

Dr. Luís Filipe Marques Amado
President of the
Council of Ministers of the European Union

14th November 2007
Ref: B718

Dear Dr Amado,

EU action on Myanmar – forthcoming opportunities

Six weeks after the brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters in Myanmar in September, serious human rights violations continue unabated in the country. Widespread arbitrary detentions, hostage taking, beatings and torture in custody and enforced disappearances clearly disprove any claims from the Myanmar authorities that the situation in the country has returned to normal.

The continued detention of some 700 political prisoners in appalling conditions is a key concern, and at least 72 individuals can be classified as cases of enforced disappearances as the authorities have failed to account for their whereabouts. In addition, the authorities have failed to account for the people killed during the crackdown, and an increasing number of those arrested in connection with the protests have already been sentenced in proceedings which do not comply with international fair trial standards. These continuing human rights violations belie recent commitments made by the Myanmar authorities to co-operate with the United Nations. It is therefore vital that the international community is aware that the situation in the country has not improved, and that it continues to be vigilant, and sustains pressure on the Myanmar government to address the grave and ongoing human rights violations in the country.

The EU has made a number of strong statements on the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, and has also made demarches to strategic countries in the region. Piero Fassino was also appointed last week as EU Special Envoy for Myanmar. These actions constitute welcome pressure, highlighting that the international community is monitoring events inside the country. Amnesty International would like to reiterate the importance of EU pressure, and also to highlight that a number of clear opportunities are coming up, in which the EU can discuss the situation in Myanmar and the international response to it, with countries in the region who have particular influence over the Myanmar authorities.

We welcome that the matter will be on the agenda at the 22 November EU-ASEAN summit. In addition, the EU summits with China on 28 November, and with India on 30 November, constitute important opportunities to urge the key actors in the region to emphasise to Myanmar the urgent need to:

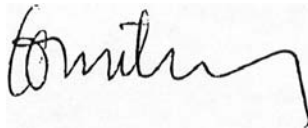
- immediately and unconditionally release all of those who were arrested for exercising their right to freedom of expression or assembly during the crackdown, as well as all prisoners of conscience held before the recent events;
- reveal the identity and location of all detainees, guarantee their wellbeing, and allow immediate and independent access to them, including, but not limited to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, the ICRC, as well as the UN and EU special envoys; and
- co-operate fully with the UN, including by complying with the substantive demands set out in the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 2 October 2007, many of which were repeated in the UN Security Council presidential statement of 11 October 2007.

The EU should also reiterate in these meetings with third countries, the importance it places on its arms embargo to Myanmar. It is imperative that Myanmar's principal sources of arms, in particular China and India, in addition to ASEAN nations, stop supplying military and security equipment to the

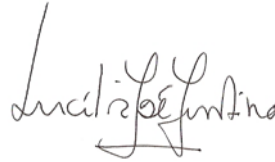
Myanmar authorities. A comprehensive and mandatory international arms embargo on Myanmar is urgently needed to facilitate this.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We would be very happy to provide further briefing on the current situation in Myanmar in the run up to these events.

Yours sincerely,



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Amnesty International EU Office



Lucília José Justino
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Cc:

Javier Solana, High Representative for CFSP
Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations
Riina Kionka, Mr Solana's Personal Representative on Human Rights