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Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
An Icon, Inspiration and Unifier for Peace
A Tribute & Call for Freedom on her 60th Birthday
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"In physical stature she is petite and elegant, but in moral stature she is a giant.

"Big men are scared of her. Armed to the teeth and they still run scared."

~ Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Introduction

June 19, 2005 is the auspicious day of Aung San Suu Kyi's 60th birthday. In societies around the world, the 60th birthday is regarded as a milestone – as a passage from one cycle of life to the next. In many societies it also marks the age of retirement, a time for serenity and leisure. Yet at 60 Aung San Suu Kyi's spirit and determination still drum strong, as does her role as an icon, inspiration and unifier for peace and freedom. However, the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi is our greatest reminder that we cannot be complacent. Very often the use of violence is criticized yet adequate support for peaceful means is not forthcoming. Today we use our voices to stand in solidarity with Aung San Suu Kyi and call for her immediate and unconditional release so that she may rightly fulfill her role as a leader in achieving unity, peace and freedom in Myanmar.

The Role of Aung San Suu Kyi`

Although Myanmar's military regime likes to belittle Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as "only 1 of 50 million people," her popularity continues to grow inside and outside Myanmar. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi symbolizes the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar and has a steadfast commitment to non-violence. Aung San Suu Kyi is a critical factor in uniting Myanmar as she enjoys widespread respect and confidence of the people, including ethnic nationalities and many political parties. It is critical that Aung San Suu Kyi be released immediately and be allowed to fully participate in the political process in Myanmar. The moral leadership and participation of Aung San Suu Kyi is an important part of creating a democratic, stable and prosperous Myanmar.

Who is Aung San Suu Kyi?

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Myanmar's martyred independence leader, General Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947 when she was only two years old. She spent much of her teenage life in India with her mother, who was Burma's ambassador to India at the time. She later moved to England where she studied at Oxford University and she met Michael Aris, a Tibetan scholar, whom she eventually married. They have two sons, Alexander and Kim.

Aung San Suu Kyi returned to Myanmar to care for her mother in 1988 after she suffered a stroke. She returned to Myanmar without her husband and sons, having warned them earlier that "duty may one day call her back to her homeland."¹

She was plunged into the nationwide democracy uprising and called for unity and discipline among the people in the face of the bloody crackdown by the military.

¹ "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 1". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

On August 26, 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi addressed a public rally at the revered religious site, Shwedagon Pagoda where an estimated half a million people, from all ethnic nationalities, came to hear her speak despite rumors the generals had planted bombs around the temple. There she spoke of “healing the country” and “promised she would do her utmost to restore democracy for the people.”²

Legitimacy

As the daughter of Burma’s martyred independence hero, General Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947 Aung San Suu Kyi has a very special place in the hearts and minds of many Burmese. Her leadership for peace and democracy, commencing with the nationwide uprising in 1988, has been extraordinary and of exalted importance to the people of Myanmar.

When the National League for Democracy (NLD) was formed in 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi became the General Secretary and remains so today.³ The overwhelming support of the Myanmar people for the NLD was demonstrated in the 1990 elections in which the NLD won 81% of the parliamentary seats totaling 392, while the government-backed party won only 10 seats.⁴ Support for the NLD crosses ethnic and social lines. In the elections the NLD won a majority of seats in several ethnic nationality states including Kachin, Karen and Mon States.⁵ In addition, it is evident by the results of the election, that many in the military forces cast their vote in support of Aung San Suu Kyi’s NLD party.

Despite efforts to marginalize Aung San Suu Kyi, her popularity endures in Myanmar. This is evident by the huge attendance at her speeches throughout the country in 2002-2003 and currently the more than half a million signatures of Myanmar citizens petitioning for her release from house arrest.⁶ The importance of these actions by the people in Myanmar are more significant when understood in the context of the Myanmar government, which routinely punishes and imprisons supporters of democracy and especially those who speak out in support of Aung San Suu Kyi. The strongest confirmation of Aung San Suu Kyi’s influence as a national unifier is that the military regime has repeatedly detained and arrested her for a total of more than nine years.

