

CHAPTER IV

TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS IN ACTION

TOWARDS THE RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Transnational Advocacy Networks are not working alone in order to aggregate people support on the idea of releasing Aung San Suu Kyi. It rests on the idea that both domestic and international actors represented by people movement, NGO, INGO, media, and other movement can bring the influence towards the changing of the decision taken by Military Junta. The discursive position possessed by Transnational Advocacy Networks bring good towards the advocacy that they conduct in order to get the freedom for Aung San Suu Kyi as well as another political prisoners who are being detained by the Military Junta because they have the strong position in influencing other states in supporting the democratic transition in Myanmar as well.

A. The Domestic Actions Taken by Transnational Advocacy Networks

In order to get succeed in accelerating their demand, there are actually some stages of influences which are conducted by this transnational advocacy network which are:

1. Making issue creation and agenda setting by recruiting activists and campaign

When the Burmese people took to the streets in August 1988 to protest against military rule, no transnational advocacy network yet existed

for Myanmar at that time. The protests were firstly organized and led by university students in the country. The issue creation is made with the effort conducted by Aung San Suu Kyi and their supporters who are bound into the National League for Democracy, a party that focuses on the democratic transition in Myanmar.

Yet, the movement conducted by National League for Democracy is stopped for a while because most of their leaders was under house arrest in several times. The way to aggregate people support is done by emphasizing on the issue of the human right violations that have been done by the government of Military Junta by putting the NLD Chairman U Tin Oo in jail and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest.

Fortunately, this condition gives the bigger power for her supporters to make a change in Myanmar soon. Even though the leader was arrested, the supporters of National League for Democracy are still on fire. Issue creation is built by based on the need of freedom that Burmese need soon. Most of the people are living in a suffer condition due to the dictatorship of Military Junta. Thus, the issue creation is established by based on the demand of people for having the much more democratic government without any human right violation anymore. The issue of freedom and human right are the most important issues that need to be

The campaign is mostly done by the supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi to demand for her release as soon as possible which consists of monks, students and ordinary citizens. They usually do demonstration in the street by asking for the freedom for Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners such as what happened in . The National League for Democracy and the other democratic organisation backed by the people, especially in Mandalay⁶⁸, who had found new strength in the NLD election victory, demanded the release of the NLD leaders and other political prisoners. The campaign is mostly done by demonstration activity. The activists such as the leaders of National League for Democracy are usually captured and being detained as the political prisoners as well by the Junta.

It is actually representing the idea of constructivist which represents that non state actors are also having the chance and position in making a change into the government. In the election of 1990, the National League for Democracy should actually become the winner, but the Junta which is led by SLORC rejected the result of the election. Arguing that social reality is constructed through the interactions of individuals and collective actors in a community (of states), proponents of transnational activism claimed that groups advancing specific universal norms such as human rights could shape the behavior of states and governments without having control over significant material resources

2. Persuade people to sign into declaration that is considered as symbolic value of the movement

This action is done in order to get the symbolic value of the movement that can bring to the betterment in Myanmar situation. This persuade action is also done by National League for Democracy that decided to hold a conference and making a declaration called as Shwegondaing Declaration⁶⁹ which emphasized on some points which are:

- a.) The immediate and unconditional release of all the political prisoners including U Tin Oo, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
- b.) Review of the Constitution
- c.) Establishment of a genuine Union based on the principle of equality for all the ethnic nationalities; recognition in some ways of the result of the 1990 general election; are the main issues to be resolved immediately for the benefit of the country and the people.

This declaration showed about the strong effort of the NLD as the parts of Transnational Advocacy Networks who tried to demand for the democratic transition in their government. In the process of democratic

⁶⁹ Lusa Ranado, *Tatmaday Constitution for Disciplined Democracy in Burma*, 2011 retrieved

transition, according to O'Donnell, it is emphasized that in order to gain the democratic transition to get succeed, there must be the emergence of a revolutionary alternative. It is clearly stated by the actions conducted by the networks who tried to seek for assistance and support from both domestic and international arena.

This effort is actually seen as the strong actions done by Transnational Advocacy Networks which is represented by NLD in order to ask for the demand for changing the decision taken by the Military Junta. It is in line with idea of constructivist proposed by Alexander Wendt which examines that international politics is conducted is made, not given.⁷⁰ The approach resolves around identity, which is construed as more basic than interest. The effort done by NLD is actually the impact of the international politics that demands on the value of democracy as the key prominent in the running of government.

It actually does not need the power of other state as well to encounter it. Instead, it is working effectively through the power of transnational advocacy networks built by both domestic and also international advocacy. Military Junta may become a self interested government but their identity can eventually be changing due to the social movements that are aggregated in making a transition from authoritarian into democratic system.

