

Burma: Restrictions Tighten Ahead of November 7 Elections Human Rights Watch 3
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The Burmese military government is increasing intimidation ahead of scheduled November 7, 2010 elections that are intended to ensure continued military rule with a civilian façade, Human Rights Watch said today in a comprehensive

[Q&A](#)
released today (...)

(...) The human rights situation throughout Burma has worsened as the elections grow closer, with growing reports of voting irregularities and inducements to vote for the military-backed parties. The ruling State Peace and Development Council tightened restrictions on foreign media, rejected all offers of international observers, and maintained tight controls on the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association (...)

(...) Under the 2008 Constitution, all three parliamentary structures will have a significant number of seats reserved for serving military officers. Only two parties will field candidates for almost every seat that is open to contest: the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the pro-military former Burmese socialist party, the National Unity Party (NUP) (...)

(...) Earlier this year, the USDP absorbed the financial assets, extensive infrastructure, and much of the membership lists - containing approximately 18 million people - of the military-created-and-controlled Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), formed in 1993. The USDA and its paramilitary wings have long been implicated in violent attacks against the opposition, and for the past few years have taken credit for local development projects in preparation for the elections. Local communities and small parties have reported a rise in intimidation and inducements by USDP party members, often aligned to local security forces, as the election approaches (...)

(...) The Q&A also addresses the international community's response to the elections, and what governments should do to promote real change in Burma. Widespread international criticism of the unfair electoral process has not resulted in any concessions by Burma's military government. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called the lack of progress "frustrating," and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called the elections "deeply flawed." Indian and Chinese officials have expressed support for Burma's electoral process.

In the Q&A, Human Rights Watch urges concerned governments to take various steps, including calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, and pressing the new government to respect human rights and commit to an inclusive political process. In addition, governments should press for increased access by humanitarian agencies

and the media, and the removal of excessive restrictions on Burmese civil society and development groups (...)

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