

## **Interview with Alan Clements at Banyen Books & Sound, Vancouver, BC, Canada**

**Interviewer (Banyen Books):** Welcome, Alan. We're thrilled to have you here ahead of your in-store event on September 15th to discuss your work, including your latest book, *A Meditator's Refuge: A Vipassana Insight Reference Guide to Awaken Consciousness and Exit Samsara*, and the compelling *The Voice of Hope: Aung San Suu Kyi: From Prison and A Letter to a Dictator*, co-authored with your long-time colleague Fergus Harlow. Let's start by talking about the ongoing struggle for democracy in Burma. How do you respond to the claim by Khin Yi of the USDP, asking Russia to recognize the conflict in Myanmar as a fight against terrorism?

**Alan Clements:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. To address the claim by Khin Yi, it's crucial to understand who he is and the organization he represents. Khin Yi is a prominent member of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which is widely regarded as a political extension of the military dictatorship in Myanmar. The USDP was founded by former military generals and has been instrumental in maintaining the military's grip on power. The situation in Myanmar is not about fighting terrorism; it's about a brutal military dictatorship suppressing a people's legitimate struggle for democracy and human rights. The Tatmadaw, Myanmar's military, has a long history of committing atrocities against its own people, including ethnic minorities. Labeling these freedom fighters and civilians as terrorists is a manipulative tactic to gain international sympathy and support.

**Interviewer:** You've been told to leave Burma a number of times, actually deported and repeatedly banned by the regime from reentering, branded a "public enemy" by the dictatorship, and if I am correct, blacklisted for 17 years until it was dropped back in 2010 or so by the military general turned president. You really get their fur up.

**Alan Clements:** It's an honor to be banned, but it's absolutely irrelevant compared to the grotesque circumstances of hardship, imprisonment, torture, bombardments, assassinations, confiscations of property, bank accounts, and more that the people of Burma endure—many of whom are friends and some like family. Burma is one of the most inspiring hell worlds on the planet. The collective moral bravery of the people is at a high Bodhisattva level, to use a Buddhist term meaning there is no hardship too great that they would not endure to care for the freedom and well-being of others, especially in their time of need. Rarely on planet Earth do we see freedom fighters fighting for freedom so heroically.

**Interviewer:** Could you elaborate on the nature of the resistance in Myanmar?

**Alan Clements:** Absolutely. The resistance in Myanmar is made up of various ethnic groups and pro-democracy activists who have endured decades of oppression. These groups have come together under the National Unity Government (NUG) to oppose the military junta that seized power in a coup in February 2021, at which time they arrested every democratically elected leader. Their struggle is for democracy, justice, and the end of military tyranny. It's a people's revolution against an illegitimate regime, not an act of terrorism.

**Interviewer:** How does this mischaracterization affect the international perception of the conflict?

**Alan Clements:** Mischaracterizing the conflict as terrorism is dangerous because it undermines the legitimate aspirations of the people of Burma. It can lead to misguided international policies that support the dictatorship under the guise of counter-terrorism. The world must see through this façade and recognize the true nature of the conflict: a fight for freedom against a merciless criminal military organization and a mafia-like group of businessmen throughout the country who sustain them financially for their own power, privilege, and profit. This is toxic patriarchy at its worst.

**Interviewer:** What are some powerful examples from your experiences in Burma that counter this terrorism narrative?

**Alan Clements:** Over many decades, I've seen firsthand the courage and resilience of the Burmese people and many of the ethnic groups as well. One powerful example is the peaceful nationwide protests of 1988, where hundreds of thousands of students, monks, and ordinary citizens marched for democracy, only to be met with brutal force. Another significant moment was the 2007 Saffron Revolution, led by thousands of monks who took to the streets in their saffron robes, demanding an end to military rule and economic hardship. Again, the military thugs with orders from the top responded with extreme violence, yet the monks' peaceful defiance became a global symbol of the Burmese people's struggle for freedom and dignity. More recently, the 2021 anti-coup protests showed the same courageous, ethically inspired revolutionary spirit. Despite the violence, disappearances, murders, and arrests, people from all walks of life, including doctors, teachers, and civil servants, risked everything to demand their rights. These revolutionaries are not terrorists; these are people yearning for freedom and democracy. Their bravery continues to inspire and remind the world of the true nature of their struggle.

**Interviewer:** How do your books and campaigns, such as "Burma's Voices of Freedom" and "Aung San Suu Kyi: From Prison - A Letter to a Dictator," reflect the true nature of the Burmese struggle?

