



Mr. Javier Solana
European Union High Representative
Secretary General CFSP,
European Council,
175 rue de la Loi,
1040 Brussels

19 June 2003

Dear Mr. Solana

The recent violent crackdown in Burma serves to confirm that which has been obvious for some time: strong words are ineffective tools for removing the despotic regime and enabling democracy to emerge.

Yet it seems clear that even in response to this most vicious of attacks on the democracy movement, the European Union is satisfied with merely rolling out the same platitudes. In response to a dramatic upsurge in state savagery, the best response you could manage was "This repressive behaviour... will most certainly reinforce the European Union's resolve to stick to the current policy of sanctions against the military regime." (Nr: S0119/03, June 2 2003)

No doubt the regime will be happy that the EU will continue its 'current policy of sanctions' as long as this policy means that the EU will still be economically and diplomatically supporting them. While the EU has made strong statements, economic investment in Burma – the lifeline of the junta – continues to pour in from Europe. Imports from Burma to the EU increased by 545% in the five years to 2001¹, despite the strong language of the 1996 Common Position 96/635/CFSP and subsequent extensions.

No doubt this 500 million euros provided to the generals through exports to EU countries says a lot more to the regime than further accusations of repressive behaviour. Harsh words will mean little to the thick-skinned junta while European corporations like *Totalfinael* invest heavily in resource development and *Lauda Air* flies tourists direct from Vienna to Yangon, against the clear wishes of Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi. The current international outcry against the regime means that **now is the time for the EU to implement commercial sanctions against the Burmese junta.**

Additionally the visa sanctions appear to have had little effect, with military leaders reported to be frequently entering the EU. While welcoming the European parliament's emergency resolution P5_TA-PROV(2003) 0272 which:

6. Calls on the Council to implement immediately the extension of the visa ban and assets freeze, as agreed in its aforementioned Common Position 2003/297/CFSP, the implementation of which was suspended until 29 October 2003 in the hope, now clearly lost, of progress being made towards the restoration of democracy and human rights;

it is doubtful whether such an official return to implementation will result in the dictators actually having their visas banned. The success of applying diplomatic and economic pressure must surely now be fully reviewed and strengthened. **Sanctions must be widened and strengthened, and enforcement mechanisms put in place** to make sure the actions of the EU live up to its fine words.

¹ Source: Eurostat, courtesy of Online Burma/Myanmar Library <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/>

The United States has taken the lead in applying stronger pressure for change in Burma. The EU must now rise to this standard and ensure that European companies are no longer able to prop up this regime. The EU must also pressure nations such as Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, India, China and Australia, as well as ASEAN as an organisation, to reverse their policy of 'constructive engagement' with the generals, as this latest attack has proven such efforts to be at least futile and at worst a means of providing the regime with license to kill.

Further, the situation is long overdue for consideration by the UN Security Council. We urge the European Community to bring the voice of the repressed majority of Burmese into the UN Security Council so that still stronger measures can be taken to enable peaceful campaigners like Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo to carry out their activities according to fundamental human rights principles. We urge you to **convince the permanent members of the UN Security Council to call a special meeting on Burma**. Additionally, **the elected leaders of Burma should be given a seat at the UN**, in place of the military diplomats currently occupying the seat.

These democracy campaigners must be immediately freed from detention. Their safety must be guaranteed. Their fellow 1,300 political prisoners must be released. Their party must be allowed to operate without facing repression. Universities must be re-opened. Those responsible for the massacre on May 30-31 must be held to account. Talks for national reconciliation must re-commence. All of this must of course happen, but unless increased economic and diplomatic pressure is applied, the generals will just slip back to their old ways, more peaceful democracy activists will die needlessly and human rights will remain a fading dream for the people of Burma.

Yours sincerely

Michel Genet & Gaëtan Vanloqueren
Spokespersons, Actions Birmanie