

Burma Briefing

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I. Editorial: Engaging with SPDC is risky

The briefing given by United Nations Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari on the human rights situation of Burma to the United Nations Security Council on 16 December 2005 has been a long overdue. Gambari stated that despite hopes of reform the past year had proven very disappointing and stressed that the Security Council should now be given a bit of time to see how things progressed. Despite disagreement over whether Burma was a threat to peace and security, all council members showed concern about the situation. The Security Council's unanimous move came days after the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) extended the house arrest of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Earlier in June 2005, Russia backed by China and Algeria had blocked the issue on the grounds that it fell outside its mandate of ensuring international peace and security. But, blocking Security Council's intervention in genuine cases is not new.

That Burma disturbs international peace and regional security, a criteria for intervention, requires little introduction. There have been reports of involvement of Burmese military personnel in arms smuggling and drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking from Burma has been wiping out an entire generation especially in Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. The government of India is engaged in "oil and counter-insurgency diplomacy". The State governments are insincere, inept and corrupt. Many of the social organisations have taken up the cause. However, since organisations such as Young Mizo Association have taken up the law into their hands, it has created problems of "illegal" measures.

The repressive policies of SPDC have contributed to large flows of refugees out of the country. Burmese refugees are often refoiled by the host counties. No one cares for them. In India UNHCR's complicity in the use of disproportionate force against Burmese asylum seekers have been established.

The latest resumption of constitutional talks in Burma is an attempt to scuttle international criticism. Only six ethnic groups are represented in the talks. In reality, Burma may not be too far from fresh rounds of conflicts with its ethnic insurgent groups. The engagement with Myanmar is a high risk area. ■

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II. The case for UNSC intervention

That the situation of human rights in Burma should have been discussed by the UNSC is a foregone conclusion. As there was no action from the UNSC, Nobel Laureates Vaclav Havel, former president of Czech Republic and Archbishop Desmond Tutu commissioned a study by the DLA Piper. The 70-page report, "Threat to Peace - A Call to the UN Security Council to Act in Burma" of 20 September 2005 by DLA Piper lucidly urged the Security Council for "an urgent, new and multilateral diplomatic initiative" to bring changes in Burma.

The report, "Threat to Peace - A Call to the UN Security Council to Act in Burma", details the policy of destruction of villages and forced relocation of civilians as a counter-insurgency strategy for many decades, primarily targeting ethnic minority groups; human rights violations including killings, forced labor, systematic rape and destruction of villages, crops, and land during relocation; internal displacement of at least 526,000 people in the eastern border areas alone; the presence of over a million Burmese refugees in Thailand, India, Bangladesh, and Malaysia; forced labour; the use of rape as a mean of war against the ethnic groups; and finally, drug trafficking across the neighbouring countries.

In 2005, the Security Council, among others, discussed the following country situations: Middle East situation, including the Palestinian question, Sudan, Burundi, Iraq, Liberia, Afghanistan, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Timor-Leste, Guinea-Bissau, Georgia, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic, Somalia, Bougainville, Cyprus, Haiti, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro), Western Sahara, Iraq-Kuwait, Middle East-Lebanon.

If the Security Council can discuss the above countries, Burma is a fit case by any yardstick given the overthrow of democratically-elected government, conflict between central government and ethnic groups, widespread violations of human rights and humanitarian laws, internal displacement and outflow of refugees, drug production and trafficking.

I. Failure to cooperate with the United Nations

The level of cooperation of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) with the United Nations has been deplorable. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, Prof Sergio Pinheiro has not been allowed to visit Burma since November 2003. The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Rizali Ismail made 14 visits without any substantial breakthrough. He has also not been allowed to visit the country since March 2004.

The lack of cooperation from the military junta led Secretary General Kofi Annan to conclude that the "present situation casts serious doubt on the prospects for the United Nations to play an effective role as a facilitator in furtherance of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly."

Even humanitarian organizations such as The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria had to stop funding projects in Burma in August 2005. The Global Fund - an independent financing organisation set up by the UN, with stringent rules about its donations - was forced to withdraw after the SPDC imposed new travel restrictions in July 2005. The Global Fund stated that these restrictions would "prevent the implementation of performance-based and time-bound programmes in the country, breach the government's commitment to provide unencumbered access, and frustrate the ability of the [recipient of the aid money] to carry out its obligations." Most humanitarian organisations have been facing dilemmas because of such restrictions which deny assistance to those who require it most.

