



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for August, 2013



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Political Prisoner Watch Burma (August 2013) Month in Review

In the month of August, we saw numerous arrests under The Decree on the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession, also referred to as Section 18. Out of the 35 political demonstrators arrested this month, 29 face trials under the section 18. Out of the 7 incarcerated this month, 6 have been charged with violating the same Act. The rest of the political demonstrators have been charged with section 505 (b).

Summary of the Current Situation

53 are facing trial, **7** were sentenced, and **0** political prisoners were released this month.

Incarcerations

At least **7** individuals were sentenced in the month of August.

Activists continue to protest against the Letpadaung copper mining project as it resumes operation in the Monywa, Sagaing Division. On August 29 activist Naw Ohn Hla was sentenced to two years in prison with two accounts Section 505(b) of the Burmese Penal Code. The veteran activist and former political prisoner had been arrested in mid-August for organizing a public protest against the Letpadaung copper mining project. Naw Ohn Hla is tried on the two counts while the other nine women, who were also arrested for their involvement in the protest, are accused of violating Section 18 only. She remains in detention at the Monywa prison, where she will await a separate verdict on her alleged violation of the Peaceful Assembly Act.

Naw Ohn Hla has been imprisoned more than seven times since 1989 for her NLD links and her efforts to free political prisoners and assist Buddhist monks during the 2007 Saffron Revolution.

In April 2012, six protesters demonstrated in Prome Tsp, Pegu Division, demanding 24 hours of power supply throughout their region and throughout Burma. Consequently, the protesters were incarcerated for 4 hours in Prome Tsp prison, charged with violating Section 18. Due to a recommendation by 5 parliament members from Pegu Division to grant a release, they were freed on bail. However, on August 23, 2013 at the Prome Tsp court, they were sentenced to 3 months in prison or a fine of 10,000 Kyat.

August 29th

[Activist Naw Ohn Hla Jailed 2 Years for Letpadaung Protest \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Latpadaung protestor sentenced to two years for sedition \(DVB\)](#)

August 28th

[Activist Naw Ohn Hla Boycotts Letpadaung Trial, Cites Judicial Failings \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 23rd

[Six activists protest for power supply, sentenced \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

Facing Trial

Farmers in Pegu Tsp continued their demonstrations, demanding the rights to their original lands, which were confiscated by the authorities. A total of ten thousand acres of land, owned by more than 500 farmers, has now been confiscated by authorities for the Pegu University Extension Project, Industrial Zone Project, and Hantharwaddy International Air Port as well as the Urban Project.

On August 28, 2013, more than 100 residents in Paungde Tsp, Pegu Division. Three protest leaders Ko Saw Naing, Ko Ye Kyaw Naing and Ko Kyaw Kyaw Lwin were indicted with section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Law by Paungde Tsp police station. On August 31, land rights activist U Win Cho and six farmers were arrested under section 505 (b) of the Penal Code for encouraging public mischief by Pegu Tsp Police Force. They were arrested for leading a protest against Dr. Mya Oo, a Union Solidarity Development Party member of parliament for the confiscated land.

In the afternoon on August 20, 2013, in Kyauktada Tsp, Rangoon, Ko Kyaw Thu, Generation Wave (GW) member called for demands which included repairing and replacing the Lal-Te Sayardaw's religious center/building in the original place in the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project region, and cancelation of curfew section 144 that was imposed in the project region. In addition, he was demanding the release of detainee Daw Naw Ohn Hla. He carried out a solo demonstration in front of the city hall in Rangoon and was arrested the same day. He was freed on parole that night from Kyauktada Tsp police station.

The 10 residents who led a protest demanding development programs around the Shwe Natural Gas Pipeline will be adjudicated in September after attorneys from both sides submit testimonies and evidence to the court by August 30. They were arrested by Ma Day Kyun Police officers and charged under Section 18 at the Kyauk Phyu court. They have already had 11 hearings so far. Their arrests can be seen as a warning to the other 500 residents and those remaining activists to prevent future protests.