**Alan Clements:** My work, co-authored with my long-time colleague and Burma expert Fergus Harlow, aims to amplify the voices of the Burmese people and their relentless pursuit of freedom. In the four-volume set "Burma's Voices of Freedom: A Nation's Ongoing Struggle for Freedom," we document the military's human rights abuses and the resilience of the people. This collection is based on nearly ten years of on-the-ground, long-form interviews with hundreds of former political prisoners, activists, and people from all walks of life who courageously resisted the dictatorship. From these interviews, we chose 34 to publish, highlighting the depth and breadth of the Burmese struggle for democracy. In "Aung San Suu Kyi: From Prison - A Letter to a Dictator," we compile Aung San Suu Kyi's own words, refuting claims of her silence about the Rohingya crisis and so-called collusion with the regime that has imprisoned her. This book makes it clear that those who truly know Aung San Suu Kyi and have at least read her own words understand that she stood up for the rule of law, justice, and independent inquiry, rather than defending a military regime's brutality. Additionally, my two volumes of "The Voice of Hope," consisting of long-form personal conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi, offer further insights into her unwavering commitment to democracy and human rights. These narratives reveal the stark contrast between the dictatorship's propaganda and the reality of a people's fight for dignity and freedom.

**Interviewer:** What message do you have for the international community?

**Alan Clements:** The international community must stand firm in support of the Burmese people's struggle for democracy. Recognize the NUG, at the moment, as the legitimate representative of Myanmar and reject the junta's attempts to label them as terrorists. Increased diplomatic pressure, targeted sanctions, and unwavering support for the pro-democracy movement are crucial. The world must not be deceived by the dictatorship's false narratives.

**Interviewer:** Alan, you've mentioned the imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic leaders. How does this factor into the current situation?

**Alan Clements:** The imprisonment of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the entire elected democratic leadership, along with over 20,000 additional prisoners of conscience, is an outrage. This psychopathic regime is labeling these heroic champions of freedom as "terrorists." The military regime is essentially screaming to the world that they are near dead, suffocating in their

own delusions, and so desperate they do not know what to do. This is a regime in its death throes, clinging to power through lies and brutality. Just look across the border at Bangladesh, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled for her life, leading to victory for the people.

**Interviewer:** How does this desperate situation compare to other regional events?

**Alan Clements:** The example of Bangladesh illustrates the vulnerability of oppressive regimes. The same fate awaits the Myanmar junta. Their days are numbered, and they know it. This is why we are steadfast in our call for justice. The right thing to do is to release Aung San Suu Kyi, the president, and all other prisoners immediately. And let the world hear and the people of Burma hear from them, the elected government leaders of the country, what they think is the best way forward.

**Interviewer:** What can the international community do to support this call for justice?

**Alan Clements:** The international community must increase pressure on the dictatorship through diplomatic channels and targeted sanctions. Support for the NUG and the people of Myanmar is critical. At present, they must be recognized as the legitimate representatives of the country. Additionally, raising awareness about the true nature of the conflict and debunking the terrorism narrative is vital. The people of Myanmar need the world to stand with them in their fight for democracy and human rights. In addition, world leaders, celebrities, influencers, authors, diplomats, and all people who love freedom and democracy should speak out in their own unique and creative ways. Flood social media and global platforms with the demand to release Aung San Suu Kyi, the president, and all elected democratic leaders. Just as President Biden cut a deal for the release of Americans in Russia, surely world leaders can cut a deal with Min Aung Hlaing to release their own leaders now.

**Interviewer:** Lastly, how can individuals contribute to supporting the cause of democracy in Myanmar?

**Alan Clements:** Individuals can help by raising awareness about the true nature of the conflict, supporting organizations that aid Burmese refugees and activists, and pressuring their governments to take a strong stance against the junta. Every voice counts in this global struggle for justice and human rights. Additionally, we are launching the Use Your Freedom global campaign to free

Aung San Suu Kyi on September 15. More information can be found on our website: [UseYourFreedom.org](https://UseYourFreedom.org).

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you'd like to say as a final comment?

**Alan Clements:** For those who cherish freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and the beauty of living peacefully free from fear, violence, and persecution for their love of democracy, it is imperative to take action. Boycott everything provided to the dictatorship by China and Russia. Absolutely dry up their ability to kill their own people. By cutting off the resources that empower this brutal regime, we can help to bring an end to the suffering and support the Burmese people's fight for a free and democratic Myanmar.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, Alan, for shedding light on this critical issue. Your insights are invaluable in understanding the truth behind Myanmar's fight for democracy. We look forward to continuing this conversation and diving deeper into these subjects at your upcoming in-store event.

**Alan Clements:** Thank you. It's essential to keep this conversation alive and support the brave people of Myanmar in their quest for freedom. I look forward to the event and discussing these important topics further.

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### **Event Details:**

**Alan Clements ~ A Mediator's Refuge and The Voice of Hope: Aung San Suu Kyi from Prison**

**Sunday, September 15th, 2024 @ 11:30AM - 1:00PM**

**Banyen Books & Sound, 3608 W 4th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6R 1P1, Canada**

**Phone:** +1 (604) 732-7912

**Email:** [info@banyen.com](mailto:info@banyen.com)

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Join us for an in-person event with Alan Clements, the author of *A Mediator's Refuge* and co-author of *The Voice of Hope: Aung San Suu Kyi from Prison*. This event will also mark the international launch of the **UseYourFreedom.org** campaign, dedicated to mobilizing global support for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners in Myanmar.

For more information, please  
visit [alanclements.com](http://alanclements.com) and [UseYourFreedom.org](http://UseYourFreedom.org).