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<https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/14/burma-free-aung-san-suu-kyi>

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(New York) - All of Burma's international trade and aid partners should strongly condemn the renewed imprisonment of the democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, in the notorious Insein Prison, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch called on the UN secretary-general, members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, and India in particular to press the authorities for her immediate, unconditional release.

"Burma's military authorities have taken advantage of an intruder's bizarre stunt to throw Aung San Suu Kyi into one of Burma's most notorious and squalid jails on trumped-up charges," said Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "China and India, as Burma's main supporters, and ASEAN should condemn this injustice and use their leverage to push hard for her freedom."

New, spurious charges that she violated her house arrest relate to the unwanted intrusion into Aung San Suu Kyi's home on May 3-5, 2009, by John William Yettaw, an American who allegedly swam across Inya Lake in Rangoon to visit her.

On May 14, Special Branch police arrested Aung San Suu Kyi and her two live-in party supporters and domestic workers, Daw Khin Khin Win, and her daughter, Win Ma Ma, at Aung San Suu Kyi's home in Rangoon, and transferred the three to Insein Prison. Authorities charged them under Section 22 of the State Protection Act, which states, "any person against whom action is taken, who opposes, resists, or disobeys any order passed under this Law shall be liable to imprisonment for a period of from three years up to five years, or to a fine of up to 5,000 Kyats, or to both." The trial is set for May 18.

Burmese authorities have held Yettaw since his arrest on May 6. A US embassy official visited him on May 13. He was charged today under the same provision as Aung San Suu Kyi.

Human Rights Watch called on ASEAN member states, China, and India to put pressure on Burma's rulers to free Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and unconditionally, as well as more than 2,100 other political prisoners.

Burma's military government has announced elections for 2010, as the next step in their "road map to democracy," a sham political process that has dragged on for more than 15 years. Most of Burma's main trading partners and diplomatic supporters - China, India, Thailand, Singapore, and Russia - have repeatedly expressed support for the process. But in the past two years, arrests and intimidation of political activists have intensified. The number of political prisoners has doubled, offices of the Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition National League for Democracy party (NLD) have been forcibly closed, and freedom of expression, assembly, and association have been sharply curtailed.

"China, India, Singapore, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries should be calling for a genuine and participatory political process in Burma, which means serious public pressure for the release of political opponents," said Pearson. "Aung San Suu Kyi's latest arrest shows how their silence simply encourages more contempt for basic freedoms."

The United Nations has attempted mediation between Burma's military government and Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the NLD, calling for "national reconciliation" without success. Ibrahim Gambari, the current special adviser on Burma for the UN secretary-general, has visited Burma several times and met with Aung San Suu Kyi without obtaining any tangible results. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement today expressing "grave concern" and calling "on the government not to take any further action that could undermine" the process of national reconciliation.

"There is no process of national reconciliation whatsoever as long as political opponents like Aung San Suu Kyi are behind bars," said Pearson. "The UN has tried talking nicely to Burma's generals for years, but now the secretary-general should simply insist on Aung San Suu Kyi's unconditional release, from prison and from house arrest."

Aung San Suu Kyi, general secretary of the NLD and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, has spent more than 14 of the past 20 years under house arrest. She has been detained in Insein Prison only once before, following the Depayin incident, when a pro-government mob attacked her motorcade in upper Burma on May 30, 2003.

Her five-year house arrest detention order was set to expire at the end of May 2009, after authorities imposed a one year extension in 2008. Aung San Suu Kyi's health has deteriorated in the past two years. Last week, members of her party said she suffered acute dehydration and low blood pressure.

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