

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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LEGAL CONCERN/FEAR OF TORTURE

MYANMAR (formerly Burma): KYI MAUNG, CHIT KAING, OHN KYAING,  
THEIN DAN, YE MYINT AUNG,  
SEIN HLA AUNG

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Six National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders were arrested recently in Myanmar. Kyi Maung, acting Chairman of the NLD, and party secretary Chit Kaing were arrested on 6 September for "handing over classified state secret documents of national interest to unauthorised persons". The announcement of their arrest was made at a news conference on 7 September by Major General Khin Nyunt, 1st Secretary of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), Myanmar's ruling military authorities. He did not identify the documents in question or to whom they were purportedly given. Kyi Maung is a former colonel in the armed forces, and both men are aged in their 70's. They had been acting on behalf of NLD Chairman Tin U, who is serving a three year prison term, and NLD General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July 1989. The NLD won over 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats in last May's election, but the parliament has not yet been convened by the SLORC.

In the same news conference Khin Nyunt also stated that four other NLD leaders, Ohn Kyaing, Thein Dan, Ye Myint Aung and Sein Hla Aung had been arrested in Mandalay on 8 August 1990 for sending out false news, an apparent reference to reports that on that day four people had been killed by soldiers during a demonstration (see UA 327/90, ASA 16/13/90, 9 August). The government has denied the report and has stated instead that three security personnel and one novice monk were injured.

Amnesty International has received detailed information from recently released political prisoners and refugees who have fled Myanmar which indicates that ill-treatment or torture occurs frequently throughout the country. Testimonies suggest that any person arrested on political grounds by government security forces risks being tortured or ill-treated.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Large-scale civil unrest erupted in Myanmar in March 1988. Mass demonstrations led by students and others called for an end to 26 years of one-party rule by the military and an interim civilian administration. The military took power in a coup on 18 September 1988 and established martial law which severely restricted freedom of expression and assembly. They also legalized political parties and promised elections to be held in May 1990. However, within a few months, many leaders and supporters of the newly registered political parties were arrested for breaking martial law orders. Hundreds and possibly thousands of them remain in detention.

Elections took place as scheduled on 27 May. However, the SLORC has not announced a firm timetable for the end of military rule, and has stated that a constitution must first be drawn up by the newly-elected parliament which would then be put to the referendum and approved by the army.

On 29 August the NLD and the United Nationalities League for

Democracy (UNLD), which is a coalition of 21 other political parties

in Myanmar, announced that a parliament would be set up in September if the government had not already convened the representatives elected in May. They were later warned in an editorial by the official Working People's Daily not to form a parliament or government without the military authorities' permission.

During August up to 500 people were reportedly detained in Yangon (Rangoon) alone following increased political activity. Demonstrations took place throughout the country on 8 August, the second anniversary of mass demonstrations against one-party military rule in which hundreds of demonstrators were killed by the army.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern that the six political leaders may be detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- urging that their cases be urgently reviewed and that they be released immediately and unconditionally if held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- urging that they receive treatment in accordance with international standards and that they be given access to their lawyers and families.

**APPEALS TO**

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| General Saw Maung<br>Chairman<br>State Law and Order<br>Restoration Council<br>Yangon (Rangoon)<br>Union of Myanmar (Burma)                           | Telegrams: General Saw Maung, Yangon<br>Myanmar<br>Telexes: 21313 MOFARN BM (via Ministry<br>of Foreign Affairs)<br>Faxes: +95 1 2 2950 (via Ministry of<br>Foreign Affairs) |
| Maj Gen Khin Nyunt<br>First Secretary<br>State Law and Order<br>Restoration Council<br>c/o Ministry of Defence<br>Yangon,<br>Union of Myanmar (Burma) | Telegrams: Major Gen Khin Nyunt, SLORC,<br>Yangon, Myanmar<br>Telexes: 21316 MILPRO BM<br>Faxes: +95 1 2 2950 (via Ministry of<br>Foreign Affairs)                           |

**COPIES TO:**

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| <u>Japan Times</u><br>5-4 Shibaura 4-chome<br>Minato-ku<br>Tokyo 108, Japan | <u>Bangkok Post</u><br>Ground Floor<br>Soi Saladaeng 1<br>Bangkok, Thailand |
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(newspapers in countries which have strong interests in Myanmar)

and to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 October 1990.