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**NDI RECOGNIZES COURAGE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI,
CALLS ON BURMESE REGIME TO SEEK NATIONAL RECONCILIATION**

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) today recognized the courage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her years of sacrifice working for a democratic Burma. Suu Kyi was released Saturday after being illegally detained by Burma’s military regime for 15 of the last 21 years.

“Her release marks a new chapter in the career and life of one of the world’s great heroines,” said NDI Chairman Madeleine K. Albright. “Our thoughts and prayers are with Aung San Suu Kyi and her people, and we will do everything in our power to be supportive as she continues the struggle to bring true democracy to Burma.”

NDI called on the regime to ensure her safety and guarantee that she and her supporters are allowed to participate fully in the nation’s political life with rights of free expression and assembly.

The Institute said Suu Kyi’s release should be followed immediately by the freeing of Burma’s 2,200 other political prisoners and the start of negotiations leading to a genuine democratic transition.

There is now an opportunity for the regime to reverse its course, the Institute said, and urged Burma’s military junta to enter into a dialogue with Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy, which she heads. That dialogue should lead to a transition process that includes a democratic constitution and open elections. A reconciliation process must also include the country’s ethnic minority groups.

NDI noted that the outcome of the Nov. 7 polls was largely predetermined by the military regime, which created a constitution and an [electoral framework](#) that ensured continuation of the status quo. The junta backed certain candidates and parties, using government resources, and arrested opposition candidates. NDI’s Burmese partner organizations have documented hundreds of incidents of violence, intimidation, abuse of government power and fraud that occurred in the

lead-up to elections and on election day. These are documented on a new website, www.burmaelectiontracker.org.

In 1990 Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy, won 80 percent of parliamentary seats. The regime nullified these results and refused to hand over power. Her release Saturday comes on the heels of an election orchestrated by the regime to ensure its hold on power under the guise of civilian rule, NDI said.

Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. In 1996, she received NDI's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award, presented annually to an individual or organization that has demonstrated a commitment to democracy and human rights.

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. More information is available at www.ndi.org.

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