

## From Saffron Revolution to Mabatha: Religion and Nationalism in Burma

In 2007, a social movement of Buddhist monks took to the streets to protest against the military junta and to support Aung San Suu Kyi. This movement coincided with the student movement and was violently suppressed, because the generals wanted to keep in power and were afraid of the revenge of the National League for Democracy (NLD). Now, things are changing.

A new movement emerged, but with anti-democratic intentions, called MaBaTha: The organization to protect race and religion. This organization successfully campaigned for the implementation of 4 Religious Protection laws that were mainly targeted against marriage of poor Buddhist women with Muslim men. Ma BaTha has lately come into conflict with the religious organization of the state, but has established close links to some military generals. More important, MaBaTha dominates the religious organization of the laity in present-day Burma (Myanmar) and is also greatly popular among Buddhists in Mon, Shan and Kayin states.

The presentation will discuss these issues and especially the meaning of the rise of religious nationalism for the fragile semi-democratic opening and for the future of multi-religious Myanmar and especially for the peace process in the ethnic minority regions. It will also discuss the role of Buddhist political activism in the Theravada Buddhist world and Islamophobia in particular.



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