

Voices of Support for Aung San Suu Kyi

AND

Burma's Ongoing Struggle for Freedom



As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs.

(Elie Wiesel, from his Nobel Peace Prize speech,
which he is sending out now to inspire those working
in support of Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma.)

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“The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 1991 to Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar (Burma) for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.

...Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades. She has become an important symbol in the struggle against oppression...

...In awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 1991 to Aung San Suu Kyi, the Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes

to honour this woman for her unflagging efforts and to show its support for the many people throughout the world who are striving to attain democracy, human rights and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means.”

— Oslo, October 14, 1991

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On May 16, 2007, 59 world leaders released a letter demanding Burma’s military government free Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. The signatories included all three surviving former US presidents, Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton; the former UK prime minister, Margaret Thatcher; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Poland, Lech Walesa; as well as Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former South Korean president, Kim Dae-jung, amongst many others.

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On 13 June 2007 Members of both Houses of the Indian Parliament wrote to Aung San Suu Kyi on the occasion of her 62nd birthday. The parliamentarians led by veteran Gandhian and Rajya Sabha member Nirmala Deshpande wrote among other things: “You are the true prime minister of Burma.”

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A LETTER FROM AUNG SAN SUU KYI’S
SIX FELLOW WOMEN NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES
OCTOBER 24, 2007

Today, as the UN celebrates its 62nd birthday, Aung San Suu Kyi will have spent a total of twelve years in detention in Burma.

On January 8, you/the United Nations Secretary General called on [Burma’s] Senior General Than Shwe to release Aung San Suu Kyi. It is a grave disappointment to us all that the Burmese regime has chosen to ignore this.

Since Burmese monks courageously took to the streets in September to call for democracy, the Burmese regime has enforced a vicious crackdown on peaceful demonstrators and democratic opposition leaders. Amidst mounting reports of torture and ill treatment, we fear for the safety of the brave people of Burma.

The Burmese regime must not be allowed to continue in its perpetration of gross violations of human rights. The detention of Aung San Suu Kyi is the most visible manifestation of the regime’s brutality but it is only the tip of the iceberg.

As Aung San Suu Kyi’s fellow Nobel Peace Laureates — representing North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa — we will work together to ensure that Burma does not slip from international view and ensure that real progress is made. The UN has a central role to play in our collective endeavour.



Jody Williams



Wangari Muta Maathai



Rigoberta Menchú Tum



Shirin Ebadi



Betty Williams



Mairead Corrigan-Maguire

Sixty-two years ago, the UN was established to enable governments of the world to respond to grave crises of this kind. It must now do more to live up to its mandate and take decisive action to secure the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and her fellow prisoners of conscience.

Signed,

Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai,
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan Maguire

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WHAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE SAYING:

“We outside Burma cannot look away and ignore the plight of Burma’s peoples. Our religious and philosophical teachings tell us that human suffering anywhere must be accepted as our own suffering. And our worldly experience convinces us that only practical political action can help end that suffering.”

~Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 1984 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient

“Any person in any country who believes in the power of good, anyone who believes in justice, will stand by Aung San Suu Kyi. Because Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the non-violent, compassionate leaders of our time.”

~Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1996, José Ramos-Horta

“She’s my hero.”

~ Bono, lead singer of U2

“Her dedication, resolve, courage and patience are the mark of a leader. We stand tall for her, as she will again stand tall for herself.”

~ Michael Stipe, lead singer of R.E.M.

“It is time for all respectable members of the international community to put weight behind their words and take active measures to secure the freedom of Aung San Suu Kyi and the Burmese people.”

~ US Senator John McCain (R-AZ)

“Please know that while you remain under house arrest, those of us who cherish freedom and democracy around the world stand by your side.”

~ US Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)

“It is necessary to support the Burmese Resistance with all our efforts. Aung San Suu Kyi is, in her fragile appearance, the force born of truth and justice, the road by which a base of peace can be built.”

