

# Let's Call It Trust

Wednesday 28 May 2008, by [Kyaw Zwa Moe](#) (Date first published: 27 May 2008).

**The ruling generals, the UN, Asean countries and others have all advocated not politicizing Burma's humanitarian crisis. Ok, let's not politicize the humanitarian issue.**

**So have the aid access and funding issues been solved? Of course not.**

So what's keeping the world from dealing effectively with the on-going humanitarian crisis? The issues are transparency, accountability and then credibility. That sounds a lot like trust, right?

Unfortunately, the military government has a recent history of being one of the most untrustworthy in the world.

The chief of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Surin Pitsuwan, told a recent press conference that one of Burma's credibility problems is in regard to its casualty statistics and aid effort.

In fact, almost no one believes anything in regard to the military government's statements and statistics. The junta has had no credibility in any area of its governance since 1988, when it took power by force.

The international will to donate money and material to aid the cyclone victims is clearly there, on the table. It's only waiting for the junta to prove it can be trusted.

*"The problem is not the generosity, but the problem is one of establishing greater trust between Myanmar and the world community,"* said Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo, who co-hosted the international pledging conference in Rangoon on Sunday.

The military regime said it needed about US \$11 billion for relief and reconstruction work. Can that figure be trusted? No one knows where it came from. The UN has appealed for \$201 million immediately to help Burma recover from the cyclone. But the amount pledged at the Sunday conference fell far short of the requested amount.

UN Chief Ban Ki-moon said last week that junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe assured him Burma would open up to "all aid workers." The paramount leader has yet to keep his promise.

Let's ask where and when the junta lost its credibility. The answer is easy, but politics can no longer be ruled off the table.

History recalls the day in 1990 when people across Burma cast their votes for democracy. The people thought they had elected a democratic government. The main opposition National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, was viewed as a symbol of democracy, won by a landslide. But the ruling generals broke their promise to honor the election result.

Before holding a constitutional referendum on May 10, the junta promised the referendum would be "free and fair." But the world saw no evidence of a "free and fair" election in the run up to the vote

or in the unbelievable vote totals. State-run media announced on Monday that the junta-drafted constitution had been approved by more than 92 percent of eligible voters. It was another in a long line of broken promises.

Coincidentally, an NLD spokesperson said the detention of its leader Nobel Peace Prize laureate Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for five years continuously since May 2003, expires at midnight on Tuesday. The current law allows five years detention under Act 10 (b) of the State Protection Act. Suu Kyi has been detained for more than 12 of the past 18 years.

Late Tuesday, the junta renewed Suu Kyi's house arrest for up to one year. The announcement came shortly after 15 NLD members were arrested on Tuesday as they marched toward Suu Kyi's home in a demonstration for her release.

The generals' callous disregard of their political promises in past decades is a clear example of why they lack credibility.

To take only the most recent examples, Than Shwe's pledge of open access, the referendum process and the renewed detention of Suu Kyi, it should be no surprise to the international community that credibility, transparency and accountability do not exist in Burma. But don't politicize that.

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**P.S.**

From The Irrawaddy News Magazine.

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