² Geok, Ang Chin, Asian ed, *Aung San Suu Kyi: Towards a New Freedom*, Singapore ; New York : Prentice Hall, 1998

³ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 1”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

⁴ Han, Khin Kyaw, *1990 Multi-Party Democracy General Elections*, 1 February 2003 available online -
www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Elections-01.htm

⁵ Han, Khin Kyaw, *1990 Multi-Party Democracy General Elections*, 1 February 2003 available online -
www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Elections-01.htm

⁶ Democratic Voice of Burma, *Burma junta prohibits opposition signature campaign*, 7 August 2004

National Unity and Stability

“Aung San Suu Kyi’s significance and value to regional security cannot be underestimated. She commands the respect and loyalty of diverse sections of Burmese society, including military officers. Her capacity as a conciliator and unifier presents the greatest hope for stability in Burma.”

~Kobsak Chutikul, former Thai diplomat & MP, October 2004

Aung San Suu Kyi stands out as possibly the only person in Myanmar that has the moral stature, nation-wide visibility, trust of the people and the ability to be an integral figure in restoring peace, unity and democracy in Myanmar.

Myanmar’s ethnic diversity is feared by the Myanmar government and being used as a strategy to divide the country and provide rationale for prolonged military rule. The military’s tactics of coercive ceasefire agreements and continued military offensives in several ethnic nationality states have deepened the distrust between ethnic nationalities and the Myanmar government.

A pillar of lasting peace and stability in Myanmar is genuine national unity with political franchise to all ethnic nationalities. Aung San Suu Kyi enjoys the confidence of most major ethnic nationality parties. She has actively worked to reach common understandings with ethnic leaders on principles of democracy, rooted in equal rights for ethnic nationalities in a genuine federal union.

Ethnic nationalities are represented within the NLD but Aung San Suu Kyi does not see the political party as the only way to enhance relations and build goodwill.

“So there is perfect understanding and friendship between us and ethnic nationality parties. We understand them. They want to represent their own states and that's no problem for us. We can still work together. We don't believe in a zero-sum situation. It doesn't mean that if we don't win, the party that wins becomes the enemy. In fact, we look on them as our allies, and we are very happy that our allies are well represented in their states.”⁷~ Aung San Suu Kyi, Time Magazine, 1999

The popularity of Aung San Suu Kyi in ethnic states was seen during her speeches throughout the country in 2002-2003. During these travels as many as 40,000 people turned out at each speech despite harassment and threats from local authorities.⁸

Aung San Suu Kyi’s country tour was abruptly ended by the military-backed attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and her convoy on May 30, 2003.⁹ The outcry from the country,

⁷ Burton, Sandra, *Aung San Suu Kyi: This government is not capable of running the economy*, Time Magazine Asia, 15 November 1999

⁸ US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma 2003*, Washington, DC, 25 February 2004 & Democratic Voice of Burma, *Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gets rousing welcome from 35,000 people in Kale*, 8 April 2003

including many ethnic nationality parties, further illustrates the importance and strong relationship between Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic nationalities.

Most recently, on April 30, 2005, the Ethnic Nationalities Council, the largest ethnic minority political alliance in Myanmar,¹⁰ wrote an open letter to Sr-Gen Than Shwe calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the initiation of genuine nationwide peace talks.¹¹

Dialogue and Non-Violence

In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her leadership and unwavering commitment to a nonviolent struggle for freedom and democracy in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership and influence is likened to that of Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, who both played a critical role in uniting their countries and building peace.

Non-violence

Despite numerous threats and attacks to her personal safety and the safety of her colleagues and supporters, Aung San Suu Kyi has always remained resolute in her commitment to nonviolence and encouraged others to embrace nonviolence as well.

