



November 8, 2007

The International Steering Committee Statement on Burma

ISC calls on ASEAN, meeting in Singapore, to take concrete action

The International Steering Committee (Nongovernmental) of the Community of Democracies is encouraged by the fact that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), meeting from 18-20 November, is making a commitment to abide by the universal values of human rights. However, in order that this pledge does not become mere words, ASEAN needs to take concrete steps to demonstrate that it is serious about protecting human rights in Southeast Asia.

The most urgent situation in the region is the ongoing turmoil in Burma. ASEAN must note that with every passing day that it fails to do anything about the crackdown on peaceful dissent in Rangoon, it is damaging its own credibility. The ongoing repression in Burma is so outrageous that any attempt to justify normal relations with the military regime is inexcusable. The ISC unequivocally and in the strongest terms calls on the governments of ASEAN to join the worldwide condemnation of the junta and to take steps to ensure the release and freedom of activity of Aung San Suu Kyi and all her colleagues who were legitimately elected in Burma's last free election. ASEAN should suspend Burma, and implement a trade and arms embargo.

As Singapore is hosting the ASEAN Summit, we note that there is widespread and credible evidence that Singapore is a primary channel for the export of ill-gotten funds by the Burmese generals and their cronies. Singapore risks tarnishing its reputation as an international financial center if it continues to refuse to take action against such money-laundering.

Furthermore, the ISC calls on the Singapore government itself to respect democratic practices and the political rights of its own citizens. The continued crackdown on human rights defenders in the city-state, notably those who have been peacefully expressing their solidarity with the people of Burma, will further damage Singapore's international reputation.