



THE VOICE OF HOPE

# AUNG SAN SUU KYI

FROM PRISON – AND  
A LETTER TO A DICTATOR

“I believe this is the most truthful and accurate commentary on how the world got it wrong, not unlike Tibet, and what we can do to support Aung San Suu Kyi and the people of Burma, to avert disaster.”

—GESHE LHAJDOR, *Distinguished scholar, translator and interpreter for His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama 1989 to 2005, Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala, and Head of the Science Education Project (a one hundred year initiative)*

“In my view this book presents facts which make perfect sense, and has endeavoured to explain the complexities, for those who can bear to look deeper. Thanks Alan and Fergus. The people of Burma thank you.”

—DR. MA THIDA, *Surgeon, writer and ex-political prisoner, Chair of Writers, Prison Committee, Pen International*

ALAN CLEMENTS & FERGUS HARLOW

World Dharma Publications

**A Public Statement on the Ongoing Terror in  
Burma, Specifically About Aung San Suu Kyi,  
Imprisoned State Counsellor, as Her Faux-Trials  
Continue, Along with More Scheduled Executions  
of Political Prisoners**

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BY ALAN CLEMENTS & FERGUS HARLOW

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In light of the upcoming anniversary of the 2021 military coup d'état in Myanmar, and due to being asked numerous times to comment in the media on the crisis, and more specifically about Aung San Suu Kyi, we wish to make a statement. These are several points we feel compelled to make first, at a time of increasing media manipulation and political censorship globally. And there are others to bring attention to, including the ongoing heroic defensive resistance by the population against the country's terrorist leader, Min

Aung Hlaing (MAH) and his terrorist group, the State Administrative Council (SAC), aka MAH-SAC.

The Points:

- Accusations that Burma's State Counsellor and Nobel Peace laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, did not speak out about the Rohingya crisis, which unfolded in Rakhine State adjacent to Bangladesh, are uninformed. We have spent years collating and publishing the evidence from public records for all to see.
- Accusations that Aung San Suu Kyi was both power hungry and a nationalist are false. Recently released Australian economist and academic Dr Sean Turnell can testify to that.
- Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's elected civilian government were misrepresented (against objections) in the media to the point of being a calculated smear campaign.
- More airtime was given to the spectacle of a fallen icon than to the interests of the country she represented, and this had a direct detrimental impact on the ongoing careful peace process.
- The National League for Democracy (NLD)'s policy and process of national reconciliation was not

taken into account when levelling criticisms, giving a confused picture without context.

- NLD efforts to tackle the Rohingya crisis were deliberately ignored to create more newsworthy stories in keeping with narratives and agendas pursued by the press.
- The UN consistently pursued its own agenda to the detriment of Myanmar's emergent democracy, "issuing demands" to Myanmar, creating a dangerous situation at an acoustical time.

Accusations that Aung San Suu Kyi didn't speak out on the Rohingya crisis are incorrect. She spoke out publicly on many occasions. What she did not do was take the side of the Rohingya, which is what the Western press demanded of her. It is our view that the Rohingya served as a vessel for the appeasement of our Western and global collective guilt and as an opportunity for reparative moral grandstanding after decades of shelling Muslims, a handy token in a country most people are unfamiliar with. This should be evident from the Associated Press report detailing mass graves that didn't exist, and for which I believe a retraction has yet to be made or even sought.

Likewise, the accusation that Aung San Suu Kyi was a “power-hungry nationalist” doesn’t take into account the obvious geopolitical concerns of the region or the political structure of Myanmar. In our view, Western interests felt slighted by Aung San Suu Kyi’s friendly relationship with Russia, India, and China, Burma’s immediate neighbours, and were genuinely surprised when she didn’t immediately offer allegiance to Western democracies and economic interests.

Yes, criticisms can be made of the NLD leadership style, but it was a desperate situation commanded by people who’d mostly spent the last 20 years in prison. Yes, the power of the NLD government may have been held in too few hands, economic policies may have been weak, voices may not have been heard. Such is the lot of those escaping decades of totalitarian brutality and operating as a parallel government, with little actual control. This latter point is crucial – in our time covering the crisis, we did not see a single article critical of Suu Kyi and the NLD’s response that explained the NLD had no control over the police, military, or the three ministries in charge of border affairs and homeland security. Not one, other than those in *The Irrawaddy*.

The press has little need for diplomacy, on the whole earning its crust through sensationalist polemics

and diatribes. A State Counsellor must carefully weight the issues on both sides and remain impartial. That was her job as a politician, a role she valued much higher than that of “global darling of democracy.” The plight of the ethnic Rakhine was barely covered. Barely any mention was made of the deliberate creation of an international incident by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Rakhine, a terrorist group set on founding a separatist Islamic State in the region who had direct connections to Al Qaeda. Key findings were omitted, and these include the willingness of ordinary Muslim villagers to participate in slaughter and the death threats we heard were levelled at other Muslims if they did not burn Muslim homes, as demanded by ARSA itself.

