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Myanmar: 12 years under house arrest – Amnesty demands release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners of conscience

On the day the United Nations celebrates its 62nd birthday, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League of Democracy, will mark her 12th year under house arrest in Myanmar.

Amnesty International calls for the immediate release of the thousands of people recently detained for participating in peaceful protests, as well as long-standing prisoners of conscience, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Win Tin, and senior opposition figures from ethnic minority groups, such as U Khun Htun Oo.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is an iconic symbol of Myanmar's political resistance - her unconditional release would be a significant step forward," said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"The international community must maintain pressure and vigilance to ensure that the Myanmar authorities produce concrete actions and tangible results, such as the release of all prisoners of conscience. Such releases are also absolutely crucial in gauging how serious the Myanmar authorities are in terms of cooperating with the United Nations."

The current secret detention, widespread reports of ill-treatment and torture, and sentencing in closed and grossly unfair trials behind prison walls make a mockery of commitments made by the Myanmar authorities to cooperate with the United Nations. The United Nations Security Council has called for the early release of all political prisoners in Myanmar.

"Human rights improvements in Myanmar cannot wait for the conclusion of a political process. The Myanmar authorities must immediately release all prisoners of conscience, open up detention centres to independent observers and stop sentencing people who have only participated in peaceful protests," said Irene Khan.

Background

Human rights violations in Myanmar are widespread and systematic. Demonstrations emerged against the backdrop of persistent and massive human rights violations that have taken place before the current crisis. These include the prolonged detention of over 1,150 political prisoners held in deteriorating prison conditions; the continued detention of senior opposition figures who are prisoners of conscience; extrajudicial executions; and the widespread use of torture. There is also endemic suppression of freedom of expression throughout the country. Use of forced labour and child soldiers continue. There is evidence that military operations in eastern Kayah (Karen) state have involved acts against civilians that constitute violations of international humanitarian and human rights law on a scale that amounts to crimes against humanity. Access by

independent observers and international human rights organizations to many parts of the country continues to be denied.

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