

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/Fear of Torture

12 October 1990

MYANMAR : U MAUNG Maung Lay Ngwe, 40 years old

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On 8 October Myanmar's official radio announced that U Maung Maung Lay Ngwe, an organizer of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Yenangyaung, had been arrested on 6 September 1990. According to the report he was arrested for writing and publicly distributing documents criticizing the government.

The report alleged that U Maung Maung distributed a publication entitled U Wisara Hnint U Ottama Ko-Sarr-Pyu, No. 3/90, which "maligned, contradicted and criticized the government and the leaders". When arrested, he reportedly also had in his possession 11 copies of a document, Pe-Tin-Tan, which he had allegedly written to "criticize and make disparaging remarks about the government and the leaders". The report further added that action would be taken against U Maung Maung because he had "distributed among the people as well as written and made plans to distribute...illegal publications that make false accusations to agitate unrest in the country and to make the people lose respect for the government".

Amnesty International has received detailed information and testimonies from recently released political prisoners and refugees who have fled Myanmar which indicate that torture and ill-treatment of political detainees occurs frequently throughout the country. Consequently, Amnesty International is concerned that U Maung Maung Lay Ngwe is at risk of being tortured while detained.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Large-scale civil unrest erupted in Myanmar in March 1988. Mass demonstrations led by students and others called for an end to 26 years of one-party rule by the military and for an interim civilian administration. The military took power in a coup on 18 September 1988 and established martial law which severely restricted freedom of expression and assembly. They also legalized political parties and promised elections to be held in May 1990. However, within a few months, many leaders and supporters of the newly registered political parties were arrested for breaking martial law orders. Hundreds and possibly thousands of them remain in detention.

Elections took place as scheduled on 27 May. However, the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council has not announced a firm timetable for the end of military rule, and has stated that a constitution must first be drawn up by the newly-elected parliament which would then be put to the referendum and approved by the army.

During August up to 500 people were reportedly detained in Yangon (Rangoon) alone following increased political activity. Demonstrations took place throughout the country on 8 August, the second anniversary of mass demonstrations against one-party military rule in which hundreds of demonstrators had been killed by the army. Four political party leaders from the NLD were arrested on that day for sending out "false news", an apparent reference to reports that four people had been killed by soldiers during a demonstration in Mandalay. The official media reported that six other political party leaders had been arrested during the month of September for publishing anti-government literature and distributing classified state documents.



**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern that U Maung Maung Lay Ngwe may be detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- urging that his case be urgently reviewed and that he be released immediately and unconditionally if held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- urging that he receive treatment in accordance with international standards and that he be given access to his family and a lawyer, and that he should be protected from possible torture or ill-treatment in custody.

**APPEALS TO:**

General Saw Maung Chairman	Telegrams: General Saw Maung, Yangon, Myanmar
State Law and Order Restoration Council	Telexes: 21313 MOFARN BM (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Yangon (Rangoon)	Faxes: +95 1 2 2950 (via
Union of Myanmar	Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Maj Gen Khin Nyunt First Secretary	Telegrams: Maj General Khin Nyunt, SLORC, Yangon, Myanmar
State Law and Order Restoration Council	Telexes: 21316 MILPRO BM
c/o Ministry of Defence	Faxes: +95 1 2 2950 (via
Yangon	Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Myanmar	

**COPIES TO:** Diplomatic representatives of Myanmar in your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 November 1990.