

Appendix A: Timeline of Arrests and Intimidation of Burmese Activists in 2003

Since mid-2002, the Thai government has taken a tougher stance against Burmese activist groups in Bangkok and in towns along the Thai-Burma border. Many groups have now scaled down their activities or gone underground. In August 2003, several opposition offices along the Thai-Burma border were closed after staff members were threatened with deportation by Thai authorities.⁸⁰ Other incidents against Burmese activists in Thailand include:

September 24, 2003: Office of a Burmese pro-democracy group in Bangkok was searched for illegal migrant workers. This incident forced the organization to cease its English language classes for migrant workers and postpone the admission of new students indefinitely.

September 18: Fifteen Burmese activists from several pro-democracy organizations were arrested while attempting to protest in front of the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok. They were sent to the Thai Immigration Detention Center (IDC) and transferred to the Special Detention Center (SDC) on September 25, where they remained as of February 2004.⁸¹

September 7: Burmese activists were arrested soon after participating in a fast organized by Forum-Asia at a public park to call for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They were charged with immigration violations and released on September 24 after paying 200,000 baht each (U.S.\$5,000).

August 19: An organization in Bangkok that provides assistance to Burmese migrants was raided and a Burmese woman who was seeking assistance from the organization was arrested and deported to Myawaddy, Burma. The raid followed accusations by the SPDC that the organization was supporting activists demonstrating outside the Burmese embassy in Bangkok.⁸²

July 31: Thai authorities issued orders not to allow any visitor from Burma to stay overnight at Mae Sarmlep (Thaw Lae Hta) in Mae Sariang District, following the order for advocacy groups to move out from the town.⁸³

July 29: Border police arrested six members of the Karen Women's Organization (KWO) in Mae Sariang. They were released after eight hours' detention.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ "Opposition Rations Slashed," *Irawaddy*, August 15, 2003.

⁸¹ "Attempted Demonstration failed, 15 Activists Arrested," Network Media Group, September 18, 2003; and "Arrested Burmese Activists Sent to Special Detention Center," Network Media Group, September 26, 2003.

⁸² "Thai Police Raid NGOs," Mizzima News, August 21, 2003.

⁸³ "Thai Says No More Burmese Visitors at Border Village," Network Media Group, July 31, 2003.

⁸⁴ "Dissidents Targeted in Mae Sariang," *Irawaddy*, July 29, 2003.

July 18: Thai officials gave Burmese opposition groups, including the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), the Karen National Union (KNU), and Network for Democracy and Development (NDD), until the end of July to leave Mae Sariang or face arrest.⁸⁵ Many organizations and human rights defenders were forced to go underground or move to the refugee camps.⁸⁶

June 30: Nearly 100 uniformed and plain-clothes police guarded the fenced-in Burmese Embassy in Bangkok to prevent any demonstrations. Their official orders were to arrest any Burmese who showed up to protest, but not Thai NGO workers or Thai university students.

June 26: Eleven members of the Democratic Friends of Burma were arrested and charged with illegal entry after taking part in a peaceful protest at the Burmese embassy in Bangkok. Most were carrying cards issued by the UNHCR identifying them as POCs.⁸⁷ The commander of Bangkok's Metropolitan Police Division Nine, Maj. Gen. Chirasil Mahintratep said: "[POCs] are not allowed to engage in political activities in Thailand. The UNHCR certificates are not the same as passports."⁸⁸ Police Lt. Col. Santi Siri wattanapornkul claimed that the U.N. agency said their identification cards were no longer valid.⁸⁹ The UNHCR did not publicly comment on these arrests.

June 25: The Thai government changed the rule from "no violent protests" to strictly banning any further peaceful protests at the Burmese Embassy by people from Burma. National Police Chief Gen. Sant Sarutanont, reflecting views expressed by the Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Interior Minister, stated: "We will definitely not allow any group of people to use Thai soil to conduct political activities against a neighboring country." Burmese carrying UNHCR protection documents who demonstrated could be arrested and deported to Burma, he added.⁹⁰

June 3-17: Burmese from the Campaign for Community Voice of Burma staged a hunger strike and hung the NLD flag on their house in the Thai border town of Mae Sot. Thai authorities instructed them to remove the flag but reportedly said they would not arrest them. However, later that night they were arrested on charges of illegal immigration and deported to Myawaddy in Burma.⁹¹

⁸⁵ "Opposition Offices Close, Road Map Pitch Continues," *Irrawaddy*, August 1, 2003; and "Burmese Opposition Checked," *Irrawaddy*, July 22, 2003.

⁸⁶ "Refugee Camp under Tight Securities," Network Media Group, August 11, 2003. Dissidents Targeted in Mae Sariang," *Irrawaddy*, July 29, 2003.

⁸⁷ "Police Chief Warns Burmese Dissidents," *Bangkok Post*, June 30, 2003.

⁸⁸ "Thailand Jails 11 Supporters of Myanmar Democracy Campaigner," Deutsche Presse-Agentur, June 27, 2003.

⁸⁹ "Thai PM Lashes UN Refugee Agency over Myanmar Exiles," Agence France-Presse, June 27, 2003.

⁹⁰ "Myanmar Junta Warns Thailand of Possible Dissident Hostage Plan," Agence France-Presse, June 25, 2003.

⁹¹ "More Hunger Strikes for Suu Kyi's Release," *Irrawaddy*, June 18 2003.

January 20: At least nine Burmese dissidents, including a child, were arrested by Thai police for “security concerns” in Sangkhlaburi while in hiding. Those arrested included members of the National League for Democracy-Liberated Area (NLD-LA), Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF), Dawei Women’s Union, and the Myeik-Dawei United Front.⁹² Seven were deported on January 22 and one person was sentenced to forty-eight days in Thai prison for harboring illegal migrants. The “illegals” were fined 4,000 Baht (U.S.\$95) each.⁹³ Police confiscated around 349,000 Baht (U.S.\$8,310) from the DPNS office, two computers from the ABSDF office and documents from the other groups.

January 13: Thai officials handed over fifteen Burmese to SPDC officials. They were part of the fifty-eight arrested in Thailand in May 2002 as part of the Thai government’s crackdown on Burma activists. Thirty-nine had been sent back in December 2002 and four were to be returned once the SPDC located their addresses in Burma.⁹⁴

January 1: Pro-democracy and dissident groups as well as the News Media Group and the Burmese Women’s Union received a warning from Thai intelligence agencies to close their offices for ten days during the visit of Deputy Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to Mae Hong Son. Around the same time, intelligence officers from the Naresuan Taskforce of the Third Army started to collect information from all pro-democracy and dissident groups in Mae Hong Son in the same pattern as security officials’ behavior in the crackdown in Sangkhlaburi district.

⁹² “Fresh Raid in Sangkhlaburi,” *Irrawaddy*, January 20, 2003.

⁹³ “Dissidents to Be Forced Out Ahead of Burma Talks,” *The Nation*, January 22 2003.

⁹⁴ “Rapprochement Continues,” *Irrawaddy*, January 14, 2003.