

China, Russia block action; monks killed in junta crackdown

Steven Edwards

Ottawa Citizen

27 September 2007

The world's most powerful nations failed yesterday to unite in a common voice against Burma's military junta, whose crackdown on peaceful protests by Buddhist monks and their pro-democracy supporters left the nation's streets bloodied and residents fearing for their lives.

U.S. and European efforts in the United Nations Security Council to condemn Burma's military-run government for its violent crackdown was blocked by China and Russia.

After meeting privately, the 15-member council issued a statement that made no mention of the violence, but said member states support the decision of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to dispatch his special envoy for Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, to the region.

() Burma's generals, following yesterday's bloody crackdown, launched pre-dawn raids on activist monasteries today, hauling away hundreds of monks, witnesses said.

() Amid fears the junta's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters will increase in intensity, the U.S. and the 27-member European Union asked the Security Council to consider imposing sanctions on the regime.

The U.S.-EU communique also called for the council to demand the junta open a dialogue with jailed opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate who has been under house arrest for 12 of the past 18 years, and ethnic minorities in the country.

China and Russia, which have friendly relations with Burma's military rulers, said the council is mandated to deal only with matters threatening international peace and security.

But a senior official with Burma's government-in-exile argued that a principle promoted by Canada under the previous Liberal government -- referred to a "**responsibility to protect**" -- remains grounds for Security Council action.

The Security Council last year endorsed the principle, which says international intervention is justified to protect civilians whose government can't, or won't, do so.

This non-action today is Darfur all over again," said Jeremy Woodrum, with the Washington-based U.S. Campaign for Burma.

() At least five people were reported killed and 100 injured when security forces tried to violently disperse up tens of thousands of protesters who took to the streets. Witnesses said three monks were killed near the golden Shwedagon Pagoda, Burma's holiest site. The junta said one person died. ()

Full text available at:

<http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/story.html?id=4bc4f306-f862-4235-b09e-d34d7cd073d8&p=2>