“When we first came into town, I was so proud of the people because you did not use force or violence means to deal with the protests against us. And I honor your tolerance. People today here have shown what real strength is. Real strength does not involve violence.”¹² ~ Aung San Suu Kyi, Kyat Pyin, Shan State, May 2003, 5 days before the May 30th attack.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's dedication to non-violence has not wavered, even in the face of continued violent attacks against her.

- In April 1989, she narrowly escaped an assassination attempt as she confronted an army unit while speaking at a major public rally for democracy in the Irrawaddy Delta. The unit was waiting for the order to fire when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi approached the soldiers, calmly reasoned with them and defused the situation.¹³

⁹ For example: Washington Post, *Crackdown in Burma*, 3 June 2003 & NCGUB News Desk, *Scores Killed in Junta Attack on NLD Motorcade*, 1 June 2003

¹⁰ The Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) is the largest non-Burman ethnic political alliance in Myanmar. It has 9 council members representing the National Democratic Front (NDF), United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD-LA), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), National United Party of Arakan (NUPA), Shan Democratic Union (SDU), and Kachin National Organization (KNO).

¹¹ Irrawaddy, *ENC Calls for Action*, 6 May 2005

¹² Altsean-Burma, *On the Road to Depayin: Speeches by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, May 2003 Available online - www.altsean.org

¹³ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 1”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003 www.dassk.org

- On 9 November 1996, 200 men attacked Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade in Rangoon with iron bars and sticks in an assault.¹⁴ The attackers were members of the Union Solidarity Development Organization (USDA), a junta-sponsored group. One month prior to the attack, Aung San Suu Kyi said a SLORC (former name of SPDC) minister told a USDA meeting that she should be killed.¹⁵ This attack was used as an excuse to close down her weekend gate-side rallies.
- In 1998, she was twice detained when police blockaded her car as she attempted to leave Rangoon to meet with NLD officials. The first, a five-day stand off, was forcibly ended when the military seized her car, restrained her and drove the car back to her home against her will. In the second incident, one month later, she was detained for 13 days at the same roadblock. She had wisely taken food and water supplies in expectation of a blockade, but the authorities refused to allow her access to fresh supplies when these ran out. She was returned to Rangoon when deteriorating health and dehydration set in.¹⁶
- On 26 June, 1998, Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Deputy Chairman U Tin Oo were injured when the military attacked a group of university students arriving at her home for a literature class.¹⁷
- During 2000, her convoy was raided by nearly 200 riot police at Dallah, on the outskirts of Rangoon. The military forcibly returned her to Rangoon. The raid ended a nine-day standoff in which she was (again) confined to her vehicle.¹⁸
- In 2002, after her release from house arrest, the military blocked her travels around the country. On 25 December 2002, during Daw Suu's trip to Arakan State in North Western Myanmar, soldiers placed trucks, boulders and barbed wire across streets to stop her vehicle, and civilians were warned not to attend her rallies.¹⁹
- On 30 May 2003, the SPDC orchestrated a brutal assassination attempt against Aung San Suu Kyi and her motorcade. A mob of up to 5,000 people attacked her during a tour of Depayin, Northern Myanmar. The attackers were, once again, the SPDC-backed USDA. An estimated 100 - 282 NLD members and supporters

¹⁴ Associated Press, *Mobs Roam Burma Streets*, 10 Nov 1996

¹⁵ Amnesty International, *Myanmar: 1996 Worst Year For Human Rights This Decade*, 12 Feb 1997

¹⁶ "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 3". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

¹⁷ "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi". Moreorless. 2004. www.moreorless.au.com

¹⁸ "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 3". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

¹⁹ "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 6". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

were killed during the brutal attack, after which Daw Suu was placed under “protective custody,” house arrest.²⁰

Dialogue

The National League for Democracy is “always ready to engage in a dialogue with the military at any time, any day and at any place within the country, for the sake of attaining genuine democracy.” ~ NLD Statement, 27 September 2004

Aung San Suu Kyi calls for a genuine dialogue with the military government and does not endorse a violent overthrow of the military regime. Being the daughter of the national military and independence hero, Aung San Suu Kyi has consistently emphasized the value and honor of the military under civilian oversight. Over time, her leadership has firmly united the democracy movement towards this call.

