

UA 262/07

Fear of torture or other ill-treatment

MYANMAR

Htay Kywe (m), aged 39
Mie Mie (also known as Thin Thin Aye) (f), aged 35
Aung Thu (m), aged 43
Two other activists and one other individual

Six people, including prominent activists Htay Kywe, Mie Mie (also known as Thin Thin Aye) and Aung Thu, were detained in the early hours of 13 October in the city of Yangon as part of a continuing crackdown by the military authorities. The three are believed to be the last high-profile members of the 1988 Generation Students group who were still at large. There is no information on where they are being detained. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of all six people, who are at grave risk of torture and ill-treatment.

According to an eyewitness report, about 70 members of the security forces raided the house where the six were in hiding. Together with Htay Kywe, Mie Mie and Aung Thu, two other members of the 1988 Generation Students group and the owner of the house were also arrested. Htay Kywe is reportedly in poor health.

Htay Kywe, Mie Mie and Aung Thu were involved in the early protest marches in August, but were soon forced into hiding as the authorities launched a manhunt for those they perceived as the leaders of the protests, in particular Htay Kywe. On 21 August, 13 key activists of the 88 Generation Students group were arrested in an overnight operation.

Shortly before his arrest, Htay Kywe said from hiding that "the international community must stand clearly to prevent further violations." He also called on "the international community to help as much as it can" to prevent further violations.

Continued arrests fly in the face of the promises made this week by the Myanmar authorities to cooperate with the United Nations. On 11 October the UN Security Council strongly deplored the violent crackdown and stressed the importance of the early release of all political prisoners.

Htay Kywe, Mie Mie and Aung Thu have all been imprisoned previously for their peaceful activism for human rights and democracy. Htay Kywe was one of the leaders of the nationwide protests against military rule in 1988. He was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in 1991 under sweeping national security provisions often used to criminalize peaceful dissent, including the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. His sentence was later commuted to 10 years, but under the 1975 State Protection Law, he continued to be held for more than three years beyond the expiry of his sentence in 2001.

Mie Mie was also a leader in the 1988 protests when she was still a high school student. She was a member of the Burma Federation of Student Unions and the Democratic Party for a New Society. In 1989, she was detained for four months because of her political activities. During the large student demonstrations in 1996, she was arrested and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

Aung Thu was arrested for the first time in March 1988. He was arrested again in 1990 and was sentenced to five years imprisonment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peaceful demonstrations began in August, sparked by sharp increases in fuel prices. Small seemingly impromptu protest marches emerged, subsequently growing in size and number, and with demonstrators calling not only for a reduction in commodity prices, but also the release of political prisoners and a process of national reconciliation to resolve deep political divisions.

Amnesty International has long-standing concerns at the deprivation of basic rights in detention in Myanmar. People are frequently arrested without warrant and held incommunicado. Torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common in pre-trial detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that six people including Htay Kywe, Mie Mie (also known as Thin Thin Aye) and Aung Thu have been detained;
- calling on the authorities to treat Htay Kywe, Mie Mie, Aung Thu and all detainees humanely, and not subject them to torture or other ill-treatment;
- urging the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally along with all detainees arrested for taking part in peaceful demonstrations;

- calling on the authorities to ensure that, while they remain in custody, all the detainees are held only in an official place of detention, and are granted immediate access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may require.

APPEALS TO:

Senior General Than Shwe
Chairman
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear General

Nyan Win
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Minister

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 26 November 2007.*****