

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 379/92 Prisoner of Conscience/Health Concern

1 December 1992

MYANMAR (BURMA): Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (female)

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the well-being of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a prisoner of conscience who has been detained under house arrest without charge or trial since July 1989. She has been held in incommunicado detention for most of that time, the only exception being when members of her family were twice allowed to visit her briefly earlier this year. Recent information received by the organization indicates that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi continues to be held in almost complete isolation and that her health may seriously deteriorate.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has consistently refused to accept food and other necessities from the authorities, and Amnesty International understands her own resources are now running out. She has been refused access to the doctor of her choice, in contravention of the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

On 18 September 1988, after months of nationwide demonstrations protesting 26 years of one-party military rule, the military reasserted its control in a coup. Before and during the coup, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were killed by security forces. Martial Law was introduced and severe restrictions imposed prohibiting "political gatherings" and other basic freedoms. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - daughter of Aung San who is regarded as the father of Burmese independence - was one of the founding leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Myanmar's largest opposition party, which was formed at this time. She was its General Secretary at the time of her arrest on 20 July 1989. Although the NLD went on to win the May 1990 general elections, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), Myanmar's ruling military authorities, has ignored the results of the election and continues to retain power itself.

In June 1989, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and General Tin U - the Chairperson of the NLD - had been calling for non-violent resistance to Martial Law. She always insisted that the gatherings they organized should be non-violent. The military authorities reacted to these demonstrations by arresting hundreds of people. On 19 July 1989 Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called off a planned march to commemorate Martyr' Day, because of reports that lines of troops were blocking the route, and because she feared for the safety of demonstrators. On 20 July 1989 she was placed under house arrest. She is held under the administrative detention provisions of the 1975 State Protection Law, which concerns supposed threats to state security. In August 1991 the SLORC amended this law to extend the time people can be detained without charge or trial from three years to five years.

Despite the announcement by the SLORC in April 1992 that they will release all political prisoners who are not deemed a threat to national security, the authorities have reiterated earlier comments that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will not be released unless she agrees to leave the country. Over 1000 prisoners have so far been released, but it is believed that this is only a small proportion of those detained.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 10 December 1991 for her work for human rights. She had previously been awarded the Rafto Human Rights Prize in Norway (November 1990) and the European Parliament's human rights award, the Sakharov Prize (January 1991). More recently, in

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June 1992 she was awarded UNESCO's Simon Bolivar prize for human rights campaigning, shared with former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere.

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

- expressing concern about the health of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who has been held in incommunicado detention without charge or trial for over three years;
- urging that she be granted free access to a doctor of her choice;
- appealing for her immediate and unconditional release.

APPEALS TO

1. General Than Shwe
Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar
Telexes: 21313 MOFARN BM

Salutation: Dear General

2. Major General Khin Nyunt
Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: Major General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Major General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 12 January 1993.