

Winds of Revolution Stirring in Burma

The revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa have inspired many others to the idea of change set off by revolt.

Activists working toward social equality in Burma have taken their mission online. There, they're calling for true democracy and an end to the junta government.

While the timing could be ripe, Dyann Romeijn with Vision Beyond Borders says it wouldn't be the first time people tried revolution: "The people in Myanmar have been very repressed for a long time. There was actually a rebellion in 2007, the 'Saffron Rebellion.' It was crushed then by the ruling party, but the people probably are encouraged by the response to Mubarak being removed from office."

The brutality of the regime may be what's keeping the idea of revolution from spreading. Romeijn agrees: "This government is characterized as one of the most repressive governments, and there is a huge need for prayer at this time."

That, and there are reports that the government has added security to Burma's former capital. It's no surprise. "The communication out of Burma is very limited. They already watch the internet," Romeijn says. "There is a close hand on all those things already within that government."

State-owned media did not cover the protests, and they restricted Web site access. The government also banned Web sites that would allow users to bypass the government's proxy servers. However, because government is bent on maintaining power, Romeijn says, "I'm sure that they are trying to get a handle on the people that are starting this. That's why it would be very important for people to be praying."

Technology played a critical role in the "Saffron Rebellion." If the winds sweep over Burma, it will play a similar role once more. The government will likely take swift action to prevent this. "They've typically dealt with any dissent with a very hard hand," says Romeijn, "so it is a time of prayer for these people."

Because of the government's heightened awareness and suspicion of outsiders, the outreach of Vision Beyond Borders could be affected. "It places everybody in a more dangerous position to go inside of Burma, especially now because we've produced that documentary on the situation in Burma with footage from three Burma rangers of the actual fighting inside Burma and the genocide that's occurring. Anytime that you've exposed things, it does put you in greater danger," explains Romeijn.

She goes on to say that "as long as God keeps that door open, we'll continue to go, as long as we're called there. If the door closes somehow, we'll continue to try to find ways around that."

The silent genocide in Burma that's been going on for nearly three decades prompts this dedication. "The people there are so in need of the Gospel, so in need of Bibles. 60% of the Karen [people group] are Christians," says Romeijn. "It's encouraging to see their faith, that in the midst of the persecution and suffering, they're continuing to stand firm for the Gospel."

What can you do? "God is moving through the prayers of His people. We're seeing a change in Burma because people are praying," Romeijn says. "They can send items just to help with these people; they can go on trips and encourage them and carry in Bibles and supplies."