

Myanmar

Violent attack on political party members

Independent investigation must take place

Hla Oo

U Khin Maung
Thaung,
reportedly injuredDaw Win Mya
Mya (f), reportedly
injured

On 30 May 2003 at least four people died and fifty people were injured in what is believed to have been a premeditated violent attack on members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the main opposition party in Myanmar on 30 May 2003. There have been allegations that the attack was allegedly carried out by pro-government protesters reportedly associated with a state sponsored social organization. Authorities have stated that the attack took place as a result of "unrest" incited by members of the National League for Democracy.

Amnesty International is concerned that the attack has not been independently investigated. The ruling military authorities, the State Peace and Development Council's failure in this and other instances to initiate an independent, prompt, effective, and impartial investigation into allegations of serious human rights violations, and to bring the suspected perpetrators to justice, breaches their obligation to provide victims of human rights violations with an adequate remedy.

On 30 May 2003 NLD members from the party's headquarters in the capital city, NLD local organizers and members, which won more than 80 % of seats in elections in 1990, and to whom authorities have not transferred power, had been travelling for 25 days through northern Myanmar, opening NLD offices and visiting party members. The assault began shortly after 8 pm on the evening of 30 May 2003, after nearly 200 NLD members and supporters travelling in a convoy of cars, vans and motorcycles passed through a village on a remote rural road in upper Myanmar. They were reportedly stopped by two persons in monks' robes, who asked that the party's General Secretary, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi give a speech. After the convoy was stopped, eye witnesses state that pro-government demonstrators shouted slogans against the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Then persons carrying sharpened bamboo sticks, iron rods and stones, attacked vehicles, pulling individuals out of cars and beating them repeatedly on the head and body. The attackers, among whom were individuals in monks' robes, reportedly wore red or white armbands. An eye-witness to events said "*I still cannot get rid of the image of people, covered in blood, being beaten mercilessly*". NLD Youth members and others attempted to protect the leaders, and some were reported to have been injured or killed in the effort.

Ko San Myint, who was driving one of the vehicles, **U Tin Maung Oo**, a 35 year old NLD township organizer and **Thein Toe Aye**, the political party's photographer are among those who are reported to have been beaten to death. Many others were reportedly beaten until they lost consciousness. Injuries sustained by individuals include internal injuries, fractured limbs, head injuries and internal injuries. Among those reported to have been injured were **Daw Win Mya Mya** (f) an organizer of

Mandalay Division's NLD, **U Khin Maung Thaung**, a former political prisoner and also an NLD Mandalay Division organizer, **U Hla Oo**, an NLD Youth member, and **U Ye Myint Aung**, a township organizer of the National League for Democracy and former political prisoner. The security forces arrived after several hours, and took more than one hundred NLD members and supporters into custody, including those who had fled from the violence. The majority have been held, without charge or trial, for months.

Less than 24 hours later, authorities stated in a press conference that four persons were killed and 50 injured after the members of the political party had "incited unrest;" and had caused "a traffic jam and instability". In late June authorities also stated that an official investigation had found that the NLD had incited the incident by "lawless" behaviour and what they described as acts of violence, such as blocking public roads with disregard for traffic rules; using Buddhist monasteries for carrying out political activities and persuading people to come out into the streets in crowds and creating unrest. They have also stated that NLD members in detention are being held for their safety, and have not specified when they will be released.

At least fifty people are still detained, without charge or trial. Relatives were not informed of their whereabouts, and in the case of some individuals, were denied access to them for months after their arrest. After 30 May 2003, authorities closed NLD offices and since then have arrested a further more than one hundred other political activists from the NLD and other political groups. Those arrested include individuals who had distributed information about the violent attack, and a number of those detained have been tried and sentenced to terms of imprisonment between one and 11 years.

PLEASE WRITE

- Expressing concern at the violent attack on political party members on 30 May 2003, and calling for the authorities to institute an independent, impartial investigation into the incident
- Urging that those carrying out the investigation are impartial, competent and independent, and have the authority and power to obtain all information necessary to the inquiry.
- Calling for complainants, witnesses, those conducting the investigation and their families to be protected from violence, threats of violence or any other form of intimidation.
- Calling for those potentially implicated in the attack to be removed from any position of control or power, whether direct or indirect, over complainants, witnesses and their families, as well as over those conducting investigations.
- calling for the scope of the investigation, the procedures and methods used as well as conclusions and recommendations to be made public within a reasonable amount of time in a public report describing in detail events that were found to have occurred and the evidence upon which such findings were based.
- Urging that the suspected perpetrators are brought to justice in a trial that matches international standards for fairness, and that those injured and the families of those killed receive appropriate compensation.

To:

Senior General Than Shwe

Chairman

State Peace and Development Council

Ministry of Defence

Dagon Post Office

Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Faxes: + 95 1 652 624

Salutation: Dear General

General Khin Nyunt

Prime Minister

State Peace and Development Council
c/o Directorate of Defence Services
Intelligence
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda road
Dagon Post Office

Yangon, Union of Myanmar
Faxes: + 95 1 652 624
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

If you are interested in joining AI's campaign for human rights in Myanmar, please contact the AI section in your country. For more information, see our web-site at www.amnesty.org

Please send copies of your letters to the Myanmar embassy in your country .