~ Adolf Perez Esquivel, Nobel peace laureate, 1980

“Aung San Suu Kyi, sister in the struggle for peace...No one enemy of justice can silence your voice for freedom, which is your father’s voice and the voice of expression of your people. No prison can halt your love and courage which was forged with sorrow and hope. Your resistance is a source of inspiration for a new beginning.”

~ Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Nobel peace laureate, 1992

“Aung San Suu Kyi is a woman who dared. She showed by example that nonviolence truly is the weapon of the strong. Their struggle will soon be over. And a warning must be sent to the [regime]: The free world is watching you.”

~ Betty Williams, Nobel Peace laureate, 1976

“By dedicating her life to the fight for human rights and democracy in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi is not only speaking out for justice in her own country, but also for all of those who want to be free to choose their own destiny.”

~Vaclav Havel, former President, Czech Republic

“As a tireless champion of human rights and democracy in Burma, Suu Kyi inspires countless people around the world who strive for peace, justice and freedom. In the face of great hardship she has never wavered in her commitment to peaceful change.”

~US President George W. Bush

“And let me say this morning that when the Burmese government tries to blame the victims for the crime, and say that Aung San Suu Kyi and her party are responsible for their own repression, I can only reply that much the same was once said about Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Vaclav Havel. The world is not fooled. And we must not be silent.”

~ Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State

FROM HIS HOLINESS THE XIV<sup>TH</sup> DALAI LAMA:

I extend my support and solidarity with the recent peaceful movement for democracy in Burma. I fully support their call for freedom and democracy and take this opportunity to appeal to freedom-loving people all over the world to support such non-violent movements. Moreover, I wish to convey my sincere appreciation and admiration to the large number of fellow Buddhists monks for advocating democracy and freedom in Burma.

As a Buddhist monk, I am appealing to the members of the military regime who believe in Buddhism to act in accordance with the sacred dharma in the spirit of compassion and non-violence.

I pray for the success of this peaceful movement and the early release of fellow Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Tenzin Gyatso / September 23, 2007

FROM THE NEW STATESMEN MAGAZINE IN THE UK  
HEROES OF OUR TIME - THE TOP 50

There was no doubt about our winner: Aung San Suu Kyi, who received three times as many nominations as even the great Nelson Mandela in second place. She has, as Richard Eyre wrote of her in a recent issue, “endured grief, danger and loneliness with extraordinary grace and courage, all the while inspiring resistance to the [corrupt Burmese] regime.”

AUNG SAN SUU KYI - PRO-DEMOCRACY LEADER  
NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER, UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN HER NATIVE BURMA

The confrontation between Aung San Suu Kyi and the brutish military rulers of Burma (officially known as Myanmar) has the power of myth. At 62, Aung San Suu Kyi is still lovely and delicate, like the strings of scented

jasmine always looped around her hair. The men in army fatigues and dark glasses who have oppressed her for so long may try to stamp out this flagrantly feminine opponent, but still she rises, unbowed and resolute.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the voice of yearning Burmese democrats. Her National League for Democracy party has majority support but is denied power by the military. She is held under house arrest and NLD members are beaten and killed by the junta's thugs. She could seek refuge abroad, where adulation awaits her, but she chooses to stay, even to death.

Death has, paradoxically, been the making of Aung San Suu Kyi; it has stalked and claimed her loved ones and supporters. But each tragedy seems only to tighten her grip on life and her cause. The heady idealism of post-colonial liberation sustains her still. Her father, General Aung San, negotiator of Burma's independence from the British, was assassinated by political rivals in 1947, when Aung San Suu Kyi was only two. One brother drowned when he was eight. In 1960 her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, became the Burmese ambassador to India. There the young Aung San Suu Kyi was inspired by Gandhi's credo of non-violent resistance. Her own ideas were developed at Oxford and later in New York, where she worked at the UN. In 1972, she married Michael Aris, a British scholar of Tibetan culture. They had two sons.

