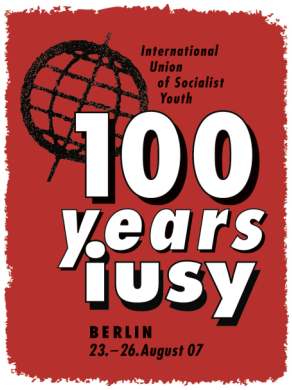

A struggle for Democracy takes its toll on the Burmese people: ongoing human rights abuses and violations in Burma (Myanmar)[1]

Burma (Myanmar) has been at the mercy of a cruel military dictatorship for more than four decades and not since 1988 when it unleashed an unmitigated slaughtering of more than 3000 people in the peaceful protests that took place have we seen such an act of defiance and call for democracy, as the protests that have taken place since August 5th this year.

These protests have come from the Burmese people following years of oppression, poverty and suffering. In August the military regime doubled the price of fuel which had dire effects on all households and the poorest of the poor thus sparking protests from all corners of the country. These protests were peaceful from the beginning and have continued to be so however the junta have not shown any tolerance towards this peaceful expression of dissent to this brutal regime which has for so long ignored the needs of Burmese people and perpetuated the political and economic hardship under which they live.

Since the crackdown on protestors the junta has locked down monasteries across Burma from which protesting monks have originated from. As civilians, in particular students continue to protest they have arrested many, fired upon crowds of protestors; baton charged groups of young people, reportedly killed 13 people, placed an extensive curfew on major cities and towns and have begun shutting down both internet and mobile phone communication within and from the country. The accumulation of these actions have turned the euphoria that precipitated amongst Burmese people at the beginning of the peaceful protests to tears as blood flows on the streets of Rangoon.

IUSY has long supported the people of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy, IUSY's member organisation the All Burma Students League (ABSL) and the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) in their struggle for peace, freedom and democracy. IUSY hails the brave Burmese people who have and continue to take to the streets nationwide to demonstrate their opposition to the ruling junta and their loud call for democracy and freedom. IUSY stands firm in its support and solidarity with all progressive and democratic forces who uphold these peaceful demonstrations.

IUSY strongly condemns the criminal violence perpetrated by the military regime against innocent civilians and calls upon the Burmese generals to immediately cease these attacks, release Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, and respect the lives and the rights of their citizens.

IUSY firmly believes that every country within the United Nations is obliged to respect fundamental human rights including freedom from arbitrary killing or arrest, freedom from torture or cruel treatment, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The International Red Cross counts 1550 political prisoners in Burma. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) estimate that 800,000 Burmese are subject to forced labour. The ruling Burmese military junta has violated all of these rights and we vigorously condemn them for doing so.

[1] Young European Socialists (ECOSY) also share the views expressed in this statement

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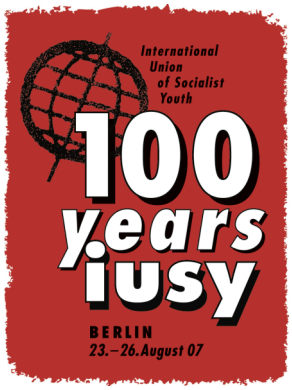

Thus, IUSY believes that the international community must bring the military regime to account for their actions and welcomes the swift response of the UN Human Rights Council to hold a special session on the situation in Burma (Myanmar). Moreover, IUSY welcomes the visit of the UN Secretary Generals special advisor on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari and hopes that his report will be taken fully on board by all member states especially regional powers such as China.

IUSY believes that all efforts must be made to bolster actions to support the Burmese people and the democratic forces within to overcome this situation and to put in place the institutions required to build a future of democracy, peace and prosperity.

IUSY call upon the UN Human Rights Council Special Session on Burma (Myanmar) to adopt a strong resolution which:

- Recognises the peaceful and non-violent methods of protest adopted by the people of Burma.
- Condemns the violent response to these peaceful demonstrations, and the ongoing serious violations of Human Rights undertaken by the ruling military junta,
- Requests the UNHRC to give due attention to the plight of young activists in particular young women and those from minority groups, who are at the forefront of the continued peaceful demonstrations.
- Calls on the international community and all nations to take all measures necessary to prevent the Burmese regime from continuing this course of action, and implement initiatives to this end, including imposing sanctions on the military dictatorship and holding those responsible accountable for the crimes committed
- Calls upon the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and regional powers such as India and China to take the steps required to guarantee the Burmese people their fundamental rights and a rapid transition to democracy, the only guarantee of regional stability.
- Requests the UNHRC special session to consider what steps should be taken to ensure communication and information is able to flow from within Burma. The international community must monitor the situation in Burma, and find methods of overcoming the lack of media access. The world must continue to watch, and to act on behalf of the people of Burma.
- Requests the UNHRC to ensure that the report and recommendations of the UN Special adviser on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari following his visit to Burma (Myanmar) are discussed both within it and the UN Security Council. Furthermore it requests the UNHRC to ensure that it fully implements all aspects of the recommendations related to Human Rights Violations and others that are within its remit. Close co-operation is a must between both bodies to ensure maximum effect and a future for all Burmese people within a democratic and rights based framework.
- Requests monitoring of the exodus of people out of Burma (Myanmar) due to the unrest, deteriorating humanitarian situation and political oppression and to take measures to ensure their safety and rights are protected under International Law. Member States should be ready to act promptly in dealing with asylum requests. Co-operation with the UNHCR should be sought to assist neighboring countries such as Thailand in dealing with a potential influx of Burmese refugees.

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