

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>

Announcement:

In May 1998 we campaigned for Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun, serving prison sentences of thirteen and seven years respectively for writing a seven-volume history of the student movement in Myanmar (Burma) (see NCH #8).

International PEN Writers in Prison Committee is conducting a Myanmar campaign and highlighting the cases of eight writers, including Ko Aung Tun and U Myo Htun. Below follow PEN's case history and sample letter. We hope that you can send this or similar letters immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

P.S.: See NCH #18 for another Burmese case, history teacher Ma Khin Khin Leh (imprisoned for life); see NCH #6, #10, #14, #17, #23, #32 for further news about Myanmar.

INTERNATIONAL PEN Writers in Prison Committee

MYANMAR (BURMA) CAMPAIGN September 15 - October 10, 2003

CASE HISTORY:

NAMES: Ko AUNG Tun and U MYO Htun.

DATE OF BIRTH: 1967 (Aung Tun).

DATE OF ARREST: February 1998.

SENTENCE: 13 years and 7 years in prison respectively.

EXPIRES: February 2011 and February 2005 respectively.

DETAILS OF ARREST: At a 1 March 1998 press conference the State Peace and Development Council claimed Ko Aung Tun had been arrested for "collaborating with terrorist groups". Opposition

sources, however, state the real reason for his arrest as being a book he had written on the history of the student movement in Myanmar. U Myo Htun assisted Ko Aung Tun in writing the book, which the authorities claim was “distributed illegally”.

DETAILS OF TRIAL: According to an official statement, Ko Aung Tun was sentenced to 3 years’ imprisonment under the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act, 7 years under the Unlawful Association Act, and 7 years under the Emergency Provisions Act. Sentence thought to be combined as 13 years.

PLACE OF DETENTION: Ko Aung Tun held in Insein Prison. U Myo Htun was reported in May 2002 to be held in Shwebo prison, Sagaing Division, North of Mandalay.

TREATMENT IN PRISON: Both men are reportedly being held incommunicado in solitary confinement and have reportedly been subject to torture, including threats and severe beatings.

HEALTH CONCERNS: Both men are said to be in very poor health as a result of their ill-treatment in prison. Ko Aung Tun is reportedly vomiting blood as a result of his beatings, and is also said to be suffering from severe asthma and tuberculosis. There is serious concern for the safety of both men.

PREVIOUS POLITICAL IMPRISONMENT/PROBLEMS: Ko Aung Tun was active in the student-led 1988 pro-democracy movement, and was reportedly previously imprisoned from 1990-94.

OTHER INFORMATION: Aung Tun is a recipient of the 1999 Hellman/Hammett grants.

HONORARY MEMBERS OF: Norwegian, Canberra and Canadian PEN Centres.

Sample letter:

[Please write a polite letter to the authorities in Myanmar expressing concern about the number of writers currently detained there and calling for their immediate and unconditional release, in accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. You may copy the suggested text for your appeal or create your own.]

Date

His Excellency Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman.
State Peace and Development Council
Ministry of Defense
Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my serious and urgent concern about the number of writers in Myanmar who are detained for the peaceful practice of their right to freedom of expression. I am particularly concerned for the well being of [insert names of writers and any relevant case information here, for example, “Ko Aung Tun, who was sentenced to 13 years’ imprisonment and U Myo Htun, who was sentenced to 7 years’ imprisonment...”]

According to information PEN has received, since the 1988 crackdown on the National League for Democracy (NLD) in which thousands were killed and thousands more arrested, the numbers of detained writers known to PEN has remained largely unchanged. I would like to remind the government of Myanmar of its commitment to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I therefore respectfully request that you intervene on behalf of [writer/s mentioned above] and all other writers detained solely for the exercise of their right to freedom of expression, and facilitate their immediate and unconditional release.

Sincerely,

[Your name and signature]

Cc:

H. E. U Tin Winn
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar to the United States
2300 S Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
Fax: (202) 332-9046
[or a Burmese embassy near where you live.]