



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for September, 2012



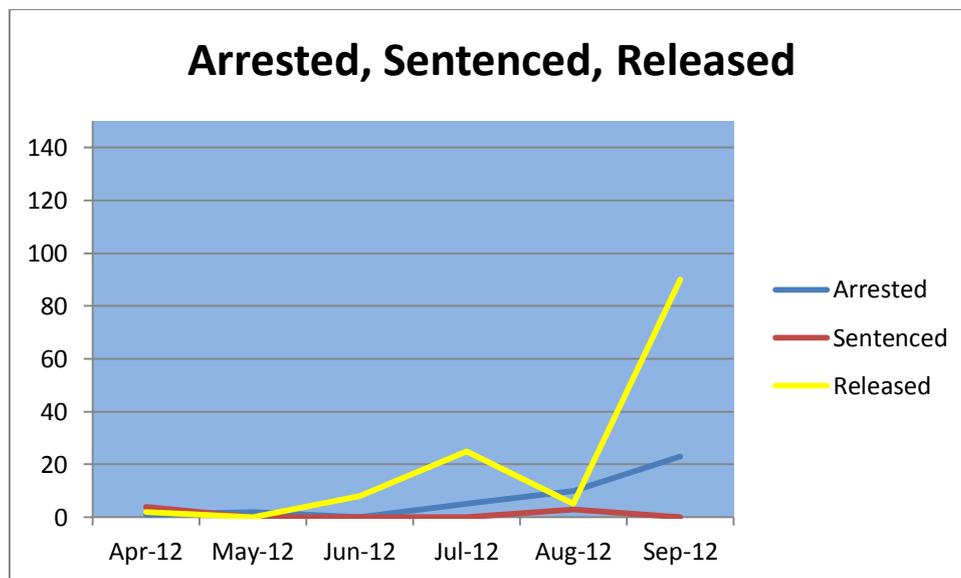
Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand
e.mail: info@aappb.org website: www.aappb.org

Monthly Chronology September 2012

Summary of the Current Situation



In September there were **23** arrests, **90** released and **0** were sentenced.

Trends

Prior to President Thein Sein's departure from Burma 514 prisoners were released under a general amnesty. The majority of those released were criminal offenders, with only 88 political prisoners released. This included several NLD members, Karen activists, and about a dozen monks. The releases were conditional as they were authorized under Section 401, and therefore are a suspension rather than an unconditional release. At this time 311 political prisoners still remain detained.

Despite the new protest bill allowing for peaceful demonstrations several applications for public gatherings have been denied on unknown grounds. The month of September saw a number of reports of ill-treatment of women protestors by authorities, shaming them publicly and abusing them while detained.

In order to bring attention to the abuse of arbitrary arrests in Burma AAPP published a report stating that an alarming increase in arbitrary arrests. Since January 2012, it said: "We have documented at least 200 politically motivated arrests without formal charges in this eight month time period. Of these arrests, less than 60 have resulted in formal court proceedings. Many leave

detention unsure whether they will face trial or not. It is clear that politically motivated arrests remains a favored tactic for suppressing critical voices of democracy and human rights.”

In the wake of the Burmese nominally civilian government’s removal of some 2000 names from its infamous blacklists, inviting dissidents to return to Burma several prominent activists returned after years in exile including labor activist Maung Maung, the general secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB), the leader of All Burma’s Students Democratic Front, Moe Thee Zun. They all expressed the intent to support the democratic movement.

Torture and Treatment of Prisoners and their Families

Three people were killed after a violent scuffle erupted following a dispute between a fishery operator and locals in Irrawaddy division’s Kyonpyaw township. Following an attack on a local fisherman leading to death, several residents gathered at a local administration office to demand justice and came under fire by police that killed two villagers, according to a local eyewitness. “Then police vehicles arrived at the scene and there was some scuffling. The police opened fire on the crowd, hitting four. Two of them died and two were hospitalised,” said local witness Tun Tun Moe.

The two villagers who died in the confrontation were identified as Kyi Thein and Kyaw Hsan Ngwe. The two injured – Kyaw Zin Thant and Win Than – were sent to Bassein Hospital after being shot. The police have yet to take action against the individuals behind Win Naing’s murder.

September 28th

[Two killed as police fire on crowd in Patheingyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Three killed following fishery row \(DVB\)](#)

Prisoners Released

September marked a prisoner release with an amnesty announced by President U Thein Sein a week before he was set to travel to the US to appear before the UN General Assembly. The official order stated the amnesty was “(...) for establishing stability of the State and eternal peace, on humanitarian grounds, for turning them into citizens who do their bits in nation building tasks realizing sympathy and goodwill of the State and for prolonging friendship with neighboring countries.” Of the total of 514 prisoners released only 90 were political prisoners, which means that more than 300 political prisoners are still behind bars throughout Burma.

