

Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD colleagues -- two months in detention

Two months after their dramatic arrest at Yangon train station, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and nine other National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders, are still held under house arrest and should be released immediately, Amnesty International said today.

"The international community should step up pressure on the Myanmar government to release these prisoners of conscience without delay. Detaining people to silence them is completely unacceptable," the organization said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and eight NLD Central Executive Committee members are held under de facto house arrest, and retired General U Tin Oo, the NLD vice-chairman, is detained at Yemon government guesthouse 30 miles north of the capital Yangon. All 10 of these leaders are prisoners of conscience, arrested solely for their peaceful political opposition activities.

In addition Amnesty International has obtained the names of 80 NLD members and supporters who are detained at Insein Prison, Myanmar's largest jail. They were arrested on 21 September when they had gone to greet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Yangon central station. There are fears for their health, as torture of political prisoners is common in Myanmar.

On 21 September Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo attempted to travel by train to Mandalay to visit NLD colleagues. The authorities blocked them from doing so in the early hours of 22 September, and forcibly removed them from the station. The UN Secretary General's

Special Envoy for Myanmar, Mr Razali Ismail, was able to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi twice, at her house, during his visit to the country in October.

Last weekend the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) announced that she would be able to appear in court to respond to a suit filed by her brother about ownership of their mother's home in Yangon. The SPDC also reportedly stated that U Tin Oo had been allowed to attend the funeral of a family member. However to Amnesty International's knowledge, they are still being held under virtual house arrest and cannot communicate or travel freely.

Background

On 24 August Daw Suu and U Tin Oo left Yangon by car to travel to an NLD office 30 miles outside of the capital, but were stopped by the authorities at Dallah township. They were detained by the side of the road until 2 September, when they were forcibly removed by 200 riot police and taken to their homes. They were held under house arrest for 10 days until 14 September, when restrictions were lifted. NLD leaders then announced that they would draft a constitution and were planning another trip outside Yangon to visit beleaguered party members.

The military authorities have launched a series of crackdowns on the NLD since the party won over 80% of the parliamentary seats in the May 1990 elections. The NLD has not been allowed to form a government, hundreds of its members are imprisoned for their peaceful political activities, and tens of thousands have been forced to resign from the party.

Some 1700 political prisoners are currently held in prisons throughout the country. In addition, widespread harassment,

surveillance, and other forms of control such as forced party resignations are all used by the SPDC to silence any opposition and keep the population in a state of fear.

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.

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