



THE OSLO CENTER
for Peace and Human Rights

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**59 Former Heads of State Call For Burma to Release World's Only
Imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize Laureate**

Letter Calls on Military Regime to Respond to United Nations

(Oslo and New York, May 15th) Today, former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik, who is Founder and President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, released a letter that he organized from 59 former heads of state calling for the military regime ruling the Southeast Asian country of Burma to release the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and prisoner of conscience Aung San Suu Kyi.

The letter urges the military regime to respect the UN Secretary-General's call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi of January 8, 2007, where he urged both her release and that of all other political prisoners in the country. The call for Ms. Suu Kyi's release was most recently reiterated by the UN in a statement released on May 10, 2007, by 14 UN human rights mandate holders led by UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, Prof. Paulo Pinheiro.

"I am immensely grateful for this global outpouring of support for Aung San Suu Kyi from so many former heads of state. It is a testament to the remarkable inspiration that she not only to her own people, but to me and so many countless others around the world," said Mr. Bondevik.

The call from the former Presidents and Prime Ministers was addressed to the head of Burma's ruling military junta Than Shwe and was copied to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and all 15 members of the UN Security Council.

The group included former leaders from Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America. In a highly unusual move, this large group of leaders across the political spectrum joined together on the effort, showing the unanimity of world opinion on the matter.

“The UN General Assembly, former UN Commission on Human Rights, ASEAN, European Union, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and many other countries have all called for Aung San Suu Kyi’s immediate release,” reads the letter. “We strongly urge you to respond to the United Nations and countless other countries and regional groupings around the world by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi before May 27th and committing to participate in peaceful, tripartite dialogue as outlined by the General Assembly.”

Importantly, the letter was signed by numerous former heads of state in Asia, including Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Filipino Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, Indonesian Presidents Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Sukarnoputri, Thailand Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed, Cambodian Prime Minister Ung Huot, East Timorese Prime Minister Mari Bin Amude Alkatiri, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, Indian Prime Ministers V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar, and Mongolian Prime Minister Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiin.

Aung San Suu Kyi is known for her charismatic Gandhian speeches calling for human rights and democracy in the Southeast Asian country of Burma. She led her political party the National League for Democracy and its allies to a landslide 82% victory in Burma’s last democratic election in 1990. The military regime has refused to recognize the results, and kept her under house arrest for more than 11 over the last 17 years, and continuously since the 2003 Depayin massacre where over 70 NLD supporters in a convey with Ms. Suu Kyi were murdered by a government-sponsored mob.

She has won over 60 international awards for her efforts to promote peaceful change in Burma, including the Sakharov Prize from the European Parliament and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from then-U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Her admirers include musicians Bono, Damien Rice, R.E.M., and Ani DiFranco, Nobel Peace Prize recipients Desmond Tutu, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, and Jody Williams, and countless political leaders and people around the world.

The letter points out that Suu Kyi’s current term of incarceration is scheduled to end on May 27, 2007, and that the UN Secretary-General publicly called for her release in January but received no response.

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May 15, 2007

Senior General Than Shwe
Naypyidaw
Burma

Dear Senior General Than Shwe:

We are writing this public letter to call for the immediate release of the world's only imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Her most recent term of house arrest is scheduled to end on May 27, 2007.

On January 8, 2007, new United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on you to release Aung San Suu Kyi. May 27, 2007 affords an excellent opportunity to respond to his request.

Indeed, the UN General Assembly, former UN Commission on Human Rights, ASEAN, European Union, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, and many other countries have all called for Aung San Suu Kyi's immediate release.

The 2006 UN General Assembly resolution on Burma, which passed overwhelmingly, expressed "grave concern" at "the extension of the house arrest of the General Secretary of the National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi" and strongly called upon your government to "to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, including National League for Democracy leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo."

Aung San Suu Kyi is not calling for revolution in Burma, but rather peaceful, nonviolent dialogue between the military, National League for Democracy, and Burma's ethnic groups. The UN General Assembly resolution, and 15 previous resolutions also support this approach.

We strongly urge you to respond to the United Nations and countless other countries and regional groupings around the world by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi before May 27th and committing to participate in peaceful, tripartite dialogue as outlined by the General Assembly.

Sincerely,

1. The Honorable Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín
Former President of Argentina (1983-1989)
2. The Honorable Mari Bin Amude Alkatiri
Former Prime Minister of East Timor (2002-2006)
3. The Honorable Sadiq Al-Mahdi
Former Prime Minister of Sudan (1966-1967, 1989-1989)
4. The Honorable Halldór Ásgrímsson
Former Prime Minister of Iceland (2004-2006)
5. The Honorable Corazon C. Aquino
Former President of the Philippines (1986-1992)

6. The Honorable Benazir Bhutto
Former Prime Minister of Pakistan (1988-1990)
7. The Honorable Kjell Magne Bondevik
Former Prime Minister of Norway (1997-2000, 2001-2005)
8. The Honorable Gro Harlem Brundtland
Former Prime Minister of Norway (1981, 1986-1989, 1990-1996)
9. The Honorable George H.W. Bush
Former President of the United States of America (1989-1993)
10. The Honorable Jerzy Buzek
Former Prime Minister of Poland (1997-2001)
11. The Right Honourable Kim Campbell
Former Prime Minister of Canada (1993)
12. The Honorable Jimmy Carter
Former President of the United States of America (1977-1981)
13. The Honorable Joaquim Alberto Chissano
Former President of Mozambique (1986-2005)
14. The Honorable William J. Clinton
Former President of the United States of America (1993-2001)
15. The Honorable Fernando Henrique Cardoso
Former President of Brazil (1995-2003)
16. The Honorable Chuan Leekpai
Former Prime Minister of Thailand (1992-1995, 1997-2001)
17. The Honorable Jacques Delors
Former President of the European Commission (1985-1995)
18. The Honorable Philip Dimitrov
Former Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1991-1992)
19. The Honorable Elbegdorj Tsakhiagiin
Former Prime Minister of Mongolia (1998, 2004-2006)
20. The Honorable José María Figueres
Former President of Costa Rica (1994-1998)
21. The Honorable Vigdís Finnbogadóttir
Former President of Iceland (1980-1996)
22. The Honorable César Augusto Gaviria Trujillo
Former President of Colombia (1990-1994)
Former Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (1994-2004)