*I personally have nothing but goodwill toward the army.*²¹
~ Aung San Suu Kyi, 1994

*“You know we have a saying in Burma it’s very, very difficult to wake somebody up who is pretending to be asleep. If somebody is really asleep it’s easier to wake him up. But if they are pretending to be asleep you can’t wake them up, and sometimes I cannot but wonder if they are pretending not to understand what we have been saying all along: that we have genuine goodwill towards Burmese Military.” Aung San Suu Kyi, March 2003*²²

Compromising

*The only thing I have refused is to discuss leaving the country.*²³ – Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi’s call for dialogue has been lauded by most of the world, but a few nay-sayers try to paint Aung San Suu Kyi as stubborn and inflexible. Far from being inflexible, Aung San Suu Kyi has always been willing to compromise and negotiate.

“The National League for Democracy and I think I myself personally, have often been accused of being inflexible...I think some members of Asean and other nations are in the best position to know whether or not we are inflexible. We have

²⁰ The Ad hoc Commission on Depayin Massacre, *The Second Parliamentary Report*, Bangkok, Thailand, May 2004

²¹ Raheem, Jehan, Richardson, Bill & Sheehen, Philip, *Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi*, Rangoon, 13 May 1994

²² Jagan, Larry, *Exclusive Interview with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi*, BBC, 10 March 2003

²³ Raheem, Jehan, Richardson, Bill & Sheehen, Philip, *Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi*, Rangoon, 13 May 1994

accepted suggestions by Asian countries and by Asean countries with regard to compromises that should be made to make dialogue between the military regime and ourselves...We have always been ready to compromise for the good of our nation and for peace, stability and harmony within the region...There is a difference between a readiness to compromise and a readiness to kneel. We are not ready to kneel – that we have to say frankly, because by kneeling we would be letting down those who trusted us to bring democracy to Burma.”²⁴

Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD were prepared to participate in the National Convention as long as minimal conditions were met including the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy, reopening all NLD offices, reducing the regime’s draconian ‘6 objectives’ and ‘104 principles’ to suggestions in the constitution drafting process and allowing all political parties to freely select their own representatives to the Convention.²⁵ It is the military that refused to be flexible and refused to accept these suggestions.

Detained

May 30, 2005 marks two years that Aung San Suu Kyi has been detained and restricted by the SPDC and from communicating with the public and NLD party members. During the ASEAN Summit in Laos in November 2004, it was announced that her detention was extended for 1 more year.²⁶ This is the third time the military regime has put her under house arrest. Totalling more than 9 years, Aung San Suu Kyi was under house arrest from July 1989-July 1995, from September 2000 – May 2002 and yet again on May 30, 2003 until today.²⁷ Her detention has been authorized under the 1975 State Protection Law, legislation which permits five years detention without charge or trial.

Impacts of Detaining Aung San Suu Kyi

The silencing of Aung San Suu Kyi is a calculated attempt by the military regime to severely undermine the democracy movement’s unity, momentum and morale and to suppress the truth about what happened on May 30, 2003.

The suppression of Aung San Suu Kyi’s leadership could jeopardize some members of the nonviolence movement in desperation turning to violence or armed struggle. An often repeated phrase is “change must come from inside Myanmar”. Aung San Suu Kyi has a vital role to play in bringing about democratic change.