Much later, in March 1988, she returned to Burma to nurse her dying mother, and was hurled into the furnace of political chaos and military tyranny. That July the dictator General Ne Win resigned. Popular unrest spread and thousands were killed. Aung San Suu Kyi formed the NLD. In September, the junta curtailed freedoms and announced an election. Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest and yet her party won. Since then she has been a de facto captive of the state, sometimes allowed no visitors for months. In 1995, her husband became ill with prostate cancer but was not allowed into Burma. She has not seen her sons since 1988. To leave would have been to break the promise she made to her people.

They may put Aung San Suu Kyi away, but cannot make her go away from the international stage. Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, she leads without armies, media manipulation or economic might. Naturally, she has her detractors. The junta brands her a foreign stooge, and now leader of a "terrorist" network. Ziauddin Sardar sees a modernized oriental woman who "triggers all the stereotypes associated with oriental sexuality buried deep in western consciousness."

Aung San Suu Kyi remains in her home [under arrest], inviolate. In this increasingly grubby world of expedient and violent politics, the miracle is not that Aung San Suu Kyi survives but that she continues to matter so much. Not since Nelson Mandela's long incarceration has a political prisoner drawn so much and such consistent support from millions the world over.

THE VOICE OF HOPE  
CONVERSATIONS WITH AUNG SAN SUU KYI,  
BURMA'S (IMPRISONED) NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE,  
BY ALAN CLEMENTS

In 1979, Alan Clements, as the first American to ordain as a Buddhist monk in Burma, lived and meditated quietly in a monastery for the next eight years with no political involvement whatsoever. Subsequently he returned to the West to teach meditation. However, as Burma descended into political chaos and tyranny, with rampant torture, mass killings, and other abuses of human rights, Alan became one of the most active and effective of all Westerners. Since he spoke Burmese, he was able to undertake four underground perilous trips into Burma where he lived in the jungle with refugees, listened to firsthand accounts of mass slaughter, torture and rape, and saw maimed victims of torture and war.

In the jungles of Burma, in 1990, he was the first journalist-activist to witness and document the genocide of the ethnic minorities by the military dictatorship, which he wrote about in his first book, *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?* (Odonian Press, 1991) with a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Clements is also co-author (with Leslie Kean) of "Burma's Revolution of the Spirit," (Aperture, NY 1995) also with a foreword by the Dalai Lama, and endorsed by eight Nobel laureates. He also co-authored the book "The

Voice of Hope—Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi,” published in 1997 and reissued and updated in 2008, including an exclusive interview with the Buddhist monk who was one of the main leaders of the September uprisings in Burma and is presently imprisoned, facing the death penalty.

His collaboration with Aung San Suu Kyi with whom he spent seven months together in 1995 and 96 deepened his appreciation for just what price the commitment to freedom could exact from those involved as freedom fighters, in their cases imprisonment, torture, and even murder. This led to his next book “Instinct for Freedom: Finding Liberation Through Living,” (New World Library, CA 2003), nominated as the best spiritual teaching/memoir by the National Spiritual Booksellers Association that same year.

Alan has appeared on numerous radio and television shows worldwide offering detailed commentary of the crisis in Burma, especially as an expert on the role of Buddhism in Burmese politics and as an ingredient in their nonviolent activism. He has been interviewed on ABC “Nightline”, CBS “Evening News”, “Talk to America”, VOA, BBC, and by The New York Times, The London Times, Time and Newsweek magazines, Yoga Journal, Utne, and scores of other media worldwide.

The Voice of Hope, Alan Clements’ international acclaimed book of conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma’s imprisoned Nobel peace laureate, offers penetrating insight into the psychology of totalitarianism and nonviolent revolution.

Said the London Observer: “Clements is the perfect interlocutor....whatever the future of Burma, a possible future for politics itself is illuminated by these conversations.”



**Alan Clements is available for radio, tv and print media inquires worldwide.**

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