

UA 69/01

MEDICAL C**MYANMARU TIN HTUN (m), aged 58**

U Tin Htun, a prisoner of conscience suffering from hypertension, heart disease and mental health problems, is being denied medical attention. Amnesty International is concerned about his health, and calls for his immediate and unconditional release, and for him to receive proper medical treatment.

U Tin Htun is serving a 20 year sentence at Thayet Prison in Upper Myanmar, west of Mandalay. He has been having health problems for several years. In 1999 he was transferred from Thayawaddy Prison to Insein Prison because of poor health. In June 2000, he was held at the Insein Prison Hospital, but did not receive proper medication or care. In July 2000 he was transferred to Thayet Prison, where he has also lacked proper care. His condition is deteriorating, yet he is receiving no medical treatment.

U Tin Htun has been imprisoned since 1993, when he was arrested with ten others, including Dr. Ma Thida, a female physician and writer, on charges of possessing and distributing illegal political journals and having contact with exiled opposition groups. In October 1993, all 11 were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. Dr. Ma Thida was released in February 1999.

U Tin Htun is a Papendan township member of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Myanmar's main opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He was active during the 1988 pro-democracy movement and assisted students and others opposing the military rule. He was a gold medallist of the 1963 Asian Boxing Championship, but was forced to retire from boxing for health reasons. He became a trainer, and also ran a restaurant until his arrest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prison conditions in Myanmar are poor and often constitute cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Political prisoners are denied adequate food, medical care, and sanitation, and dozens have died as a result of improper care. Although the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been conducting prison visits since May 1999, prison conditions are still poor. Over 1800 people remain imprisoned for political reasons.

In 1988, a massive pro-democracy movement gathered momentum in Myanmar as protesters across the country called for the end to 26 years of military rule. The military quelled the protests, but at the same time promised that general elections would be held in May 1990. The NLD, which had been established during the 1988 movement, won over 80% of the parliamentary seats in the election, but was not allowed to form a government. Since then, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) has restricted NLD's activities and arrested hundreds of political prisoners, including NLD members, young political activists and monks. Although the SPDC has recently shown increasing openness, for example by opening secret talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and releasing 84 NLD supporters, the human rights situation in Myanmar remains critical.

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

- urging the SPDC to immediately and unconditionally release U Tin Htun and promptly provide him with proper medical care;

- calling on the SPDC to release all prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience;
- welcoming the dialogue between the SPDC and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and urging the SPDC to take steps to improving its human rights record.

APPEALS TO:

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Director of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defense, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar
Telexes: 21316
Faxes: + 95 1 222 950
Salutation: Your Excellency

Colonel Hla Min
Office of Strategic Studies
Department of International Affairs
c/o Ministry of Defense, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: Colonel Hla Min, Yangon, Myanmar
Telexes: 21316
Faxes: + 95 1 222 950
Salutation: Dear Colonel

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 4 May 2001.