

URGENT ACTION

PRISONERS IN MYANMAR DENIED DRINKING WATER

Fifteen political prisoners, currently on hunger strike in Insein prison in Myanmar, are reportedly being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. According to sources in Myanmar, they have been denied drinking water, and eight of the prisoners have been held in cells designed to hold dogs.

The 15 political prisoners, all men, started a hunger strike at Insein prison at midday on 26 October. The strike is in protest that political prisoners in Myanmar are commonly denied the reductions in their sentences which are allowed to criminal convicts. Between 27 October and 2 November it was reported that the hunger strikers were being denied drinking water and no further updates are available at present. Depriving prisoners of drinking water as a punishment for participating in a hunger strike could result in the prison authorities being responsible for the rapid death of the hunger strikers due to dehydration. This would amount to a violation the right to life according to international law, including in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This also violates Rule 21(2) of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which states that drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever they need it.

Eight of the 15 hunger strikers were reportedly moved to dog cells on 29 October. The names of the eight political prisoners sent to dog cells have not yet been confirmed. The dog cells at Insein Prison are about 3m in length, just over 2m wide, but it is possible to stand upright. They are windowless and often have poor ventilation. There is generally no proper sanitation, no bed and no mats on the floor.

By the morning of 1 November it was reported that two of the hunger strikers had been sent to hospital. The names of those hospitalized and details of their medical situation are currently not available. The hunger strikers have also been denied visits from their families and receipt of parcels from relatives, which may include medicine, food or letters.

Please write immediately in English, Burmese or your own language:

- Requesting the Myanmar authorities to take immediate action to ensure that the hunger strikers are provided with adequate drinking water and removed from dog cells, and not subjected to further torture or other ill-treatment, including subjecting them to mental or physical abuse;
- Explaining to the authorities that torture and other forms of ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited under international law;
- Urging the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the reports that eight hunger strikers were placed in dog cells and that others were deprived of drinking water; with the results of the investigation made public and those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 DECEMBER 2011 TO:

Minister of Home Affairs
Lt. Gen. Ko Ko
Ministry of Home Affairs
Office No. 10, Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 439
Salutation: Dear Minister

Chairman
U Win Mya
Myanmar National Human Rights
Commission
27 Pyay Road
Hline Township, Yangon
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Chairman

And copies to:
Deputy Director, Insein Central Prison
U Thet Shay
Insein Central Prison
Middle Ywama Ward
Insein Township, Yangon,
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Deputy Director

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Five of the 15 political prisoners who are involved in the current hunger strike were also involved in a hunger strike at Insein Prison in May 2011, demanding improvements to the harsh prison conditions. During the May hunger strike seven of the protesters were placed in solitary confinement in dog cells, including three of the political prisoners who are involved in the current hunger strike. The names of those who were also involved in the May hunger strikes are Nyi Nyi Tun, Ko Wunna Htay aka U Vithoddi, Aung Naing, Zin Min Shein, Ko Soe Moe Tun. The three who have again been sent to the dog cells as punishment for their role in the current hunger strike are Nyi Nyi Tun, Ko Wunna Htay aka U Vithoddi and Ko Soe Moe Tun. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar met with Nyi Nyi Tun during a visit to Insein Prison in August 2011.

Many political prisoners in Myanmar have used hunger strikes as a form of protest. Prison authorities have tortured those who protest, or subjected them to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including shackling them, and confining them in dark cells or military dog cells for protracted periods.

Amnesty International has been reporting on the use of dog cells as punishment cells for the last 15 years, as numerous political prisoners have been confined in them for varying periods after breaking sometimes arbitrary prison regulations.

Political prisoners who were placed in dog cells in the past have reported that they were periodically denied food and water and also refused the right to receive visits from relatives. One political prisoner reported that the dog cell he was placed in was covered in white lice and smelled of excrement. Sometimes prisoners were put in dog cells alone, on other occasions up to four prisoners were forced into one space. There are also reports that on some occasions criminal convicts have been placed in dog cells with political prisoners, which could have placed political prisoners at risk of physical abuse. Prisoners were often beaten, sometimes severely, when they were taken to the dog cells and were not provided with any medical treatment for their injuries. Prison authorities appear to apply such punishments against political prisoners regardless of their state of health or age, which leads to health problems and the exacerbation of existing medical conditions.

Names: Nyi Nyi Tun, Thaw Zin aka Ngapain, Kaung Myat Hlaing, Ko Saw Nobel, Than Naing Oo, Ko Wunna Htay aka U Vithoddi, Aung Naing, Nyan Tun Lin aka Yan Naing, Ko Aung, Inter aka Spy, Swam Khant Thwam, Zin Min Shein, Sandimar aka Tun Naung, Aung Moe Zaw and Ko Soe Moe Tun.

Gender: m