

Edinburgh honours president under house arrest in Burma

Marking the 60th birthday of democracy campaigner and Nobel prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, Edinburgh will grant her the Freedom of the City this month, as UNISON bestows her with honorary membership at its Conference in Glasgow.

It all started from motions by UNISON's City of Edinburgh Branch to the national union and a campaign with the Council to draw attention to the suffering of the people of Burma.

Last year, the Council unanimously voted to bestow its highest honour on Aung San Suu Kyi, who joins fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Nelson Mandela, as one of only two people not of Edinburgh origin to ever receive this award.

UNISON honorary membership was also previously granted to Nelson Mandela. On his release he spoke warmly of the strength it gave him to know that the outside world was campaigning.

In making this award, the Council has taken an active decision to raise public awareness about the continuing human rights abuses in Burma - a country with long standing connections with Scotland, where 60 years ago many Scots served in the Second World War.

Dr Sein Win, the Prime Minister in exile of Burma has been invited to Edinburgh by the International Development Group, UNISON and the City of Edinburgh Council for the events.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Now based in the US, Dr Sein Win has sacrificed his family life to campaign internationally to restore democracy and human rights to Burma.

His wife and six year old daughter remained in Burma after he was forced to flee for his life and liberty in 1991. They have not been allowed any contact since then.

Myanmar, as Burma is now called by the ruling junta, is led by one of the most brutal military dictatorships in the world; a dictatorship charged by the United Nations with a "crime against humanity" for its systematic abuses of human rights, and condemned internationally for refusing to transfer power to the legally elected Government of the country - the party led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San Suu Kyi is now serving her third term of house arrest. She was re-arrested on 30 May 2003 after the regime's militia attacked her convoy and killed up to 100 of her supporters. The National League for

continued over

Forthcoming events

Thurs 9 June: 17.30
Scottish Parliament Dr Sein Win, Burmese Prime Minister in exile, public seminar: International Cttee of Scottish Parliament *Free!*
Bookable tickets: 0131 348 5919 David.halliday @scottish.parliament.uk

Sat 11 June - 22 June
10.00 - 17.00 BEST
Wishes Aung San Suu Kyi
Exhibition at City Arts Centre. Painting & Photos by Chris Robinson, Norma and Maurice Joseph; cards drawn by refugee and child artists from Edinburgh and Burma as well as SSA artists. *Bookable group workshops*

Free Printmaking and lantern workshops by Chris Robinson

Tues 14 June: 10.00 Launch
Aung San Suu Kyi Mural on St John's Church, West End.

Thurs 16 June: 19.00 Free event
Interfaith Seminar: St George's, West End - Faith as a tool for Democracy
Panel to Dr Myint Su.

Fri 17 June: 18.15

Filmhouse, Burmese Film event: 'Sacrifice' Normal
Ticket Prices

Sat 18 June: 12.30 Tree planting ceremony
'Freedom of the City' ceremony to bestow the honour to Aung San Suu Kyi recognising Burma's 1300+ political prisoners

14.00 - 17.00 Bring a picnic to the park before and cup cakes with candles to share - to make a birthday wish for Burma's people.

'BEST Wishes Aung San Suu Kyi' - Parliament Square: Birthday Party and rally with celebrity and Burma speakers and video link. Burmese dancers, Community Arts Groups, local bands & surprise guests. *Organised by Amnesty, BEST, Scottish Refugee Week Committee and Burma Campaign UK.*

Sat 18 June: 16.00 Free
Burma Awareness Exhibition, City Arts Centre internet café, performance from Burmese dancers, 'The Burma Play' extract.

See over for more

Your views on the next issue

This special issue has been rushed out to advise you of the Freedom of the City and Honorary UNISON membership events for Aung Suu Kyi - and to update on the Make Poverty History events. A full edition will follow in a couple of weeks, covering :

- Job Evaluation, Single Status pay and conditions
- Council reorganisation

If there is anything else you want us to cover, contact 220 5655 or webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

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Democracy (NLD) won a resounding victory in the 1990 Burmese elections, winning over 80 percent of the Parliamentary seats at stake.

