



## Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7

2180 Milvia Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704

PHONE 510-981-7170 FAX 510-981-7177 kworthington@ci.berkeley.ca.us

### CONSENT CALENDAR

October 23, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Political Situation in Myanmar/Burma

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a the Resolution drafted by the Peace and Justice Commission urging the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately cease the use of violence in suppression of non-violent protests by it's citizens, cease the detention of political prisoners and release those currently held, restore communications within and outside the county including telephone, cellular, and Internet services, and enter into sincere negotiations with leaders of the movement for democracy and human rights in Mynamar/Burma.

#### BACKGROUND:

The Peace and Justice Commission at their October 1, 2007 meeting unanimously adopted the attached resolution urging the United States and other governments as well as the citizens of Berkeley to take action in defense of the peaceful demonstrators of Burma/Myanmar.

Recently thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns have participated in street protests against the military dictatorship in Burma/Myanmar. In retaliation against these actions the government of Burma/Myanmar has arrested hundreds of its citizens, killed an unknown number of people, raided Buddhist monasteries and have imprisoned monks in their monasteries.

It is important that the United States and other governments with strong relations with Burma/Myanmar use their influence to pressure its government to immediately end their violent and unjust actions and enter into negotiations with leaders of the movement for democracy in Burma/Myanmar. Given the time sensitive nature of this issue it is important that this item be considered at this meeting, rather than waiting several weeks for the Peace and Justice Commission's staff report to go through the normal review process.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

#### CONTACT PERSON:

Councilmember Kriss Worthington, 981-7170.

#### Attachments:

1. Staff Report and Resolution recommended by Peace and Justice Commission



Peace and Justice Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
October 23, 2007

To: Honorable Mayor and  
Members of the City Council

From: Peace and Justice Commission

Submitted by: Councilmember Kriss Worthington on behalf of Steve  
Freedkin, Chairperson

Subject: Political Situation in Myanmar/Burma

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution urging the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately cease the use of violence in suppression of nonviolent protests by its citizens, cease the detention of political prisoners and release those currently held, restore communications within and outside of the country including telephone, cellular, and Internet services, and enter into sincere negotiations with leaders of the movement for democracy and human rights in Myanmar/Burma.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

None.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECT

On August 15, 2007, the authoritarian military government, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), hiked the price of fuel by as much as 500 percent. In response, several hundred people took part in peaceful demonstrations in Rangoon against the move. Additional protests were held in other cities throughout the country. More recently, the protests swelled to thousands and turned to a call for democracy under the leadership of hundreds of Buddhist monks and nuns.

Under Burma's repressive regime the exercise of basic rights like the right to protest is routinely denied and large demonstrations rarely occur. The SPDC has launched a violent repression of the demonstrations, has detained thousands of organizers and participants of the protests, including some of the government's most prominent critics, and is reported to have killed perhaps many hundreds. These arrests violate fundamental rights of assembly, association and expression, and are arbitrary and unlawful under international law.

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of October 1, 2007, the Peace and Justice Commission approved the following motion:

**M/S/C** (*Freedkin/Seaton*) that Council adopt a Resolution (*Attachment 1*) urging the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately cease the use of violence in suppression of nonviolent protests by its citizens, cease the detention of political prisoners and release those currently held, restore communications within and outside of the country including telephone, cellular, and Internet services, and enter into sincere negotiations with leaders of the movement for democracy and human rights in Myanmar/Burma. **Ayes:** Bohn, Freedkin, Kafin, McDonald, Meola, Seaton, Sherman, Sorgen, Wagley; **Noes:** None; **Abstain:** Cohen; **Absent:** Litman, Winkelman.

Commissioner Cohen abstained from the vote because he felt it was important to clarify that the resolution does not constitute a call for the United States government to use military pressure.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the recommendations of the Commission.

CONTACT PERSONS

Kriss Worthington, Councilmember, District 7, (510) 981-7170

Steve Freedkin, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission, (510) 595-4626

Manuel Hector Jr., Secretary, Peace and Justice Commission, (510) 981-5110

Attachment

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. –N.S.

URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF MYANMAR/BURMA TO CEASE THE USE OF VIOLENCE IN SUPPRESSION OF NONVIOLENT PROTESTS

WHEREAS, Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.68.070, establishing the Peace and Justice Commission, states that the Commission shall “(A) Advise the Berkeley City Council ... on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley’s role in issues of peace and social justice, ... including ... support for human rights and self-determination throughout the world, [and] (C) Help develop proposals for the City Council ... for actions in furtherance of the goals of peace and justice”; and BMC § 3.68.070 (D) finds that: “Peace is ... the process of solving differences constructively, creatively, and non-violently”; and

WHEREAS, street protests against the military dictatorship of Myanmar/Burma and for democracy began on August 19, 2007,<sup>1</sup> and when thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns took to the streets beginning September 18, 2007<sup>2</sup> swelled to many tens of thousands; and

WHEREAS, starting on September 26, 2007<sup>3</sup> the government of Myanmar/Burma has launched violent repression of the demonstrations, arresting hundreds,<sup>4</sup> killing an unknown number of people estimated by diplomats to be in the dozens or more,<sup>5</sup> allegedly cremating the victims’ bodies and in at least one case, a living person,<sup>6,7</sup> raiding Buddhist monasteries, beating and arresting more than 4,000 monks,<sup>8,9</sup> imprisoning monks in their monasteries,<sup>10</sup> and placing an estimated 20,000 soldiers in the streets of Rangoon<sup>11</sup>; and

