

# Burma protesters call for end to military ties

Tuesday 23 October 2007, by [Ayi Layah Mon](#), [GARFIELD Shua](#) (Date first published: 19 October 2007).

Sydney,

On October 13, 450 supporters of the Burmese democracy movement, including members of Sydney's Burmese community, trade unionists, and members of the Greens and the Socialist Alliance, rallied in Martin Place.

Protest organiser Maung Maung Than explained that the rally was to demand that the Australian government directly appeal to the Burmese military regime to negotiate with the Burmese opposition; end the training of Burmese military and police personnel by Australian officers; impose visa, scholarship, and financial sanctions on Burmese military officials and their families; and for Australian companies to withdraw from conducting business in Burma.

Than said that there had been thousands of arrests of protesters and democracy activists in Burma. He also called for Burma's membership of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) to be suspended.

Unions NSW representative Amanda Tattersal called for sanctions to be imposed against any company that deals with the Burmese regime.

An former political prisoner of the Burmese regime addressed the protesters saying: "The Australian government's targeted sanctions are not enough. It's a very important moment to step up our movement to demand [the regime] free Aung San Suu Kyi, negotiate with the National League for Democracy, and to demand international pressure."

Indigenous activist Jakalene X expressed Aboriginal solidarity with the Burmese people and Caroline Laurie from PEN, an international organisation of poets, essayists, and novelists, called attention to the imprisonment of writers in Burma who "mocked" the regime.

The protest concluded with a march to the Botanical Gardens, where a Buddhist ceremony was held.

**Shua Garfield**

*\* From: Australian News, Green Left Weekly issue #728 24 October 2007.*

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**RESISTANCE!**

**"Send the Burmese military regime into the dustbins of history!"**

Canberra,

@body intro = My name is Ayi Layah Mon and I am a member of the Mon Youth Group.

I am honoured to speak at this rally on behalf of the Mon Youth Group, which is a branch of the Australian Mon Association.

As an Aussie-Mon girl, my usual life was interrupted by images of the recent political turmoil in Burma.

My parents came here as refugees who had fled the country in 1988. They told me that Burma has been ruled by a group of generals since 1962, and the people of Burma have not enjoyed freedom or democracy since. They also told me that schools in Burma are very crowded and many schools don't even have a computer, and sometimes the Burmese soldiers would even come to the schools to arrest the students who had been part of the anti-government demonstrations.

Unlike us in Australia, students in Burma frequently joined in demonstrations against the corrupt generals, and many were killed in 1988.

While we in Australia constantly complain about the small things in our lives that have gone wrong, our counterparts in Burma are risking their lives for the greater good of Burma.

When I saw the images of the demonstration, which many of you may have seen, I felt angry and I wanted to do something about it.

So what can I do, what can we do? I think that we all can do a lot.

We can tell our friends that soldiers should not rule any country. We can tell them that the soldiers are making Burma poor. We can tell them that students and the youth in Burma are paying a great price and it's not even their fault. We can tell them that they can write to politicians or even the United Nations.

Finally, the students and the youth of Burma are suffering as much as their parents did from those tyrants. I strongly believe that we, in Australia, can make a difference by helping send the Burmese military regime into the dustbins of history.

**Ayi Layah Mon**

[Ayi Layah Mon is a year 9 student in the ACT. This her speech at a Free Burma rally in Canberra.]

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**Free Burma!**

**5 October 2007**

Further protests in solidarity with the struggle for democracy in Burma have been held around Australia. On October 3, some 150 people gathered on the steps of Parliament House in Adelaide and the same day, 120 people marched in Cairns. The Burmese community in Sydney are holding protests every Thursday and on October 4, some 175 people rallied, calling on the Australian government to stop doing business with the ruling military regime. The Australian Coalition for

Democracy in Burma (ACDB) also wants the Howard government to extend the visa ban on the military regime to include their relatives and business partners; to downgrade the full embassy status of the Burmese regime in Canberra; and to withdraw Australian Federal Police training of Burmese police. To contact the ACDB, phone Maung Maung Than on 0411 337 816.

*\* From: Australian News, Green Left Weekly issue #727 10 October 2007.*