

Report: Myanmar monks have vanished

by UPI

YANGON, Myanmar -- Thousands of Buddhist monks, a fixture in Myanmar's monasteries and temples, have vanished in the wake of the September crackdown by the military junta. A report in the Dec. 3 issue of Newsweek says the few foreigners, who managed to visit the country since September, have noted how empty these places look in cities like Yangon, formerly Rangoon, and Mandalay. "What has happened to all the monks?" Shari Villarosa, charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Yangon, was quoted as asking. "It's frightening. Something has happened. It's not like they all willingly left town." The crackdown by the military junta, which has ruled Myanmar, formerly Burma, since 1989, began after pro-democracy protests were taken over by the monks. The junta's action led to the deaths and injuries of dozens of monks. The report, quoting numerous sources, said some the monks, who were imprisoned, were kept in deplorable conditions. Others were forcibly "derobed" and made to flee to the countryside or out of the country. The government says it has freed all but about 90 of the 3,000 monks and civilians initially jailed, but the report says the junta may yet pay a price for arousing the anger of a people known for their gentle nature.

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