

UNISON NEC STATEMENT – BURMA

Trial of Aung San Suu Kyi and worsening human rights situation in Burma's eastern region

The National Executive Committee notes with deep concern the worsening situation in Burma following the sham trial of Aung San Suu Kyi which started on 18 May 2009. She is charged with violating the terms of her house arrest less than two weeks before she was due to be released at the end of May. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won the elections in 1990 (subsequently overturned by the military). She was awarded honorary life membership of UNISON in 2005.

Against this backdrop reports are being received that there is an escalation of state-sponsored violence against ethnic groups in eastern Burma with forced labour and rape being used against the local population.

UNISON has been the leading British trade union working with and supporting Burma campaign groups in the UK and overseas, and with the Federation of Trade Unions Burma and the Federation of Trade Union Kawthoolei (Karen). We have worked to identify trade union and labour activists among the over 2,100 political prisoners with a view to spearheading a campaign with the TUC and Amnesty International in the coming months calling for their release; and were the only British trade union to endorse the recent petition to the UN secretary general calling on him to make the release of all political prisoners his personal priority.

In light of Aung San Suu Kyi's trial and the deteriorating situation in the country over recent months the National Executive Council commits to:

- 1) Joining international efforts calling for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the dropping of all charges against her;
- 2) Supporting calls for the military government to end the repression of its own people and to respect human and labour rights;
- 3) Calling for MPs to support Early Day Motion (EDM) 1452 which calls on the UK government to 'assist the UN Secretary General in making it his personal priority to secure the release of all Burma's political prisoners';
- 4) Considering encouraging and participating in a TUC-organised delegation should one be arranged;
- 5) Supporting Burma Campaign UK (BCUK) in its campaign for a UN commission of enquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in eastern Burma;
- 6) Calling on the UK government to seek Burma's expulsion from ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) which gives the military the international legitimacy it craves;
- 7) Calling for an extension of EU sanctions to include banking and insurance;
- 8) Calling for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to refer Burma to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its use of forced labour.

(Statement issued 18 June 2009)