

BLOOD JADE: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games

PRESS KIT

The medals of the Beijing Games - inlaid for the first time in Olympic history with **jade** - are a reminder of China's deep and complex relationship with the military regime that rules neighboring **Burma**, including its jade mines.

"Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games", a joint report by the All Kachin Students & Youth Union and 8-8-08 for Burma, investigates Burma's jade mining industry, fueled by Chinese demand, and calls on global consumers to boycott Burma's blood jade - in Beijing and beyond.

www.bloodjade.org

Excerpts from “*Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Beijing Games*”. Full report available for download at www.bloodjade.org

Stop the Global Trade in Burmese Blood Jade

The authors of this report call on individuals – global consumers, visitors to China, Olympic spectators, and Olympic athletes – to **boycott the sale of Burma’s blood jade**. The Beijing Organizing Committee of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) and the government of the People’s Republic of China should take immediate action to curb the global trade in blood jade, beginning by ending their promotion of jade products from Burma.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the first time in history, Olympic medals will be made with a material other than gold, silver, and bronze – jade. While they are a constituent part of a grand effort to infuse Chinese culture into the Olympic movement’s legacy, the medals of the Beijing Games also symbolize China’s deep and complex relationship to neighboring Burma – and the brutal military regime that rules it.

Burmese jadeite is a global business predicated on human suffering and the absence of the rule of law, and is controlled with an iron grip by Burma’s military regime. The regime led by Senior General Than Shwe grew in notoriety in September 2007 when it violently suppressed peaceful protests led by Buddhist clergy in Burma. The regime’s status as an international pariah was further cemented when it obstructed humanitarian aid to 2.4 million people affected by Nargis, a class four cyclone that hit the Irrawaddy delta region on May 3, 2008, killing 150,000.

Burma’s regime has effectively consolidated military control over the entire gems industry, including jadeite, by eliminating small and independent companies from mining and forcing all sales to go through national auctions held by official government ministries in Rangoon. Gems are now Burma’s third largest export and provide the regime with an important source of foreign currency .

Much of this cash comes from China, which has recently seen a dramatic rise in demand for Burmese jadeite due to its overall economic growth. On March 27, 2007, the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) announced that the design for the medals of the Beijing Games included jade from China’s Qinghai province . BOCOG has publicly stated that their officially licensed products are being made with Qinghai jade (or nephrite), not jadeite from Burma. However, many if not most of the jade products on the general market are from the abuse-ridden jadeite industry in Burma and profit Burma’s brutal military regime. The showcasing of jade on the world stage will further escalate the growth in demand .

Jadeite production comes at significant costs to the human rights and environmental security of the people living in Kachin state. Land confiscation and forced relocation are commonplace and improper mining practices lead to frequent landslides, floods, and other environmental damage. Conditions in the mines are deplorable, with frequent accidents and base wages less than US\$1 per day. An environment of impunity and violence has been created by the military regime and its corporate partners, who inflict beatings on and even kill locals who are caught collecting stones cast off as trash by the mining companies. Mining company bosses and local authorities are complicit in a thriving local trade in drugs, which – when coupled with a substantial sex industry – has led to a generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic that has spilled over the border into China.

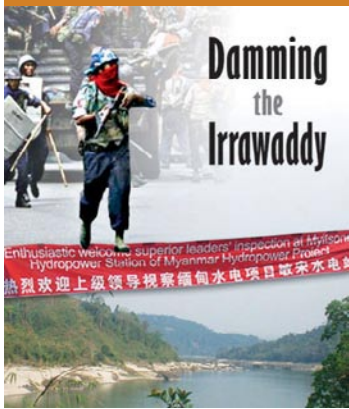
While Burmese jadeite is only one part of China’s vast economic relationship to Burma’s military rulers, it is an industry on which individuals can have a direct and substantial impact, if they make conscientious decisions not to buy what can justifiably be called “blood” jade.

It is critically important that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the rest of the Olympic movement find clear and creative means to distance itself from the trade in Burmese blood jade to protect the integrity of the most important symbols of the Olympics and the fundamental values enshrined in the Olympic Charter. They should take swift action to safeguard the trust of the world’s citizens who are at risk of becoming unwitting parties to a global blood jade industry mired in a system of abuse and lawlessness.

“Their target is the jade market during the Olympics. The [merchants] buy jade whether it’s good quality or not. When jade is gone in Kachin State, Burma, China may be the only jade market in the world. I don’t think it will be long before all the jade in Hpakant is gone.”

- ZR, villager interviewed by All Kachin Students & Youth Union in Kachin State, Burma

BACKGROUND ON KACHIN STATE, BURMA



Excerpts from “Damming the Irrawaddy”, published by the Kachin Development Networking Group and the Kachin Environmental Organization, October 2007.

Kachin State is the northernmost part of Burma. It is bordered by China to the north and east, Shan State to the south and Sagaing Division and India to the west. The population of Kachin State is over 1.2 million. The inhabitants are Kachin (Jingpaw, Rawang, Lisu, Zaiwa, Longwo, Lachit), Shan, Burmese, Chinese, and Indian. The capital city is Myitkyina with an estimated population of 140,000.

Kachin State is home to the highest mountain in Southeast Asia (Mount Hkakabo Razi at 5,881 meters). The icy mountains in the north are where the headwaters of the Irrawaddy originate. Kachin State is abundant in natural resources and biodiversity; there are 800 species of orchids alone in the state and several rare species of wildlife including the leaf deer and dwindling numbers of tigers. The renowned botanist F. Kingdon Ward said of Kachin State “it is one of the most interesting botanical and zoological natural sanctuaries in Southeast Asia.”

