



# FREE BURMA'S POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!

## Press Release

**For immediate release**

[Bangkok, Thailand] 26 May 2009

### **Accept nothing less than the release of Burma's political prisoners: Over 650,000 global citizens urge Ban Ki-moon**

A global campaign for the release of Burma's political prisoners has secured over 650,000 petition signatures in just ten weeks, according to campaign organisers. Signatures have come from 220 countries and territories. "This is the largest global coordinated action for Burma the world has ever witnessed," said Dr Naing Aung, Secretary-General of the Forum for Democracy in Burma.

The petition calls on the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to make it his personal priority to secure the release of all political prisoners in Burma, as the essential first step towards democratization in the country. It comes at a time when Ban Ki-moon is negotiating a visit to the country with the ruling military government, and has said he is "deeply concerned" about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's detention. The closed-door trial of the Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the National League for Democracy is today entering its seventh day. International condemnation of the trial has been widespread, including unprecedented criticism from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Since October last year, more than 350 of Burma's 2,100 political prisoners have been sentenced in similar trials, to harsh sentences of up to 104 years.

Co-founder and Joint-Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) Bo Kyi said, "The eyes of the world are on Ban Ki-moon now. He must do whatever it takes, and accept nothing less than the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners. Without their release, there can be no national reconciliation in Burma."

The campaign has been led by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) and Forum for Democracy in Burma, representing former political prisoners and pro-democracy activists. A broad-based consortium of Burma exile and solidarity groups around the world has worked to secure the signatures, including Avaaz, a massive online community of activists.



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Avaaz Executive Director Ricken Patel said, "Aung San Suu Kyi is Burma's Nelson Mandela. The UN Secretary-General must insist that her release be the condition for any further international engagement with the Burmese junta."

Since the campaign launched on 13 March, Burma's Human Rights Day, one person has signed the petition every 10 seconds.

-ENDS-

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### *THESE STATISTICS HAVE BEEN UPDATED*

#### 1. The Campaign By Numbers

- A broad-based consortium of over 200 Burma exile and solidarity groups have participated in the campaign, in 32 countries across 5 continents.
- Over 650,000 people from over 220 countries and territories have signed the petition.
- One person has signed the petition every 10 seconds since the campaign launched on 13 March, Burma's Human Rights Day.
- In Thai-Burma border areas, over 60 roundtable discussions about political prisoners have taken place, for migrant workers and in refugee camps
- Over 40,000 signatures were collected inside Burma
- Over 23,000 signatures were collected from refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border.
- Over 47,000 signatures were collected from migrant workers in Southern Thailand.
- Over 23,000 signatures were collected in the Thai-Burma border town of Mae Sot.



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## 2. Political Prisoner Statistics

- There are currently 2,156 political prisoners in jails and labour camps all over Burma (statistics provided by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) )
- Since October 2008, more than 350 democracy activists in Burma have been sentenced to harsh sentences of up to 104 years. Since November last year, more than 230 have been transferred to remote prisons all around the country, far from their families.

## 3. Campaign Consortium

The campaign is led by the [Assistance Association for Political Prisoners \(Burma\)](#) and [Forum for Democracy in Burma](#). Follow this link for a full list of all endorsing organisations involved in the campaign: [http://www.fbppn.net/?page\\_id=1750](http://www.fbppn.net/?page_id=1750)

### Annex: Media Contact List for the FBPPN! petition campaign in Asia

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