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INTERNATIONAL BURMESE MONKS ORGANIZATION

84-32, Apt#2A, GRAND AVE, NY 11373, U.S.A. Tel & Fx: (718) 426-3959 www.burmesemonks.org

Statement on the One-year Anniversary of the Saffron Revolution

from the International Burmese Monks Organization

September 26, 2008

On the one-year anniversary of Burma's Saffron Revolution, the International Burmese Monks Organization gives voice to the monks and nuns inside Burma who have been silenced by a cruel military dictatorship. We vow to keep the struggle for freedom and human rights alive in Burma.

We call for the United Nations and the international community to support the Burmese people in the following ways:

- 1. back a comprehensive global arms embargo against the Burmese regime;**
- 2. insist on the release of all political prisoners;**
- 3. pressure the regime to allow freedom of all religion in Burma and to halt the harassment of monasteries and monastics in Burma.**
- 4. insist that the regime allow the ICRC full access to the prisons and labor camps.**

One year ago today, the world watched as Burma's military regime brutally cracked down on one of the most powerful, peaceful demonstrations of non-violence in recent times, led by Buddhist monks and nuns and numbering near 500,000 people.

As we mark the one-year anniversary on September 26, 2008, the IBMO remains focused on our intent to free the Burmese people from the tyranny of a 46-year military regime.

The Saffron Revolution was and is essentially not a struggle for political power. It is a revolution of spirit that aims at changing Burma from the inside out. With loving-kindness, we intend to change the hearts and minds of Burma's generals, returning them to their inborn Buddha nature.

The religious policy of the Saffron Revolution is peace. Throughout Burma's history, when the country was in crisis, or when the people faced emergencies, religious leaders of all faiths have played key roles maintaining peace and stability in our society. The Saffron Revolution demonstrated this. In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, monasteries again provided sanctuary, shelter, and hope for countless Burmese.

- We remember the courage of over 100,000 monks and nuns who walked and marched in peace in 24 cities throughout Burma, chanting and praying for democracy and justice for the people.
- We remember the valor of tens of thousands of ordinary Burmese who walked with them, encircling and protecting the monastics.
- We remember the fearless symbol of overturned alms bowls and the monks' significant refusal to accept alms from the military regime. We celebrate the brave monks, like those from Pakokkhu, who still refuse alms from government authorities.
- We remember the violent crackdown that left scores dead, monasteries raided and emptied, a Japanese photographer dead, and thousands arrested.

- We speak for the monks who were beaten, killed, or arrested, and the nuns who have been arrested and sexually abused.
- We give our voice to Ngwe Kyar Yan monastery, brutally raided by the Army last September, when two monks were killed, and many more beaten and injured.
- We remember the thousands of monks who are still missing, some 212 now imprisoned or in forced labor camps, and others who were forced to disrobe and give up their vows for their own and their families' safety. We know that one year ago there were over 30,000 monks in Rangoon and now only approximately 6,000.
- We are deeply concerned about the fate of our fellow monks, including U Gambira, and all political prisoners who languish in Burmese jails without proper nutrition and medical care, and with no access to a fair legal process. And for U Gambira's relatives who have recently been arrested by the junta.
- We are deeply concerned that Buddhism itself is at stake in Burma, and monastic life is under threat. Today monks continue to be arrested, harassed, are under surveillance and unable to exercise freedom to carry out their monastic vows to alleviate suffering.
- We give voice to U Thila Wuntha, the abbot of Marlayon Monastery, who was arrested on September 5 along with 19 of his monks after his monastery was searched and raided.
- We respect and have concern for the well-being of Daw Aung Saw Suu Kyi, who has spent 12 of the last 20 years under house arrest. We salute her selfless dedication and determination to seek a democratic Burma.
- We remember Maggin Monastery, Sasana Sippan Monastery, and others, which have been permanently closed in the past year. And we remember the former abbot of Maggin Monastery, who is prevented from collecting alms.
- We know that the university monasteries currently house only 30% of the number of monks who resided there before the Saffron Revolution.
- We grieve over a military regime that has no external enemy, yet maintains an army of over 400,000 soldiers, one of the largest in Southeast Asia, and that only uses arms against its own people.
- We remember that currently there is a curfew in Rangoon for monks between the hours of 8pm and 6am, and that the regime is conducting midnight checks at monasteries. The monasteries are increasingly being surrounded by Army posts.
- We are deeply concerned for the people of Burma, who live under a stifling regime where they cannot ask, even peacefully, for respect and common human decency without fear of beatings, torture, imprisonment and even death.
- We remember that monastics and monasteries are essential to the fabric of life in Burma, and are not only at the heart of religious functions, but also serve as centers of education and culture, caring for HIV/AIDS patients and orphans.
- We stand in solidarity with our Burmese brothers and sisters of all faiths who share our aspirations for justice.

International Burmese Monks Organization (IBMO) (718) 426-3959

Email: ibmohq@gmail.com www.burmesemonks.org