Instead, the Western reader was treated to a buffet of hearsay from human rights giants such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch who used their platforms to advance rumours as if they were fact. For instance, satellite images of burned down homes were used as “evidence” of the military committing genocide, bolstered with cliched phrases like “no smoke without fire”, without a single mention anywhere that this was very likely also a terrorist tactic, that numerous villagers either willingly or through coercion were involved in the attacks, and that both Rohingyas and

Buddhists had committed widescale arson in the burning of each other's homes during earlier riots. Barely anyone mentioned that Aung San Suu Kyi herself commissioned Kofi Annan to conduct an impartial investigation into how to bring peace to the area, a report that was released mere hours before the attacks, and which we believe is the reason ARSA launched the attacks when they did.

As for pursuing alternative avenues to address the crisis, something she was accused of not doing during her time in the Hague, aside from the Kofi Anna report, there was a full-scale redevelopment operation in effect, with the support of numerous Burmese business leaders, as well as both Buddhist and Muslim clergy, working in harmony, to address the actual socio-economic causes of the crisis. This was a massive operation including many diverse elements of the civil and business sectors to offer long-term solutions to the immediate problems for the sake of both communities. Spokespeople for the NLD repeatedly said they would prove the truth of their commitment to the Muslim community through the work they were doing. In all likelihood, the public will now never hear of that work.

Further, taking the “talking stories” of displaced refugees living in camps in part populated by these same terrorists as the only evidence, at the time, of

many of the crimes now in public awareness actually stoked the fire, playing into the hands of evil. Scores of camp and village leaders were beheaded or otherwise killed by these terrorists. Think of the reality for ordinary refugees who have a CNN camera pointed at their face while terrorists look over their shoulder. Think of the pressure. Real life politicians turned up in the country with these talking stories implanted in their heads as fact, because their “intel” was coming from newspapers. Numerous Nobel Peace Prize laureates were suckered in by the emotive furore. They did not question, they reacted.

Because of this, we understand why the Myanmar government removed Yanghee Lee from the role of Special Rapporteur and from the country, not least because when she went on Twitter to decry the release of imprisoned soldiers who had not been released, her Twitter comment was immediately picked up by numerous outlets such as the Washington Post and New York Times. It spread widely and remained in the public imagination. I believe no retraction was made beyond deleting the comment over a week later.

When barred from the country, this is what Lee said: “I am puzzled and disappointed by this decision by the Myanmar government... This declaration of non-co-operation with my mandate can only be viewed



as a strong indication that there must be something terribly awful happening in Rakhine, as well as in the rest of the country.” This is a strawman argument. She knew full well why the decision was made, as did we at the time, following assiduously every report that came out of Burma daily for years. Valid criticisms were made and went unreported. Her comment is contemptuous posturing. Note the line “... can only be viewed,” which denies the place of critical thinking. It is a polemic and illustrative of the strongarm attempt to control the narrative at the expense of people’s lived experience in Myanmar.

When the Associated Press (who we mentioned reported on mass graves that didn’t exist) published Aung San Suu Kyi’s paraphrased comments from a public address with a simple comma omitted, the same thing happened. Newspapers around the world, and NGOs and insiders famous for defending Myanmar, jumped on their platforms to tell the world Aung San Suu Kyi was a racist who blamed terrorism on illegal immigration. To us, they appeared far too eager for this slander to be the truth. To quote the Irrawaddy: “The Associated Press on Monday misquoted and seriously misrepresented comments made by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her speech to the ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting in Naypyitaw.

The misleading report immediately drew the ire of the Myanmar Press Council, which condemned the news agency's "purposeful 'misinterpretation' with an ulterior motive to hurt her image, and that of Myanmar" (Kyaw Phyo Tha 21 November 2017).

For clarity, here are the two statements, the second directly attributed to Aung San Suu Kyi by AP:

ASSK: Conflicts around the world are giving rise to new threats and emergencies; illegal migration, spread of terrorism and violent extremism, social disharmony and even the threat of nuclear war.

AP: the world is facing instability and conflict in part because illegal immigration spreads terrorism

Aung San Suu Kyi, in our view, was being punished for not taking sides. Yet taking sides is clearly not the point in a conflict situation that involves two communities both equally affected by socio-political and economic hardships who are both at war with each other. Taking sides is what you do at a football game. This refusal to take sides further reflects the NLD policy of national reconciliation, which included a policy of non-demonisation of the army. It was an attempt to allow megalomaniacs to save face and beat a hasty retreat with their millions. This actually relied

on international support and understanding, and in fact I wrote as early as 2016 that a looming power gap would easily allow the junta to regain power in 2020.

Had Aung San Suu Kyi remained an icon there would have been a massive outcry about her current situation. There would be a global “Free Aung San Suu Kyi” campaign bringing global attention to Myanmar’s ongoing quest for democracy. Instead, she is harshly imprisoned for life, and doing hard labor.

The Burmese Army, like all modern armies, has had training and clearly understands the role of perception management and psychological warfare. The Rohingya crisis was allowed to spiral out of control to tarnish her reputation and leave the impression that only a military response would bring peace to the region. It was a deliberate attempt to kneecap the NLD. And the world bought it.

