

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/health concern

MYANMAR

**Myint Myint San (f), National League for Democracy (NLD) member
Paik Ko (m), NLD Member of Parliament, Pakokku
Par Par Lay (m), comedian
Zargana (m), also known as Ko Thura, comedian
Tin Aung (m), NLD Member of Parliament
Tin Ko (m), NLD youth member in Meiktila
U Win Naing (m), politician
Up to 300 others, including Buddhist monks**

Around 300 people were reportedly arrested in a crackdown on anti-government protests launched by the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in the evening of 25 September in the former capital Yangon, the second-biggest city, Mandalay, and also Meiktila, Pakokku and Mogok. Amnesty International was told that a number of people had gone into hiding.

Some were reportedly arrested in the evening of 24 September, but most were seized during the following 36 hours, as the crackdown by security forces escalated. Among those arrested were between 50 and 100 monks in Yangon. Parliamentarian Paik Ko and at least one other member of parliament from the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which is led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, several other NLD members and other public figures, including the famous comedian and former prisoner of conscience Zargana are also reported to have been arrested. Amnesty International believes these and other detainees are at grave risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Officials confirmed to journalists that at least three monks were killed in Yangon: one was shot and two were beaten to death. Unofficial sources told Amnesty International that up to 50 monks had been injured.

Despite the high tension, thousands of people continue to take to the streets in continued anti-government protests, led by monks, who have reportedly asked ordinary civilians to stay away, in an apparent effort to protect them.

The security forces have reportedly beaten demonstrators with batons, used teargas to disperse crowds defying a recent ban on gatherings of more than five people, and fired warning shots into the air.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peaceful demonstrations began in August in response to sharp increases in fuel prices. They have grown rapidly in size and number. Buddhist monks, who took the lead in the protests after reports that monks had been injured by security forces in the town of Pakokku, have called for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners and a process of national reconciliation to resolve deep political divisions.

In the evening of 25 September, the authorities began a crackdown on the protesters, introducing a 60-day 9pm-5am curfew and issuing public warnings of legal action against protesters.

Human rights violations in Myanmar are widespread and systematic. They include the use of child soldiers and forced labour. There are laws that criminalize peaceful expression of political dissent. At the end of 2006 most senior opposition figures were imprisoned or administratively detained, among more than 1,160 political prisoners held in deteriorating prison conditions. People are frequently arrested without warrant and held

incommunicado; torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common, especially during interrogation and while in custody awaiting trial. Judicial proceedings against political detainees fall short of international standards for fair trial: defendants are often denied the right to legal counsel and prosecutors have relied on confessions extracted through torture.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that hundreds of monks and other peaceful protesters, including well-known comedian Zargana and member of parliament Paik Ko have been detained;
- urging the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with recognisably criminal offences;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that, while they remain in custody, all the detainees are held only in official places of detention, and are given immediate access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the detainees are not subjected to torture or any other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all people in Myanmar are able to peacefully exercise the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly without fear of harassment, intimidation or arbitrary detention, in line with international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO:

State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)
Senior General Than Shwe
c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear General

Foreign Minister Nyan Win
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 1 222 950

+95 1 221 719

Salutation: Dear Minister

U Aye Maung
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General, Office No. 25, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 67 404 146

+95 67 404 106

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Brig-General Khin Yi
Director General, Myanmar Police Force, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Director General

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Myanmar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 November 2007.