

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 16/017/2003

UA 207/03

Fear for safety/Incommunicado detention/
Fear of torture or ill-treatment

11 July 2003

MYANMAR

**Daw Mae Hnin Kyi (f), aged 55, National League for Democracy (NLD) Member of Parliament elect, Mogauk 1, Mandalay Division
12 other human rights defenders, including NLD organizers and other political activists**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of thirteen human rights defenders in Myanmar. They are believed to have been arrested after petitioning authorities about the violent attack on the National League for Democracy (NLD) on 30 May. They are reportedly being held in incommunicado detention. Concerns for their safety are heightened by reports that a recently released detainee was tortured whilst in detention.

Daw Mae Hnin Kyi, a NLD MP elect from Mandalay Division, and two female organizers of the NLD Women's division were reportedly arrested by Military Intelligence officers on the evening of 10 July in Yangon, the capital of Myanmar. Their arrest is believed to be motivated by a letter that had been written to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) on behalf of the NLD Women's division. The letter requested the release of those NLD members and supporters, who have been detained by authorities or who have been missing since 30 May, for an investigation into the events on that day and for the reopening of NLD offices.

On 6 and 8 July, U Khin Win, U Maung Maung, Ko Than Aung, three NLD organizers and Ko Aung Thein Myint, a NLD Youth member from Magway Division, central Myanmar were reportedly arrested. Their arrest is also believed to be linked to a petition to the SPDC in the name of NLD party members in their township of Yenanchaung, which made the same requests as the NLD Women's division.

On 5 July, six people are reported to have been arrested in Kawthaung, a town on the border with Thailand, for distributing leaflets with information about the violent attack on the National League for Democracy on 30 May. The leaflet is believed to have called for an investigation into the incident. Than Tun, Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, Aung Than and Kyaw Kyaw were reportedly arrested in the early morning, and U Hnout Khan Hmwe and Win Naing were taken into detention later than night.

U Soe Win, an NLD MP elect who was detained on 30 May and released on 29 June, was in a very poor state of health as a result of his treatment in detention. He reportedly had head and eye injuries and was unable to speak or walk. It is believed that he was tortured during interrogation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 30 May 2003 members of the NLD travelling on party business in Upper Myanmar were violently attacked in what is believed to be a premeditated attack. Authorities confirmed that four people had been killed; according to other sources the true figure could be significantly higher.

Six weeks after the attack, at least 130 people who were among those attacked remain missing or in detention, including party secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Many reportedly suffered head injuries and have had no access to relatives or lawyers. While the International Committee of the Red Cross has publicly stated that in late June 2003 it was granted permission to visit at least 30 of the detainees, it has not been given access to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Following the attack, Amnesty International is aware that at least 55 further people were reportedly taken into incommunicado detention. NLD offices have been closed down, members and supporters of the NLD as well as other political organizations are reportedly under intensive surveillance. The press is strictly controlled by authorities in Myanmar, and there is no free access to information, including news about the events on 30 May 2003.

For further information on these concerns, see UA 159/03 (ASA 16/009/2003, 02 June 2003), and follow-ups (ASA 16/010/2003, 6 June 2003 and ASA 16/11/2003, 4 July 2003). An updated list of those reportedly missing or detained on or after 30 May 2003 is available on Amnesty International's web-site at <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/mmr-040603-action-eng>. You may also wish to sign Amnesty International's petition for their release and an investigation into the attack on <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/mmr-040603-petition-eng>.

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

- expressing concerns at reports of the arrest of NLD MP elect Daw Mae Hnin Kyi, two members of the NLD Women's division, four NLD township organizers in Yenanchaung, Magway Division, and six persons in Kawthaung, Tanintharyi Division,
- urging authorities to either charge those arrested with a recognizably criminal offence or immediately and unconditionally release them;
- calling on authorities not to penalize people on account of their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly; and calling for an end to arrests of on this basis;
- calling for guarantees that no detainees will be tortured or ill-treated, and that detainees are granted immediate access to lawyers, doctors, and relatives.

APPEALS TO:

Senior General Than Shwe
State Peace and Development Council
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar

Telegram: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar

Telex: 21316

Fax: + 95 1 652 624

Salutation: Dear General

General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Peace and Development Council
C/o Director of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar

Telegram: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

Telex: 21316

Fax: + 95 1 652 624

Salutation: Dear General

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 22 August 2003.