

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 16/03/98

UA 63/98

Fear for Safety/Fear of Ill-treatment

2 March 1998

MYANMARU Ohn Myint, age 81

Amnesty International is concerned about the safety and whereabouts of U Ohn Myint, an advisor to the National League for Democracy (NLD), Myanmar's major opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. U Ohn Myint was also a friend of the late General Aung San, the Burmese national independence hero and father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. U Ohn Myint was detained at about 11.30pm on 23 February 1998 for questioning and has not been heard from since. It is not known where he is being held or what, if any, charges have been made against him.

Ill-treatment, particularly during initial interrogation of political prisoners, is common in Myanmar.

On 1 March the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, the new name of Myanmar's military government) conducted a press conference alleging recent "terrorist plots and subversive activities" and naming some 40 people who were allegedly involved in plans to detonate bombs and assassinate members of the government. It is believed that these named people were arrested in late 1997. In the press briefing U Ohn Myint was accused of collaborating with others in producing and illegally distributing articles entitled "History of the Student Movements, Me and They and Witnesses to History". The SPDC stated that the articles were "largely exaggerated and biased accounts of events based on a few facts". No further statements are known to have been made about the articles, or about U Ohn Myint himself.

U Ohn Myint had been previously arrested in June 1997 at the same time as several NLD members, and released unharmed in late July 1997. His name and the name of several NLD members were mentioned in a June 1997 press release given by Myanmar's military government. In the government press statement they were accused of obtaining a videotape of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and arranging for it to be taken out of the country.

Amnesty International is also concerned that U Ohn Myint, who is 81 years old, should be receiving immediate and regular access to proper medical treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 15 November 1997 the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, Myanmar's military government since September 1988) reorganized and renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council. According to reports the changes were made because of widespread corruption among some members of the government, who were subsequently expelled. However, the government's policies appear generally unchanged, particularly with regard to human rights, and far-reaching repression of people opposing the government continues.

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

- calling on the authorities to immediately make known the whereabouts of U Ohn Myint and any charges against him;
- calling on the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally if he is being held solely for his peaceful political activities;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that while detained U Ohn Myint is not ill-treated and is held in conditions which meet international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO:

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

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

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 13 April 1998.