

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 16/28/96

18 June 1996

Further information on EXTRA 73/96 (ASA 16/14/96, 21 May 1996) and follow-ups (ASA 16/16/96, 22 May; ASA 16/19/96, 24 May; ASA 16/22/96, 29 May; ASA 16/26/96, 7 June) - Fear of torture / Legal concern

MYANMAR156 detainees released, at least 35 detained

and new arrests: U Khin Maung Thaung, a Mandalay Division NLD leader
U Kyi Aung, engineer from Sagaing town
U Tin Maung Aye, merchant from Mandalay
U Kyaw Htway, engineer and teacher
U Kyaw Thaung, NLD division leader from Sagaing
U Pwar, engineer from Mandalay
U Aung Kyi, engineer from Mandalay
Maung San Hlaing, also known as Tin Hlaing and Eva

As the crackdown against political opposition in Myanmar continues, Amnesty International has learned of the arrests of eight more people, apparently for their peaceful opposition activities. The organization fears for their safety in detention as ill-treatment is commonplace in Myanmar.

U Khin Maung Thaung, U Kyi Aung, U Tin Maung Aye and U Kyaw Htway were all taken to a court hearing on 5 June 1996. However, they have not yet been charged, although they are scheduled to appear in court on 19 June. Their dates of arrest and places of detention are unknown. According to unofficial sources, they were arrested for possessing a critique of the National Convention by the Burma Lawyers' Council, which is an expatriate opposition group. (The National Convention is a group, convened and controlled by the military, whose aim is to agree the principles of a new constitution).

U Kyaw Thaung, U Pwar and U Aung Kyi were taken to a court hearing on 10 June, but were not charged at that time. They are also scheduled for a second hearing on 19 June, and their dates of arrest and places of detention are also unknown. They were apparently arrested for possessing "political" letters and material from "illegal organizations".

Maung San Hlaing, also known as Tin Hlaing or Eva, was arrested on the evening of 13 June in Yangon (Rangoon, the capital). For the first time in 20 days, he had left the home compound of NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, where he had been staying. He drove to Kamayut Market, parked his car, and as he crossed the street, he was pursued by five people who took him into custody. He has not been heard from since that time. Apparently on 14 and 15 June officers from Military Intelligence Unit 12 searched his family's home and confiscated videotapes and photos. Maung San Hlaing, a 27-year-old Muslim, had been arrested previously, although Amnesty International has no further details. He was acting as a bodyguard for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the time of this latest arrest.

The 27 people named in the EXTRA Update of 7 June are believed to still be held in Insein Prison. Some 156 NLD activists have now been released, but information about others who were arrested in the government crackdown on the opposition in late May is still not available. Amnesty International remains concerned about their whereabouts.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD colleagues held public gatherings in front of her house on the weekends of 8-9 and 15-16 June with no interference from the

State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, Myanmar's military authorities). However, on 7 June the SLORC issued Law No 5/96, which prohibits any individual or group from writing a constitution. The penalty is from three to 20 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International is concerned that the sweeping and vague provisions of Law No 5/96 may be used to imprison NLD activists. During the NLD party congress held from 26 - 28 May, the NLD announced that they would begin to draft a constitution. If anyone were to be charged and sentenced under the provisions of Law No 5/96, Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing their non-violent political views.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of U Khin Maung Thaung, U Kyaw Htway, U Kyi Aung, U Tin Maung Aye, U Kyaw Thaung, U Aung Kyi, U Pwar, and Maung San Hlaing if they are being held solely for the peaceful expression of their non-violent political views;
- reiterating calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the 27 prisoners held at Insein Prison;
- seeking assurances that the vaguely-worded provisions of Law No 5/96 will not be used to imprison anyone for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression.

APPEALS TO:

1. Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration 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

2. Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Telegrams: Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

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 18 July 1996.