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MYANMAR: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SHOCKED BY ARREST OF U KYI MAUNG

Amnesty International is shocked by the arrest of U Kyi Maung, Central Executive Committee member of the National League for Democracy (NLD), who was taken by Myanmar security forces from his home in Yangon in the early hours of this morning (local time).

“U Kyi Maung has done nothing more than call for peaceful political change. His arrest is an outrage and he should be released immediately. This arrest is part of a relentless attempt by the Myanmar authorities to crush any peaceful dissent by whatever means,” Amnesty said today.

No news has since been heard from U Kyi Maung, a close associate of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The organization is also concerned about reports of arrests of students during recent demonstrations.

Tension in the capital has increased in the past three days. Some 200-300 students from the Yangon Institute of Technology (YIT) marched on the night of 21-22 October to the Pyay Road and University Avenue intersection after an argument at a local restaurant on 20 October. Students claim that the dispute had already been settled when police arrived and beat three or four students at the scene. Apparently two students were injured, one seriously. Three students are believed to remain in detention. During the march students called for the authorities to make public the true account of the incident in the restaurant, which they characterized as police brutality.

Because of restrictions of access to information, accounts of following events remain confused. Demonstrations continued on 22 October when a group of students gathered near Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house. Another protest may have taken place in the evening in front of a police station near the University of Yangon. Security forces arrested an unknown number of students, who were reportedly taken to Kyitkasan racetrack. NLD supporters who were arrested recently are also believed to be held there. There was a further demonstration today at the University of Yangon which was said to have dispersed peacefully.

Reports indicate that U Kyi Maung, one of two NLD vice-chairmen, was accused by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, Myanmar's military government) of involvement in the student protests. U Kyi Maung was a prisoner of conscience from 1990 until March 1995, when he was finally released from Insein Prison, where hundreds of political prisoners remain behind bars.

Amnesty International urges the Myanmar authorities to exercise restraint in dealing with the demonstrators and to provide a full account of all those thought to remain at Kyitkasan racetrack.

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