A total of 28 people including Ko Soe Wai have been indicted under Section 18 in the Arakan State. They were all released on bail, but they are facing trial at different courts. On August 8, Ko Soe Wai was arrested and indicted under Section 18, after demonstrating to take back the confiscated land in Thandwe Tsp, Arakan state. Some residents have stated that a total of ten thousands acres of farm land have been confiscated by the senior army officers, as many hotels will be built along the beach of Thandwe district, Arakan state. He was released on bail on August 9th. The initial court hearing, set on August 16, 2013, was presumably moved to a later date. On August 23rd, he protested in front of the Institute of Technology in Thandwe Tsp for the second time. Though he was released on parole, he was indicted again under section 18 on August 24th and will have to face the court on August 26th.

U Lahtaw Brang Shaun, was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment under section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act on July 18, 2013. He was freed from prison on July 23, 2013, a week after his prison sentence under a mass release. His lawyer is submitting the appeal to remove his 2-year prison sentence at Myitkyinar District court as his analysis finds the prison sentence to be in contradiction with the law. Under the amnesty, U Lahtaw Brang Shaun is still vulnerable to future arrests that could lead to him fulfilling the remaining 2-year prison sentence. On August 7, judge U Nay Min Oo rejected the appeal.

In the afternoon of August 2, 2013, former political prisoner and Myanmar Development Committee (MDC) member, Ko Htin Kyaw, was indicted under section 505 (b) as well as Section 18 and sent to Insein prison from North Okkalapa police station. Article 505 (b) of Burma's Penal Code prohibits people from spreading statements that cause alarm or induce others to commit an offense against the state or the public. U Myint Naing, Daw Sein Htwe and U Lu Aye, who demonstrated against Section 6, Mayangone Tsp land confiscation, were sent to Insein prison along with Ko Htin Kyaw. Their case will be initially tried on August 5, 2013.

On July 31, 2013 Daw Bauk Ja, member of the National Democratic Force (NDF) party, was tried at Phar-Kant Tsp court and accused of negligent homicide and illegal possession of medicine and medical equipment which were unregistered with the Medical Council. This incident took place more than one year after the patient she had been caring for died. In addition, the wife of the patient who had initially filed the judicial procedure concerning section 304 (a) submitted a letter to close the file, stating that she was summoned by the police to open the case and signed it out of fear for not meeting the demands of the police. Daw Bauk Ja's prosecution took place after she gave assistance to farmers, whose lands were confiscated. She has previously denounced the former general Ohn Myint at the Pyidaungzu Commission.

In May, three members of People's Support Network, who gave assistance to the farmers, re harvested in Nattalin Tsp, in Western Pegu Division, were arrested under section 6 of the Organization of Association Law for forming an organization without permission. Their hearing on August 20th was their ninth court hearing. They are still awaiting a verdict.

August 30th

[Three protester leaders in Paungde Tsp, indicted \(RFA\)](#)

August 31st

[Pegu Tsp farmer protesters, arrested \(RFA\)](#)

[Rights Group Calls for Release of Burmese Activist in Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 26th

[Protester who solely protested twice to take back lands, indicted again under section \(Mizzima\)](#)

August 24th

[Kyauk Phyu-Kunming Pipeline protesters to be adjudicated \(Mizzima\)](#)

August 21st

[An activist, solely demonstrated in front of City Hall, free \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

[A solo protester for Letpadaung Taung Affair, arrested \(Irrawaddy Blog Burmese\)](#)

August 20th

[The judge ruled three members of People's Support Network indicted \(RFA\)](#)

August 11th

[Solo marching from Rangoon-Mandalay for the release of political prisoners, initiated \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 10th

[Defiant Burma Activists Expect Jail Over Shwe Gas Protest \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 9th

[Myanmar Activist Stages Hunger Strike in Insein Prison \(RFA\)](#)

[Thandwe Tsp solo protester, free on bail \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 8th

[A solo protester, arrested on August 8, in Thandwe Tsp \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 7th

[District court rejected the appeal of U Brang Shaun's case \(Mizzima Burmese\)](#)

August 2nd

[Ko Htin Kyaw, incarcerated in Insein prison \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 3rd

[A one-man protest for the release of all remaining political prisoners before 8888\(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 1st

[The case of Daw Bauk Ja, tried at Phar-Kant Tsp court \(DVB Burmese\)](#)

Releases

There were no political prisoner releases this month.

