

## **Activists Call for Boycott of Burmese “Blood Jade” in Beijing**

NEW YORK – Activists are calling on visitors to China for the 2008 Summer Olympics to boycott souvenirs and jewelry made of Burmese jade in order to avoid supporting Burma’s abuse-ridden jade mining industry that provides the military regime with one of its largest sources of hard cash.

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For the first time in history, Olympic medals will include a material other than gold, silver, and bronze. While the medals of the Beijing Games are made with Chinese nephrite jade, Burmese jadeite has eclipsed nephrite in popularity in China. Gem-quality jade, a class of jadeite, is only produced by Burmese mines, which are controlled and operated by the military regime and its business partners.

*Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games*, a report released today by the All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU) and 8-8-08 for Burma, details how the military regime that rules Burma makes millions of dollars per year from the export of jade, primarily to China.

“We are relieved that the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games has sourced the jade for the Olympic medals and official souvenirs from China,” said Cristina Moon of 8-8-08 for Burma. “But there is a growing demand for Burmese jade that will only increase due to the Olympic promotion of jade. The generals will keep using their jade profits to buy weapons and crush dissent in Burma unless individuals take a stand.”

In addition to being a major source of foreign currency, the military-controlled industry is plagued with deplorable working conditions, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, and environmental destruction. Thousands have lost their land due to the expansion of mining areas. Deaths from pit collapses and company vigilantism are commonplace.

“Our mountains have disappeared and our youth are dying. The generals are letting their cronies mine away our future,” said Naw La of the AKSYU. “We urge people not to buy blood jade from Burma”.

The Kachin are an ethnic group from Burma’s northernmost Kachin State, the source of almost all of the world’s gem-quality jade.

Burma’s military crushed non-violent protests led by Buddhist clergy in September 2007, echoing its infamous bloody crackdown on the student-led uprising on August 8, 1988 when 3,000 were killed. The opening ceremony of the Olympics falls on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event.

Following Cyclone Nargis, which killed 150,000 people and affected over 2 million others, Burma’s military leaders hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid and attempts to fully assess cyclone damage. Despite international outcry, the regime held a national referendum to approve a draft constitution only seven days after the cyclone.

The full report *Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games* can be viewed at [www.bloodjade.org](http://www.bloodjade.org)

Photographs and video of the jade mines are available from AKSYU (GMT+7) and 8-8-08 for Burma (GMT-5)