

URGENT ACTION

ROHINGYA ACTIVIST JAILED FOR 18 MONTHS

Human rights defender U Kyaw Hla Aung has been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment in Myanmar. He is now detained in Sittwe prison in Rakhine State. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Rohingya human rights defender **U Kyaw Hla Aung** was sentenced on 26 September to 18 months' imprisonment by the Sittwe Township Court, in Myanmar's Rakhine State. He had been found guilty of "rioting" under Article 147 of Myanmar's Penal Code.

U Kyaw Hla Aung had been arrested on 15 July 2013 after spending several months in hiding following the arrest of several Muslim leaders accused of orchestrating community protests against a government-led population registration exercise conducted in Rakhine state in April that year. Tensions arose when members of the Rohingya community refused to identify themselves as "Bengali", a description that the authorities use to imply that all Rohingya are actually migrants from Bangladesh and to deny them citizenship. Protests forced the authorities to suspend the registration exercise. U Kyaw Hla Aung was not present during the protests. He had been trying to contact other Muslim leaders to try to prevent the protests from becoming violent. However, he was charged with a range of "offences". A charge under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code – a provision frequently used to detain political and human rights activists – was dropped following a Presidential pardon on 30 December 2013. All other charges against him have now been dropped.

Amnesty International is concerned by reports that U Kyaw Hla Aung's trial fell short of international fair trials standards. Among the concerns raised have been a lack of access to legal representation and the failure to provide adequate security and protection to defence witnesses. Amnesty International believes that U Kyaw Hla Aung has been targeted because he is an influential human rights defender with connections to the international community, and that the charges against him have no basis.

Please write immediately in Burmese, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release U Kyaw Hla Aung and all others imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their human rights;
- Urging them to ensure that U Kyaw Hla Aung is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, has regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choosing and is provided with any medical treatment he may require;
- Calling on them to end all discrimination in law, policy and practice against the Rohingya and all other ethnic and religious minorities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 NOVEMBER 2014 TO:

President
U Thein Sein
President's Office
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: + 95 1 652 624
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Home Affairs
Lt Gen. Ko Ko
Ministry of Home Affairs
Office No. 10
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 439
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:
Chairman, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
U Win Mra
27 Pyay Road, Hline Township
Yangon
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 1 659 668
Email: winmra@mnhr.org.mm

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 213/13. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA16/001/2014/en>.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

U Kyaw Hla Aung is a prominent Rohingya lawyer and former staff member of a humanitarian non-governmental organization. He has spent more than 16 years in prison in Myanmar due to his involvement in peaceful activities. Amnesty International receives regular reports about the arrest, detention, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and peaceful political activists in Myanmar.

The Rohingya have faced discrimination in Myanmar for generations. Under the 1982 Citizenship Law they are not recognized as an official ethnic group – effectively rendering them stateless – and are denied equal access to citizenship rights. Their rights to study, work, travel, marry, practice their religion and receive health services are restricted to various degrees.

Name: U Kyaw Hla Aung

Gender: m

Further information on UA: 213/13 Index: ASA 16/022/2014 Issue Date: 30 September 2014