Furthermore the release of the prisoners was not unconditional. As we have seen before it came with section 204(a) of the constitution and section 401(i) of the Code of Criminal Procedure which means that the released can be apprehended again at any time to serve the rest of their initial sentences. If the President U Thein Sein is sincere about “establishing stability of the State and eternal peace, on humanitarian grounds” he must put an end to the conditions that often go along with the releases.

Most of the prisoners were released from Mandalay and Taunggyi prisons. Amongst the released from Mandalay Prison on September 17th was U Kaylartha, a monk sentenced to 16 years jail following the 2007 protests. In Myingyan, Laphai Zau Seng was released after 27 years in prison. He received a dead penalty for his role in assassinating Brigadier General L-Kun Hpan, the head of the Northern Region military command.

September 24th

[Almost 100 prisoners of conscience freed: activists \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand, e.mail: info@aappb.org, web: www.aappb.org

September 19th

[Political prisoners among hundreds freed in Myanmar amnesty \(CNN\)](#)

September 18th

[Amnesty granted \(New Light of Myanmar\)](#)

September 17th

[President announces amnesty of 514 prisoners \(DVB\)](#)

Update on Individual Cases

Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network (HRDP) launched a campaign calling for the release of the group's leader and co-founder U Myint Aye who is serving a life sentence after being charged with plotting a bomb attack in Rangoon four years ago. U Myint Aye was arrested in August 2008 and was later convicted by a court under the Explosive Act, Immigration Act and the Unlawful Association Act. The group's members have been collecting signatures in eight administrative regions across the country for the petition that will be sent to President Thein Sein and international human rights organizations. HRDP is also preparing to appeal U Myint Aye's case to the Supreme Court.

It has been reported that Judge U Myint Htoo who is leading the trial of Brang Shawng, a 25-year-old refugee jailed since June for being an alleged bomber from the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), is acting hostile to Brang Shawng and his lawyer Ma Hka. In July following reports on the trial in Burmese exile media, Judge U Myint Htoo warned Brang Shawng's lawyer not to reveal details of the proceedings to the public. The judge has also barred observers from attending the trial which critics say is further evidence that the court is unfair.

The situation of Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min who was jailed last month after his return to Burma was acknowledged by Asian Human Rights Commission that sent an open letter to President Thein Sein calling for Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min's release.

Five of the humanitarian aid workers that were arrested in relation to the violent outbreaks in Arakan State remain in detention Rakhine State in Burma. The five are said to include one employee of the UNHCR, two men working for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and two for Action Against Hunger (ACF).

September 26th

[Petition campaign launched to free imprisoned activist \(DVB\)](#)

September 24th

[Accused KIO member Brang Shawng faces hostile court \(Kachin News\)](#)

September 11th

[Lawyer who returned believing situation changed jailed \(AHRC News\)](#)

September 3rd

[Five humanitarian workers remain in Burmese detention \(Mizzima\)](#)

National League for Democracy

There is no relevant news to report for the month of September.

September 12th

[NLD MPs Win Arbitration Cases \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 10th

[Hundreds receive free legal advice from NLD in capital \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

Ethnic Nationalities

September saw a continuation of violence and human rights abuses in Burma's ethnic regions.

On the 21st, groups and individuals around the world marked World Peace Day. In Rangoon, the day was marked by the largest popular demonstration since the monk-led 2007 Saffron Revolution, organised by 19 civil society groups. Between three hundred and two thousand protesters marched through the city for International Peace Day, demanding an end to Burma's ongoing ethnic conflicts. Despite more than one request, written permission had not been given by the authorities and, as the marchers were gathering, a police official warned them that the march was not authorised. A march in Nay Pyi Daw was prevented by authorities.

Since the protest, thirteen peace activists have been charged by police under Article 18 of the Assembly and Procession bylaw, for staging a public gathering without official permission. Nine of the thirteen were involved in the march in Rangoon and have been named as Jaw Gum, from the Kachin Peace Network, May Sapae Phyu, National League for Democracy (NLD) member, social worker and former political prisoner Nay Myo Zin, Moe Thway, Khin Sandar Nyunt, Phway Yu Mon, Kyaw Bo Bo, Win Co and Wai Lu. The nine face trial and a 30,000 kyat (US \$35) fine. This is in addition to a maximum sentence of one year imprisonment for each of the ten townships that they passed through. In Taunggyi, the four activists charged were named as Nay Myo, Bo Bo Han and Maung Maung of the 88 Generation Students group and Aung Thu, an NLD member. Unlike the other three, Aung Thu was not kept in detention. The activists say that they are prepared to test the law.

