

URGENT ACTION

PRISONERS AT RISK OF ILL-TREATMENT

The 15 political prisoners, all men, who started a hunger strike at Insein prison on 26 October, ended their protest on 7 November without achieving their objectives. Recent information suggests that many of the men were denied drinking water during at least some of that period.

A new hunger strike started in Insein prison on 10 November, this time by six political prisoners who were in the prison hospital. These political prisoners are calling for improved medical care and the same rights to reductions in prison sentences to which criminal convicts are entitled.

There is no information available about whether the two hunger strikers who were hospitalised on 1 November were allowed drinking water. The eight hunger strikers who were moved to dog cells on 28 October were all returned to their normal cells by 7 November. One of the current protesters, Ko Aung Cho Oo (aka) Yunaut, was also involved in the hunger strike which started on 26 October. It is not known if he was one of the two hunger strikers who had previously been hospitalised.

Please write immediately in English, Burmese or your own language:

- Requesting the Myanmar authorities to take immediate action to ensure that the hunger strikers are not subjected to psychological or physical abuse;
- Explaining to the authorities that torture and other forms of ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited under international law;
- Urging the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the reports that eight hunger strikers were placed in 'dog cells' between 29 October and 7 November, and that many of the hunger strikers were deprived of drinking water; with the results of the investigation made public and those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 JANUARY 2012 TO:

Minister of Home Affairs
Lt. Gen. Ko Ko
Ministry of Home Affairs
Office No. 10, Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 439
Salutation: Dear Minister

Chairman
U Win Mya
Myanmar National Human Rights
Commission
27 Pyay Road
Hline Township, Yangon
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 439
Salutation: Dear Chairman

And copies to:
Minister of Health
Dr Pe Thet Khin
Building 4
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Minister

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA: 322/11. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA16/007/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 15 political prisoners, all men, started a hunger strike at Insein prison at midday on 26 October. The strike was in protest that political prisoners in Myanmar are commonly denied the reductions in their sentences which are allowed to criminal convicts. It has been reported that some of the hunger strikers were being denied drinking water. Depriving prisoners of drinking water as a punishment for participating in a hunger strike could result in the prison authorities being responsible for the rapid death of the hunger strikers due to dehydration. This would amount to a violation of the right to life according to international law, including in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This also violates the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which states that drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever they need it.

Eight of the 15 hunger strikers were reportedly moved to dog cells on 29 October. The names of the eight political prisoners sent to dog cells have not yet been confirmed. The dog cells at Insein Prison are about 3m in length, just over 2m wide, but it is possible to stand upright. They are windowless and often have poor ventilation. There is generally no proper sanitation, no bed and no mats on the floor.

By the morning of 1 November it was reported that two of the hunger strikers had been sent to hospital. The names of those hospitalized and details of their medical situation are currently not available. The hunger strikers were also denied visits from their families and receipt of parcels from relatives, which may have included medicine, food or letters.

Many political prisoners in Myanmar have used hunger strikes as a form of protest. Prison authorities have tortured those who protest, or subjected them to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including shackling them, and confining them in dark cells or military dog cells for protracted periods.

Names of those who were involved in the hunger strike between 26 October and 7 November are as follows: Nyi Nyi Tun, Thaw Zin aka Ngapain, Kaung Myat Hlaing, Ko Saw Nobel, Than Naing Oo, Ko Wunna Htay aka U Vithoddi, Aung Naing, Nyan Tun Lin aka Yan Naing, Ko Aung, Inter aka Spy, Swam Khant Thwam, Zin Min Shein, Sandimar aka Tun Naung, Aung Moe Zaw and Ko Soe Moe Tun.

Gender: m

Names of those who started a hunger strike on 10 November 2011: U Hla Myint Than, Ko Maung Maung Tin, Ko Aung Tin Win, Ko Aung Cho Oo aka Yunaut, former Captain Nay Myo Zin and Ko Thura Soe.

Gender: m

Further information on UA 322/11 Index: ASA: 16/008/2011 Issue Date: 25 November 2011