

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

COUNTRY: MYANMAR  
SUBJECT TITLE: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS

NOVEMBER 1990

SUMMARY

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This report updates the information contained in a document published by Amnesty International on 7 November 1990 entitled Myanmar: 'In The National Interest', Prisoners of conscience, torture, summary trials under martial law. That document details Amnesty International's concerns about human rights violations in Myanmar from before the military coup in September 1988 to May this year.

The attached report describes some human rights violations which have taken place in Myanmar between May and September 1990, including arrests of political activists and continuing ill-treatment of political prisoners.

This summarises a four page document, Myanmar: Recent Developments Related to Human Rights (AI Index: ASA 16/28/90), issued by Amnesty International in November 1990. Anyone wanting further details or to take action on this issue should consult the full document.

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

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 Amnesty International  
 International Secretariat  
 1 Easton Street  
 London WC1X 8DJ  
 United Kingdom

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MYANMAR:RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS

The National Assembly, for which elections were held in May, had yet to be convened by the military government five months after the results were published. The principal leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won over 80% of the National Assembly seats in the nationwide elections, remained under house arrest or in prison; and demonstrators increasingly called for the elected representatives to be allowed to take up their seats and form a government. July saw increased political activity with the approach of Martyrs Day on 19 July, which commemorates those killed in Myanmar's struggle for independence. The NLD cancelled plans for a Martyr's Day rally. However, as the country prepared for the holiday, students in Rangoon held snap demonstrations and handed out leaflets demanding that the military government -- State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) -- transfer power to the opposition. They reportedly dispersed when troops arrived. The official Martyr's Day ceremony proceeded without arrests.

On 27 July the SLORC issued announcement 1/90, which stated the ruling military authorities' view that it was not "necessary to explain" why the NLD did not "automatically obtain the three sovereign powers of legislative, administrative, and judiciary powers by the emergence of a people's assembly" as a result of its election victory. The authorities would not "accept...in any way" anyone acting independently of the SLORC in "drafting...an interim constitution to obtain state power and to form a government". They warned that "effective action will be taken according to the law" against anyone who did. The statement was an apparent warning to the opposition and those demanding a prompt transfer of power.

The following day an NLD party conference asked the ruling military authorities to hand over power to the NLD as the winning party in the 27 May parliamentary elections. On 29 July a reported 10,000 people gathered outside of Gandhi Hall in Yangon, where the conference was being held, but there were no arrests. The NLD also asked for direct talks with the SLORC and the release of their leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin U, both detained since July 1989. On 29 August the NLD and the United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD), which is a coalition of 21 other political parties in Myanmar, announced that a parliament would be set up in September if the government had not already convened the representatives elected in May. They were later warned in an editorial by the official Working People's Daily not to form a parliament or government without the military authorities' permission.

On 3 August, the authorities reported the arrest of 42-year-old U San Lin, the patron of the student-dominated Democratic Party for

a New Society (DPNS). They said he was detained for "instigating the students and children into forming illegal associations and creating disturbances." He was reportedly arrested in connection with a meeting he had attended where the formation of high school unions and the assistance the DPNS could give were discussed.

Early August was also marked by more sporadic demonstrations around the country. These culminated on 8 August, a significant anniversary in Myanmar. On that day two years ago hundreds of people were shot dead by security forces during mass demonstrations that broke out after months of mounting protests against one-party military rule. On this year's anniversary two monks and two students were reportedly shot dead by Myanmar security forces during a demonstration in the town of Mandalay. The government denied these reports and said instead that three security personnel and one novice monk were injured. An estimated 2-5,000 monks marched through its streets at dawn, nominally collecting their daily alms from the people. During the march, which was watched by contingents of troops, groups of students who had joined it reportedly shouted anti-government slogans and raised the flying peacock flag, the symbol of the NLD. The police arrived, and a police captain was reportedly hit on the head, after which the army opened fire. Three people were also wounded during the incident. Security forces arrested several people, but Amnesty International has not been able to obtain their names, nor those of the monks and students reportedly killed. The day before, soldiers allegedly bayoneted a student in Mandalay. Monks have continued to stage protest demonstrations in Mandalay, and the government claims that they have thrown stones at soldiers. After the 8 August demonstrations, the military reportedly increased the troop presence in Yangon and other major cities.

At the end of August Michio Watanabe, a Japanese diplomat, in a meeting with General Saw Maung, questioned the continuing detention of NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Saw Maung reportedly told him that she would be freed if she left Myanmar to return to the United Kingdom to join her family and resume her career as a writer. At this writing Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed no contact with her family abroad.

More arrests occurred in September. Kyi Maung, acting Chairman of the NLD, and party secretary Chit Kaing were arrested on 6 September for allegedly "handing over classified state secret documents of national interest to unauthorised persons". The announcement of their arrest was made at a news conference on 7 September by Major General Khin Nyunt, First Secretary of the SLORC. He did not identify the documents in question or to whom they were purportedly given. Kyi Maung is a former colonel in the armed forces, and both men are in their 70's. They had been acting on behalf of NLD Chairman Tin U, who is serving a three year prison term, and NLD General Secretary Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July 1989. Amnesty International considers Kyi Maung and Chit Kaing to be prisoners of conscience, arrested for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

In the same news conference Khin Nyunt also stated that four other NLD leaders, Ohn Kyaing, Thein Dan, Ye Myint Aung and Sein Hla Aung, had been arrested in Mandalay on 8 August for sending out "false news". This was apparently a reference to reports of the shooting deaths that day in Mandalay.

On 12 September three Democratic Party for a New Society leaders were arrested in Kayan township, some 42 miles from Yangon, for possessing anti-government pamphlets. They are: Kyi Win, aged 32; Ye Naing, aged 23, and Ngwe Oo, aged 20. Further arrests were reported on 20 September when another NLD leader Kyi Hla, the party's information officer, was arrested for publishing anti-government

propaganda. On 26 September the official radio announced that three more political party activists were arrested. It said Sein Hlaing, aged 35, Myo Myint Nyein, aged 38, and Nyan Paw, aged 36 had been arrested on 9, 12, and 13 September respectively for "organizing youths and students to create instability in Rangoon city and in connection with the preparation, planning and publications of an anti-government propaganda publication..." The authorities claimed that the publication, entitled What's Happening, "aimed at making people misunderstand the government and the Defence Forces." The report also alleged that Myo Myint Nyein had asked Nyan Paw to write poetry ridiculing military leaders. Sein Hlaing then reportedly printed and distributed the poems. Amnesty International believes that all of these people may be prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International does not know if the prisoners whose cases are described are to be tried by military tribunals in effect since July 1989 and which operate according to procedures not in accordance with international standards for fairness. These courts have handed down dozens of long sentences to political prisoners who have broken martial law orders which forbid public gatherings of more than five people and prohibit public criticism of the military authorities. However, in a press release issued on 5 October the government stated: "In the exercise of judicial responsibility, martial law is being applied to serious cases which warrant such actions."

Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of ill-treatment of prisoners, particularly in Insein Prison, near Yangon, and in Tharawaddy Prison, 70 miles from the capital. In the most recent report 89 political prisoners in Insein Prison staged a hunger strike beginning 18 September to demand a transfer of power to the opposition. On 25 September after having shouted their demands, several were reportedly beaten by soldiers and nine required hospitalization. Their present condition is not known.