamiliar with, and few people would be 'in the know' enough to offer any correction. This should be evident from the Associated Press report detailing mass graves that didn't exist, and for which I believe a retraction

has yet to be made. This is not to say that what happened to the Rohingya was excusable. What they experience continues to be horrendous.

Likewise, the accusation that Aung San Suu Kyi is a nationalist is lazy journalism that doesn't take into account the obvious geopolitical concerns of the region. It is our view that Western interests felt slighted by Aung San Suu Kyi's friendly relationship with Russia, India, and China, Burma's immediate neighbours, and that people were genuinely surprised when she didn't immediately offer allegiance to Western democracies and economic interests. When David Cameron flew over in 2010, not with diplomats but businesspeople, I'm sure he was expecting a more lucrative return.

Yes, criticisms can be made of the NLD leadership style, but it was a desperate situation commanded by people who'd mostly spent the last 20 years in prison, not in comfortable cubicles or air-conditioned offices a few feet from a cappuccino. Yes, the power of the NLD government may have been held in too few hands, economic policies may have been weak, voices may not have been heard. Such is the lot of those escaping decades of totalitarian brutality and operating as a parallel government with little control. This latter point is crucial – in our time covering the crisis, we did not see a single article critical of her and the NLD's response that explained the NLD had no control over the police, military, or the three ministries in charge of border affairs and homeland security. Not one, other than the Irrawaddy.

The press has little need for diplomacy, earning its crust through sensationalist polemics and diatribes. A State Counsellor must carefully weight the issues on both sides and remain *impartial*. That was her job as a politician, a role she valued much higher than that of global darling of liberal democracy.

The plight of the ethnic Rakhine was barely covered. Barely any mention was made of the deliberate creation of an international incident by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Rakhine, a terrorist group set on founding a separatist Islamic State in the region and who had direct connections to Al Qaeda. Key findings were omitted, and these include the willingness of ordinary Muslim villagers to participate in slaughter, the death threats levelled at other Muslims if they did not burn Muslim homes *as demanded by ARSA* itself.

Instead, the Western reader was treated to a buffet of hearsay from human rights giants such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who used their platforms to advance *rumours* as if they were fact. For instance, satellite images of burned down homes were used as “evidence” of the military committing genocide, bolstered with cliched phrases like “no smoke without fire”, without a single mention *anywhere* that this was also a terrorist tactic, that numerous villagers owned up to burning houses, and that there is a historical context that includes the Rohingya burning homes when slighted or oppressed.

No one mentioned that Aung San Suu Kyi herself commissioned Kofi Annan to conduct an impartial investigation into how to bring peace to the area, a report that was released mere hours before the attacks, and which is *the* reason ARSA brought the attacks

forward, attacking only 30 outposts instead of the intended 100. As for pursuing alternative avenues to address the crisis, something she was accused of not doing during her time in the Hague, aside from the Kofi Anna report, there was a full-scale redevelopment operation in effect, with the support of numerous Burmese business leaders, as well as both Buddhist and Muslim clergy, working in harmony, to address the actual socio-economic causes of the crisis. This was a massive operation including many diverse elements of the civil and business sectors to offer long-term solutions to the immediate problems for the sake of both communities.

Further, taking the “talking stories” of displaced refugees living in camps in part populated by these same terrorists as the *only* evidence, at the time, of many of the crimes now in public awareness is worse than lazy journalism. It actually stoked the fire. It played into the hands of evil. Scores of camp and village leaders were beheaded or otherwise killed by these terrorists. Think of the reality for ordinary refugees who have a CNN camera pointed at their face while terrorists look over their shoulder. Think of the pressure. Real life politicians turned up in the country with these talking stories implanted in their heads as fact because their “intel” *was coming from newspapers*. Numerous Nobel Peace Prize laureates were suckered in by the emotive furore. They lost their critical thinking skills. They did not question, they reacted.

