

washingtonpost.com

Burma Expels U.N. Envoy Who Backed Pro-Democracy Protests

); } //-->
Advertisement

By Colum Lynch
Washington Post Staff Writer
Saturday, November 3, 2007; A15

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 2 -- [Burma's](#) military government Friday ordered the expulsion of the top [U.N.](#) representative in the country, Charles Petrie, expressing anger over his public endorsement of the country's pro-democracy protests.

The move comes on the eve of a visit to Burma of senior U.N. envoy [Ibrahim Gambari](#), who intends to prod the government to halt its crackdown on protesters, release political prisoners and begin negotiations with opposition leaders including detained Nobel Peace Prize laureate [Aung San Suu Kyi](#). It will be Gambari's second visit to Burma since the government responded with violence against Buddhist monks and pro-democracy organizers who were protesting a sharp increase of fuel prices in August.

Burma's action Friday sparked criticism from the United States and other Western governments who threatened to slap sanctions on Burma if it fails to cooperate with the United Nations. "This outrageous action . . . is an insult to the United Nations and the international community," said [Gordon Johndroe](#), a [National Security Council](#) spokesman.

U.N. Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#) said he "is disappointed" by Petrie's expulsion, adding that Gambari would raise his concerns with Burmese authorities when he arrives Saturday. Ban has "full confidence in the United Nations Country Team and its leadership," said Michelle Montas, a spokeswoman for Ban.

Petrie, a French national who works for the [U.N. Development Program](#), was summoned Friday to Burma's remote administrative capital, Naypyidaw, where he was excoriated by Burmese officials. They handed Petrie a letter accusing him of "acting beyond his capacity" and informing him that the government no longer wanted him to serve in the country.

Burma's action marks the most serious deterioration in relations with the United Nations in years. The global body has spent nearly \$90 million in humanitarian programs in Burma over four years, and the U.N. mission's leadership has traditionally avoided confronting the government for its role in human rights abuses.

In an Oct. 24 statement marking U.N. Day, Petrie issued his strongest criticism of Burma yet, urging the government to address the crisis and increase cooperation with international aid groups. He also endorsed an Oct. 18 statement by humanitarian aid agencies that blamed increasing poverty on the government's economic policies. "The concerns of the people have been clearly expressed through the recent peaceful demonstrations, and it is beholden on all to listen," Petrie said.

Burma's Foreign Ministry reacted angrily. In a letter to Petrie obtained by [The Washington Post](#), the Foreign Ministry said his statements harmed Burma's image and "jeopardized the good working relations" between the government and the United Nations.

Human rights advocates portrayed Burma's action as a "cheap ploy" aimed at undercutting Gambari. "Burma's generals will do anything to avoid being pressured into talks about genuine reform," said Brad Adams, [Asia](#) director at [Human Rights Watch](#), in a statement. "But now the danger is that Gambari will spend his time talking about the U.N.'s role in Burma instead of the need to end the crackdown and bring real reform."

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Log in](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

© 2007 The Washington Post Company

Ads by Google

[Videos of Burma](#)

More Travel Videos to More Places Free Shipping - Free Video Clips
www.travelvideostore.com

[Burma Airfare Sale](#)

Up to 50% off Retail Prices Discounted International Airfares
www.asaptickets.com

[Cheap Myanmar Phone Cards](#)

Excellent Connection, High Quality 14¢/min \$4.25 30min.Free PhoneCards
www.MyanmarPhoneCard.com