Detentions

Approximately 40 activists marched, together with people facing protest march charges, from Myaynigone junction to the Sule Pagoda in downtown Rangoon on August 27, calling for the removal of Section 18 of the Law on Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful procession. Six protesters were detained. They can be prosecuted under Section 18 in each of the seven townships they passed through on their march through Yangon. Tin Htut Paing was arrested alongside Hlaing Min Oo, Sithu, Kyaw Thu, Nilar Han, Kyaw Nay Lin by police from Kyauktada Police Station.

Two other protesters were charged under the same law on August 27 for leading a march of hundreds to commemorate the anniversary of the 1988 student-led pro-democracy protest movement under Section 18. The two were taken into custody that day and released after signing a guarantee to appear in court if summoned. The two, Phyu Phyu Win of the Former Political Prisoners' Force and Workers' rights activist Win Cho, will be tried on Sept 6.

On August 13, around 50 female activists led by former political prisoner Naw Ohn Hla staged an unauthorized protest near the controversial Letpadaung Mine. The Monywa police arrested 10 female activists including Naw Ohn Hla. The police have been condemned for its excessive use of force during the arrest. 9 were released on bail later that evening. Naw Ohn Hla was denied bail and sent to a detention center in Monyaw where she was charged under Section 18 and Article 505 (b).

In the morning of August 10, the authorities came to the 260 acres of confiscated land in Ohbo-Taun village and fenced in the surrounding land. Residents noted that a dispute took place between the residents and approximately 100 officials, which resulted in the arrest of Daw Tin Ye. The government has yet to meet the demands of the villagers in compensating them for the confiscated land. Ten other attempts have been made to fence this confiscated land by the authorities.

Three activists will face charges under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Procession law after leading a peaceful but unauthorized march through Rangoon on August 8, marking the anniversary of Burma's 1988 pro-democracy uprising. Charged under Section 18, Win Cho believes that if the organizers had sought permission from police to hold the march, it would have taken five days, with no guarantee that the demonstration would ultimately receive approval. Phyu Phyu Win stated "They [the government] claim they are democratic. We did our peaceful protest as we wanted to honor those who sacrificed their lives during the uprising. We are ready to face the charges" (Irrawaddy).

In search of activists fighting for local residents' land rights, the military police raided a monastery near the Letpadaung Copper Mine. Four people were arrested and at least 15 others were injured as police smashed the windows and destroyed their property. Two of the four people arrested were released, but the location of the pair still in detention remains unknown. The activists have been accused of inciting unrest in the area by encouraging the locals and farmers to participate in protests against the copper mine project.

August 7th

[Activists Reject Bill on Associations as Legislation Goes to Parliament \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 28th

[Protesting the Protest Law \(DVB\)](#)

August 27th

[Myanmar Activists Held for Marching Against Protest Law \(RFA\)](#)

August 18th

[Fresh arrests as residents reject Letpadaung mine deal \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

August 16th

[Villagers continue to push against Letpadaung project \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

[Women's group slams 'violent' arrest of Latpadaung activists \(DVB\)](#)

August 15th

[Latpadaung activists arrested in Monywa \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Woman Activist Remains Detained for Unauthorized Letpadaung Mine Protest \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 14th

[Latpadaung protestor hit with charges for demonstrating without permission \(DVB\)](#)

[Letpadaung Protesters Stage Sit-In Near Police Station \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 10th

[A villager, arrested from the dispute between Monywa residents and the authorities \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 9th

[Activists to Face Charges for Unpermitted '88 March \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 6th

[4 Arrested in Crackdown on Monastery Near Letpadaung Mine \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Police arrest villagers during pre-dawn raid on monastery in Monywa \(DVB\)](#)

August 2nd

[Political Prisoner Pledge, Govt Actions Don't Align: Activist \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

Conditions of Detention and Treatment of Family Members

During the three-day Jubilee, Burma's government received criticism for arbitrarily arresting a 74 year-old human rights activist and keeping him under arrest despite reports that he is in poor health and cannot get proper medical attention. His family members have not been allowed to visit him in detention.

August 7th

[Elderly human rights activist jailed, rights groups outraged \(Karen News\)](#)

Restrictions on Political and Civil Liberties

Daw Soe Soe Khaing, a Middle School teacher in the B.E.H.S (5), Zabuu Thiri Township, Naypyidaw Council Region was dismissed from her position in August after attending a commemoration earlier this month of the country's 1988 pro-democracy uprising. She was dismissed for taking a leave from August 10 to 14 without prior permission and for her connections to political organizations. Though she was offered a small severance pension at the time of her dismissal, after speaking to the media regarding her dismissal, her pension was also withdrawn.

