

Burma



The road to today



Burma is an underdeveloped country in Southeastern Asia, bordering India, China, Laos, and Thailand.

Although resource-rich, Burma suffers from the poverty caused by the corruption and control of its military dictatorship.

Burma's 47 million citizens are from diverse ethnic groups

Most are Buddhist, but there is a Christian minority



Map of Burma

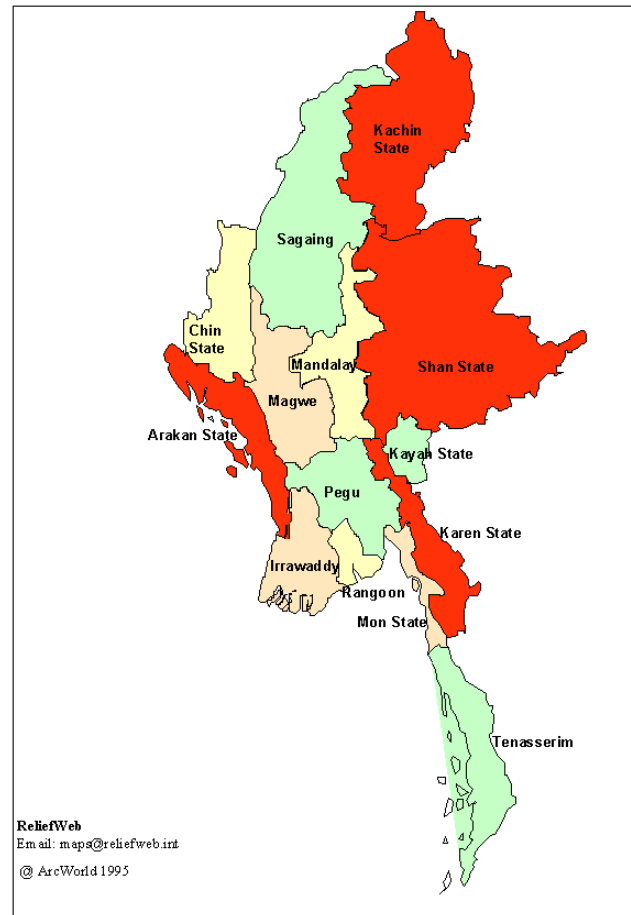


Burma is comprised of many ethnic states:

Each one has its own language, culture, religion...

...and armed force.

Myanmar: Divisions and states



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Burma's ethnic groups



Burma shed British colonial rule at the end of World War II

Burma's young democratic government was overthrown in a military coup by General Ne Win

Burma adopted a socialist state with the military in control of every aspect of government

The military officers of the government formed the Revolutionary Council

And outlawed all forms of political dissent



**Aung San signing agreement
for Burmese independence
from Britain, General Ne Win**



Students often led protests against the junta

In 1962, the army shot many students and blew up Rangoon University Student Union after protests

In 1988, 42 students were killed during a protest, which led to another wave of protests,

Which led to the government closing all universities

Which led the protests to be taken up nation wide



Student protests

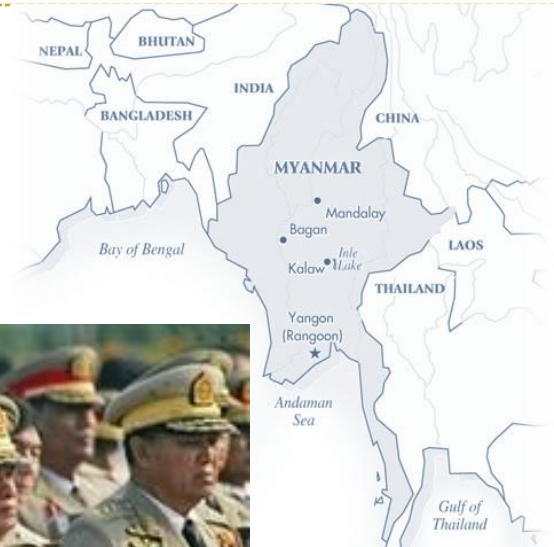


The back and forth between protests and government repression continued for years

Until the military decisively won and established the State Law and Restoration Council,

which is now the State Peace and Development Council, and still runs the country

The military junta renamed the country “Myanmar”





To try and gain international acceptance the government allowed formation of political parties and announced elections for May 1990.

The main opposition group, the National League for Democracy, won 80% of the vote

even when their leader, Aung San Suu Kyi had been imprisoned

The military government declared the election to be illegitimate, and resumed martial law



Aung San Suu Kyi



In the midst of this struggle to maintain power, the junta tried to negotiate or force agreements with all ethnic state armed forces.

However, the Karen state did not give in to the junta

Thus, in 1990 the government launched a systematic offensive against the Karen people in Eastern Burma.

The motives of the government involve controlling the resource rich area of East Burma and the desire to end the Karen peoples de facto self government.



Karen rebels



Government used following weapon of war against civilians:

- Executions, violence, and terror
- Forced labor and forced relocations
- Destruction of 3200 villages and their crops and food supplies
- Widespread and systematic rape as part of a plan of “Burmanization”
- Landmines and use of child soldiers



Karen refugees



Today...

An estimated half million people have been displaced in East Burma, making it the largest displaced population in Asia.

Over 3,200 villages have been burned in East Burma

East Burma has become the most mined region in the world

The international community has been slow to respond because of the gradual nature of the attacks.



Where we stand





The Government and Army

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Formerly known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, the Burmese Government changed its name to the SPDC in 1997. The SPDC is run by the military junta that has controlled the regime since 1962.