Violence has continued in Kachin State, with specific reports centring on Hpakant region. On September 5th, an unarmed father of two was shot in the neck and left for dead by government troops while he was gathering jade stones at the Sharaw Hka mine, owned by the Shwe Inn Wa firm. Two days later, 20-year-old Saga La Awng was detained by soldiers from Infantry Battalion No. 51, put into a rice sack and thrown down a mine, it is presumed to his death, as he was returning from work. Such abuses echo the disappearance of Kachin woman, Sumlut Roi Ja, who was abducted by Burmese troops in October last year. This month, the Kachin Women's Association of Thailand sent an open letter to President Thein Sein demanding justice for Sumlut Roi Ja, but have yet to receive a reply.

At the end of the month more than 200 locals from Tedim, northern Chin State, held a protest in front of the town's Chin National Front (CNF) liaison office to demand its closure. Local people claim that the CNF has also extorted money from and killed people and that the CNF is generally unrepresentative of local people. Protestors used the opening ceremony of the office to shout "We do not want the CNF in our area" and "We want only President Thein Sein's governance" while marching down the main road of Tedim. Protesters have submitted objections to the local authorities since February, but the opening of the office went ahead as planned.

Nineteen Karen political prisoners were among those released in September's amnesty. They are: U Myint Hlaing, Naw Tae Hei (a.k.a) Naw Kae Hei, Saw Aung Naing Oo (a.k.a) Saw Palee, Saw Chit Hla, Saw Hla Sein, Saw Kler Say Doh, Saw Khu Wah, Saw Ko Ko Aung, Saw Kyaw Htoo, Saw Lar Lah Htoo, Saw Lay Doh, Saw Lo, Saw Mae Doh, Saw Muh Ri Htoo, Saw Myo Myint, Saw Tun Naing Oo, Saw Yin Hla (a.k.a) Saw Aye Hla, Tin Oo (a.k.a) Soe Thee (a.k.a) Poe Thee and Win Hlaing. Most of the Karen prisoners had been charged under article 17/1 – the Unlawful Organisation Act – with their sentences ranging from two to 56-years in prison.

Civilians who have been working with the Shan State Army (SSA) "North" have been charged under Article 17-1, for associating with unlawful organisations. Despite a truce between P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand, e.mail: info@aappb.org, web: www.aappb.org

the government and 13 ethnic armed groups, a government official has claimed that the home and defence ministries still regard the groups as unlawful organisations and that “Anyone who is associated with them, therefore, is liable to [a] prison sentence [of] up to 3 years under Section 17-1”.

September 30th

[Rakhines and army attack a passenger bus on Maungdaw-Alay Than Kyaw highway \(KPN\)](#)

September 28th

[Family of Abducted Kachin Woman Wait for Answers \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Demonstrators Protest Against Thein Sein in New York \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 27th

[Kachin Displaced Return after Religious Intervention \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Army constructs three army camps at Maungdaw south \(KPN\)](#)

[Army daily commits robbery in Maungdaw \(KPN\)](#)

[Kachin groups invite Suu Kyi to visit camps for displaced \(DVB\)](#)

September 26th

[Chin Protesters Demand Closure of CNF Liaison Office \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 25th

[Peace Day protesters prepared to test the law \(Karen News\)](#)

[Burma Should Embrace Minorities, Says Turkey \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 24th

[Burmese peace march organizers to be charged \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Accused KIO member Brawng Shawng faces hostile court \(Kachin News\)](#)

[13 Peace Activists Charged in Burma \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 22nd

[19 Karen political prisoners released \(Karen News\)](#)

September 21st

[Peace Day Protest Goes Ahead in Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Peace Protesters Banned from Leaving Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 14th

[Forced labour flourishes in post-conflict Arakan state \(DVB\)](#)

[Girl Killed in Crossfire between Govt Troops \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 12th

[To home, defense \[sic\], ceasefire groups are still “unlawful organizations” \(EPL\)](#)

September 11th

[Chin Activists In London To Highlight Violations Of Religious Freedom \(Asian Tribute\)](#)

[FBR: Despite ‘peacetalks’ armed conflict, forced labour continue in Karen State \(Karen News\)](#)

September 10th

[Kachin man feared dead after Burma army throws him in mine pit \(Kachin News\)](#)

September 6th

[Burmese troops kill unarmed Kachin civilian in Hpakant jade mine \(Kachin News\)](#)

September 5th

[Christians face systematic discrimination in Chin state \(DVB\)](#)

Monks

Burmese monks are using boycott as a way to try and force Burmese security authorities to apologize for the violent crack-down on the protests five years ago and to release monks still

behind bars. The boycott is a form of excommunication where monasteries refuse to accept alms from those who committed offences. The boycott is a way to show their commitment to monks still behind bars and to mark the anniversary of the protests. Ceremonies were held in Rangoon and Mandalay.

