

the rights of assembly and speech are restricted. Schools closed in June 1988, were reopened to the primary and middle grades through the summer of 1989. However, classes have not yet resumed in high schools, universities and technical institutes.

On July 20, 1989 Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the largest opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was placed in house detention along with other members of that party's leadership. The arrest of up to 6000 NLD party activists and other opposition party members followed. Under the current election regulations Aung San Suu Kyi may be barred from standing as a candidate under current election laws. Death sentences have been imposed on political prisoners by military tribunals.

There are currently approximately 11 different insurgent organizations fighting the Myanmar army. Most of these private armies are based on specific ethnic groups and have been fighting for 20 or 30 years. The conflict with the Kayin (Karen), along the eastern border with Thailand, is presently the most active. In these conflicts the army has been accused of seizing civilians for use as military porters.

Canadian Position

Canada welcomes the Union of Myanmar's stated commitment to hold free and fair elections on May 27, 1990. We are concerned with military and police actions against participants in political rallies and the restrictions on the right of assembly and free speech. The house detention of San Suu Kyi, along with the arrest of other opposition political leaders, is not conducive to the process of democratization.

Canada stated in the Third Committee of the United Nations on November 24, 1989 that:

In Myanmar, while the Government maintains that plans for free elections in May 1990 are on schedule, reports of human rights abuses, including systematic torture and arbitrary arrests, continue. Martial law restrictions suppress the right of free assembly and free speech. Violence has been used against participants in political rallies. These reports are disturbing and suggest that the government has not yet accepted that building democratic institutions depends crucially on the full protection of human rights.