On the night of August 5, 2013, the Mergui Tsp authorities removed the 8888 silver anniversary posters, according to the Mergui Tsp 8888 silver anniversary convening committee. They were told to remove the posters on the basis that the poster could encourage a riot. The local police forcefully removed eight out of eleven posters.

On August 4, Ko Yarzar, member of the National Democratic Force held a one-man protest in front of the city hall in Rangoon. He circulated flyers that made 5 demands including the immediate release of political prisoners and the removal of section 144. He was questioned at the Kyauktada Tsp police station, but subsequently released on parole. In 2007, Ko Yarzar was previously arrested and served for 2 years under section 505 (b) in Monywa prison.

August 23rd

[Teacher, who attended the Political Press Conference, was revoked the rights to her small pension in addition to her forced retirement \(RFA\)](#)

August 27th

[UTA condemns termination of teacher \(Mizzima\)](#)

August 26th

[Sacking of Naypyidaw Schoolteacher Draws Condemnation \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 21st

[Teacher Forced to Resign for Attending '88 Uprising Commemoration \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 7th

[Elderly human rights activist jailed, rights groups outraged \(Burma News International\)](#)

[8888 Silver Anniversary posters removed by the Mergui Tsp authorities \(Mizzima Burmese\)](#)

August 4th

[An activist protested by himself for the immediate release of political prisoners \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

Restrictions on Former Political Prisoners

Ko De Nyein Lin, Ko Ye Myat Hein (Western Rangoon University), and Ko Zin Lin Aung (Rangoon Institute of Economic) who had been arrested for their political activities and prevented from continuing their studies, were allowed by the authorities to resume their classes in their respective universities. Many former political prisoners for example,

the chairman of Rangoon Institute of Economic Union, Ko Sithu Maung, are still not allowed to resume classes at their respective universities.

The authorities have refused to grant passports to a couple, Ko Moe Kyaw Thu and his wife, who were wrongfully accused of sending a parcel bomb to No-2 Secretary of State Law and Order Restriction Council (SLORC) and Deputy General Tin Oo's home on June 6, 1997. The requests were submitted 2 years ago. They have submitted letters to the President, Daw Aung San Su Kyi, and several other committees for support in their endeavor to obtain a passport. U Win Myint from Rule of Law and Stability Committee plans to continue the work with the couple. "We have only applied for our passports because this new government said they are a democratic government," stated the couple.

August 18th

[Three student leaders, permitted to resume their classes in University \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

August 1st

[The interview with a couple, were allegedly accused of sending the parcel bomb to Deputy General Tin Oo's home \(Mizzima Burmese\)](#)

AAPP (B) in the Media

On August 1, president U Then Sein pledged again to work towards releasing all political prisoners by the end of 2013. This is the first time that the president has given a speech for the release of political prisoners on the state's media. This speech comes amid new concerns of activists being arrested. AAPP (B) continues to campaign for the release of the remaining 100 plus political prisoners and to support them and their family members.

"Wherever possible, individuals will receive assistance to cover the cost of medical checkups upon leaving prison, as well as for any subsequent medical care they may require. AAPP (B) will continue to provide extensive support and assistance to newly released political prisoners wherever we are able to." AAPP (B) said it was aware of "over a hundred political and human rights activists who are currently awaiting trial, having been arrested for expressing their views in peaceful demonstrations. Regardless of the number of political prisoners being released, there is still an unacceptably high number of people being arrested and charged for their political beliefs and activities. It is regrettable that those awaiting trial for these actions are not being discussed and represented. They require as much assistance as those currently incarcerated in attempting to refute the allegations made against them," the AAPP (B) said. The Former Political Prisoners Group is also planning to create a network in order to look into the welfare of political prisoners by helping campaign for the release of the remaining political prisoners (RFA).

Political prisoners have been released on ten occasions from 2010 to 2013 by Presidential executive orders. Bo Kyi, joint secretary of AAPP (B), is skeptical of the claim stating, "There have been continuing arrests of activists, those who were fighting for certain rights, farmers and workers. So I am unconvinced as to whether it is possible that there won't be any political prisoners [by the end of 2013]." The president said that he would not use 401 Act as a political weapon, but there hasn't been any cooperation between high-level staff and low-level staff of the government to make what [the president said] come true. The departmental cooperation is still very weak" stated U Bo Kyi (Burma News International).