II. Off-setting western sanctions

On 16 September 2005, the Netherlands refused a visa to Burma's Economic Minister who wanted to attend the Asia-Europe meeting in Rotterdam. The Netherlands was hosting the ASEM economic minister's meeting. The ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations responded to the ban and boycotted the meeting.

Such sanctions by the United States and European Union have been off-set by so-called "constructive engagement", an euphemistic term to describe "exploitation of natural resources" of Burma by the Asian countries. After European Union imposed further sanctions on SPDC on 11 October 2004 and Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was sacked, SPDC's Chief General Than Shwe was accorded a red carpet welcome with gun salute reserved for Head of State by the government of India during his visit to India from 24 October 2004 to 29 October 2004.

China, India, Japan and Thailand have played key role to off-set sanctions by the United States and European Union and kept the oppressive military regime alive.

Legitimate questions have been raised as to the effectiveness of the sanctions. However, the neighbouring countries which advocate and practice "constructive engagement" have even refused to raise the issue of the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from solitary confinement. If the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from solitary confinement cannot figure in the "constructive engagement" with the SPDC, there is no alternative to the sanctions against Burma, despite its limited effectiveness.

Apart from the five permanent members, the other non-permanent members of the Security Council are Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Denmark, Greece, Japan, Philippines, Romania and Tanzania. It is unfortunate that the discussion on the situation of human rights in Burma ended without any decision. The UNSC must consider taking appropriate actions to expedite the process of national reconciliation in Burma in the near future. ■

III. Special Rapporteur's Report to UNGA

In his interim report (A/60/221) to the UN General Assembly, the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar outlined deplorable human rights situation in the country. Since November 2003, the Special Rapporteur has not been able to undertake fact-finding mission in Myanmar due to denial of permission by the military regime. The Special Rapporteur has, however reportedly continued to fulfill his mandate on the basis of information collected from a variety of independent and reliable sources.

Key findings of the SR's Report

- The 2005 Session of the National Convention meant for transition to democracy in Myanmar was held in Yangon on 17 February 2005. Representation wise, the National Convention was confined to participation only by members of Government sponsored associations and there were reports of civilian population being forced to attend mass meetings to demonstrate its support for the National Convention. The National Convention Convening Commission reportedly invited only the invitees to the last session of the Convention in 1996. Majority of the political parties that won the 1990 elections, including the National League for Democracy, did not join the reconvened National Convention.
- From the ethnic nationality parties, only six of them attended the latest session of the National Convention in Yangon. These are: Kokang Democracy and Unity Party, Union Kayin League, Union Pa-O National Organization, Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organization, Lahu National Development Party and Wa National Development Party.
- The situation regarding the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms has not substantially changed during the reporting period. Civilians, including members of registered political parties and pro-democracy activists, continue to be harassed, arrested, tried and sentenced to prison for the peaceful exercise of basic civil and political rights and freedoms. All NLD offices remain shut, with the exception of its headquarters in Yangon, and political party members are consistently liable to politically motivated prosecution and incarceration. On 7 February 2005, at least 10 political activists were arrested for participating in a meeting of senior representatives of the Shan ethnic nationality. On 8 April 2005, a Member of Parliament-elect of Shan State, U Kyaw Khin, was sentenced, for the second time, to 14 years' imprisonment. He was accused of distributing a leaflet describing the list of awards won by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and photocopying them without permission. This second arrest came only seven weeks after his release on 3 January 2005 from prison, where he had been detained since 1996. On 1 and 6 June, respectively, Win Aung and Soe Win, two

NLD leaders, were arrested and later sentenced on 8 July to 13 years' imprisonment on charges of possessing and watching a video of a political tour by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and for reading a book by an exiled journalist. On 13 June 2005, Ko Aung Myo San, U Ba Myint, U Ba Tint and Ko Khin Kyaw, all NLD leaders, and Ko Thet Naing Aung, member of the Democratic Party for a New Society, were reportedly given life sentences for distributing a political pamphlet. On 12 July 2005, the military reportedly arrested and sentenced scores of political party activists, including NLD leader and renowned cartoonist, Chit Swe. As on July 2005, there were reportedly remain over 1,100 political prisoners in Myanmar, including monks, lawyers, teachers, journalists, farmers, politicians, student leaders, writers and poets.