23. The Honorable Luis Alberto Lacalle Herrera
Former President of Uruguay (1990-1995)
24. The Honorable Václav Havel
Former President of the Czech Republic (1990-2003)
25. The Honorable Thorbjørn Jagland
Former Prime Minister of Norway (1996-1997)
26. The Honorable Lionel Jospin
Former Prime Minister of France (1997-2002)
27. The Honorable Kim Dae-jung
Former President of South Korea (1998-2003)
28. The Honorable Junichiro Koizumi
Former Prime Minister of Japan (2001-2006)
29. The Honorable Aleksander Kwaśniewski
Former President of Poland (1995-2005)
30. The Honorable Ricardo Froilán Lagos Escobar
Former President of Chile (2000-2006)
31. The Honorable Árpád Göncz
Former President of Hungary (1990-2000)
32. The Honorable Kenneth Kaunda
Former President of Zambia (1974-1991)
33. The Honorable Lee Hong-Koo
Former Prime Minister of South Korea (1994-1995)
34. The Honorable Paavo Lipponen
Former Prime Minister of Finland (1995-2003)
35. The Honorable Mahathir Mohamed
Former Prime Minister of Malaysia (1981-2003)
36. The Right Honourable Sir John Major, KG CH PC
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1990-1997)
37. The Honorable Megawati Sukarnoputri
Former President of Indonesia (2001-2004)
38. The Honorable Rexhep Meidani
Former President of the Republic of Albania (1997-2002)
39. The Honorable Benjamin William Mkapa
Former President of Tanzania (1995-2005)

40. The Right Honourable Martin Brian Mulroney
Former Prime Minister of Canada (1984-1993)
41. The Honorable Davíð Oddsson
Former Prime Minister of Iceland (1991-2004)
42. The Honorable Andrés Pastrana Arango
Former President of Colombia (1998-2002)
43. The Honorable Göran Persson
Former Prime Minister of Sweden (1996-2006)
44. The Honorable Fidel V. Ramos
Former President of the Philippines (1992-1998)
45. The Honorable Poul Nyrup Rasmussen
Former Prime Minister of Denmark (1993-2001)
46. The Honorable Mary Robinson
Former President of Ireland (1990-1997)
47. The Honorable Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé
Former President of the Republic of Bolivia (2005-2006)
48. The Honorable Petre Roman
Former Prime Minister of Romania (1989-1991)
49. The Honorable Amos Claudius Sawyer
Former President of Liberia (1990-1994)
50. The Honorable Chandra Shekhar
Former Prime Minister of India (1990-1991)
51. The Honorable Vishwanath Pratap Singh
Former Prime Minister of India (1989-1990)
52. The Honorable Mário Soares
Former President of Portugal (1986-1996)
Former Prime Minister of Portugal (1976-1978, 1983-1985)
53. The Right Honourable Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1979-1990)
54. The Honorable Alejandro Toledo
Former President of Peru (2001-2006)
55. The Honorable Jorge Quiroga
Former President of Bolivia (2001-2002)
56. The Honorable Ung Huot
Former Prime Minister of Cambodia (1997-1998)

57. The Honorable Casam Uteem
Former President of the Republic of Mauritius (1992-2002)

58. The Honorable Abdurrahman Wahid
Former President of Indonesia (1991-2001)

59. The Honorable Lech Wałęsa
Former President of Poland (1990-1995)

cc: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Members of the UN Security Council

U Aung Shwe, Chairman, National League for Democracy



New York, 8 January 2007 - Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Myanmar

The Secretary-General has taken note of the decision by the Government of Myanmar on 3 January 2007 to grant amnesty to 2,831 prisoners. He welcomes reports that this includes the release of up to 40 political prisoners. The Secretary-General urges the Myanmar authorities to go beyond this first step by releasing all other political prisoners in the country, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and by making further concrete progress on all of the issues raised in the context of his good offices.



UN RIGHTS EXPERTS CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND ALL REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS

10 May 2007

This statement was issued today by 14 United Nations human rights mandate holders*:

“On 27 May, the current term of detention of the General-Secretary of the National League for Democracy comes to an end. Since her party and its allies won the 1990 election with over eighty percent of the Parliamentary seats, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been detained for 11 of the last 17 years without charge or trial. She has been held in isolation for the past four years.

As of one of the world's most acclaimed human rights defenders, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate is a major political and spiritual leader of Myanmar. Her tireless commitment to non-violence, truth and human rights has made her a worthy symbol through whom the plight of all people in Myanmar may be recognized.

We call on the Government of Myanmar to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally and to free all the remaining political prisoners. We believe this would give a significant sign of the Government's will to initiate a genuine and effective transition towards democracy.

The UN human rights experts believe that the stability of Myanmar is not well served by the arrest and detention of several political leaders or by the severe and sustained restrictions on the exercise of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights”.

*The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Ambeyi Ligabo; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Leandro Despouy; the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Yakin Ertürk; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Rodolfo Stavenhagen; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, Miloon Kothari; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Sigma Huda; and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit. Interview requests may be addressed to: press-info@ohchr.org