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<sup>1</sup> “UN Envoy Meets Myanmar Democracy Leader,” Associated Press, Sept. 30, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070930/ap\\_on\\_re\\_as/myanmar;\\_ylt=Aleg\\_5xLjDJ58\\_zfuiPdhpWs0NUE](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070930/ap_on_re_as/myanmar;_ylt=Aleg_5xLjDJ58_zfuiPdhpWs0NUE)

<sup>2</sup> “Nine killed’ in Burma Crackdown,” BBC News, Sept. 27, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7016608.stm>

<sup>3</sup> “West Eyes China to Influence Burma’s Junta,” *Christian Science Monitor*, story dated Oct. 1, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1001/p01s01-wosc.html>

<sup>4</sup> “More Burma Protesters Arrested as Curfew Orders Ignored,” ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corp.) News, Sept. 28, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/28/2046819.htm?section=world>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “UN Envoy Snubbed by Junta Leader in Burma,” *The Telegraph* (London), story dated Oct. 1, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/09/30/wburma530.xml>

<sup>7</sup> Reported with audio by the U.S. Campaign for Burma, viewed Oct. 1, 2007 at <http://www.uscampaignforburma.org/index2.html>

<sup>8</sup> “Burmese monks ‘to be sent away,’” BBC News, Oct. 1, 2007, viewed Oct. 1, 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7022437.stm>

<sup>9</sup> “Burmese Riot Police Attack Monks,” BBC News, Sept. 26, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7013638.stm>

<sup>10</sup> “UN Envoy Sees Top Burma Dissident,” BBC News, Sept. 30, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7020465.stm>

<sup>11</sup> “‘If They Joined Us, Instead of Applauding, We Could Win’” *The Guardian* (London), story dated Oct. 1, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/burma/story/0,2180836,00.html>

WHEREAS, Myanmar/Burma's closest trading partner, China,<sup>12</sup> has been slow to respond, first calling the developments an "internal matter,"<sup>13</sup> and only after the initial crackdown urging "all parties" to exercise restraint; and

WHEREAS, Myanmar/Burma has been ruled by a repressive military dictatorship since a coup d'état ended democratic governance in 1962; after holding free elections in 1990, the government annulled those elections when it lost decisively; and the government continues to hold more than 1,000 political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the party that won the 1990 election<sup>14,15,16</sup>; and

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2005, upon recommendation by the Peace and Justice Commission, the Berkeley City Council adopted Resolution No. 62,947–N.S. declaring June 19, 2005 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Day in recognition of the 60th birthday of Ms. Suu Kyi and the efforts of the Myanmar/Burmese people to reclaim their human rights and their democracy, following other resolutions adopted by the City Council in 1994, 1995, 1998, and 1999 against the repressive regime of Burma/Myanmar.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges the government of Myanmar/Burma to immediately cease the use of violence in suppression of nonviolent protests by its citizens, cease the detention of political prisoners and release those currently held, restore communications within and outside of the country including telephone, cellular, and Internet services, and enter into sincere negotiations with leaders of the movement for democracy and human rights in Burma/Myanmar.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges the governments of the United States and those countries with particularly strong relations with Myanmar/Burma, including China (its largest trading partner) and Japan (its largest provider of foreign aid), to exert maximum pressure upon the regime to restore the human rights of the demonstrators and the citizenry of Burma/Myanmar.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges the citizens of Berkeley to speak up for the safety, human rights, and freedom of the people of Myanmar/Burma by participating in letter-writing, vigils, demonstrations, and other actions organized by such forces as Amnesty International,<sup>17</sup> Avaaz.org (an activism

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<sup>12</sup> "China Appeals for Calm in Burma," BBC News, Sept. 30, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7020399.stm>

<sup>13</sup> "Russia and China Dig In their Heels over Burma as the West Calls for UN Sanctions," *The Times* (London), Sept. 27, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article2540160.ece>

<sup>14</sup> "Burma," *CIA World Factbook*, updated Sept. 20, 2007, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>

<sup>15</sup> "Myanmar," Wikipedia, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar#Military\\_rule\\_.281962.E2.80.93present.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar#Military_rule_.281962.E2.80.93present.29)

<sup>16</sup> "Myanmar (Burma) Human Rights Concerns," Amnesty International, viewed Sept. 30, 2007 at [http://www.amnestyusa.org/By\\_Country/Myanmar\\_Burma/page.do?id=1011205&n1=3&n2=30&n3=955](http://www.amnestyusa.org/By_Country/Myanmar_Burma/page.do?id=1011205&n1=3&n2=30&n3=955)

<sup>17</sup> Information and online letter-writing campaign of Amnesty International regarding Burma/Myanmar viewed Oct. 1, 2007 at: [www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?n=955](http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?n=955)

Web site co-founded by MoveOn.org),<sup>18</sup> the Berkeley-based Buddhist Peace Fellowship,<sup>19</sup> and the international organized-labor movement.<sup>20</sup>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution shall be sent to the governments of Myanmar/Burma, China, Japan, and the United States, by way of their Missions to the United Nations.

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<sup>18</sup> Online letter-writing campaign of Avaaz.org regarding Burma/Myanmar viewed Oct. 1, 2007 at [http://www.avaaz.org/en/stand\\_with\\_burma/t.php](http://www.avaaz.org/en/stand_with_burma/t.php)

<sup>19</sup> A list of vigils compiled by Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), sponsored by BPF or other organizations, was available as of Oct. 1, 2007 at [http://www.bpf.org/html/whats\\_now/2007/burmaevents.html](http://www.bpf.org/html/whats_now/2007/burmaevents.html)

<sup>20</sup> Online letter-writing campaign of Building and Wood Workers' International viewed Sept 30, 2007 at: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=1111&Language=EN>