

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 16/25/97

18 August 1997

Further information on UA 187/97 (ASA 16/19/97, 24 June 1997) and follow-ups (ASA 16/21/97, 11 July; ASA 16/23/97, 22 July) - Fear for safety / Fear of ill-treatment

MYANMARU Shwe Myint Aung, alias Myint Swe
Daw Khin Ma Than, alias Nge Ma Ma Than (f)
Cho Aung Than
U Myo Aung Thant
U Khin Kyaw
Khin Maung Win alias Ko Sunny

U Shwe Myint Aung, also known as Myint Swe, was not released as reported in the previous update to this Urgent Action (ASA 16/23/97, 22 July). He, his wife Daw Khin Ma Than, also known as Nge Ma Ma Than, and her brother Cho Aung Than were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on 15 August at a court inside Insein Prison, Myanmar largest detention facility. Cho Aung Than and Daw Khin Ma Than are first cousins of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

All three received a three-year sentence under the Unlawful Associations Act and a seven-year sentence under the Emergency Provisions Act. The broadly-worded provisions of these two laws are often used by the military authorities to hand down long terms of imprisonment for peaceful political activity. U Myo Aung Thant also received the same sentence in addition to a sentence of life imprisonment for "high treason". He was accused by the authorities of attempting to bring explosives into Myanmar from Thailand. There is no further information about the status or whereabouts of Khin Maung Win alias Ko Sunny and U Khin Kyaw.

Amnesty International has no further details about their trial, but fears that the four may have been tortured or ill-treated during their pre-trial interrogation. Trials of political prisoners in Myanmar fall far short of international fair trial standards. Prisoners are seldom allowed legal counsel and trials are normally conducted in closed session. Amnesty International is also concerned about the state of their health and the conditions of their imprisonment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 23 July 1997 Myanmar was formally admitted into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, amid widespread protests from Asian human rights groups. The long terms of imprisonment recently handed down to Myint Swe, Nge Ma Ma Than, Cho Aung Than and U Myo Thant belie ASEAN hopes that Myanmar would improve its human rights record after it were admitted to the regional grouping. The other ASEAN countries are: Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos, Vietnam and the Philippines.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please write one final letter to the Myanmar authorities expressing your concern about the health of Myint Swe, Nge Ma Ma Than, Cho Aung Than, and U Myo Thant. Also express concern that they may not have received fair trials. This action will then close and the case will be transferred to other AI Networks.

APPEALS TO:

Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/p Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Lieutenant General

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 1 October 1997.