

The international community must back the people of Burma

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International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Paris, 25 September 2007 - *As the United Nations General Assembly opens discussions in New York, tens of thousands of demonstrators are marching through the streets of Rangoon and other major cities in Burma. FIDH salutes the courage of the men and women who have chosen to bravely defy one of the world's most repressive regimes.

«These protests are a turning point in Burma's history, the likes of which have not been witnessed since 1988. The junta has no choice but to begin a dialogue with the National League for Democracy», stated Olivier de Schutter, FIDH Secretary-General.

Yet the Minister for Religious Affairs, General Thura Myint Maung, has already threatened Burma's monks - at the heart of the protests - and promised to «take action» if the monks «act contrary to the rules and regulations in the authority of the Buddhist teachings». Such thinly veiled threats of violence are directed against what is a peaceful protest. As such, the reported activities and strategic positioning of government troops emphasises the importance and urgency of an international response.

We are launching an appeal to the international community, calling on it to act upon its responsibility to protect civilian populations and to evidence its resolve concerning the Burmese junta by deploying all United Nations instruments at the service of the people of Burma.

FIDH calls upon the member states of the United Nations, urgently, to:

- Convene a meeting of the Security Council and invoke the principle of «responsibility to protect», reaffirmed last year by the United Nations General Assembly, in calling the Burmese authorities to open a dialogue with the opposition ;
- Convene a special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council to recognise the failings of the Burmese authorities to implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Burma/Myanmar, and to respond to the serious deterioration in the human rights situation over recent months ;
- Adopt effective sanctions against the Burmese regime, including an arms embargo as well as a prohibition on foreign investment in

Burma's key natural resource industries (oil, gas, timber).

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