

UA 163/98

Torture or Ill-treatment / Fear for safety / Medical

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MYANMARKo Aung Tun

U Myo Htun

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun, who are in a precarious state of health after being tortured and ill-treated in detention. Both prisoners are being held incommunicado in solitary confinement.

Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun have been tortured inside Insein Jail, Myanmar's largest prison. During late February and March 1998, Aung Tun was severely beaten with rifle butts and sticks. He is reported to be suffering from severe asthma and tuberculosis. In addition he is vomiting blood, believed to be a result of his beatings. U Myo Htun has also been beaten and subjected to threats while a gun was placed in his mouth, and is in very poor health as a result of his treatment.

Ko Aung Tun was arrested in February 1998 and, according to an official statement, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for breaking the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act; seven years under the provisions of the Unlawful Association Act, and another seven years under the Emergency Provisions Act for a total of seventeen years in prison.

At a 1 March 1998 press conference, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) claimed that Ko Aung Tun was collaborating with "terrorist groups". Opposition sources state, however, that the real reason for his arrest was because he had written a history of the student movement in Myanmar. Ko Aung Tun was active in the student-led 1988 pro-democracy movement and was imprisoned from 1990 to 1994.

U Myo Htun assisted Aung Tun in writing the book, which the authorities claim was distributed "illegally". He was reportedly sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since the beginning of the year scores of political activists have been arrested in Myanmar, joining hundreds of others in prisons throughout the country. In the last few days, an unknown number of National League for Democracy (NLD, Myanmar's main opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi) members are believed to have been arrested in the run-up to the party's celebration of its 1990 general election victory on 27 May. Amnesty International is also concerned about the safety of these detainees, as torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners is common in Myanmar, particularly during the initial stages of detention and interrogation.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing grave concern that U Myo Htun and Ko Aung Tun are in very poor health due to severe torture by the authorities;
- urging the authorities to grant the two prisoners immediate access to proper medical care, their families, and their lawyers;
- calling on the authorities to initiate an independent and prompt investigation of these reports of torture.

**APPEALS TO:**

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1  
State Peace and Development Council  
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)  
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road  
Dagon Post Office  
Yangon  
Union of Myanmar  
**Telegrams: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar**  
**Telexes: 21316**  
**Faxes: + 95 1 229 50**  
**Salutation: Dear General**

Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman  
State Peace and Development Council  
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)  
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road  
Dagon Post Office  
Yangon  
Union of Myanmar  
**Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar**  
**Telexes: 21316**  
**Salutation: Dear 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 7 July 1998.