

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
1998		8	Burma/Myanmar	Ko Aung Tun, U Myo Htun, historians

Announcement:

Here is an Urgent Action issued by Amnesty International concerning an author who has written a history of the student movement in Myanmar. We hope that you are able to send the recommended appeals.

URGENT ACTION APPEAL

The following information is from Amnesty International's research headquarters in London, England. A.I. is an independent worldwide movement working for the international protection of human rights. It seeks the release of people detained because of their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language or religious creed, provided they have not used nor advocated violence. These are termed prisoners of conscience. It works for fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial. It opposes the death penalty, extra-judicial executions (political killings), 'disappearances' and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all prisoners without reservation. Amnesty International promotes awareness of and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognized human rights instruments, the values enshrined in them and the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and freedoms.

Please do not repost the information below to any part of the Internet without prior permission from Amnesty International. Thank you for your help with this appeal.

26 May 1998

UA 163/98 Torture or Ill-treatment/Fear for Safety/Medical Concern/Prisoners of Conscience MYANMAR: Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun, who are in a

precarious state of health after being tortured and ill-treated in detention. Both prisoners are being held incommunicado in solitary confinement.

Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun have been tortured inside Insein Jail, Myanmar's largest prison. During late February and March 1998, Aung Tun was severely beaten with rifle butts and sticks. He is reported to be suffering from severe asthma and tuberculosis. In addition he is vomiting blood, believed to be a result of his beatings. U Myo Htun has also been beaten and subjected to threats while a gun was placed in his mouth, and is in very poor health as a result of his treatment.

Ko Aung Tun was arrested in February 1998 and, according to an official statement, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for breaking the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act; seven years under the provisions of the Unlawful Association Act, and another seven years under the Emergency Provisions Act for a total of seventeen years in prison.

At a 1 March 1998 press conference, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) claimed that Ko Aung Tun was collaborating with 'terrorist groups'. Opposition sources state, however, that the real reason for his arrest was because he had written a history of the student movement in Myanmar. Ko Aung Tun was active in the student-led 1988 pro-democracy movement and was imprisoned from 1990 to 1994.

U Myo Htun assisted Aung Tun in writing the book, which the authorities claim was distributed 'illegally'. He was reportedly sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

Background information:

Since the beginning of the year scores of political activists have been arrested in Myanmar, joining hundreds of others in prisons throughout the country. In the last few days, an unknown number of National League for Democracy (NLD, Myanmar's main opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi) members are believed to have been arrested in the run-up to the party's celebration of its 1990 general election victory on 27 May. Amnesty International is also concerned about the safety of these detainees, as torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners is common in Myanmar, particularly during the initial stages of detention and interrogation.

Recommended action:

Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters:

- expressing grave concern that U Myo Htun and Ko Aung Tun are in very poor health due to severe torture by the authorities;
- urging the authorities to grant the two prisoners immediate access to proper medical care, their families, and their lawyers;
- calling on the authorities to initiate an independent and prompt investigation of these reports of torture.

Appeals to:

1. Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1 State Peace and Development Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office, Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Dear General:

[Telegrams: General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar]
[Telexes: 713 21316] [Faxes: 011 95 1 229 50]

2. Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman State Peace and Development Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office, Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Dear General:

[Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar]
[Telexes: 713 21316]

Copies to:

Ambassador Tin Winn

Embassy of Myanmar
2300 S St. NW, Washington DC 20008

Please send appeals immediately. Check with NCH if sending appeals after July 7, 1998.