- There are allegations of the pervasive and systematic use of torture and ill treatment by the authorities against persons in pre-trial detention that included subjecting detainees to prolonged deprivation of sleep, food and water during initial interrogation, which may stretch over a period of days. Between January and July 2005, at least four deaths in custody have been reported. In May 2005, Aung Hlaing Win, an NLD activist, was arrested and ten days later his family was informed by the authorities that he had "passed away unexpectedly". However, an autopsy found 24 external wounds on his body, three fractured ribs and a broken rib that caused bruising to the heart, indicating that he had been tortured.
- Incommunicado detentions are common and political activists are often arrested and detained without the knowledge or notification of their families. The authorities continue to deny detainees access to relatives, legal professionals or other external persons for considerable periods of time after arrest and, in the vast majority of cases, until after the detainees have been sentenced. The detainees have little or no access to legal counsel or the means by which they might prepare their own defence.
- Health problems of prisoners that have been caused or exacerbated by their conditions of detention are not being adequately addressed. The most common complaints are heart disease, mental illness, hypertension and illnesses related to malnutrition. In spite of the urgent requirements of several prisoners for specialist treatment, the authorities are often slow to act upon the requests of medical professionals and in some cases deny access outright.

The Special Rapporteur expressed concerns that serious human rights violations continue to be perpetrated against Myanmar's ethnic minority communities, which constitute approximately 35 per cent of the country's population. Widespread reports of forced labour, rape and other sexual

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IV. Burmese Refugees in India: Who cares?

There are reportedly more than 65,000 Burmese refugees in India. Over 1,500 of them live in New Delhi and the rest are in Northeast Indian states bordering Burma. While about 1200 of them living in New Delhi have been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees, the rest are undocumented. Only in New Delhi, there are about 400 undocumented Burmese refugees. UNHCR is only based in New Delhi and has no access to the areas in the northeast Indian states bordering Burma where majority of the refugees live and therefore, remain undocumented. The fact that India is neither a state party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol nor has any domestic law or specific national policy concerning refugees, has been adversely affecting the rights of the Burmese refugees. They are often treated as foreigners and therefore, susceptible to violations of their rights.

Security

Security remains a serious concern for the Burmese refugees in India. Following the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission pursuant to the complaints of the Asian Center for Human Rights, government of India stated that Burmese asylum seekers can reside in New Delhi subject to grant of refugee status. This decision is subject to relations between Burmese Government and Government of India. There is always a fear of being harassed, arrested and persecuted, more so for refugees who have not been recognized as 'refugees' by the UNHCR. UNHCR has given final rejection letter to most of the refugees.

Survival

A part from security risk, survival remains a serious concern for the Burmese refugees both in New Delhi and Northeast Indian states. In the absence of assistance from the Government of India the refugees have to be completely self sustainable. In New Delhi, even the conditions of a few, who are receiving Subsistence Allowance (SA) from the UNHCR are not better as most of them have to share their SA with other members of the community or relatives not receiving such allowance. Their conditions deteriorated further due to decrease in their Subsistence Allowance by half from the sixth month of grant of SA by the UNHCR.

The conditions of the Burmese refugees living in Mizoram and other northeast Indian states are equally deplorable. In the absence of documentation, the refugees are not able to move freely to find work and wherever there is work, they are often discriminated, harassed and paid lesser. Moreover, there is stiff

V. Who's behind Indo-Burma border drug smuggling? by - Surajit Khound

Burma is the world's second largest opium producer and the largest producer of amphetamine tablets. The military-ruled country shares 1643 km international border with India's North Eastern states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Given the porous border, militancy problem in the North East India, political instability in Burma and lack of suitable policy to address the problem, drug trafficking has been going on unabated.

