

## Burma cracks down on Students group

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Yangon (dpa) - Burma's military on Saturday accused leaders of the 88 Generation Students Group of terrorist acts, threatening legal action against the dissidents.

State-run television and radio stations accused a dozen well-known members of the 88 Students of involvement in two unsolved bombings in Yangon, formerly blamed of Karen insurgents.

The accusations come in the wake of a spate of rare protests in Yangon against a doubling of fuel prices on August 15, in which leaders of the 88 Generation Students were actively involved.

On Friday authorities put up "wanted" posters for ten of the 88 Generation Students including Nilar Thein, Aung Thu, Ko Ko Gyi, Sein Hlaing, Aung Naing, Htay Kywe, Hla Myo Naung, Aung Myo Tin, Tin Myint Aung and Tin Htoo Aung.

State media reports said that at least one of the dissidents, Htay Kywe, "has been at large under the protective wing of a super country embassy," presumably the USA's.

The attack on the 88 students, comprising many former student activists who participated in the 1988 pro-democracy movement, comes amid signs that anti-military protests are on the rise.

On Wednesday hundreds of Buddhist monks in Pakokku, 530 kilometres north of Yangon, marched against the government for hiking fuel prices and arresting about 100 demonstrators in recent weeks.

Monks on Thursday held 20 Myanmar officials hostage in a monastery in Pakokku for half a day in retaliation for their crack down on the Wednesday protest.

Buddhists monks have a long history of political activism in Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country.

The monkhood played a prominent role in Burma's struggle for independence from Great Britain in 1948 and joined students in the anti-military demonstrations that rocked Burma in 1988, which ended in bloodshed.

Like the recent protests, the 1988 mass demonstrations were sparked by rising discontent with the military's mismanagement of the economy and refusal to introduce some semblance of democracy.

After the 1988 events, the military, although still very much in charge, dropped its socialist ideology and opened the country up to foreign investments and market forces.

But the generals' brutal 1988 crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, that left an estimated 3,000 dead, resulted in the severing of nearly all international aid to the regime.

The aid blockade and other sanctions have been kept in place for the past 19 years. Although the military allowed a general election in 1990 it ignored the outcome when 80 per cent of the votes went to the National League for Democracy (NLD) of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sealing its pariah status in the West.

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has been under house arrest since May, 2003. Her ongoing incarceration was harshly criticized earlier this week by US President George W Bush, who is currently attending the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Sydney.

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