The *Tatmadaw*. The Burmese army is composed of 400,000 soldiers funded with over 50% of the national budget.





The National League for Democracy (NLD).

This group is led by **Aung San Suu Kyi**, is the main political opposition group to the SPDC.

When multiparty elections were held in 1990, the NLD won 392 out of 485 parliamentary seats. Regrettably, the results of this election have not been recognized by the ruling junta.

Ms. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, recently had her house arrest extended once more.

The Resistance



GETTY/AFP



The Resistance

Armed resistance groups.

These groups come from the ethnic states that have not signed a ceasefire agreement with the government.

They work with key humanitarians in the region to get information and work the underground networks for internally displaced persons and play a significant role in facilitating the escape of villagers during and before attacks.

Some of the significant groups include the **Karen National Union (KNU)** and the **Shan State Army-South** (Shan State Army-North *has* signed a ceasefire agreement with the government).





The Cyclone

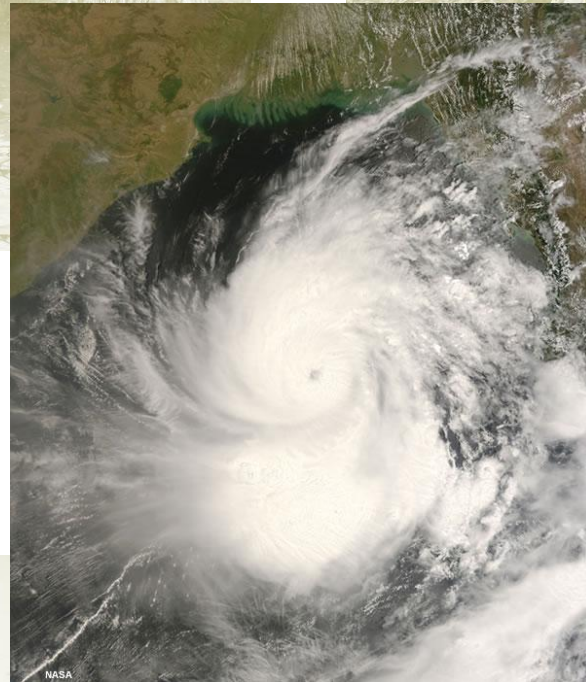
In May, 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Burma, causing immeasurable damage.

The Burmese Government blocked, withheld, and redistributed humanitarian assistance to its own people

Countless people died from a result of this abuse of power

Aid was especially withheld from vulnerably minority areas that were hit hardest:

One of these was the Karen state.





The Constitutional Referendum

In the wake of cyclone Nargis, the Burmese military government held a referendum of a new constitution.

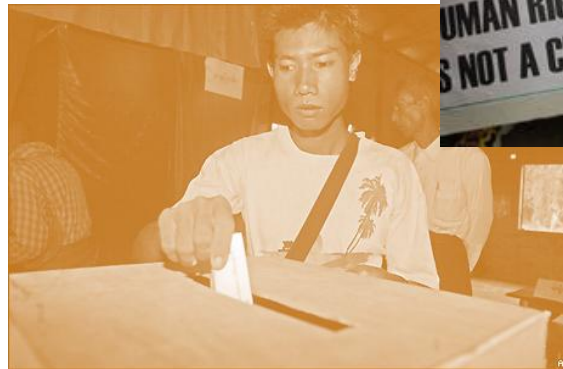
The constitution would have given the military regime even more power.

In order to pass this “sham” referendum, criticism was censored, aid was withheld as a bribe, and worse....

...The voting process is so flawed that international monitors were barred from observing the voting on the referendum.



AFP Photos



The road forward





Burma and The Responsibility to Protect

The Burmese Government has consistently violated the principles of the Responsibility to Protect

With its actions against civilians in East Burma

Its actions towards the pro-democracy movement,

and its unwillingness and inability to act during Cyclone Nargis

“The international community has a responsibility to protect the world’s populations from genocide, massive human rights abuses and other humanitarian crises. This responsibility to prevent, react to and rebuild following such crises rests first and foremost with each individual state. When states manifestly fail to protect their populations, the international community shares a collective responsibility to respond. This response should be the exercise of first peaceful, and then, if necessary, coercive, including forceful, steps to protect civilians”

Promote Peace

- ❑ Encourage continued dialogue by a UN special envoy for Burma
- ❑ Support US engagement with Thai government on refugee issues to prevent forced return of refugees
- ❑ Increase diplomatic pressures on Asean and Thai government to pressure Burmese gov't
- ❑ Promote pro-democracy movement in order to reduce threat to minorities
- ❑ Consider an international arms embargo



(AP PHOTO/CNN GRAPHIC)





Protect civilians

- Work to develop early warning systems and coping mechanisms for communities at risk of attack by the army
- Increase US funding for humanitarian activities for Burmese relief groups





Punishing Perpetrators

- ❑ Increase targeted sanctions on senior Burmese leadership
- ❑ Cut funds to the junta
- ❑ Advocate for companies to consider human rights when conducting business in Burma
- ❑ An ICC referral of the Burma case
- ❑ Support the enforcement of the Block Burmese Jade Act





STAND: A Student Anti- Genocide Coalition

The student movement to end genocide has been called **the fastest-growing student movement in the world today.**

Since the first STAND chapter formed in 2004, STAND has grown into **an international network of more than 850 chapters** at schools around the globe.

As an international network of students, **STAND has:**



The time to start



IS NOW.

WWW.STANDNOW.ORG