Militarism and development in Kachin State

After years of sustained civil war and abuse by Burma’s military towards the people of Kachin State, a ceasefire agreement between the military regime and the Kachin Independence Organization was reached in 1994. Since the ceasefire, Kachin State has witnessed a drastic expansion of Burma Army troops together with destructive development projects that have resulted in what some local leaders are calling an economic, environmental and social crisis. Thousands of acres of farm land and homes have been confiscated by military authorities and associated businesses. Several reports have documented the loss of rich forests and biodiversity to rampant logging, the contamination of waterways by destructive mining processes, and the escalation of drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, and human trafficking. These problems have been devastating for communities; in addition, the problems of HIV and drug addiction are crossing the border into neighboring China.

The post-ceasefire expansion of the military to ethnic border areas has gone hand in hand with a Border Area Development program that has involved the selling of the country’s natural resources to the highest bidders. Neighboring countries hungry for Burma’s natural gas, gems, and teak have made deals with the junta despite widespread condemnation of its human rights record. In Kachin State, the junta has been profiting from allowing businesses to extract gold in wildlife sanctuaries and along rivers. After international criticism of the unsustainable logging of teak and other hardwoods, much of it shipped directly to China, the junta decreed that the log trade should be centralized through Rangoon to international buyers, thus ensuring that they would profit more directly from the trade.

The regime has also made long-term natural gas sales agreements with Thailand and China and is negotiating with India. These involve large foreign investments to pay for international pipeline construction. The contracts are usually signed for a 25-30 year period so that the neighboring country or foreign company can earn enough profit to repay their initial investment. In this case, the investor has a stake in the stability or survival of the regime with which they have signed the deal. Therefore these energy sales by the regime are a type of “resource diplomacy” through which they gain political as well as financial capital.

GLOBAL ACTION ON BURMESE GEMSTONES

US Sanctions

HR 3890

Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta's Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008
Signed into law by President George W. Bush on 30 July, 2008

Strengthens existing bans on import of goods made, manufactured, or grown in Burma to specifically cover gemstones such as rubies and jade.

HJ Res 93

Renewal of important ban included in Burma Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003
Signed into law by President George W. Bush on 30 July, 2008

Bans import of all goods made, manufactured, or grown in Burma. Also freezes assets of designated individuals associated with the military regime in Burma and bars them from receiving visas to enter the United States.

Executive Order 13464

Signed into law by President George W. Bush on 30 April, 2008

Authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to block the property and interests in property of, among others, entities owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, the Government of Burma or an official or officials of the Government of Burma. Affects three Burmese state-owned enterprises, Myanmar Gem Enterprise, Myanmar Timber Enterprise, and Myanmar Pearl Enterprise.

Canadian Sanctions

SOR/2007-285 December 13, 2007

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT: Special Economic Measures (Burma) Regulations
P.C. 2007-1913 December 13, 2007

Bans all exports or imports between Burma and Canada (except for humanitarian aid) and investment in Burma, and a freeze on assets belonging to 40 designated members of the military regime and their families and 36 companies associated with the military regime.

EU Sanctions

16 October, 2008

The EU Council on External Relations strengthened the EU Common Position on Burma by imposing an export ban on equipment intended for the logging and timber sectors or for the mining of metals, minerals, precious and semi-precious stones; an import ban on products of the above sectors; and an investment ban in these sectors.

HEADLINES: Burmese Gems & the Junta

“Soldiers are always watching at the mine... Since the joint ventures started, it is like working for soldiers.

– LA, interviewed by AKSYU in *“Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Olympics”*

From Human Rights Advocates

“Burma’s Gem Trade and Human Rights Abuses”, Human Rights Watch Backgrounder, 30 July 2008

“Burma: Gem Trade Bolsters Military Regime, Fuels Atrocities”, Human Rights Watch Press Release, 12 November 2008

From the Jewellery Industry

“Myanmar: Gem Paradise, Human Rights Hell”, *Professional Jewelers Magazine*, May 2004

“Burma, Gemstones & Despots”, Leber Jeweler Inc & Jeweler Burma Relief Project (http://www.leberjeweler.com/stones/burma_despots.php3)

“AGTA Supports Strengthening embargo on Burmese goods”, *National Jeweler Network*, 7 November 2007

Mary Wizniewski, “Among ‘Blood Rubies’ headlines, JA calls for full ban on Burmese gems”, *National Jeweler Network*, 1 November 2007

In the News

“Gem Traders Unfazed by Burma Turmoil”, *Businessweek*, 7 November 2007

“Myanmar Rubies Have Dealers Seeing Red”, AP, 16 November 2007

“Myanmar’s Rubies: Bloody Colour, Bloody Business”, Reuters, 4 October, 2007

“World Ruby Sales Bankroll Burma’s Regime”, *Telegraph UK*, 1 October, 2007

“Blood Rubies Bankroll Burmese Junta”, *The Sunday Times*, 30 September, 2007

“Burma’s Poor Pay for Foreign Gem Demand”, *Telegraph UK*, 23 July, 2007

“The Burma Regime and the Gemstone Trade”, *BBC World Service*, 5 July, 2007

“The company came and simply took the land.”

– LTJ, interviewed by AKSYU in *“Blood Jade: Burmese Gemstones & the Olympics”*

VOICE: 8-8-08 for Burma on Burma, China & the Olympics

Publication



“SINKING: China’s Soft Diplomacy on Burma”

8-8-08 for Burma

2 July, 2008

Available for download at www.8808forburma.com/special/sinking

Interviews

8-8-08 for Burma Executive Director Cristina Moon on “Radio Nation with Laura Flanders”

Air America

21 April, 2008

8-8-08 for Burma Executive Director Cristina Moon on “Worldview with Jerome McDonald”

Chicago Public Radio

18 September, 2008

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