Because of this, I fully agree with the Myanmar government removing Yanghee Lee from the role of Special Rapporteur and from the country, not least because when she went on Twitter to decry the release of imprisoned soldiers *who had not been released*, her Twitter comment was immediately picked up by numerous outlets such as the Washington Post and New York Times. It spread widely and remained in the public imagination. I believe no retraction was made beyond deleting the comment over a week later. This was the least of her inaccuracies. She asked, “Where is justice?” I ask the same question.

When barred from the country, this is what Lee said: “I am puzzled and disappointed by this decision by the Myanmar government... This declaration of non-co-operation with my mandate can only be viewed as a strong indication that there must be something terribly awful happening in Rakhine, as well as in the rest of the country.”

This is patently a strawman argument. She knew full well why the decision was made, as did we, at the time, following assiduously every report that came out of Burma daily for years. Numerous valid criticisms were made and went unreported. I have been in many arguments but have rarely been puzzled by people’s counters without a personal, emotional reason for being so, simply making it plain where relevant that we don’t see eye to eye. Her comment is contemptuous posturing. Note the line “it can only be viewed.” This denies the place of critical thinking. It is a polemic and illustrative of the strongarm attempt to control the narrative at the expense of people’s lived experience in Myanmar.

When the Associated Press (who we mentioned reported on mass graves that didn’t exist) published Aung San Suu Kyi’s paraphrased comments from a public address with

a simple comma omitted, the same thing happened. Newspapers around the world, and NGOs and insiders famous for defending Myanmar, including Burma Campaign UK's Mark Farmaner, jumped on their platforms to tell world Aung San Suu Kyi was a racist who blamed terrorism on illegal immigration. To quote the Irrawaddy:

“The Associated Press on Monday misquoted and seriously misrepresented comments made by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her speech to the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Naypyitaw. The misleading report immediately drew the ire of the Myanmar Press Council, which condemned the news agency's “purposeful ‘misinterpretation’ with an ulterior motive to hurt her image, and that of Myanmar.” (Kyaw Phyto Tha 21 November 2017)

For clarity, here are the two statements, the second directly attributed to Aung San Suu Kyi by AP:

ASSK: Conflicts around the world are giving rise to new threats and emergencies; illegal migration, spread of terrorism and violent extremism, social disharmony and even the threat of nuclear war	AP: the world is facing instability and conflict in part because illegal immigration spreads terrorism
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Aung San Suu Kyi, in my view, was being punished for not taking sides, yet taking sides is clearly not the point in a conflict situation that involves two communities both equally affect by socio-political and economic hardships who are both at war with each other. Taking sides is what you do at a football game.

This refusal to take sides further reflects the NLD policy of national reconciliation, which included a policy of non-demonisation of the army. It was an attempt to allow megalomaniacs to save face and beat a hasty retreat with their millions. This actually relied on international support and understanding, and I wrote as early as 2016 that a looming power gap would easily allow the junta to regain power in 2020.

Had Aung San Suu Kyi remained an icon, or at least been understood, there would have been a massive outcry about her current situation. The Burmese Army, like all modern armies, has had training and clearly understands the role of perception management and psychological warfare. The Rohingya crisis was allowed to spiral out of control to, in our opinion, tarnish her reputation and leave the impression that only a military response would bring peace to the region. It was a deliberate attempt to kneecap the NLD.

Whatever she said at the Hague, Aung San Suu Kyi did not deny wrongdoing on the part of the Tatmadaw in her role as State Counsellor. Special courts were set up specifically to look into these crimes, charges were levelled, arrests were made, and soldiers were sentenced. This is but one of many points she had to labour.

Aung San Suu Kyi specifically requested the country be allowed the time and space to do this, in an effort to allow the Tatmadaw to redress its historic impunity and move towards democracy, and *this was actually happening*. The Tatmadaw was actually making its own efforts to address these crimes. Further, she did not “block independent investigations” (another UN accusation at the Hague) in a general sense, she specifically refused to allow the UN to escalate the situation through its one-sided fact-finding mission. *The UN repeatedly framed the issue as a one-sided attack on a single minority*. This was not the reality on the ground. It will never be the reality on the ground. Buy ink by the barrel and you will never cover the blood spilled on that ground. There is no escaping culpability of both the UN and Western press for their part in preventing the resolution of this crisis.