In 1994 governments of India and Burma signed a border trade agreement under which Indians and Burmese are allowed unrestricted access to an area spanning 40 kilometers on each side of the border. The agreement has come handy for the drug peddlers to carry out illegal activities along the border areas. Close ties between the people of Burma and India have made drug peddling an easy job.

There is also allegation that the Burmese police and army are involved in drug trafficking. There have reports of involvement of insurgent groups from both sides of the border.

Mizoram

Drug flows freely from Burma into Mizoram which shares a porous international border of 510 km with Burma. Due to political instability in Burma, a section of people has taken up trafficking of drug as a means of livelihood. Heroin, known locally as 'No-4' is available in various Mizoram-Burma border areas and is generally brought to India from Burma through Champhai. According to YMA sources, 730 villages along the Indo-Burma border have been affected by drug use.

Though no proper survey has yet been carried out to determine the number of drug affected people, there are hundreds of drug addicts in Mizoram.

Nagaland

Nagaland shares border areas with the Tuensang and Mon districts of Burma where opium, cannabis and heroin trading is a serious problem. According to reports, opium is cultivated in the remote areas of Mon district, inhabited by the Kanyak community. Opium cultivation areas are scattered in the hills making them difficult to locate and destroy. Much of the drug comes from Manipur which shares border with Burma.

According to available information, in the past six months, 20,000 kg of cannabis, 400 gm of heroin and two kg of opium have been seized by various agencies. All the drugs are believed to have come from Burma.

Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh shares a vast border with Burma. The state is known as major opium producer and its residents

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have a close relationship with Burma. Singpho is a major Arunachal Pradesh tribe known to have a good relationship with Burma's Kachin. According to a Singpho National Council report, almost 60 per cent of Singphos are opium addicts. Most of them have reportedly switched over to 'No-4', generally bought from Burma through Joirampur, where the drug is cheap.

According to Bisa Latnong, the Singpho King, the drug menace is so alarming among the Singpho community that unless "comprehensive steps" are taken immediately to address the problem, "the Singpho community will vanish from the region".

Insurgent groups are allegedly involved in drug trafficking in Arunachal Pradesh.

Yet, no proper survey has been carried out to determine the number of addicts in the state.

Manipur

There are reportedly about 50,000 drug addicts in Manipur, which is the worst affected state in the region. Cannabis is a major problem for the state which produces more than 50 percent of the entire crop in the country. Several major cultivation areas in Manipur are reportedly controlled by armed opposition groups and are linked to the Burma border with routes used by drug smugglers.

A difficult problem to solve

While there is lack of appropriate policy on the parts of both of the governments of India and Burma and cooperation between the two governments, alleged involvement of the Burmese police and the army in the drug trade is serious. According to a 26-year-old Kuki woman identified as Himjaseng Vaiphei who was arrested in Imphal recently with 400gm of heroin, fellow traffickers bought heroin from Burma with the help of Burmese police. Himjaseng Vaiphei, who is now in jail, said bribes were paid to Burmese officials depending on the amount of drugs being trafficked.

On 27 September 2005, Indian and Burmese authorities held an important meeting in Moreh and have reportedly agreed to share information on drug trafficking. An estimated 27 similar meetings have taken place since 2001 but failed to yield any result.

Absence of democracy in Burma and prevailing political instability which has displaced hundreds of people and deprived their livelihood have been responsible for drug trafficking by such people. There have also been reports of involvement of insurgent groups from both sides of the border in drug trafficking.

Mass education and awareness about the ills of drug

consumption, rehabilitation centers for the addicts and participation by the civil society will help to fight drug menace. But the YMA-styled vigilante violence cannot be accepted in any civilized society. These methods do not address the roots of the problem. The solution of the drug trafficking is interlinked with political instability in Burma. ■

Controlling drug addiction: The YMA style

In order to free Mizoram from the menace of drug and alcohol, the social organizations like the Young Mizo Associatino and the Mizo Zirlai Pawl have launched coordinated campaign against the users of drug. Sometimes the campaigns turn violent and resulted in serious violations of human rights including torture and killings.

On 10 October 2005, 32-year old man identified as Zothantluanga, an alleged drug addict and petty thief, died at Aizawl civil hospital due to severe beatings at the hands of YMA activists at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl. The deceased was apprehended by members of the 'M' section of Mission Vengthlang YMA branch at about 9:30 pm on 9 October 2005 and severely beaten up for his alleged burglary in the Presbyterian Women's hostel. The Kulikawn police have registered a case in this matter and have arrested six office bearers of 'M' section of the locality's YMA branch.

