

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
	2003			<i>follow-up 1</i>
	2012			<i>follow-up 2</i>

Announcement:

Ko Aung Htun, a student, has been in prison since 1998 for writing a seven-volume history of the student movement in Myanmar (Burma). The history showed that since 1900 students have often been active in the movement for political change in the country. The Network of Concerned Historians (NCH) has campaigned for Ko Aung Htun in 1998 and 2003. It now joins a new campaign to release Ko Aung Htun, launched by *Endangered Scholars Worldwide*. Please find below:

- * The appeal by *Endangered Scholars Worldwide*;
- * A sample letter and addresses,
- * A NCH overview of the case.

We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeal immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

ENDANGERED SCHOLARS WORLDWIDE

KO AUNG HTUN

COUNTRY: BURMA

<http://www.newschool.edu/cps/subpage.aspx?id=52974>



Ko Aung Htun, a writer and former student activist, was imprisoned in Burma between 1990 and 1995 for organizing student demonstrations against military rule. After his release, he wrote a seven-volume history of the student movement in Burma. In February 1998 he was re-arrested and sentenced to a total of 17 years imprisonment, charged with violation of censorship laws and unlawful association with any organization deemed by authorities to be against state interests. He has been tortured during interrogation, and there are serious concerns about his health and safety.

SAMPLE LETTER:

I am writing to you to express my grave concern over the case of Ko Aung Htun, arrested in February 1998 and reportedly tortured under interrogation. In a press conference after his arrest, authorities accused him of writing and illegally printing “largely exaggerated and biased accounts of events,” referring to his articles and books on the student movement. In April 1998 he was sentenced to a total of 17 years imprisonment: seven years under Section 5j of the 1950 Emergency Provision Act; seven years under the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act; and three years under the Unlawful Associations Act.

I am concerned that the use of these emergency powers to silence writers like Ko Aung Htun constitutes a grave threat to freedom of expression and research. I urge you to conduct a prompt investigation into the trial and imprisonment of Ko Aung Htun, as well as the accusations of torture, and his current medical condition.

I respectfully await your response to this matter of great importance.

Sincerely,

APPEALS TO:

U Thein Sein

**President

**Office of the President

**Naypidaw

**Republic of the Union of Burma

***Salutation:* Your Excellency

Minister Counselor U Myint Lwin

**Chargé d'Affaires Ad Interim

**Embassy of Myanmar

**2300 S Street, NW

**Washington, DC 20008, USA

***Salutation:* Dear Sir

NCH OVERVIEW OF THE CASE

In February 1998, **Ko Aung Tun [Aung Htun]** ([1968–]), a Central Executive Committee member of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), which played a leading role in demonstrations against one-party rule in 1988, was arrested and sentenced to seventeen (later reduced to thirteen) years' imprisonment under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act and the Unlawful Association Act. The military government claimed that he was collaborating with "terrorist groups." Opposition sources stated, however, that the real reason for his arrest was his seven-volume history of the student movement in Myanmar since 1900, written after his 1995 release. The history was important in that it showed that students had often been active in the movement for political change in the country and in that it provided information about student political prisoners. The authorities characterized the volumes as part of a plot to instigate unrest in the country by "spreading rumours" and called the writings "largely exaggerated and biased accounts of events based on a few facts." They also stated that the volumes had been illegally distributed to thirty politicians and that Ko Aung Tun had printed and distributed leaflets about the student history without official permission. Ko Aung Tun had been active in the 1988 student-led pro-democracy movement. In 1990–1995, he was imprisoned for organizing student demonstrations against military rule.

Others imprisoned and tortured in the same case were:

* **U Hla Shwe** ([1943]–), a chicken farmer and a central executive committee member of the ABFSU in 1962, was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for his co-authorship. In the 1980s, he had been imprisoned three times under suspicion of being a member of the Burmese Communist Party.

* **U Thar Ban** ([1941]–), lawyer and writer, was arrested [in March 1997] and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment because of his prodemocracy writings and because he helped gather data on the history of the student movement. He was reported in bad health. Like Ko Aung Htun, he had been released from prison in 1995.

* In February 1998, lawyer and historian **Maung Maung Kyaw** ([1931–]), a student activist at the time Burma won its independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, a well-known student leader during the early years of Myanmar’s independence, and one of Burma’s political veterans, was arrested and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for his co-authorship. He had reportedly been imprisoned before (between 1989 and 1992).

* **U Myo Htun** [also known as **Ko Khun Sai**] (?1949–), a teashop owner and former student activist (imprisoned in 1976 on account of his work for student rights) and member of the New Generation Youth League, assisted Ko. He was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment in March 1998, his third period of detention as a result of his political activities. On 18 November 2004, almost 4,000 prisoners were released, including U Myo Htun.

* Another person involved was **U Ohn Myint** (?1917–), an unofficial adviser of the opposition party National League for Democracy. He was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment in April 1998 but released in January 1999 following the visit of United States Congressman Tony Hall.

* Another man arrested in 1998 in connection with the preparation of a history of the student movement (probably the same history as the one referred to above) was lawyer **Min Thu** (1954–2004). He was reportedly sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment and, in 2001, ill-treated. In June 2004, he died in prison.

* **Ma Su Su Win** (female), a student activist in her thirties, was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment.

[*Sources: Amnesty International, Report* (London), 1999: 258, 2005: 185; Amnesty International, *Myanmar: Prisoners of Political Repression* (London 2001), 2, 11; Amnesty International, *Urgent Action 163/98* (London 26 May 1998); Amnesty International, “Myanmar: 13 Years’ Imprisonment for Writing a Student History: Generations of Student Activists Imprisoned after Unfair Trials” (November 2003); Amnesty International, *Myanmar: The Administration of Justice—Grave and Abiding Concerns* (ASA 16/001/2004; 1 April 2004), 42; Human Rights Watch, *World Report* (Washington), 1999: 166, 2000: 170, 501; *Index on Censorship*, 1/05: 94, 1/06: 107, 109, 4/09: 83–84; International PEN Writers in Prison Committee (PEN), *Half-Yearly Caselist* (London), 1998: 31–32; 2003: 92; 2004: 42; 2007: 43; 2008: 55–56; PEN, *Centre to Centre: Newsletter* (July 1998), 6; Reporters without Borders, *Burma: 2004 Annual Report; WUS Human Rights Bulletin* (May 1999), 5.]

Previous NCH circulars about Ko Aung Htun:

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/ca/08.pdf>

<http://www.concernedhistorians.org/ca/08f1.pdf>