⁷⁰ Wendt, Alexander. *International Organization* (New York : Spring, 2002). English edition

People still continue to seek for support in asking the Military Junta to change their policies and releasing Aung San Suu Kyi soon. Aung San Suu Kyi is seen as the democratic icon for peace in Myanmar. The other initiative is aggregated by NLD members in Mandalay in where more than 100 MPs and NLD organizers from Mandalay, Sagaing, Pegu, Rangoon, Irrawaddy, and Magwe Divisions and the Kachin State convened in Mandalay on 29 September 1990 in spite the difficulties they were facing. The meeting agreed on the formation of an Action Committee of MPs, rejected SLORC's Notification 1/90, and decided to implement the resolutions of the Gandhi Declaration Conference⁷¹. They decided some points which are:⁷²

- a.) Establish a legitimate Government in Mandalay or an appropriate place within the country with the support of elected representatives,
- b.) If conditions in the country were not favorable to form of a Government then to do it in the liberated areas with MPs representing different regions of Burma,
- c.) Establish contacts with the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), and other revolutionary forces, to seek their assistance in setting up a legitimate Government in the liberated area, and

⁷¹ Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activist Beyond Border : Advocacy Networks in International Politics* New York : Cornell University Press, 2010, 26-29.

- d.) Seek diplomatic and other forms of support from the international community.

These formulations are becoming the strategic planning for NLD in order to seek for the support from the other activists who are also concerned about the changing on the government system in Myanmar. They establish networks with international community who are not only composed by states but also by the INGO. NLD also make cooperation with the local NGO such as Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) to gain much bigger supports in demanding the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and for all political prisoners as well.

B. The International Actions Taken by Transnational Advocacy Networks

1. Establishing Networks with International non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and International Organization

This action is used by the using of the connection from international worlds in order to pressure the government of Myanmar in order to change the system of the government from the authoritarian into the more democratic state such as from the International non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) or the International Organization that has the strong influence in the world such as United Nation Here is

the analogy of the connection. Once, a movement establishes a connection with international NGOs or states, a "boomerang" pattern emerges. In this pattern, movements in a country with a repressive government that fails to respond to the needs of its people are blocked from engaging in direct advocacy efforts and look outward to find support from INGOs.⁷³

There are many INGOs who take part in the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The examples of the most vocal INGOs are Amnesty International and Human Rights Networks who are focusing their jobs on the advocacy for the release of Aung Suu Kyi and on the idea of freedom for all people in Myanmar. The connection established is done by the local movement such as NLD, local NGO in Myanmar such as Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) who tried to publish their reports and send into Human Rights Watch as well as Amnesty International in order to seek for their assistance to promote the idea of freedom and democracy.

These advocacy networks are significant transnationally and domestically. They build new links among actors in civil societies, states, and international organizations that later multiply the channels of access to the international system. The examples of the action are conducted by ND-Burma (Network for Human Right Documentation Burma) who tried to capture some human right issues in Myanmar and making a report on it.

⁷³ Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", *International Relations* 25 (2010) : 24

They send this report to United Nations Human Rights-Office for the High Commissioner for Human Right which states that bundles of human rights violation done by Military Junta such as detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and also all democratic activists without any trial.⁷⁴ This brings good atmosphere because finally United Nations made a statement on pressuring and urging Junta to set Aung San Suu Kyi free because it has broken the human right value and freedom of people.⁷⁵

The release of Aung San Suu Kyi is becoming the most demanded decision that people have waited during years. Aung San Suu Kyi is considered as the lady who can unite Myanmar and creating the peaceful circumstance due to her idea of democracy that leads Burmese free from the dictatorship of Military Junta. The norms promoted by Transnational Advocacy Networks are about the idea of freedom and democratic transition that people in Myanmar need soon.

Domestic norms, however, are deeply entwined with the workings of international norms. Many international norms began as domestic norms and become international through the efforts of entrepreneur of various kinds.⁷⁶ It analyzes the power of individual and also people to give contribution towards the behavior of state as well. Domestic norms in Myanmar are about the need of freedom and democracy that people have

⁷⁴ Official Website of OHCHR, *Report on Myanmar*, retrieved November 9th 2012, <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/asiaregion/pages/mmindex.aspx>>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Sikkink, Kathryn and Martha Finnemore, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change", *International Relations* 25 (2010) : 24

waited for a long period. Besides, it also emphasizes on the concept on how non state actors are trying to influence in the decision making process of the government. This is seen from the actions established by domestic and international networks consist of people movement, party, NGO, and INGO who are working in advocating the release of Aung San Suu Kyi soon altogether.

2. Making International Campaign on Promoting the Idea of the Release of Aung San Suu Kyi

There are many organizations who take part on the campaign to release Aung San Suu Kyi. The INGO who take part in the release of Aung San Suu Kyi are Amnesty International and Human Rights Networks who are focusing their jobs on the advocacy for the release of Aung Suu Kyi to the world. It can be seen from the campaigns done by Amnesty International in collaboration with Burma Campaign UK as one of the INGOs who is also concerned about the democratic transition process in Myanmar.

