

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 16/015/2005 (Public)  
News Service No: 057  
11 March 2005

**Embargo Date: 11 March 2005 00:01 GMT**

## **Myanmar: Time for justice as human rights defender spends 75th birthday in prison**

Myanmar's longest serving prisoner of conscience, U Win Tin, turns 75 on 12 March 2005. Since his arrest in July 1989, he has spent more than one fifth of his life in prison, and is serving a 20-year sentence.

On the occasion of U Win Tin's birthday, Amnesty International renews long-standing calls on the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) to put an end to the ongoing imprisonment and harassment of peaceful dissenters, and immediately and unconditionally release U Win Tin and all other prisoners of conscience.

"U Win Tin's imprisonment highlights how the justice system in Myanmar has been misused in order to silence peaceful government critics," said Natalie Hill, Deputy Director Asia Pacific Program. "His 75th birthday is a reminder that the consequences of long-term abuses of justice are too great for the authorities to ignore. Authorities must stop criminalizing peaceful dissent, and take concrete steps to improve the administration of justice."

U Win Tin was imprisoned because of his senior position in the National League for Democracy (NLD), and was sentenced to further years in prison for his attempts to inform the United Nations of ongoing human rights violations in prisons in Myanmar. He has been in a poor state of health, exacerbated by his treatment in prison, which has included torture, inadequate access to medical treatment, being held in a cell designed for military dogs, without bedding, and being deprived of food and water for long periods of time.

"U Win Tin has been waiting for more than 15 years to be released from prison. He and other victims of abuses of the justice system, who should never have been imprisoned in the first place, must be released," Natalie Hill said.

Among the more than 1,300 political prisoners in Myanmar, there are many prisoners of conscience who are elderly or infirm, or who have been given such lengthy prison sentences that they are not scheduled to be released until they are in their 70s or 80s. The authorities continue to arrest and hold political activists incommunicado, deny them access to lawyers and due process of law, and to harass former political prisoners and activists.

## Background

NLD Member of Parliament-elect, **Dr. Than Nyein**, 67, urgently requires specialist medical treatment for a liver condition -- treatment that has reportedly been denied. He is being imprisoned beyond the expiry of his seven-year prison sentence, under legislation that allows detention without charge or trial. **U Saw Ne Dun**, also in his 80s, has been imprisoned since 1991. **U Tin Oo**, aged 76, deputy chairman of the NLD, is under house arrest, and has been held without charge or trial since 30 May 2003, with no opportunity to challenge his detention in court. **U Htwe Myint**, a former prisoner of conscience in his mid 70s, released from prison in December 2004, was sentenced to 15 days' imprisonment for staying overnight at a friend's house without permission from local authorities. He is reported not to have a place to live, after spending nine and a half years in prison.

Students arrested in their 20s, and sentenced to lengthy prison terms of up to 59 years imprisonment, such as **Thet Win Aung** and **Myo Min Zaw**, may still be in jail when they are in their 70s or 80s.

Amnesty International is calling on the Burmese authorities to stop arresting peaceful political activists; to impose a moratorium on the use of security and censorship legislation to criminalize peaceful dissent; to put an end to incommunicado detention and torture, and to stop denying prisoners legal counsel and fair trials.

For appeal cases on other prisoners in Myanmar, and further information on U Win Tin's imprisonment, please see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-mmr/index>.

To sign a petition for U Win Tin's release, please go to:  
<http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/APROweb.nsf/turn75bip?OpenForm>

## Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>