For the UN to speak of Aung San Suu Kyi refusing to use her moral authority in the face of these gross inaccuracies is basically gaslighting a whole country. Note how generalised the UN comments from the Hague transcripts are, as if the UN speaks for the whole world when it is talking about its own agenda, specifically its own fact-finding mission.

Consider this picture when you consider Aung San Suu Kyi voluntarily going to the Hague at a time when the whole world had turned its back on her. Think in basest, barest psychological terms. Never mind just Bono and Geldof’s vulgar displays of misplaced celebrity “insight”, every institution that had supported her stripped her of her awards and standing. She claimed she was not moved by this, and we do not believe her. Personally, it would have broken our hearts. I was asked by a journalist ‘What has happened to the woman we knew? Her words in the Hague transcripts are so cold.’ You ask why she was cold? This is like poking someone in the eye and asking them why they’re screaming.

Aung San Suu Kyi was widely accused of ‘cosying up to the military,’ being power hungry, yet she was practising diplomacy. She was attempting to negotiate with psychopathic warlords. What looks to some like Stockholm Syndrome looks to me like a woman who has for too long courted psychopaths and who bears the hallmarks of an abusive relationship. Had I spent 20 years under house arrest, lost my family, and witnessed and felt so much brutality, only to have the Western media junta flay me publicly with my own words, I too would lack emotional affect when placed on a stand and accused of genocidal intent.

We saw a deflated, dejected woman who no doubt she knew her days were numbered. Don’t forget that one of her chief lawmakers, U Ko Nyi, a Muslim who had devised ways to amend the undemocratic military constitution, was assassinated in broad day light at a busy airport with his grandchild in his arms. Death threats, we hear, were common for those in Suu Kyi’s inner circle. She lacked international support at a time when the junta was poised to do what they have done, what they have always done, and what we have let them continue to do. Our affinity with her democratic mission was her and her country’s principle insurance, and we stripped that of her, as we stripped it from the thousands of people currently being tortured in prisons across Burma.

Her famous quote, initially a thank you for support, now takes on a new meaning. “To be forgotten is to die a little. It is to lose some of the links that anchor us to the rest of humanity.” I believe that psychologically she has indeed died a little. None of us, *none* of us, can appreciate what she’s been through, or what that has done to her mind. None of us know what she holds in her heart. She is alone now, forgotten, in a prison cell, where she will die. Worse, I can hear her detractors practically cheering. “We crucified another pretender!”

Her sons will never see her again. Her country is being torn apart by civil war. Student protestors are jumping to their deaths from buildings rather than be arrested. And the world asks where the light has gone?

We ask, when will the world account for its misstep? When will the world retrieve its conscience from the mire of tabloid ignorance and uninformed opinion, from its soundbites and sensationalism, and take up the fight again *demanding* the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and *all democratically elected* civilian government leaders, along with every other prisoner of conscience? Bono, Geldof, Dalai Lama, women Nobel laureates, world leaders, celebrities, influencers, your silence echoes deafeningly in the torture chambers of the country you have so easily forgotten. Freedom lovers worldwide, *it is time to speak out and boycott everything military in Burma.*

These are but 2,500 words distilled from our 500,000 word four volume set of books, *Burma's Voices of Freedom*, recently published by World Dharma Publications. Please refer to those volumes (available from online retailers worldwide), if moved, for a complete analysis of what we have expressed here, and so much more, including 125,000 words directly from Aung San Suu Kyi, along long form conversations with U Tin Oo, U Win Tin, Zin Mar Aung, Min Ko Naing, U Win Htein, Ko Jimmy (sentenced to death), Zaya Thaw (sentenced to death) and dozens of other heroic revolutionaries. Volume five will start from February 1, 2021, titled, *The War Is On*.

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