September 27th

[Monks Mark Uprising with Ceremonies, Protests \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

Journalists, Bloggers and Writers (media activists)

Despite a government announcement that more than 2,000 names were removed from the country's blacklist, journalists and academics are still unable to secure Burmese visas. Bertil Lintner, who has written several books about the country and has been on the blacklist since the 1980s, has yet to be given a visa despite his name being removed from the black list on August 28. "I've applied three times and I've sent them emails every day," said Lintner.

Burmese exiles who fled Burma nearly 25 years ago, escaping from Rangoon after dodging gunfire or imprisonment by the military junta, and who now work as journalists, heads of NGOs or budding politicians are wary of government promises. For instance, Toe Zaw Latt, head of operations for the Chiang Mai office of Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), was quick to point out their inconsistencies. "We have opened an office in Rangoon with 36 'semi-legal' reporters," he says. "We are in the process of being fully legalised, but still waiting for censorship to be really abolished. The authorities are dragging their feet, making vague promises." Furthermore, Aung Zaw, 44, one of the best known Burmese journalists in exile, who launched Irrawaddy, a fortnightly magazine that has now been replaced by a website of the same name, commented that the regime's many promises, not always honoured. "We plan to open a small office in Rangoon, but [...] it is still early days for the democratic transition," he says.

The Democratic Voice of Burma's reporter that was sued by Magwe Region's Department of Education last month was granted bail after paying a 10 million kyat (US\$11,494) bond and will appear in court next week for a hearing. DVB's Zaw Pe, along with his friend Win Myint Hlaing, were sued by the Department of Education after allegedly disturbing a civil servant on duty and trespassing on government property on 24 August. The reporter contends that he was trying to interview officials for a story he was working on concerning a scholarship programme set up by a Japanese foundation. "Since we don't know much about the legal process, we requested to move the hearing to September 11. As a parent of a student, I was inquiring about the scholarship but I didn't get an answer but instead got sued," said Win Myint Hlaing.

September 24th

[Gov't prevents journalists, academics from entering Burma \(DVB\)](#)

September 21th

[Burmese Court Accepts Govt Suit against Journal \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 18th

[Myanmar reforms press council after criticism \(AP\)](#)

September 11th

[Burma's exiles play a waiting game \(The Guardian\)](#)

September 10th

['The Voice' verdict postponed two weeks \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

September 5th

[DVB reporter posts bail; hearing scheduled for next week \(DVB\)](#)

Women

Phyu Phyu Win, a female political activist, sentenced to 28 years imprisonment under section 17/2, was released from Taungoo prison on September 17, 2012, under the presidential order. In Burma's recent cabinet reshuffle, Myat Myat Ohn Khin became the first woman Union minister in more than 60 years. Myat Myat Ohn Khin was promoted to Union Health minister from deputy minister on Aug. 4. According to a Parliament report released in 2012, Burma ranks 134 out of 143 countries in participation of women in parliament. On the other hand, women activists in Burma urban and rural regions, who have exercised for their civil rights and political rights, have been restricted, constantly assaulted, harassed and intimidated by the police force and authorities. Around 200 women in Sittwe Township, Arakan state, were restricted for demonstrating on September 30th, 2012. They were told by the authorities that their application was denied for the reason of the curfew, section 144.¹

In addition, thirteen peace activists, in Burma have been charged by police and they could face jail time for leading marches to mark the UN's International Peace Day without official permission. Among the protesters were at least three women, May Sapae Phyu, Khin Sandar Nyunt, and Phway Yu Mon. The protest leaders have been charged under Article 18 of of the Assembly and Procession bylaw for staging a public gathering without official permission. Nine of the 13 were involved in Friday's peaceful demonstration in Rangoon where up to 500 people marched from the City Hall to Inya Lake to protest the ongoing civil conflicts in Kachin State and other ethnic areas. **See section Ethnic Nationalities.**

Furthermore, nine protesters were arrested during a prayer service to highlight land confiscations at the Latpadaung mountain range copper mining project were released by Monywa Police on Tuesday, September 11, 2012, with only three female activists now remaining in custody. "They released five of them yesterday night and another four of them later at midnight," a local activist told *The Irrawaddy* on Tuesday. "All of them are now backing in Sarlingyi. Ma Thwe Thwe Win, Ma Aye Nat and Ma Phyu Phyu Win remained and have been moved to Monywa Prison." Those released expressed concern for their remaining colleagues who they claim were mistreated and assaulted by police during detention.

