

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 16/31/97

EXTRA 147/97

Fear of torture/ill-treatment /
Possible prisoners of conscience

31 October 1997

MYANMARDaw San San (f)

U Soe Myint

Dr Than Nyein, NLD Member of Parliament-elect

Win Win Htay alias Ma Po (f)

Daw May Win Myint (f), NLD MP-elect

Khin Maung Myint

U Win Thaug

U Mya Thaug

Eight people, arrested on the night of 28/29 October 1997, are feared to be at risk of torture or ill-treatment, common during interrogation in Myanmar.

Seven of the detainees are leading members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

On the morning of 28 October the NLD attempted to hold a meeting at its Mayangone township office on the outskirts of Yangon, the capital (see below). However, the security forces set up barricades and blocked Aung San Suu Kyi's supporters from meeting with her. A number of them were rounded up and trucked several miles away where they were then released. The seven NLD leaders and one other, named above, are still believed to be in detention at an unknown place.

Daw May Win Myint, NLD Divisional Organizer and Member of Parliament (MP) elect from Mayagone, was arrested by Military Intelligence Officers at 10pm on 28 October after they had taken documents from her. Also at 10pm, Khin Maung Myint, NLD Central Youth member and Secretary of Latha Township, was arrested by a combined force of Military Intelligence and other security personnel. Daw San San, the NLD Seikkan Divisional Vice-Chairman and NLD women's leader, was arrested at midnight after documents were taken from her. At the same time, Win Win Htay, a member of the Yangon NLD Youth Division, was arrested after security forces seized documents from her. U Soe Myint, the Chairman of the Thaketa NLD, was arrested at 1am on 29 October. One and a half hours later, Dr Than Nyein, an MP-elect from Kyauktan township, was arrested after a combined group of Military Intelligence and other security forces had confiscated documents from his home. U Win Thaug, the Chairman of the Mayangone NLD, was arrested sometime late in the evening of 28 October or in the early hours of 29 October. U Mya Thaug, who is the landlord of the Mayangone NLD office, was arrested at around the same time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), Myanmar's military government, has subsequently accused the NLD of being "confrontational" and of attempting to embarrass the SLORC in front of the international community. On 30 October the SLORC stated that it had detained four NLD members for questioning, but did not identify the four. The authorities further claimed that the four were breaking the law by holding the meeting.

The 28 October meeting had been planned in order to reorganize the Mayangon Township's NLD youth wing. The previous week, on 21 October, Aung San Suu Kyi had travelled to Thaketa, outside of Yangon, in order to meet NLD youth members there. The authorities did not prevent her from holding the meeting, and they also allowed the NLD to hold a national party congress in late September for the first time. However, the latest crackdown on peaceful political activity

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has diminished hopes that the SLORC is becoming more tolerant of NLD activities.

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

- calling on the authorities to immediately make known the whereabouts of the eight detainees and the charges against them, and to release all eight immediately and unconditionally if they are being held solely for their peaceful political activities;
- urging that the detainees be protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment and granted immediate and continuing access to their lawyers, doctors, and family members, in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration 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

Faxes: +95 1 229 50

Salutation: Dear General

Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Director of Defence Services (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

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 1 December 1997.