On the night of 2 June 2005, Lalthanngura alias Ngurtea (35) was allegedly severely beaten up by YMA activists after picking him up from his house at Bawngkawn on the accusation of drinking wine. The next day the victim was admitted at Aizawl Civil Hospital with brain haemorrhage. A head scan revealed internal bleeding at two places. The mother of the victim filed a complaint with Banwgkawn police naming V. Lalkunga, president of the Kumpuan committee chairman and Vanlalfela, an executive member of the YMA branch, as the perpetrators. On the other hand, YMA Banwgkawn branch president Rinawma Sailo said the man had hit his head against a concrete post when they tried to tie up his hands.

On 4 June 2005, activists of Central Young Mizo Association's Supply Reduction Service beat up six women and six men after tying their hands behind and blindfolding them after liquor was recovered from their houses during a raid in Rangvamual locality in Aizawl. They were later handed over to the Mizoram Excise police.

While YMA-led anti-drug awareness campaign is a noble effort, the fact that YMA activists take the law into their hands to punish the accused is unacceptable.

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violence, extortion and expropriation by Government forces continue to be received. While those in areas where counter-insurgency operations are taking place are particularly badly affected, there are also reports of violations in ceasefire areas, where large contingents of Government forces continue to be present. Numerous violations of humanitarian law by these forces are still being reported. Allegations of human rights abuses by members of non-State armed groups have also been received. A widespread culture of impunity persists, in which victims of violations rarely have recourse to redress.

The Special Rapporteur reported about ongoing allegations of forced labour throughout Myanmar, and particularly in ethnic minority states. Men, women and children are forcibly made to perform duties such as road repair and construction, portering for the military, sentry duty, transport of military supplies, forced rice and tea cultivation, rock-breaking, digging, gathering of firewood, construction, bush and scrub clearance, fencing of military barracks and compounds and digging of military bunkers and trenches. Civilian vehicles and their owners are frequently requisitioned to transport military supplies. In many instances, those who are not in a position to undertake forced labour duties are allegedly obliged to pay a sum to cover the hire of another to go in their place. Fees such as a "porter" or "self-reliance development" fee for road construction are regularly extorted by Government forces in lieu of forced labour. Civilians living in counter-insurgency areas who are unable to carry out their forced labour duties are particularly vulnerable to reprisals and collective punishment. Cases of severe punishment of those who are unable, unwilling or too weak to carry out orders continue to be received. Several cases have been brought to the attention of the Special Rapporteur of persons who have been conscripted as porters and have become too weak to carry their loads or keep up with the military column (owing to a lack of food, water or medical care)

often being beaten and, in some instances, summarily executed.

In fact Government of Myanmar announced that at a press conference that anyone making what it deemed to be false allegations of forced labour, or found to be reporting such allegations to the International Labour Organization (ILO), would face prosecution. The restrictions placed on the ILO liaison officer were increased.

The ceasefire groups have also allegedly insisted upon forced labour by the civilian population for tasks including clearing tracts through the jungle and preparing land for crop cultivation.

There have been reports of forcible recruitment and training of children both by security forces and non-State armed groups.

Sexual violence committed by Government personnel against women and children allegedly continues. Civilians in ethnic minority areas such as Shan, Kayin, Kayah and Mon states have allegedly been particularly vulnerable to such violations. Documented reports of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage continue to be received. Such incidents have resulted in the restricted movement of women, who allegedly are often fearful of working in the fields or travelling unaccompanied. It is reported that prosecution of the alleged perpetrators rarely takes place.

The imposition of arbitrary taxes is reportedly commonplace. Random and temporary checkpoints are understood to be periodically erected and "taxes" demanded from the civilian population. Reports have been received that many farmers have been prohibited from selling their rice and bran to anyone other than the military. They are allegedly forcibly obliged to sell produce at a price fixed by the authorities that is many times lower than the market price. Others were compelled to make a payment to the authorities before they could harvest their crops. ■

Burmese Refugees Continued to page 4

competition for work, as the problem of unemployment is acute in the Northeast. Despite programs aimed at self-reliance, the fact is refugees need financial help. Other possible support options could include ration cards and reduced school fees for their children who study in Delhi's schools.