Three released women activists, Ma Thwe Thwe Win, Ma Aye Nat and Ma Phyu Phyu Win who were detained due to their leading roles in a protest against the Latpadaun Mountain copper mining project, plan to sue the director of Monywa Township. During their detention, they were assaulted and treated in a degrading manner, and they now plan to talk to organizations that have experience with cases like it, according to Ma Thwe Thwe Win, who was released on bail with two women activists on September 14th, 2012. "The township director ordered the police to drag me out of the police station. They dragged me from the custody upstairs. While I was dragged from the stairs, my longyi came untied and fell off in front of more than 500 policemen including the township director. I felt humiliated and displeased with the situation. For that reason, I will surely sue the township director," stated Ma Thwe Thwe Win, one of the leaders of the protest. The three women were released with another activist Ko Wai Lu after demonstrators and one of the 88 generation leaders, Ko Kyaw Min Yu negotiated with local authorities for their release. ²

¹ RFA, translated from Burmese by AAPP

² September 13 VOA & September 10 RFA, Translated from Burmese by AAPP,

More than one thousand protesters from the Korean-owned factory, SMK, or Myue & Sue clothing factory protested last Friday (September 7th) in order to raise their base salaries. Consequently, six representatives of the protesters including a woman representative Ma Aye Aye Myo have been indicted under the section 18 for protesting without permission. The six representatives were questioned at the Hlaingthaya and Mayangone township police station in the evening of September 9, 2012, according to Ma Myo Myo Aye.

Women in Burma, who have attempted to exercise their civil rights, still face mistreatment and degradation. Ma Aye Nat, another of the released woman activists from the copper mine project protest, stated: "We simply paid homage to the lord Buddha; however, we were arrested by the township director for a crime we didn't commit. During detention, my hair was harshly pulled by the township director, my arms were twisted, they pushed us on the ground and we were also assaulted. When the policewomen attacked us, our clothes, and longyi came untied. When I asked them permission to tie my longyi, my request was denied." Ma Aye Nat added that: "We are young Burmese women and our dignity is more important than being alive. I feel so miserable as I was not even allowed to retie my longyi. I cannot shake off the feeling of humiliation. People talk about democracy, but I was not even permitted to retie my longyi that fell off."

September 24th

[13 Peace Activists Charged in Burma \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 14th

[Mine activists free on bail \(RFA\)](#)

[Last Four Copper Mine Activists Released \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 13th

[Freed copper mine protesters assaulted by police \(DVB\)](#)

[Bronze project protest continue \(BBC UK\)](#)

[Copper mine protest earns nationwide support \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 11th

[Hundreds Want Activists Released \(RFA\)](#)

[Nine Copper Mine Protesters Released \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 10th

[Burma has first woman cabinet member in over 60 years \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Dozen Mine Protesters Arrested \(RFA\)](#)

[Copper Mining Tensions Rise as Dozen Detained \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network

A campaign calling for the release of U Myint Aye, the co-founder of HRDP, has been initiated by the network. Signatures have been collected from all across the country and so far approximately 8,000 signatures have been collected. The group is aiming to get as many as 50,000. **See also Update Individual Activists.**

Labour Activists

After many years in exile Maung Maung the general secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) returned to Burma on September 4th as his name was among those removed from the infamous blacklist. Having the intention to develop unions in Burma, Maung Maung met with Labor Minister Maung Myint on Friday September 7th to discuss the worker situation.

Seventeen workers from a restive gold mining region in Mandalay's Yamethin Township have been charged following an altercation earlier this month with security staff from Myanmar National Prosperity Public Company. Ko Yae Yet Htun and 16 other miners operating independently in the Moehti Moemi were formally notified of the charges on September 4 and met police on September 6 and 14. On September 17 they lodged an application to the township police station to protest on September 24 and 25 over working conditions and the company's treatment of miners in the area. However, Myanmar National Prosperity spokesperson Daw Na Di Lwin told the Myanmar Times that the company charged the 17 workers because they had tried to incite other workers and made them "obstreperous". **See also section Women**

September 10th

[Labour minister meets FTUB leader Maung Maung \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Garment workers protest in Yangon outskirts \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

Students

There is no relevant news to report for the month of September.

Lawyers

The government of Burmese now has a rule of law committee. However, chairman of the Labor Solidarity Group U Zaw Nyunt commented that "there has been progress in the administrative sector and significant progress in the legislative sector. But I think, of the three pillars, we've seen little improvement in the judicial sector."

