

URGENT ACTION

EARLY RELEASE FOR FORMER CHILD SOLDIER

Aung Ko Htwe, former child soldier, was released from prison a few months early on 6 September 2019, likely due to good behaviour. Arrested in August 2017 after giving a media interview about being forcibly recruited into the military, he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Aung Ko Htwe was released from Insein prison in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, on 6 September 2019. Sentenced to a total of two years and six months, his lawyer believes that he was released early for good behavior.

Aung Ko Htwe was arrested on 18 August 2017 after he gave a media interview about his experiences as a child soldier and how the Myanmar military abducted and forcibly recruited him when he was 13 years old. He was then sentenced to two years in prison – the maximum sentence - under Section 505 (b) of Myanmar's Penal Code, which criminalizes speech that "is likely to cause fear or alarm to the public". Also convicted under Section 228 of the Penal Code for "intentional insult of a public servant sitting at any stage of a judicial proceeding" after criticizing the judge presiding over his trial, he was sentenced to an additional six months in prison.

Aung Ko Htwe is still facing up to three additional years in prison for another charge "causing destruction of the whole or any part of the Union Seal" under Sections 6 and 7 of the Union Seal Act. While he was acquitted from this charge on 30 October 2018, an appeal against the decision was filed in June 2019. It is likely that a decision will be made in early 2020.

Thank you to everyone who took action, Aung Ko Htwe should have never been imprisoned for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Amnesty International will continue to monitor his situation and respond to developments as appropriate.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Aung Ko Htwe (He, Him, His)

THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 132/18

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/9410/2018/en/>