

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE01/373/2010
13 November 2010

Myanmar should free all prisoners of conscience following Aung San Suu Kyi's release

Amnesty International today welcomes the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, but calls on the government of Myanmar to immediately release all of the prisoners of conscience in the country.

Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's best-known prisoner of conscience, has spent more than 15 of the past 21 years under house arrest. She was one of more than 2,200 political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, currently being held in deplorable conditions for simply exercising their right to peaceful protest.

“While Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release is certainly welcome, it only marks the end of an unfair sentence that was illegally extended, and is by no means a concession on the part of the authorities”, said Amnesty International's Secretary General, Salil Shetty. “The fact remains that authorities should never have arrested her or the many other prisoners of conscience in Myanmar in the first place, locking them out of the political process”.

The Nobel Peace laureate had been detained since 30 May 2003 after government-backed thugs attacked her motorcade in Depayin, killing an unknown number of people, and injuring scores. This was the third time she was held under house arrest, having been previously detained from 1989 to 1995 and from 2000 to 2002.

“This time the authorities must ensure Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's security”, said Salil Shetty.

“It is high time the government of Myanmar put an end to the ongoing injustice of political imprisonment in the country, while the international community—including China, India, ASEAN and the UN—must act together to prevent Myanmar from abusing its legal system to

penalize peaceful opponents. The release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi must not make them forget other prisoners of conscience”.

There are more than 2,200 political prisoners in Myanmar still held under vague laws frequently used by the government to criminalize peaceful political dissent. They are being held in grim conditions, with inadequate food and sanitation. Many are in poor health and do not receive proper medical treatment. Many were tortured during their initial interrogation and detention, and still risk torture as a punishment at the hands of prison officers. Amnesty International believes the vast majority of those held are prisoners of conscience who are being punished merely for peacefully exercising their rights to free expression, assembly, and association.

Many of those still being held took part in the 2007 Saffron Revolution, sparked by protests against sharp fuel and commodity price rises. In the past three years, hundreds of political prisoners have been moved to extremely remote prisons, restricting their access to relatives, lawyers and medical care. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment are rife.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has been denied access to prisons in Myanmar since December 2005.

Background

Just two weeks before her detention order was due to expire in 2009, Aung San Suu Kyi was again arrested and charged with violating the terms of her house arrest. On 11 August 2009, after a trial widely condemned by the international community, she was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, which was later commuted to 18 months' house arrest.

Her release comes just six days after the first general elections in Myanmar in 20 years, which were held against a backdrop of political repression. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won the majority of seats in those 1990 elections, but were prevented from taking power by Myanmar military leaders who have controlled the country for decades.

Amnesty International is also calling for the release of all prisoners of conscience, including:

- Former student leader and pro-democracy activist Min Ko Naing, 47, serving a prison sentence of 65 years for his part in demonstrations in 2007.
- U Gambira of the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA), sentenced to 63 years for his part in

monk-led demonstrations in 2007.

- U Khun Htun Oo, 67, chair of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), sentenced to 93 years' imprisonment for disagreeing with the government's plans for a new constitution. He suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure.

Aung San Suu Kyi won the Noble Peace Prize in 1991.

Amnesty International won the Noble Peace Prize in 1977.