

## **Event Statement: Saffron Revolution 4th Anniversary**

27 September 2011

### ***“We Want Real Change in Burma, Not Public Relations Games”***

On the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saffron Revolution, an alliance of Burma-related organizations in Chiang Mai has organized this candlelight vigil and rally to call on the international community to maintain pressure on Burma's regime until it carries out a genuine democratic transition by immediately and unconditionally releasing all political prisoners and ending impunity for human rights abusers.

It is important that the world understands that the people of Burma and all of us demand real change in Burma, not only public relations games.

Burma's regime has been trying to win over the international community by organizing meetings with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, inviting the UN Special Rapporteur to visit the country, and establishing their own National Human Rights Commission led by former military generals. However, as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon recently pointed out: *“The detention of all remaining political prisoners will continue to overshadow and undermine any confidence in the Government's efforts”*. Agreeing with the UN Secretary General, we believe the world must not be misled by the regime's attempts at deceiving the international community into believing it is on the road to genuine democratic reform.

Four years after the Saffron Revolution took place, 222 monks and nearly 2,000 political prisoners remain behind bars. Those responsible for the brutal and deadly crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in 2007 are still in power thanks to the broadly denounced sham 'elections' of 2010. They still run the country, enjoying impunity and remaining free to continue committing serious human rights violations, especially in ethnic areas.

Although we welcome any positive changes in Burma, we must not forget that in many areas, the situation in the country has significantly worsened since the 2010 elections, with an increase in violence and human rights violations in ethnic areas, an increase in the number of internally-displaced people and refugees from Burma in neighbouring countries, and the extremely damaging effects to the natural environment brought about by new dams and other multi-national 'megaprojects'.

Before we accept that true positive change is underway in Burma, the international community should require the regime to do more than ineffectual public relations maneuvers. The regime needs to show a true determination for democratic transition by immediately and unconditionally releasing all political prisoners, ending impunity for human rights abusers, and entering into tripartite dialogue with Burma's ethnic groups and the pro-democracy opposition.

Thank you for participating this evening to show your support and solidarity for genuine positive change in Burma! Together, we will see a FREE BURMA.