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Press Release

BURMESE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE PAYS HER LAST RESPECTS TO VÁCLAV HAVEL

PRAGUE, December 23, 2011. On the occasion of today's state funeral of the former Czech president Václav Havel, representatives of the people of Burma express their deep sorrow at his passing and gratitude for his support. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the Burmese democratic opposition and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, paid her respects by sending a bouquet of roses, and by this she referred to a famous quote from Mr. Havel.

"Mr. Havel was a long-term supporter of Suu Kyi and of the pro-democracy movement in Burma, and his influence helped bring greater awareness of the Burmese issue in Europe and around the world", says Sabe Soe, director of the Czech NGO *Burma Center Prague*. Together with other Burmese pro-democracy activists and former political prisoners, Ms. Soe conveys the message of grief from the people of Burma and their leader Aung San Suu Kyi. On Monday, Suu Kyi expressed her sadness at Havel's passing when she arrived for a meeting at the party headquarters of the National League for Democracy in Rangoon.

On Tuesday, members of *Burma Center Prague*, along with Burmese activists and former Czech ambassador to Burma H.E. Jiří Šitler, formed a delegation to represent Aung San Suu Kyi as Václav Havel's body lay in repose at *The Prague Crossroads*, the former St. Anne's church turned into a cultural and spiritual center by the late president.

Tin Tin Nyo, General Secretary of Women's League of Burma, lay a bouquet of roses with a ribbon that said "To a True Friend – Aung San Suu Kyi", while Aung Myo Min, Director of *Human Rights Education Institute of Burma* and Sabe Soe lay a basket of flowers with "We Thank You – People of Burma". Sabe Soe and Aung Myo Min then paid their respects at Mr. Havel's coffin, while H.E. Mr. Šitler and Ko Bo Kyi, Joint Secretary of the *Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma*, stood as the honour guard.

Suu Kyi has always considered Václav Havel to be a close friend and supporter, although the two were never able to meet in person. Havel nominated Aung San Suu Kyi for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. When she celebrated her 60th birthday while still under house arrest, Havel wrote an article entitled "A Rose for the 'Unfree'" in the *Washington Post*. In that article, he expressed his wish to personally give her a rose after she gained freedom. In the end, it was Aung San Suu Kyi who presented roses to him, although not in person.

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