

Headlines:

- **Democracy in Burma?**
- **Geneva Talks Fail, Again**
- **France Extends State of Emergency**

Details:

Democracy in Burma?

This week saw the first session of Aung San Suu Kyi in parliament in an event which engulfed media channels around the world. Whilst many have hailed her election as a "victory for democracy," a closer look at events shows the status quo is far from democratic. This was typified by her expression which was blank, rarely showing a smile despite the hype of this event by her party. The current parliament which consists largely of NLD MPs, is in reality controlled by the military who also control the key ministries and can veto any parliamentary decision. However, this facade is being presented as democracy, which conceals the economic motivation driving western interest in Burma.

Geneva Talks Fail, Again!

In December 2015, 17 nations with an interest in the outcome of Syria gathered in Vienna, Austria to agree on a timetable to resolve the conflict in Syria. This week the first part of this process took place in Geneva, Switzerland. But even before it began, the conference ran into problems and opposition groups refused to attend unless their terms were agreed to in advance. Syria now has more summits, conferences and meetings than a global multinational company, but despite the number of meetings the outcome remains the same, failure. The reasons for this are, firstly, the attendees of such gatherings are dissidents, who are secular and nationalistic in outlook, but spend most of their time in Paris, Washington and London, rather than fighting in Syria. Secondly, these gatherings never include the largest groups and most popular in Syria – Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-sham, despite them controlling much of North Syria. Thirdly, these conferences require participants to negotiate a transition deal with the regime in Damascus, thus accepting the regime which the people have been fighting to expel for five years.

France Extends State of Emergency

France has extended its state of emergency which was brought in after the Paris attacks in November 2015. After the attacks the emergency powers permitted the security agencies to arrest anyone without the need for a warrant, it banned demonstrations and allowed house searches at any time without any judicial oversight. The French authorities conducted mass raids after the attacks in 2015, hoping that more raids would lead to catching suspects. The mass raids have targeted Muslims despite Muslims representing a small percentage of all terror attacks in Europe. According to Yasser Louati of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, he recalled a situation where a mother was "*touched in her private parts by police*," and another mother who "*lost her baby after a raid*." John Dalhuisen, Director of Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia programme told Al Jazeera: "emergency powers are only supposed to be used in relation to an imminent threat." It's hard to judge the imminence of a threat from the outside... But it doesn't take a mathematical genius to figure out that much more of this was preventative and speculative rather than linked to intelligence.