²⁴ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, *Statement to the 33rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting & 7th ASEAN Regional Forum*, Bangkok, 20 July 2000

²⁵ National League for Democracy, *Statement by the National League for Democracy*, 14 May 2004

²⁶ AP, *Suu Kyi's house arrest 'extended'*, 29 Nov 2004

²⁷ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 6”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

International Community

“My message to the foreign community is please continue to support the struggle for democracy in every way you can.” ~ Aung San Suu Kyi, May 2002

*“I would like to appeal to them [ASEAN governments] to do what they can to help bring about democratization of Burma, because we do believe that once there is an accountable and transparent government in this country we shall be able to improve our economic situation, and we shall be able to make our contribution to the region.”²⁸ ~
Aung San Suu Kyi*

Aung San Suu Kyi is highly-respected and admired in the international community. She is the recipient of numerous awards including, but not limited to, India’s most prestigious award, the Jawaharlal Nehru Award; Sakharov Prize from the European Parliament; Presidential Medal of Freedom from the USA; Outstanding Woman in Buddhism Award from the United Nations Gender and Religious Department; Time Magazine Asia’s Hero in 2004 and the Nobel Peace Prize.²⁹

Moreover, Aung San Suu Kyi is largely seen by the international community as a critical element in creating a process for reform towards a free and democratic Myanmar. This is evident through statements from the United Nations General Assembly, UN Secretary General and his Envoy, Heads of State and Members of Parliament and civil society and human rights organizations.

“I remain convinced that the only way to build durable peace in Myanmar is to release the detainees, ensure their political freedoms, and begin substantive dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi immediately. To that end, I requested that the Government take the initiative and meet with her.”³⁰ Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations, July 2003

Aung San Suu Kyi enjoys an enormous amount of support and solidarity from deeply respected international figures that have experienced the struggle for freedom in their own countries such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Vaclav Havel, Jose Ramos Horta, and Shirin Ebadi.

²⁸ The Nation (Thailand), *Suu Kyi: Never Say Never*, 17 February 1998

²⁹ A listing of these and additional awards is available online - <http://www.ncgub.net/Daw%20Aung%20San%20Suu%20Kyi/index%20of%20Awards.htm>

³⁰ United Nations, *Press Release: Annan Calls for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s Release: Meets with envoy from Myanmar*, Geneva, 17 July 2003

*Thousands of people welcomed Suu Kyi on her tours, proving that the Burmese nation is neither subjugated nor pessimistic and faithless. Hidden beneath the mask of apathy, there is an unsuspected energy and a great human, moral and spiritual charge. Detaining and repressing people cannot change the soul of a nation. It may dampen it and disguise the reality outwardly, but history has repeatedly taught us the lesson that change often arrives unexpectedly.*³¹

~ Vaclav Havel, October 2003

It is firmly believed that international attention on Aung San Suu Kyi has been an important source of protection and pressure for keeping the NLD a legal political party in Myanmar but increasingly also for Aung San Suu Kyi's life since the May 30, 2003 attack.

*If only those who say that for them war is the last resort proved this by supporting those struggling for nonviolent solutions to avert such last resorts. Where are the statesmen, the visionaries of our time, with regard to Suu Kyi's nonviolent struggle for freedom? The words of protest at her detention from world leaders ring hollow when they do not translate into action.*³²

~ Archbishop Desmond Tutu, October 2004

The Myanmar regime has responded to the international community by saying that Aung San Suu Kyi is only one person and that they are thinking of 50 million people. However, the people of Myanmar support Aung San Suu Kyi and call for her leadership in a tripartite dialogue with the regime and ethnic nationality leaders, and as such, the international community finds it essential that Aung San Suu Kyi is immediately and fully a part of the political process inside Myanmar.

Strength and Grace in the Face of Personal Hardship

Despite harassment, isolation and great personal sacrifice, Aung San Suu Kyi has resisted attention on her situation, instead insists that the world recognize that many people in Myanmar suffer more than she and that the end goal is freedom for all the people of Myanmar. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's selflessness, strength and immeasurable grace while enduring tremendous hardship is valiant.

Health and Security Concerns

In December 2004, Aung San Suu Kyi was ordered to reduce her security contingent from 13 NLD youth members to six. In protest of the move, she instead dismissed the entire contingent, leaving her without security protection. The generals also ordered her

³¹ Havel, Vaclav, *The Soul of a Nation*, Washington Post, 12 October 2003

³² Tutu, Archbishop Desmond, *The Burmese Dictatorship*, Burma Campaign UK, 7 October 2004

medical visits to be cut from three per week to one.³³ Even more worrying are reports that her medical visits, initially dropped to one per week, have now been limited to merely “whenever” the junta decides.

