

PUBLIC

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UA 258/07 Health concern/ Fear of torture or ill-treatment

MYANMAR Hla Myo Naung (m), former student activist

Former student leader Hla Myo Naung was arrested in the city of Yangon on the morning of 10 October, as he sought medical treatment for a ruptured cornea. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Unless operated on soon, Hla Myo Naung may go blind in this eye.

Hla Myo Naung, a former law student and member of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), the main student organization in the Myanmar, was one of the leaders of nationwide protests against military rule in 1988. He was arrested in March 1990 and given a three year prison sentence. Those who took part in the protests are known as the 1988 Generation Students group.

Hla Myo Naung had been in hiding since 21 August 2007, when 13 other leaders of the 1988 Generation Students group were arrested in a crackdown by the authorities on protestors. He came out of hiding to visit an eye clinic in Sanchaung township to get medical treatment. He was arrested at the clinic by members of police special branch. According to reports, his doctor diagnosed a ruptured cornea which requires surgery, without which he may suffer permanent blindness.

It is not known where Hla Myo Naung or numerous other members of the 1988 Generation Students group who have been arrested since August 2007 are detained.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peaceful demonstrations began in August sparked by sharp increases in fuel prices. Protests led by monks grew rapidly in size and number, calling for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners and a process of national reconciliation to resolve deep political divisions.

In the evening of 25 September, the authorities began a crackdown on the protestors, including raiding monasteries, arresting monks and others, and imposing a curfew. Thousands of people are believed to remain in detention.

Human rights violations in Myanmar are widespread and systematic. They include the use of child soldiers and forced labour. Laws criminalize peaceful expression of political dissent. At the end of 2006, most senior opposition figures were imprisoned or detained, among more than 1,160 political prisoners held in deteriorating prison conditions. People are frequently arrested without warrant and held incommunicado; torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common, especially during interrogation and while in custody awaiting trial. Judicial proceedings against political detainees fall short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are often denied the right to legal counsel and prosecutors have relied on confessions extracted through torture.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest Hla Myo Naung, who requires urgent surgery on his eye;
- urging the authorities to release Hla Myo Naung immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to immediately ensure that while he is in detention, he is granted access to appropriate medical treatment, as well as to a lawyer and his family;

- calling on the authorities to treat Hla Myo Naung and all detainees humanely, and not subject them to torture or ill-treatment;
- calling for the release of all detainees arrested for taking part in the peaceful demonstrations.

APPEALS TO:

Senior General Than Shwe
Chairman
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

Nyan Win
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Minister

Dr Kyaw Myint
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Minister

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 21 November 2007.