

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 16/52/96

EXTRA 185/96 Prisoners of conscience / Fear of ill-treatment 3 December 1996

MYANMARZaw Win (m)

Tin Hla (m)

Kyaw Soe (m)

Thi Thi Aung (f)

Than Than Su Win (f) - members of NLD Youth

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Five young people, arrested on 3 December 1996 in Yangon, are believed to be held at the Military Intelligence 12 Headquarters for interrogation. The five, all members of the Youth wing of the National League for Democracy (NLD, Myanmar's primary opposition party co-founded by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), were arrested after they left Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's compound, where they had gone earlier in the morning. The compound is now sealed, and no one can enter or leave.

Amnesty International considers the five to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of association. Concern for their safety in detention is heightened by recent reports indicating that the authorities often beat political detainees and deprive them of sleep and food. Young people are particularly vulnerable, as they were at the forefront of the 1988 pro-democracy movement in Myanmar.

In a separate incident on 2 December, a group of students from the Yangon Institute of Technology (YIT) marched from their campus to the entrance of the Yangon University campus. They were protesting earlier alleged police beatings against three YIT students who had been briefly detained on 20 October 1996 after a fight at a foodstall in Insein township. They were also protesting the circulation of leaflets to some YIT students, which reportedly called on them not to ignore their studies in favour of politics. Students' demands included the punishment of the police officers involved in the October beatings and the reinstatement of two students who had been subsequently suspended. The authorities responded by stating that the policemen involved in the 20 October arrest had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

The protests continued all night, when YIT students were joined by students from other universities. At about 5.30am on 3 December some 400 students were gathered at Shwedagon Pagoda, when police arrested 300 of them and took them away in trucks. According to the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, Myanmar's military authorities), the students were released after they were identified and questioned. The SLORC claimed that the group was detained in order to determine whether they were students or "infiltrators". Amnesty International remains concerned about anyone whom the SLORC characterize as "infiltrators" who may still be in detention.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Political tension has grown in Myanmar in the last six months. In late May the NLD called a party congress which the SLORC prevented by arresting some 300 NLD members. The vast majority of them were released, but 31 were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in August. In late September the NLD again called a congress and hundreds more were briefly detained. In October a group of students marched in Yangon in protest at alleged police brutality on 20 October.

U Kyi Maung, a senior NLD leader, was detained for five days for questioning about his involvement in the student demonstrations, which he denied. Since late September access to University Avenue, the location of Daw Aung San Suu

Kyi's compound, has been blocked, which has prevented weekly public gatherings at which NLD leaders spoke.

On 9 November a group of 200 young men attacked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade.

Although no one was injured, it is widely believed that the attack was government-initiated.

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

- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Zaw Win, Tin Hla, Kyaw Soe, Thi Thi Aung, and Than Than Su Win, prisoners of conscience, detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of association;
- calling on the authorities not to ill-treat the five young NLD members, or any of those still detained following the mass arrests at Shwedagon Pagoda on 3 December;
- urging the authorities to release any of those still in detention after the mass arrests or charge them with recognizably criminal offences.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman  
State Law and Order Restoration Council  
c/o Director of Defence Service Intelligence (DDSI)  
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road  
Dagon Post Office  
Yangon, Union of Myanmar

**Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar**

**Telexes: 21316**

**Salutation: Dear General**

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

**Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar**

**Telexes: 21316**

**Salutation: Dear 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 3 January 1997.