

21 October 1998

**Further information on UA 237/98 (ASA 16/26/98, 8 September 1998) - Mass Arbitrary Arrests / Prisoners of Conscience New concerns: Fear of torture and ill-treatment / Fear for safety / Health concern**

**MYANMAR** Over 200 members of the NLD opposition political party, including Thakin Khin Nyunt, aged 84 (released)  
New name: Dr. U Saw Mra Aung, aged 80, and  
54 people, including 23 NLD members

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Thakin Khin Nyunt was released on 14 September 1998, and 32 others also arrested by Myanmar's military authorities since 6 September 1998 have also since been released. However, there are serious concerns for 54 people who were recently arrested in a related case, some of whom were reportedly severely beaten during interrogation. Hundreds of other prisoners of conscience who are still detained remain in danger of torture or ill-treatment.

Dr. U Saw Mra Aung, an 80-year-old medical doctor and an elected member of parliament, was arrested on 6 September. In view of his age, Amnesty International is particularly concerned about his health while in detention. In mid-September he was appointed as Head of the symbolic People's Parliament by the few National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders who are not currently in detention. The NLD is Myanmar's leading opposition party, led by Nobel prize laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a press conference on 7 October, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) announced that 54 people, including 23 NLD members, had been arrested in connection with a "conspiracy" to "incite unrest" by NLD members and students allied with foreign organizations. Amnesty International could find no evidence in the SPDC statement that any of those arrested had engaged in anything other than peaceful civil disobedience in Myanmar. Amnesty International is also concerned by reports that some of those detained before the press conference were severely beaten during interrogation, and that they may not be receiving the medical care they could need as a result.

SPDC officials have stated that NLD members are being held in government guesthouses and treated well. The SPDC also claims that detainees are participating in discussions about the future of the country with government officials. However, other reports indicate that NLD members are being intimidated into resigning from the party, and that most of them are held in detention facilities around the country, including Insein Prison in Yangon, where hundreds of political prisoners are held.

According to the NLD, over 900 of its members have been arrested since May, including some 200 elected members of parliament. Student activist sources also claim that hundreds of their colleagues have been arrested during the same period. Because of the lack of access to Myanmar by journalists and independent human rights monitors, it is impossible to confirm these numbers.

However, Amnesty International believes that hundreds of opposition activists have been arrested in the last five months, many of them for their peaceful political activities, including holding demonstrations and distributing leaflets, calling on the SPDC to convene the parliament elected in 1990, and attempting to meet with colleagues around the country.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:**

- welcoming the release of Thakin Khin Nyunt and 32 others arrested by Myanmar's military authorities since 6 September 1998;
- expressing deep concern at the recent arrests of 54 people in a related case, and at reports that some were severely beaten during interrogation and may not be receiving medical attention;
- urging the SPDC to release all those arrested in the last five months for their peaceful political activities, including Dr. U Saw Mra Aung;
- urging the SPDC not to ill-treat or torture anyone currently in detention;
- calling on the SPDC to make public a list of all those detained, their whereabouts, and any charges brought against them;
- reminding the government of Myanmar of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 20 (1):"Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

**APPEALS TO:**

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

**Telegrams: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar**

**Telexes: 21316**

**Faxes: + 95 1 229 50**

**Salutation: Dear General**

Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman  
 State Peace and Development Council  
 c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)  
 Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road  
 Dagon Post Office  
 Yangon  
 Union of Myanmar

**Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar**

**Telexes: 21316**

**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 8 December 1998.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."  
*Article 20 (1), Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

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