They are seeking for call in a Global Day of Action for Myanmar⁷⁷, with rallies in cities around the world. It was held on October 6th 2007 in

⁷⁷ Burma Campaign UK Official Website, *Global Day of Action for 34 Resistance Fighters from Burma in Indian Jail*, retrieved November 1st 2012, <<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/news-and-reports/news-stories/global-day-of-action-for-34-resistance-fighters-from-burma-in-indian-jail/16>>

30 countries and almost 100 cities including Sydney, Montreal, Canada, United States, and Hongkong. It gives much influence on how people from all over the world finally aware about the problem in Myanmar and ask the release of Aung San Suu Kyi soon by publishing their ideas in the media as well.

Besides, the coordination for the protests was also done through Facebook.com in the usage of media, where a group called Support the Monk's Protest in Myanmar (now called Burma Global Action Network was later formed), working closely with Burma Campaign UK and Amnesty International, had steadily grown to over 440,000 members in a matter of weeks. It was and a hotbed of protest related news and as a flashpoint for Myanmar related activity on the internet. Here we can see that media also gives contribution towards the succeed of the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from the detainment under Military Junta. This brings good and fast response because media is considered as the sphere between the government and society, then media plays important role in the spreading of news about human right violation in Myanmar to the world.

. Another movement is also conducted by over thirty non-governmental organizations from twenty countries who are sending the letter to UN Secretary General at that time Kofi Annan and the members of the United Nations Security Council who are calling for a peaceful, binding resolution on the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar. The

letter adds to a growing chorus from the international community calling for action on Myanmar. The letter states:⁷⁸

"The Burmese junta has ignored 28 UN General Assembly and Commission on Human Rights resolutions. Now is the time for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and members of the UN Security Council to move beyond discussion and take action in the Council. The situation for Burma's 53 million people grows more desperate and horrific each day. We urge the government to soon release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Burma."

This shows about the supportive support from all over the world who demand on the release of Aung San Suu Kyi as soon as possible. Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest many times without any legal trial. Thus, it leads the action of movements who ask for the release of her soon. The implications for this statement by United Nations later also aggregate the support from the other states and international worlds such as:

- a.) British Foreign Office ministers called Friday for the immediate and unconditional release of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, detained. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said Suu Kyi's continued detention "contravenes international human rights law and

⁷⁸ Press Release of Humanitarian, Human Rights Organization call for Urgent, US Campaign for Burma, June 2006, retrieved November 2nd 2012, < <http://uscampaignforburma.org/take->

casts a long shadow over planned elections in the country." He urged the military to release her and all other political prisoners immediately.⁷⁹

- b.) A similar call came Thursday from U.N. Special Rapporteur Tomas Ojea Quintana, who is on the U.N. Human Rights Council. He said the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found Suu Kyi's detention is a breach of international human rights law⁸⁰. He emphasized that:

"Aung San Suu Kyi has made clear her commitment to working with all parties to achieve national reconciliation. It is high time the regime released her and accepted her offer of dialogue."

- c.) The United States, EU, Australia, Canada, and Switzerland continue to impose restrictive trade and financial sanctions on Myanmar, arguing that recent government actions are insufficient to consider lifting the sanctions.⁸¹ In September and November Derek Mitchell, the newly appointed US special representative and policy coordinator on Myanmar, made official visits to the country.

⁷⁹ Official website of Burma Campaign UK, *Free All Political Prisoners*, retrieved November 12th 2012, < <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/index.php/burma/campaigns/campaigns-main> >

⁸⁰ UN News Centre, *Myanmar Current Situation and the Need of Change*, retrieved November 11st 2012, < <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43386#.UKMMc2fnYUE> >

⁸¹ Arendshorst, John, "The Dilemma of Non-Interference: Myanmar, Human Rights, and the ASEAN Charter", vol.8, no.1, 2009, pp. 22-24

Mitchell expressed cautious optimism that reforms could evolve into far-reaching change, but urged the government to "take concrete actions in a timely fashion to demonstrate its sincerity and genuine commitment to reform and national reconciliation by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi soon.

These actions are promulgated and becoming the evidence on how the structured networks can shape the domestic politics on how the decision of the government can be changed. When movements are able to adopt structures that are similar to international NGOs, they are more likely to gain support.⁸² The idea promoted by the local NGO and also party as well as movement in Myanmar are similar to international demand who promotes the idea of freedom and democracy.

These whole actions make Myanmar feel that they have no supporters in the international world. Many sanctions are also addressed to them so that they finally feel unsafe and insecure in conducting the international politics. It is indirectly forcing them to release Aung San Suu Kyi and allow them to get involved in the opposition movement bound into National League for Democracy. The release of Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the indicators of the success of the democratic transition in Myanmar on how the political transition is needed when authoritarian

regime has been neglected by the people.⁸³ Therefore people gathered and establishing the transnational advocacy network in order to send their demand internationally.

⁸³ Mundy, Karen and Lynn Murphy, *Transnational Advocacy : Global Civil Society? Emerging*