The ruling military junta launched a systematic campaign to prevent the NLD from forming a government and kept NLD President Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest along with over 1300 other democracy activists.

The Freedom award will be presented by Lord Provost Lesley Hinds to Aung San Suu Kyi's son, Kim Aris, at a ceremony on Saturday 18th June in the City Chambers, with a magnolia tree planted in her honour in Princes Street Gardens. This will be followed by a street party rally in Parliament Square from 2pm to 5pm hosted jointly by Amnesty International, Burma Educational Scholarship Trust, the Burma Campaign and the Scottish Refugee Council.

More events

Sun 19 June: 14.00 Royal Botanic

Gardens A guided contemplative garden walk around the Burmese collection of plants with Edinburgh Buddhist Centre/ERBG. Free/Bookable tickets only Murray.Forgie@educ.edin.gov.uk

Sun 19 June: 13.00 Free Edinburgh Refugee Centre Birthday Lunch – a typical meal eaten in Burmese refugee camps in Thailand to mark the start of Refugee Week

Sun 19 June: 15.30 Free 'The Burma Play' Full performance City Arts Centre

Mon 20 June: 18.00 Free Reception Amnesty Report on Refugees Launch St Georges Church

Mon 20 June: 19.00 'The Burma Play': St Georges Church: Popular Education Event organised by BEST and the Edinburgh Active Citizenship Group with panel discussion on 'Taking action for Burma'

Tues 21 June: 19.00 'Fascist Disneyland' National Library of Scotland

Causewayside Exhibition from the NLS archives and letters from Burma written by Aung San Suu Kyi with Sarah Boyack MSP, Liz Lochhead and Ian Banks reading Free Reception/Bookable tickets only: events@nls.uk

Sat 25 June: 14.00 National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge 'The Hour of Burning Clouds': Burmese Storytelling with Linda Bandalier and traditional 19th Century Burmese marionettes. Free event/Bookable tickets only: events@nls.uk

21-24 June Glasgow - UNISON

Conference, honorary membership (time to be confirmed)

Gearing up for the G8 Summit

UNISON is gearing up for the G8 Summit and Make Poverty History events in July, with a major role in the biggest event on 2 July.

UNISON is likely to have two major roles at the G8 demonstration and rally in Edinburgh on July 2. We are likely to be in charge of the stewarding of the demonstration and we also have (at least one) stall at the celebration afterwards.

We are looking for activists and members to volunteer to assist with either (or both) jobs. Please contact Michael Macneil at West Campbell Street, m.macneil@unison.co.uk.

Campaigning organisations and charities, such as Oxfam, Christian Aid, ACTSA, SCIAF and the World Development Movement, have identified how they can campaign together to urge the UK Government to commit to the following policies, all of which UNISON has called for in the past:

- Drop the Debt
- Trade justice



- More and Better aid

Demo Edinburgh 2 July

UNISON Scotland has agreed to support the mobilisation for the event in Edinburgh on 2 July.

Key events on 2 July are:-

- Forming a giant human white band around Edinburgh, challenging the G8 to take action
- Sending messages directly to the G8 on two storey high MAKE-POVERTYHISTORY letters
- Hearing campaigners from across the globe sending a clear challenge to the G8

Members should keep in touch with the Branch to find out how they can participate. In the first instance leave your name at 220 5655 or branchoffice@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

"Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

"The G8 leaders, when they meet in Scotland in July, have already promised to focus on the issue of poverty, especially in Africa. I say to all those leaders: do not look the other way; do not hesitate. Recognise that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision.

"Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.

"Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom. Of course the task will not be easy. But not to do this would be a crime against humanity, against which I ask all humanity now to rise up.

"Make Poverty History in 2005. Make History in 2005. Then we can all stand with our heads held high."

Nelson Mandela