In an interview during her first period of house arrest from 1989-1995, Aung San Suu Kyi admitted that at one point, “I was seriously malnourished for about a four-five week period... At one point I was so weak I could not get out of bed.” At times she was so poor she was forced to sell her furniture for money for living expenses.³⁴

Isolation

Without her security contingent, Aung San Suu Kyi is now isolated in her compound, apart from two housekeepers. The SPDC have continually tried to isolate her: from the pro-democracy movement, the wider Burmese populace and the international community. Military personnel surround her home and telephone lines are regularly cut to prevent contact with the outside world. Residents near her home on Rangoon's University Avenue report that security forces had parked vans, cars and motorcycles at both ends of the street in an effort to prevent her leaving the house and any ‘unapproved’ visitors.³⁵

Family Contact Barred

When she was first placed under house arrest in 1989, Aung San Suu Kyi was unable to see her sons for two years. Her youngest son, Kim, was 11 when she was detained; she later said he underwent a complete “physical transformation” during the initial two-year separation, and said, “had they met on the street...she would not have known her son.”³⁶ She has not been allowed to stay in touch with her children for extended periods of time. It has now been several years (again) since her sons were allowed to visit her.

In early 1999, the junta cruelly refused to issue her husband a visa when he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, even though they had not seen each other since 1995. While the junta had said numerous times she was free to leave the country to “be with her husband and children” it was clear that she would not be allowed to return to Myanmar were she to do so.³⁷

³³ Democratic Voice of Burma, *Unofficial Translation of NLD Statement on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's safety*, 15 Dec 2004

³⁴ Raheem, Jehan, Richardson, Bill & Sheehen, Philip, *Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi*, Rangoon, 13 May 1994

³⁵ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 6”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

³⁶ Geok, Ang Chin, Asian ed, *Aung San Suu Kyi: Towards a New Freedom*, Singapore ; New York : Prentice Hall, 1998

³⁷ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 3”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org

Personal Attacks

For much of her time under detention, and during periods of release, the state-controlled media continually instigated personal attacks against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.³⁸ The regime has tried to label her an ‘opportunist’, a ‘foreigner’ and not a ‘professional lady’. These insults come from government newspapers, the government-backed Union Solidarity and Development Association and editorials from people posing as NLD members. Pamphlets were heavily circulated during Aung San Suu Kyi’s travels around the country in 2002-2003, but the people of Myanmar discredited them by assembling crowds of 10,000s to greet Aung San Suu Kyi.³⁹

³⁸ “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Biography, Part 2”. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Pages. 23 May 2003
www.dassk.org & Zaw, Aung, *SLORC Linked to Pamphlet Attacks Against Suu Kyi*, Irrawaddy Magazine, 15 March 1995

³⁹ Democratic Voice of Burma, *Pamphlets Against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Monya*, 29 January 2003

Chronology of Important Dates Relating to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