U Bo Kyi added that any former political prisoner, who was released with pardon, is always concerned for their security and that their rights continue to be threatened even after they have been released under amnesty.

"Former political prisoners are always concerned for their security and when they are going to be re-arrested. It means their freedom is being controlled," stated U Bo Kyi. He added, "what we are calling for is an unconditional release. The best result would be to see 'released unconditionally' written at the bottom of the release warrant" (Irrawaddy Burmese).

August 20th

[Myanmar Activists Mull Network to Help Protect Political Prisoners \(RFA\)](#)

August 10th

[Minister joins Free Political Prisoners campaign \(Burma News International\)](#)

August 2nd

[Political Prisoner Pledge, Govt Actions Don't Align: Activist \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 1st

[U Thein Sein pledges to release all political prisoners by the end of 2013 \(Irrawaddy Burmese\)](#)

Key Domestic and International Developments

Burma's Union Parliament approved on Tuesday a four-month timetable to review the country's controversial Constitution, which was drafted in 2008 by the former military regime. Led by the deputy speaker of Union Parliament, the Constitutional Review Joint Committee will divide itself into small groups to review particular sections of the Constitution. The White House has also commented on the issue, stating that the constitutional reform would allow the people of Burma to elect whomever they liked and protect human rights.

While the Constitution will be rewritten, Burma must also reject or amend a draft of the Association Law, which would allow the government to ban or impose criminal penalties on civil society groups for exercising free speech. If passed in its current format, the law would require non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to register with a military-backed body that can arbitrarily reject applications, leaving activists vulnerable to arrest and prosecution.

U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Tomás Quintana made his eighth visit to Burma this month. "There are still critical challenges, including the historical need of reconciliation with ethnic groups," The U.N special envoy stated. Quintana also commended President Thein Sein for his efforts to secure the release of all remaining political prisoners by the end of this year and hoped to see the promise realized.

The three-day "Silver Jubilee for Four Eights Democracy Movement" kicked off on August 6 in grand fashion, marking the first time in 25 years—since the modern pro-democracy movement was born—that the cause has been openly feted on such a scale in the country. Nearly 2,000 people were present at the opening ceremony of the 1988 student protest. In a country where people were banned from commemorating any anniversary, the 25th anniversary is a significant event.

Presidential Office Union Minister, General (Retd) Aung Min, also attended the Silver Jubilee celebrations on August 7. He signed a memorandum pledging his support for the

campaign to free political prisoners, after refusing to acknowledge political prisoners for many years. He discussed cooperating with the event organizers for “national reconciliation” as human right groups called the government to launch investigation into the military’s violent crackdown in 1988. The minister expressed interest in further cooperation with the civil society groups to promote peace and reconciliation in Burma.

The road to reconciliation is a long and difficult path, however, as student groups demanded an apology from the government for the brutal crackdown during the commemoration of the anniversary of the 88 pro-democracy student protest. In addition, Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch are calling for an investigation into the 1988 crackdown. This warning urges President U Thein Sein to commit to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the brutal suppression of the movement on the 8th of August 1988. In addition, other civil society groups convening in Rangoon on August 8, called for the establishment of a “democratic federal state” (DVB).

While in the Arakan State, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Burma Ashok Nigam called for the release of four UN employees who have been detained in Arakan State for more than a year.

Many new proposals and drafts are being sent to the parliament in an effort to change the laws written by the former government. Changes proposed to the draconian laws being used to jail activists, include possibly revamping provisions on offenses and penalties that could see jail terms for those found guilty halved. In addition, opposition New National Democracy Party lawmaker Thein Nyunt submitted the proposal to amend the 2004 Electronic Transactions Law at the lower house of parliament who later on in the month approved a proposal to amend the Electronic Transactions Law. The law has a long list of offenses and imposes heavy penalties. Many political activists and student leaders were jailed for many years under this law.

