

Japan Takes Flak for Burma Aid

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A prominent United States senator has blasted Japan for allegedly funding at least 28 new assistance projects in Burma worth more than \$18 million over the past year. "Some of these funds appear to have been provided directly to the illegitimate and repressive State Peace and Development Council, SPDC," Sen. Mitch McConnell charged in an October 8 statement published in the Congressional Record.

He was referring to the military regime that governs Burma.. "Why is Japan providing assistance to Burma and the thugs in Rangoon when Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other members and supporters of the [opposition] National League for Democracy, NLD, remain imprisoned?" the powerful head of the Senate's Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee asked. "It is time Japan gets with the programme and pressures the SPDC to begin meaningful reconciliation with the NLD--the only legitimately elected leadership of that country," McConnell warned.

The military nullified a landslide NLD election victory in 1990 and has held Suu Kyi under house arrest for much of the time since. A Japanese government spokesman stresses that all Tokyo's aid to Burma is humanitarian and "is provided under strict conditions . . . There's no question of it getting diverted."

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JAPAN AND BURMA -- (Senate - October 08, 2004)

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Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it has come to my attention that since October of last year, the Government of Japan has funded at least 28 new projects in Burma totaling more than \$18 million. Some of these funds appear to have been provided directly to the illegitimate and repressive State Peace and Development Council, SPDC.

A question many of my colleagues may be asking is: Why is Japan providing assistance to Burma and the thugs in Rangoon when Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other members and supporters of the National League for Democracy, NLD, remain imprisoned?

I wish I knew the answer.

Providing assistance to Burma and the SPDC sends exactly the wrong message at the wrong time. Assistance to the junta prolongs the suffering of the Burmese people and props up an illegitimate regime, headed by Than Swe, which has tortured, murdered and raped with impunity.

It is time Japan gets with the program and pressures the SPDC to begin meaningful reconciliation with the NLD--the only legitimately elected leadership of that country.

Freedom needs Japan's help in Burma .

Source: Mitch McConnell, "Japan and Burma", *Congressional Record, Senate*, article 15 of 79, October 8, 2004, Page: S10819, US Library of Congress, at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.