- 1945: Born in Rangoon on June 19th, the daughter of independence hero and national leader General Aung San and Daw Khin Kyi; General Aung San is assassinated July 19, 1947. Aung San Suu Kyi is educated in Rangoon until 15 years old
- 1960: Accompanies mother to Delhi on her appointment as Burmese ambassador to India and Nepal and studies politics at Delhi University
- 1964-67: BA in philosophy, politics and economics, St. Hugh's College, Oxford University. She is elected Honorary Fellow in 1990.
- 1969-71: Assistant Secretary, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, United Nations Secretariat, New York
- 1972: Research Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bhutan; married Dr. Michael Aris, a British scholar.
- 1973-77: Birth of sons Alexander in London (1973) and Kim (1977) in Oxford
- 1985-86: Visiting Scholar, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
- 1987: Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla
- 1988, March: Student protests break out in Rangoon.
- 1988, July 23: General Ne Win steps down as Chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party(BSPP) after 26 years, triggering pro-democracy movement.
- 1988, Aug 8: The famous 8-8-88 mass uprising starts in Rangoon and spreads to the entire country, drawing millions of people to protest against the BSPP government. The following military crackdown killed thousands.
- 1988, Aug 26: Aung San Suu Kyi addresses half-million mass rally in front of the famous Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon and calls for a democratic government.
- 1988, Sep 18: The military reestablishes its power and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) is formed. The military again crushes the pro-democracy movement, killing hundreds more.
- 1988, Sep 24: The National League for Democracy (NLD) is formed, with Aung San Suu Kyi as general secretary.
- 1988, Dec 27: Daw Khin Kyi, mother of Aung San Suu Kyi, dies. The funeral procession draws a huge crowd of supporters, which turns into a peaceful protest against military rule.
- 1989, Jul 20: Aung San Suu Kyi is placed her under house arrest in Rangoon under martial law that allows for detention without charge or trial for three years.
- 1990, May 27: Despite her continuing detention, the National League for Democracy wins a landslide victory in the general elections by securing 82 percent of the seats; the military junta refuses to recognise the results of the election
- 1990, Oct 12: Awarded, in absentia, the 1990 Rafto Human Rights Prize.
- 1991, Jul 10: Awarded, in absentia, the 1990 Sakharov Prize (human rights prize of the European Parliament)

- 1991, Aug 10: The military regime retroactively amends the law under which Aung San Suu Kyi is held to allow for detention for up to five years without charge or trial.
- 1991, Oct 14: Awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize
- 1991, Dec 10: Aung San Suu Kyi's 'Freedom from Fear' and other writings published in London.
- 1992: The Nobel Committee reveals that Aung San Suu Kyi has established a health and education trust in support of the Burmese people to use the \$1.3 million prize money.
- 1994 Sep 20: Gen. Than Shwe and Gen. Khin Nyunt of SLORC meet Aung San Suu Kyi for the first time since the house arrest.
- 1995 Jul 10: The junta releases Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest.
- 1995 Oct 10: The NLD defied junta's ban on changes in party leadership positions and reappointed her as the party's General Secretary.
- 1999 Mar 27: Aung San Suu Kyi's husband Michael Aris dies of prostate cancer in London. His last request to visit Aung San Suu Kyi, whom he had last seen in 1995, was rejected by the military junta which said if Aung San Suu Kyi wanted to leave the country she could do so. She refused the offer knowing that she would not be allowed to return to Burma.
- 1996-2000: Aung San Suu Kyi defies travel bans imposed against her and continually tries to leave Rangoon. In March 1996, she boarded the train bound for Mandalay but citing a "last minute problem" the coach she was in was left behind at the station.
- On 2 September 2000, around 200 riot police surrounded Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade near Dala and forced them to return to Rangoon after a nine-day standoff.
- 2000 Sep 23: Aung San Suu Kyi is placed under house arrest.
- 2000, Oct: Aung San Suu Kyi begins secret talks with the military junta. Substance of the talks remains secret, and UN Special Envoy Razali acts as a "facilitator."
- 2000 Dec 07: US President Bill Clinton confers America's highest civilian honour on Aung San Suu Kyi. Her son Alexander Aris receives the award on her behalf.
- 2002 May 6: Aung San Suu Kyi is freed after 19 months of house arrest.
- 2003 May 30: During a tour of northern Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters are attacked by the regime's militia in the town of Depayin. As many as 70 people were killed in the attack and over 100 people arrested, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Aung San Suu Kyi remained in secret detention for over three months.
- Current situation: Aung San Suu Kyi is currently under house arrest in Rangoon. She is allowed no visitors, her phone line has been cut, and National League for Democracy volunteers providing security at her compound were removed in December 2004.

Biography is courtesy of the Burma Campaign UK