

The Telegraph  
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Burmas democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has suffered a further travesty of justice, on top of the 13 years of house arrest she has already endured. Later this month her current period of detention expires, but now she has been moved to the notorious Insein Prison to stand trial on new charges. Even before today, her detention - according to the United Nations - violates both international and Burmese law, and she remains the worlds only jailed Nobel Laureate. The brutal junta ruling Burma even denied her medical treatment, and arrested her personal doctor. She has committed no crime indeed, it is the regime that is criminal.

But Aung San Suu Kyi is simply the most visible of Burmas prisoners of conscience. At least 2,100 dissidents remain in jail, in conditions far more brutal than her house arrest. A recent report, Burmas Prisons and Labour Camps: Silent Killing Fields, released by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), details systematic and horrific torture, denial of medical treatment and refusal of visits from family. Food is inedible and exercise severely restricted. ()

And it is not only those in jail who are prisoners. Burmas ruling military junta has held the entire nation captive for almost fifty years. It ranks alongside North Korea, Sudan and Zimbabwe in the inhumanity stakes. The regimes callousness was on full display a year ago, when after Cyclone Nargis, the worst natural disaster in years, it initially refused international aid and denied access to aid workers. Over 140,000 people died, with more than 2.5 million left homeless.

As if this catalogue of horrors was not enough, the regime is carrying out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Karen, Karenni and Shan peoples in eastern Burma. More than 3,300 villages have been destroyed and a million people driven from their homes into hiding, without food, medicine or shelter. Civilians, including women and children, are shot at point-blank range. Rape is used as a weapon of war, forced labour is widespread and the use of human minesweepers common. It has the highest number of forcibly conscripted child soldiers in the world. Burma has become Asias Darfur, but without the worlds cameras. ()

For too long, Burmas plight has been neglected. The time has come to say enough is enough. It is time for the UN to invoke its much-flaunted **Responsibility to Protect** mechanism, to impose an arms embargo on the regime and establish a commission of inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity.

As an immediate step, the UN Secretary-General must hear the appeals of hundreds of thousands of people around the world who have signed a petition calling on him to make the release of political prisoners in Burma a top priority. The UN should send a senior envoy immediately to Burma, to secure the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners and access to medical care. As Aung San Suu Kyi has said, ntil all of our political prisoners are

free, none of us can say that Burma is now truly on the road towards democratic change.

In 1997, I went to prison for very different reasons. I was convicted of perjury. I had committed a crime, and paid the price. Since then, I have devoted my time to two causes prison reform and international human rights. I know that I went to prison for telling a lie. It is for that reason that I cannot stay silent when in Burma, over 2,000 people are in prison for telling the truth.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/5324040/I-went-to-prison-for-telling-a-lie.-In-Burma-people-are-in-prison-for-telling-the-truth.html>