

UA 263/00

Fear of torture/prisoners of conscience 5 September 2000

MYANMAR

U Soe Myint - National League for Democracy (NLD) Central Executive Committee member, NLD Yangon Division Chairman
Dr Myo Aung - NLD Yangon Division organizing committee member

NLD Youth members: Htun Zaw Zaw, Myo Nyunt, Htun Myint, Thein Lwin, Aung Htoo, Khin Oo, Moe Thaw (alias Pauk Pauk), Myint Kyaw, Shwe Gyo, Than Htut, Nyan Lin Aung, Aye Myein Lin, Than Htun, Thein Swe, Zaw Min Kyaw, Min Aung Nyo

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - NLD Secretary General
U Tin U - NLD Vice Chairman

Two leaders of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) have reportedly been imprisoned, together with 16 members of the party's Youth wing, after they tried to attend a party meeting. If these reports are confirmed, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for exercising their right to freedom of association and for their membership of a non-violent political party. Political prisoners are routinely tortured in Myanmar.

They were among a group of NLD members, led by the party's General Secretary, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and vice-chairman, U Tin U, stopped by security forces on 24 August as they left the capital, Yangon, for a meeting 30 miles away. They refused to turn back, and stayed at the roadside in the Yangon suburb of Dallah for nine days. Some 200 riot police eventually removed the group by force, at about 1.30am on 2 September.

Since then, NLD Central Executive Committee member U Soe Myint, who is chairman of the party's Yangon division, has reportedly been held in Insein Prison in Yangon, together with a member of the party's organising committee, Dr Myo Aung, and the 16 NLD Youth members named above.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin U have been held incommunicado since 2 September. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's home has been cordoned off by security forces, and the telephone lines have been cut. The NLD headquarters are also blocked off, and Military Intelligence officers are reported to have taken files and documents from the offices on the weekend of 2/3 September. On 4 September the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) issued a statement claiming that all 10 of the NLD Executive Committee, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin U, "have been requested to stay at their respective residences," although they have denied that the 10 are under house arrest. The SPDC also alleged that the NLD has links with armed opposition groups, but Amnesty International believes there is no evidence for this. The NLD has always advocated non-violence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Political prisoners in Myanmar are often tortured during interrogation by Military Intelligence after they are arrested. After sentencing they can also be tortured if they break arbitrary and harsh prison rules. Prison conditions are extremely poor. Political prisoners are denied adequate food, medical care, and sanitation, and dozens have died through lack of proper care. The NLD won over 80% of the parliamentary seats in the May 1990 elections, but has not been allowed to form a government. Since then the military SPDC has launched a series of crackdowns, arresting hundreds of NLD members and other activists for their peaceful political activities. Amnesty International estimates there are 1500 political prisoners in Myanmar. The government has also forced thousands of NLD members to resign from the party, and has closed down offices around the country.

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

- urging the SPDC to release immediately and unconditionally U Soe Myint, Dr Myo Aung and the 16 NLD Youth members arrested on 2 September, unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offense;
- urging the SPDC to ensure that all 18 are allowed immediate access to lawyers, their families and medical treatment;
- urging the SPDC to ensure that no prisoners are subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- urging the authorities to clarify the current situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin U and other NLD Central Executive Committee members whose movements have been restricted, and to ensure that they are not held in incommunicado detention.

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 1 229 50

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: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

Telexes: 21316

Faxes: + 95 1 222 950

Salutation: Dear Colonel

However, it is extremely difficult to get through. It may be better to try during Yangon office hours (GMT + 6.5 hours)

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 17 October 2000.