August 30th

[The remaining political prisoners are still 122 \(RFA\)](#)

August 28th

[Burma’s Constitutional Review to Stay Confidential Until Next Year \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 26th

[Activists slam Association Law that would ‘criminalize’ dissent \(DVB\)](#)

August 22nd

[Myanmar moving forward despite critical challenges UN envoy \(Eleven\)](#)

[Parliament approves amendment of Electronic Transactions Law \(Mizzima\)](#)

August 21st

[Myanmar’s Parliament Considers Amending Draconian Law \(RFA\)](#)

August 20th

[Govt Should Release UN Workers Detained in Arakan: UN Official](#)

August 10th

[Suu Kyi urges people to support amendment of Constitution \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Suu Kyi calls for unity during final day of 8888 commemoration \(DVB\)](#)

[Minister joins Free Political Prisoners campaign \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Minister joins Free Political Prisoners campaign \(Mizzima\)](#)

August 9th

[88 Generation: The struggle for democracy continues... \(Burma News International\)](#)

[2 Kachin Men on Trial after Torture by Military Interrogators \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[4 Kachin Rebels Killed in Firefight With Govt Troops \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

August 8th

[Hundreds Commemorate ’88 Uprising on Streets of Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Thousands gather in Rangoon to mark anniversary of 8888 uprising \(DVB\)](#)

[Suu Kyi Praises 88 Generation Leaders \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Suu Kyi Calls for Unity on Crackdown Anniversary \(RFA\)](#)

[Myanmar Students' Group Demands Apology for Brutal 1988 Crackdown \(RFA\)](#)

[Myanmar's Underground Communist Party Claims Key Role in '88 Uprising \(RFA\)](#)

[Civil society groups call for creation of a 'federal state' during 8888 anniversary \(DVB\)](#)

August 7th

[Govt delegation attends 8888 commemoration as activists call for investigation \(DVB\)](#)

[Minister Attends 1988 Uprising Ceremony, Donates to Leaders \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Rights Group Calls for Probe on Eve of Myanmar's '88 Uprising' Anniversary \(RFA\)](#)

[The 8888 Uprising, realization of its objectives \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Burma Campaign UK: 'Hundreds' of political activist still rotting in Burma's prisons \(Burma News International\)](#)

August 6th

[Silver Jubilee Marking 1988 Uprising Opens With Somber Reflection \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

["Our revolution starts today..." \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Former rebel leader returns to Burma to mark 8888 anniversary \(DVB\)](#)

August 5th

[The spirit of 8888 Uprising lives on \(Burma News International\)](#)

August 4th

[Don't let pain of 1988 hold us back, urges NLD leader \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

[Student leaders prepare to mark '88 anniversary \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

August 1st

[Myanmar Charter Reforms Key To Free Elections in 2015: White House \(RFA\)](#)

Conclusion

This month marked the 25th anniversary of the "Silver Jubilee" of August 8, 1988. While the government pledges to release all political prisoners by 2013, we are seeing ever increasing number of new political prisoners indicted or arrested under Decree on Right to the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession. This Decree regulates in detail the legal regime for public assemblies, making it increasingly difficult for peaceful demonstrators and the general public to participate in assemblies and peaceful processions. This abuse of power is placing limitations on the political activities and denies basic human rights. AAPP (B) is currently aware of 125 political activists awaiting trial under section 18, with a further 32 being charged with section 505 (b).

As the country reflects on its past, present and looks to its future, towards peace and national reconciliation, the nation must draw from its lessons as it works through its transition to democracy. The increased use of a law that denies rather than permits peaceful assembly does little to encourage the idea of real change occurring in Burma.

While laws are being used to arrest activists for peaceful protests there will always be political prisoners in Burma. There are numerous laws used to detain activists outside of section 18 and section 505 (b) that require revision and amendments. Many countries have passed laws to allow peaceful protests to be carried out safely and successfully, whereas laws in Burma are designed and implemented in a manner which restricts the freedom to assemble peacefully and protest.

If the government are truly committed to ensuring the rights and freedoms of all its citizens people are realized then they must end the growing trend of section 18 and section 505 (b) arrests. They must cease the writing and implementation of new laws such as the draft Association Law currently being debated in parliament. This lack of compliance with international standards on freedom of assembly and expression, combined with the

number of activists still awaiting trial for peaceful protests, is extremely damaging to national reconciliation and the work of civil society groups. While legal barriers and the threat of punishment are continually used against peaceful humanitarian activists, the people of Burma will not achieve the political freedom and access to human rights they are deserving of.