

Myanmar criticized over sentencing of Suu Kyi

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Criticism poured in for Myanmar yesterday over the sentencing of Aung San Suu Kyi as the EU promised more sanctions and one of its key regional partners called for the democracy icon's immediate release.

After the authorities ordered the Nobel laureate to remain under house arrest for a further 18 months following a trial in Yangon, protesters rallied outside Myanmar's diplomatic missions to denounce the outcome.

With the sentence effectively ruling out any possibility of the 64-year-old standing in polls next year, there were immediate calls for a hardening of sanctions against the military rulers who prevented Suu Kyi from taking power after her party won elections in 1990.

"The EU will respond with additional targeted measures against those responsible for the verdict," the EU's Swedish presidency said in a statement on behalf of the 27-nation bloc.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said Suu Kyi's continued detention is "unjustified and unacceptable on all accounts."

An EU source said a "written procedure" had been launched to beef up the sanctions which will be able to come into force on Friday, as long as there is no opposition from the bloc's members.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said any new EU sanctions had to hit the junta where it hurt.

The new measures "must in particular target the resources that they directly profit from, in the wood and ruby sector," a statement from his office said.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he was "saddened and angry" at the verdict in the "sham trial."

Brown said her "monstrous" prosecution, designed to stop her from taking part in next year's planned elections, meant the poll would have no legitimacy.

He said it was time an arms embargo was slapped on the junta by the UN Security Council, whose permanent members include Myanmar's traditional ally China.

Criticism was more muted closer to home, but Malaysia's foreign minister said Suu Kyi should be released immediately and called for an urgent meeting of the ASEAN.

"We were hoping that the junta will release her unconditionally and will hold an election to enable Suu Kyi and other political detainees to participate in that election," Anifah Aman said.

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Fellow ASEAN member Indonesia also expressed concern, with the foreign ministry saying it was “very disappointed” at the verdict.

ASEAN last month rejected US calls to expel Myanmar and opposed sanctions on Myanmar.

Australia also called for tougher sanctions, expressing “dismay” at the conviction and urging the junta to release Suu Kyi.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/08/12](#)