

URGENT ACTION

IMPRISONED MEDIA WORKERS' SENTENCES REDUCED

Five media workers from *Unity* newspaper in Myanmar had their sentences reduced on appeal to seven years' imprisonment. They were jailed in connection with their journalistic activities and are prisoners of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 2 October 2014 the Magwe Regional Court in central Myanmar reduced the sentences of *Unity* journalists **Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe** and the newspaper's chief executive officer **Tint San** to seven years' imprisonment each. They will all lodge an appeal against their convictions at the Supreme Court in Myanmar's capital, Nay Pyi Taw.

The media workers had been arrested between 31 January and 1 February 2014 after *Unity* published an article on 25 January about an alleged secret chemical weapons factory in Pauk Township, Pakokku District in Magwe Region. They were all charged with "disclosing State secrets, trespassing on the restricted area of the factory, taking photographs and the act of abetting" under Article 3(1) A/9 of Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. On 10 July the Pakokku District Court sentenced them each to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour.

All five men are currently detained at the Pakokku prison in Magwe Region.

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

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe and Tint San and all other prisoners of conscience in Myanmar, and to drop charges against all those who have been arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to ensure that pending their unconditional release the five men are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, or transferred to remote prisons, but that they have regular access to their families and lawyers of their choosing, and are provided with any medical treatment they may require;
- Calling on them to repeal or else amend all laws which restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, to comply with international human rights law and standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 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

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 second update of UA 82/14. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA16/013/2014/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Despite a series of reforms in Myanmar, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of intimidation, arrests and detention of human rights defenders, including journalists, for peacefully carrying out their legitimate work.

The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This right includes the right to “receive and impart information and ideas through any media”. Journalists and other media workers must be able to operate throughout the country and carry out investigations without fear of reprisal or arrest.

In his final report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, expressed concerns about Myanmar’s Official Secrets Act. In the report, he identified the Official Secrets Act as among a host of laws which do not comply with international standards, and reiterated calls on the Myanmar government to review and amend these laws within a clear timeframe.

Amnesty International remains concerned about trials in Myanmar, which largely fall short of international standards. Furthermore, the organization continues to receive reports about poor prison conditions in the country, including a lack of access to adequate medical treatment. Other concerns raised include lack of access to clean drinking water, nutritious food, and water for bathing.

Names: Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe and Tint San

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 82/14 Index: ASA 16/023/2014 Issue Date: 3 October 2014