Several leading lawyers have called on the government to review the cases of all lawyers that have been banned from practicing since 1988. Advocate U Robert San Aung, whose license was revoked in 1993, said about 500 lawyers had been banned from working, mostly for political reasons, over the past 24 years. He said returning their licenses would provide a significant boost to the capacity of the judicial sector.

In the meantime, the attorney of political defendants, Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min, who was sentenced to 6 months under the contempt of court in August is still detained in prison. In a report to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011, the Special Rapporteur Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana, also raised the "problem of the arbitrary revocation of licenses of lawyers who defend prisoners of conscience". "The special rapporteur Mr. Quintana urges the government to reconsider these revocations and to guarantee the effect right to counsel and to allow lawyers to practice their profession freely."

September 10th

[Return licences, lawyers urge govt \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

Individual Activists

Activists planning to hold demonstrations in several cities across the country on Friday to mark International Peace Day were denied permission. Nearly 250 protesters heading to Naypyidaw for a demonstration against the Kachin State conflict in northernmost Burma were prevented from leaving Rangoon early on Friday morning, September 21, 2012. The activists then instead organized peace rallies in Rangoon and several other towns. They have now been charged for protesting without a permit. Generation Wave's Moe Thway said about 15 activists from

different civil society groups who led the rallies on 21 September calling for an end to the war in Kachin state were charged. **See Section Women and Ethnic Nationalities.**

Performance artist Sue Myint Thein was briefly detained after walking around Mandalay wrapped in blue duct tape ahead of International Peace Day. Sue Myint Thein, who runs Ahlin Dagar (“Door of Light”) painting and sculpture school in Mandalay, walked for two hours to raise awareness on ethnic conflicts. He was released around 1pm in the afternoon.

Farmers began airing their disquiet about land confiscations at protests near the Wan Bao Company office beginning on July 2 this year. Since then, more local villagers have joined the farmers’ protests. Ko Wai Lu, a former political prisoner involved with the protests was apprehended by police on Aug. 31 while traveling back to his home in Rangoon. Wai Lu has been charged under Burma’s Religious Offenses Act. “Family members were told by officers from Myinmu police station that he will be charged under Penal Code 295 and 295(a) for religious offenses,” according to Thwe Thwe Win, a local activist in Sagaing Division. Wai Lu’s family and friends are increasingly worried because they have not had a chance to meet him since his arrest and don’t know where he is being held.

Police stormed a copper mining site in north western Burma on Thursday in search of land rights activists who helped organize protests by 10,000 villagers. The police arrived at the Monywa mine, located in Sagaing division’s Sarlingyi Township, around 11 p.m. but were held off by hundreds of demonstrators armed with sticks and knives who were guarding the area, according to an article on the *Radio Free Asia (RFA)* website. “They came in to arrest Ko Han Win Aung, Ko Aung Soe, Ko Thaug Hteik, and Ko Zaw Tin, but they haven't gotten them yet,” according to Aye Thinn, a member of the group.

Protesters at Monywa’s Letpadaung mountain range later have been joined by activists from Rangoon and Mandalay plus members of the 88 Generation Students group in their bid to halt copper mining in the area. On Tuesday, 20 students from Mandalay City joined a march of around 1,500 people to demand the release of three female activists. As a result of the farmers' demand, four activists Ma Thwe Thwe Win, Ma Phyu Phyu Win, Ma Aye Net, and Ko Wai Lu were finally freed on bail Friday, on September 14, 2012, after demonstrators and some 88 generation student leaders negotiated with local authorities for their release. Some 3,000 people came to Monywa city near the mine on Friday to welcome the release of the three women activists. **See also Section Women**

September 24th

[Police to charge peace activists following Friday’s rallies \(DVB\)](#)

September 21th

[Peace Day Protest Goes Ahead in Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Peace Protesters Banned from Leaving Rangoon \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 20th

[Performance artist detained in Mandalay \(DVB\)](#)

September 14th

[Mine Activists Freed on Bail \(RFA\)](#)

September 13th

[Copper Mine Protest Earns Nationwide Support \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 12th

[Freed copper mine protesters assaulted by police \(DVB\)](#)

September 11th

[Nine Copper Mine Protesters Released \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 10th

[Dozen Mine Protesters Arrested \(RFA\)](#)

[Copper Mining Tensions Rise as Dozen Detained \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 7th

[Police search for mine demonstration leaders \(Mizzima\)](#)

September 6th

[Land Rights Activist Charged for 'Religious Offenses' \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 1st

[Exiled Activist Returns to Burma \(VOA News\)](#)

88 Generation Students Group

Min Ko Naing decided to cancel a trip to the US to receive an award from the National Endowment for Democracy in an act of solidarity towards his fellow human rights activists that are being denied passports. While he expressed great appreciation for the award that celebrates his major importance to the democracy movement, Min Ko Naing said that as a principle he could not travel alone when his colleagues are denied the right.

