



MYANMAR

Expected Council Action

On 18 November the Council is expected to be briefed in consultations on recent developments in Myanmar by Vijay Nambiar, the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, who has also served as the Secretary-General's acting advisor on Myanmar.

At this stage it is unlikely that the Council will take action on Myanmar.

Key Recent Developments

On 7 November Myanmar held its first election in twenty years. Though the final results have not yet been declared, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, the proxy party of the ruling military government and party of current Prime Minister U Thein Sein, claims to have won 80 percent of the seats in parliament.

The election has been criticised by the Secretary-General as "insufficiently inclusive, participatory, and transparent". The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, has dubbed the election as "deeply flawed", as certain opposition parties were excluded from the process.

Council members have expressed differing views on the validity of the election. US President Barack Obama criticised the election in Myanmar, saying it had been neither free nor fair, and the UK's Foreign Secretary, William Hague, deemed the election as "the return to power of a brutal regime". China's ministry of foreign affairs characterised the election as "peaceful and successful" and a positive step in the transition to an elected government. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations welcomed the election "as a significant step forward" "in the implementation of the seven-point Roadmap for Democracy".

Following the election, on 8 November, violent clashes broke out between ethnic Karen rebels and Myanmar troops, reportedly causing some 15,000 people to flee into northern Thailand. On 12 November the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that most had returned to Myanmar.

On 13 November, pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi was released, after spending most of the last two decades under house arrest. The Secretary-General urged Myanmar to release the remaining 2,200 or so political prisoners.

On 22 October, cyclone Giri struck Myanmar, claiming the lives of at least 45 people and causing the destruction of at least 20,380 homes and thousands of acres of crops and fish breeding ponds. Currently, 100,000 people remain homeless as relief efforts by government authorities, UN agencies and NGOs are under way.

Key Issues

A key issue for the Council to address is the legitimacy of the recent election and its effect on future developments in the country.

Another issue is the recent release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Related to that is the issue of the remaining political prisoners in Myanmar.

Other issues of continuing concern are potential security risks arising from possible unrest among ethnic groups, highlighted by the recent clashes following the election and exacerbated by the humanitarian impact of cyclone Giri.

Options

The most likely option for the Council is to take no action following the briefing.

A possible option is to issue a presidential or a press statement expressing concern over the election process and the issue of remaining political prisoners.

Council Dynamics

The UK has been keen for the Council to discuss recent developments in Myanmar and proposed that Council members be briefed following the election and release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Though the UK's position is supported by some Council members, Myanmar is not an issue of high priority for many of them.

China is generally not eager to have Myanmar discussed by the Council but appears to have agreed to this briefing though it is unlikely to support any action being taken. It continues to hold the position that the issues at hand are internal in nature rather than threats to international peace and security.

UN Documents

Presidential Statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• S/PRST/2008/13 (2 May 2008) noted the commitment of the Myanmar government that the referendum would be free and fair and underlined the need for the Government of Myanmar to "establish the conditions and create an atmosphere conducive to an inclusive and credible process".• S/PRST/2007/37 (11 October 2007) deplored the use of violence against demonstrations and emphasised the importance of early release of prisoners.
Selected Press Statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SC/9731 (13 August 2009) reiterated the importance of the release of all political prisoners and expressed serious concern at the conviction and sentencing of Aung San Suu Kyi.• SC/9662 (22 May 2009) expressed the Council's concern about the political impact of recent developments in Myanmar following Aung San Suu Kyi's imprisonment.• SC/9228 (17 January 2008) affirmed the Council's support for the objectives set out in its October presidential statement and regretted the slow progress on meeting those objectives.• SC/9171 (14 November 2007) called for the release of political prisoners and for Myanmar to allow access for humanitarian assistance to those in need.
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A/65/368 (15 September 2010) was the latest report from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar.• S/PV.5753 (5 October 2007) was the record of the Council discussion following the crackdown in Myanmar.

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