

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WEB FEATURE**

**Date:** 05/11/2007  
**AI Index:** ASA 16/036/2007

### **Monks return to streets of Myanmar**

In a display of courage, Buddhist monks have once again staged peaceful protests in Myanmar. According to media reports, on Wednesday 31 October over 100 monks returned to the streets in the central town of Pakokku.

They called for a reduction in commodity prices, national reconciliation and the release of all political prisoners. This was the first such public protest since a brutal crackdown on peaceful anti-government demonstrations in September.

The mass demonstrations during September were first sparked by events in Pakokku. Monks there had staged protests, which then swelled to include hundreds of thousands of Burmese after reports that monks had been injured by the security forces.

Reports of arrests continue to emerge from Myanmar, including of people who are linked to leading protesters, such as family members. There have also been arrests of others less directly linked, including the landlords of those sought by the authorities. At the same time, an increasing number of those already in detention have been sentenced in trials that appear to have been grossly unfair and carried out in secret.

However, in a welcome move a significant number of detainees have been released in recent weeks, including the famous comedian Par Par Lay. His fellow comedian, Zargana, first released on 17 October, was subsequently reported to have been taken in for questioning in the evening of 29 October, but released on the following day.

Over 100 protesters were released on 25 and 30 October, among them at least 55 members of the National League for Democracy, the main opposition party. Most of them were released from Insein prison in Yangon, with others freed in Mandalay. Amnesty International remains gravely concerned by conditions in Myanmar jails. Former detainees at Insein have described beatings, shackling and solitary confinement combined with lack of food and health care leading to widespread ill-health.

Caption: Comedian Par Par Lay has now been released