September 17th

[I Want to Hear Bells not Guns, Says Min Ko Naing \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 16th

[Prominent Burmese Activist Cancels Trip to US \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 3rd

[Ex-political prisoners quench thirst for writing \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

In September Aung San Suu Kyi visited the United States where she is scheduled to visit the UN, a large Burmese community in Indiana, and the US Congress to receive the Congressional Gold Medal. The long awaited trip to the US was her first since her release from house arrest. During the 17 day stay she met with both President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton along with a lot of other people around the country.

Before her departure Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, put pen to paper on a petition for the release of political prisoners and called for the release of all remaining political prisoners. She signed the petition (courtesy of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters) during her trip to Bassein in the Irrawaddy division in the beginning of September.

In an interview with Voice of America she brought up the subject again. Urging human-rights activists to work to end the plight of political prisoners, the opposition leader told members of the Amnesty International rights group and other supporters in Washington that hatred and fear often prompt officials to detain individuals with different viewpoints.

September 26th

[U.S. Eases Import Ban on Burma \(RFA\)](#)

[Suu Kyi is midway through US tour \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Suu Kyi Tells US Exiles to Look Back to Burma \(AP, published in Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 24th

[UN Has Great Expectations from Suu Kyi, Says Ban \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 21th

[Burma Must Work Together to Prosper: Suu Kyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Suu Kyi addresses Pussy Riot, Burmese Army in DC \(AFP, published in DVB\)](#)

September 20th

[Aung San Suu Kyi Seeks Support for Political Prisoners \(VOA\)](#)

September 19th

[Aung San Suu Kyi Talks Burma Reforms With VOA \(VOA\)](#)

[Myanmar's Suu Kyi gets Congress' highest honor \(Huffington Post\)](#)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand, e.mail: info@aappb.org, web: www.aappb.org

September 18th

[Myanmar's Suu Kyi begins US visit, says she supports easing of remaining sanctions \(Washington Post\)](#)

September 17th

[Aung San Suu Kyi Visit Indicates Progress in US-Burma Relationship \(VOA\)](#)

[Suu Kyi Begins First US Visit for Two Decades \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Myanmar's Suu Kyi departs on landmark US visit \(AFP\)](#)

September 15th

[Daw Aung San Suu Kyi signed a signature campaign for the release of political prisoners \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

September 10th

[Suu Kyi to receive top US honour \(Sky News\)](#)

September 6th

[Suu Kyi to speak at Yale University \(Mizzima\)](#)

September 18th

[Myanmar's Suu Kyi begins US visit, says she supports easing of remaining sanctions \(Washington Post\)](#)

Key International Developments

Only a week after Aung San Suu Kyi's arrival in the US President Thein Sein embarked on the first American trip by a Burmese leader in almost half a century to speak at the UN General Assembly. The further lifting of sanctions were one of the main intents with the trip which to some extent was successful as the US treasury lifted sanctions restricting business connections lower house of Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann as well as the president himself. During President Thein Sein's visit the US also announced that the current ban on imports from Burma will be eased. There remains a caution among the US administration though; US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also voiced concern over the remaining political prisoners, ethnic violence and military contacts that persist between Myanmar and North Korea. She urged the government and the opposition to work together to carry reforms forward. "That is also key to guard against backsliding, because there are forces that would take the country in the wrong direction if given the chance," Clinton said, referring to conservative elements in the military who oppose the political changes. The EU also took further steps to reward Burma for the recent developments proposing a lift on trade barriers. The US Campaign for Burma (USCB) expressed disappointment and concern in regards to the removal of sanctions arguing that the government continues to be undermined by the Burmese military who continue to violate the terms of ethnic cease-fire agreements.

Prior to Thein Sein's departure to the US 514 prisoners were released under an amnesty including 88 political prisoners. **See also Prisoners Released.** Thomas Quintana, the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma, again called for the immediate and systematic liberation of all prisoners of conscience without conditions. "Bold steps are needed now to overcome the legacy of the past and to ensure that no prisoners of conscience are left behind," Mr. Quintana said. To meet these demands he pointed out the necessity of the Government to work in collaboration with civil organizations to establish the exact number of political prisoners still detained.