Whatever she said at the Hague, Aung San Suu Kyi did not deny wrongdoing on the part of the Tatmadaw in her role as State Counsellor. Special courts were set up specifically to look into these crimes, charges were levelled, arrests were made, and soldiers were sentenced. This is but one of many points she had to labor. Aung San Suu Kyi specifically requested the country be allowed the time and space to do this, in an effort to allow the Tatmadaw to redress its historic impunity and

move towards democracy, and this was actually happening. The Tatmadaw was actually making its own efforts to address these crimes.

Further, she did not “block independent investigations” (another UN accusation at the Hague) in a general sense, she specifically refused to allow the UN to escalate the situation through its one-sided fact-finding mission. The UN repeatedly framed the issue as a one-sided attack on a single minority. This was not the reality on the ground. It will never be the reality on the ground. Buy ink by the barrel and you will never cover the blood spilled on that ground.

There is no escaping the culpability of both the UN and Western press for their part in preventing the resolution of this crisis. For the UN to speak of Aung San Suu Kyi refusing to use her moral authority in the face of these gross inaccuracies is basically gaslighting a whole country. Note how generalised the UN comments from the Hague transcripts are, as if the UN speaks for the whole world when it is talking about its own agenda, specifically its own factfinding mission. Consider this picture when you consider Aung San Suu Kyi voluntarily going to the Hague at a time when the whole world had turned its back on her. Think in basest, barest psychological terms. Almost every institution that had supported her stripped her of her

awards and standing. She claimed she was not moved by this, and we do not believe her. Personally, it would have broken OUR hearts.

We were asked by a journalist “What has happened to the woman we knew? Her words in the Hague transcripts are so cold.” You ask why she was cold? This is like poking someone in the eye and asking them why they’re screaming. Aung San Suu Kyi was widely accused of “cosying up to the military,” and “being power hungry”, yet she was actually practising delicate diplomacy. She was attempting to negotiate with psychopathic warlords. What looks to some like Stockholm Syndrome looks to me like a woman who has for too long courted psychopaths, and who bears the visible hallmarks of an abusive relationship. Had I spent 20 years under house arrest, lost my family, and witnessed and felt so much brutality, only to have the Western media junta flay me publicly with my own words, I too would lack emotional affect when placed on a stand and accused of genocidal intent. We can easily imagine a deflated, dejected woman who no doubt she knew her days were numbered.

Don’t forget that one of her chief lawmakers, U Ko Ni, a Muslim MP from Rakhine State who had devised ways to amend the undemocratic military constitution, was assassinated in broad daylight at a busy airport

with his grandchild in his arms. Death threats, we hear, were common for those in Suu Kyi's inner circle. She lacked international support at a time when the junta was poised to do what they have done, what they have always done, and what we have let them continue to do. Our affinity with her democratic mission was her and her country's insurance, and we stripped that of her, as we stripped it from the thousands of people currently being tortured in prisons across Burma. Her famous quote, initially a thank you for support, now takes on a new meaning. "To be forgotten is to die a little. It is to lose some of the links that anchor us to the rest of humanity."

We believe that psychologically she has indeed died a little. None of us, not one, can fully appreciate what she's been through, or what that has done to her mind. None of us know what she holds in her heart. She is alone now, forgotten, in a harsh prison cell, where she will die. Her sons will never see her again. Her country is being torn apart by civil war. And the world asks where the light has gone?

According to recently released Dr. Sean Turnell, she is very thin, but has maintained a lot of that spirit in impossible circumstances, when they were all able to meet and talk for half an hour, right before their sham trials.

So we here ask, when will the world account for its misstep? When will the world retrieve its conscience from the mire of tabloid ignorance and uninformed opinion, from its soundbites and sensationalism, and take up the fight again, demanding the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all democratically elected civilian government leaders, along with every other prisoner of conscience? Bono, Geldof, the Dalai Lama, the Pope, The Elders, women Nobel laureates, spiritual feminists, world leaders, celebrities, influencers, your silence echoes deafeningly in the torture chambers of the country you have so easily forgotten.

Freedom lovers worldwide, it is time to speak out and boycott everything military in Burma. Think of the youth, still battling, people cowering, foraging for food, being robbed and killed trying to find food for their children, surveilled and beaten. The ATMs are closed. Do we even notice? Haven't we been here before, in the raging 80s, with Pol Pot?

*This message includes some of the words distilled from our 500,000-word four volume set of books, 'Burma's Voices of Freedom,' recently published by World Dharma Publications. If you feel moved, please refer to those volumes (available from online retailers worldwide), for a complete analysis of what we have expressed here, and so much more, including 125,000*

*words directly from Aung San Suu Kyi, along with long form conversations with U Tin Oo, U Win Tin, Zin Mar Aung, Min Ko Naing, U Win Htein, Ko Jimmy (recently executed), Zeya Thaw (recently executed) and dozens of other heroic prisoners (now around 12,000) and revolutionaries.*