Rehabilitation

This has been a major failure of UNCHR for a variety of reasons. Many refugees lack the motivation to work due to low employment and wage rates, language problems and a

lack of skills.

Providing jobs and placements after UNHCR assisted training, supporting existing Burma groups, personal 'adoption' and support for small businesses would go a long way to help rehabilitate Burmese refugees. Indian Civil Society, especially those non-governmental organisations receiving assistance from government and international donors should put together with their resources to help Burmese refugees. ■

VI. UNHCR's complicity for torture of asylum seekers

On the night of 12 November 2003, over 100 Burmese refugees were brutally assaulted by the Delhi Police for protesting in front of UNHCR's office. Many were arrested

and continue to face various charges. The use of disproportionate force by the Delhi Police is attributed to the UNHCR's urge to use "whatever action is necessary", despite the knowledge about the use of disproportionation force by police in India. The allegations of UNHCR were unsubstantiated and vehemently denied by the protestors.



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

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10 November 2003

Sub: Burmese Demonstrators in front of UNHCR Office

Dear Ms. Wadhwa,

I write to you in regard to a matter of increasing concern to this Office.

You may be aware that a group of 150-200 Burmese has been demonstrating in front of the UNHCR Office since 20 October 2003. The demonstrators have put forward two demands, the first is for **prima facie recognition** of all Burmese who leave Myanmar and the second is that all Myanmarese refugees should be resettled from India. We have not been able to establish the names of those who are demonstrating, nor their identity, but believe that they comprise mainly of individuals whose refugee status has been rejected by this Office.

We have had two meetings with different representatives of the group and have intimated to them that UNHCR cannot accede to their requests. We do not see any reason for this group to be treated differently from other asylum applicants and therefore they would need to adhere to the procedures established by this Office in regard to their application for refugee status.

This is the fourth week of the demonstration and although the demonstrators have by and large been peaceful, there have been a few occasions when they had been agitated. This occurred when the police and UNHCR staff had tried to remove provocative posters, which they had put up against the wall and gate of the UNHCR Office.

The local police, namely the Station House Officer of the Lodi Road Police Station, has been very helpful in providing police support for the Office, although we are concerned that this has not been possible in a timely manner on a few occasions.

Ms. Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa,
Joint Secretary to the Govt. of India (UN),
Ministry of External Affairs,
South Block,



My Office has also written to the DCP (South) Hanz Khas, to request urgent intervention and had also met with the ACP (South), to discuss the matter with him. In addition, we had also spoken over the telephone with the Additional District Commissioner of Police. It would appear that despite expressing our concern, the police seem not to be in a position to take any action to disperse the demonstrators.

We met with the Commissioner of Police on Friday, 7 November 2003, to express to him directly our increasing concern that the situation could deteriorate in view of the increasing frustration among the demonstrators. The Commissioner agreed to look into the matter, but was not able to advise on what action he would take.

We have also informed the Foreigners' Regional Registration Office, given the fact that the demonstrators are Myanmarese.

Many of the demonstrators have spent the past weeks sleeping at night in the open, behind the Office. This has led to extremely unhealthy conditions at the back, given the lack of toilet and water sanitation.

Today, 10 November 2003, I was compelled to close the Refugee Reception, as the demonstrators had defecated all over the area and had also deliberately dirtied the doors and walls of the premises at the back. Our staff were not able to function under such conditions. We therefore had no other option but to close the Refugee Reception today leaving upto 100 refugees without the service they expect from UNHCR.

The lack of action on the part of the authorities appears to have emboldened the demonstrators and we are concerned that should the situation not be resolved soon, the demonstrators will grow increasingly desperate and violent. They have today thrown excreta into our compound from the front gate without any immediate reaction from the police witnessing the event.

This being the 22nd day of the demonstration, we would urge the authorities to take whatever action is necessary to dispel the demonstrators.

Thank you for your kind understanding and urgent action.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lennart Kotdsalainen'.

Lennart Kotdsalainen
Chief of Mission