Many human rights organizations voiced great concerns over the situation for political prisoners in Burma. Human Rights Watch issued a statement calling for the immediate release of all political prisoners "The Burmese government is dragging its feet rather than fulfilling its promises to release all political prisoners," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director. "Donor countries promoting reform should actively press Burma to meet its human rights commitments by immediately freeing the remaining political prisoners and lifting all restrictions against them. The fact that only one fifth of the released prisoners were actually political prisoners shows that the insincerity of the Burmese government said Ko Bo Kyi, joint secretary of AAPP in a much published quote. Amnesty International also expressed concern about the conditional release of

Burmese political prisoners. “In past and recent amnesties some prisoners have been released on condition that they do not engage in political activities.” Amnesty International said in an official statement.

September 28th

[Thein Sein lauds Suu Kyi, addresses Kachin conflict \(DVB\)](#)

[Myanmar can count on UN support to face challenges ahead, says envoy \(UN News\)](#)

[US Burmese group opposes lifting of sanctions \(Mizzima\)](#)

September 27th

[Final push on political prisoners needed \(IRIN\)](#)

[Rights Groups Cautious About Easing Burma Sanctions \(VOA\)](#)

[Myanmar’s democratic transition needs continued support, patience, President tells UN \(UN News Centre\)](#)

[Thein Sein: Burma Experiencing “Amazing” Changes \(VOA\)](#)

[Arbitrary Arrests in Burma: a tool to repress critical voices. \(AAPP\)](#)

September 26th

[U.S. Says it Will Ease Myanmar Import Ban \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

September 24th

[US Trip to Target Sanctions \(RFA\)](#)

[Thein Sein heads to US for landmark visit \(DVB\)](#)

September 20th

[“None should be left behind” – UN expert welcomes latest release of prisoners of conscience in Myanmar \(UNHCR\)](#)

September 19th

[U.S. Treasury Lifts Sanctions On Top Myanmar Officials \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

[Thein Sein using political prisoners as “pawns” \(DVB\)](#)

September 18th

[EU plans to lift trade barriers for Burma exports \(BBC\)](#)

[Activists say limited prisoner releases show Myanmar is insincere on its much-lauded reforms](#)

[Myanmar is called insincere on political prisoners \(Huffington Post\)](#)

September 17th

[European Commission : proposes to reinstate trade preferences to Myanmar/Burma \(EU\)](#)

[Burma: Former Political Prisoners Persecuted \(HRW\)](#)

September 16th

[BBC World Service seeks permanent office in Myanmar \(the Nation\)](#)

September 10th

[Skydiver to raise funds for Burmese political prisoners \(Mizzima\)](#)

September 4th

[Canada establishes trade links with Myanmar \(Vancouver Sun\)](#)

Conclusion

Small scale releases of prisoners, while always welcome, are not a significant development in Burma, in contrast to what Thein Sein stated in his speech before the UN General Assembly in September. Instead, prisoner releases are an old tool used to curry favour - for decades successive governments of Burma have released political prisoners in small doses as a way to extract concessions or ease pressure from the international community. The release in September is no different. As we have seen before in Burma, the September release was timed to coincide with President Thein Sein’s trip to the UN General Assembly. This is a trend: since 2007 about half of the prisoner releases ordered by the government of Burma have been strategically timed to coincide with an UN or ASEAN event. For example, the January 2007 prisoner release was made one week before the UN Security Council vote on Burma, prompting the UN Secretary General to urge the government of Burma to go beyond this first step and free all political prisoners in Burma.

The government has not taken any concrete steps with an intended aim of emptying Burma’s prisons of all political prisoners, despite continued excitement over the perceived political opening

in Burma. Prisons and detention centers remain completely off limits to international monitors, making it impossible to know the true scale of those detained for their political/humanitarian activities or beliefs. AAPP supports calls made by UN Special Rapporteur Quintana urging the government to actively work with civil society organizations to determine the number of political prisoners left behind in a concerted effort to ultimately secure their unconditional release.

Equally important to releasing all political prisoners in Burma is to create an environment that prevents new political prisoners from restocking the prisons. The month of September showed that no progress has been made on this front. Although legislation has been passed legalizing public demonstrations, state authorities continue to trample civil liberties by detaining peaceful protestors and arbitrarily denying those who submit lawful requests to protest. AAPP has found that since January 2012, the government of Burma has arrested over 200 activists and dissidents, with less than 60 facing formal court charges.

The September release heralds neither reform nor change, merely marking yet another insufficient prisoner release designed to simultaneously keep dissenters on a short leash and placate the international community. The perceived opening in Burma heightens the urgency with which the political prisoner situation must be resolved so that no one is left behind. This is the time to maintain, not decrease, pressure on the government to open its prison doors wider to release all political prisoners.