



**Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)**

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

## **Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for December 2010**

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### Monthly Chronology December, 2010

#### Summary of current situation

There are a total of **2189** political prisoners in Burma, a decrease in comparison to last month's figure of **2203**. In December, **16** political prisoners were released.

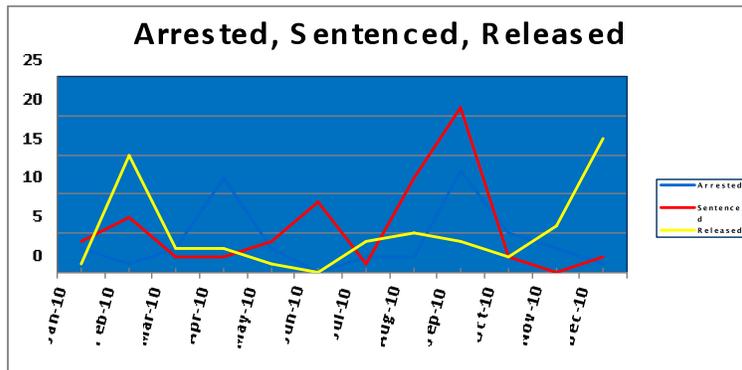
**The total number of political prisoners is 2189**

<b>These prisoners include:</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
<b>Monks</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Members of Parliament</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Students</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>NLD members</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Ethnic nationalities</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Cyclone Nargis volunteers</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Media activists</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Lawyers</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Labor activists</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>88 Generation Students</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Doctors</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Individual activists</b>	<b>607</b>
<b>In poor health</b>	<b>142</b>

Since the protests in September 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of 1159 activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

## Monthly Trend Analysis

During the month of December at least **1** political prisoner was transferred, and **16** political prisoners were released. The arrests of **5 people** in December for protesting were reported in the media. These arrests were not included in the overall figures this month, as they remain unconfirmed at the time of reporting.



December brought the continued mistreatment of numerous political prisoners across Burma, with at least **142** in poor health due to the harsh prison conditions, transfers to remote prisons where there are no doctors, and the denial of proper medical care.

One case in particular further highlighted the toll these conditions take on political prisoners and the devastating consequences. Buddhist monk, U Naymeinda, passed away on 8 December. He was the 146th political prisoner to die in prison in Burma, since 1988, due to malnutrition, maltreatment and inadequate medical care. U Naymeinda was tortured during interrogation and later transferred to Moulmein Prison in Mon State where his health deteriorated. He developed serious mouth ulcers, preventing him from eating and drinking. He also suffered from a skin disease but requests for medical treatment were ignored by authorities. His body was cremated on 9 December 2010.

Furthermore, labor union member, Naing Lin, was transferred from Insein prison to Kale prison in Sagaing Division, 680 Miles from his home. He suffers from Leukemia and requires a monthly blood transfusion; yet there are no doctors in Kale prison. Without monthly blood transfusions he could die.

Of particular note this month, was the release of 16 political prisoners. Although this was clearly a positive development it must be noted that each of these individuals had served their full sentence and were not granted freedom under an amnesty. One individual had already served an additional 4 months on her initial prison term.

## **Treatment of prisoners and their families**

A number of prisoners in Cell block 4 in Insein prison are suffering serious health problems including tuberculosis and malnutrition related diseases, according to Ma Soe Soe, the sister of one of the detained. The prisoners do not receive adequate healthcare from the authorities and restricted family visits go further to limit their access to medical supplies and nutritious food. As a result, their health condition has deteriorated and some of them are suffering from tuberculosis and a beriberi (a potentially fatal disease which affects the nervous system, associated with a deficiency in thiamine). Beriberi is usually found in countries suffering from famine and is clear evidence of insufficient diet. Only three of the sick prisoners have been identified. They are NLD members, Bodaw aka U Khin Win and Ko Aung Myo San aka Sarkalay and student activist, Ko Maung Maung Myint.

## **Prisoners Released**

December brought the release of 16 political prisoners who had served their full sentence. Those released were Buddhist monk U Sandima, Kyaw Kyaw San, Chit Khin, Myint Swe, Thein Win, Han Sein, Htay Aung, San Baw, Soe Ohn, Tun Myint, Maung Maung Than, Robert San Aung and three members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), Kyaw Kyaw, Lwin Ko Latt and Han Win Aung.

Other than the three ABFSU members, the rest of the released were arrested in 2008 for protesting against the junta and demanding the release of pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who at the time was under house arrest. They were sentenced to two years and six months for violating a ban on public gatherings of more than five people.

Female political prisoner Thin July Kyaw was released a few days later on 20 December, 4 months after her 2 year and 6 month prison term had ended.

17 November, 2010

[16 political prisoners released \(Mizzima\)](#)

## **National League for Democracy**

There are at least 399 members of the National League for Democracy party currently in prison. On 4 December the wife of Ye Htut Khaung visited her detained husband at Insein prison only to be threatened by the prison superintendent who stated that if she attempted to provide the media with “false

information” and in doing so hurt their reputation she would be sued. Ye Htut Khaung is currently serving a three year sentence for his involvement in the Tuesday prayer group.

Ko Shwe Maung who was attacked by guards in Pyapon prison last month has learnt that his eyes will never fully recover from the assault. The guards threw powder into his eyes which caused him excruciating pain; they became swollen and bruised and both his corneas were, as a result of delayed treatment, permanently damaged. Ko Shwe Maung was only granted permission to see the prison doctor the morning after the attack, who swiftly transferred him to an eye specialist at Pyapon General Hospital stating that “it was already a little late for the treatment he needed”. Prior to the attack he was frequently woken by guards during the night and disturbed during meditation sessions.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has reportedly ruled out suggestions from NLD youth members to replace elderly leaders with younger members, stating, “We are not going to ask our older leaders to leave because they want to serve as long as they have strength to serve the party and I think that is a good thing to be encouraged.”

18 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi Rules Out Replacing NLD Leadership \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **88 Generation Students**

There are at least 39 members of the 88 Generation Student group currently detained. On a family visit in early December Htay Kywe, a leading member of the 88 Generation Students group, told his brother-in-law, Phyo Min Thein, that he was concerned that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi could face another attack similar to the one in Depayin in May 2003 where armed thugs recruited by the pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association ambushed Daw Suu’s convoy in Depayin, Sagaing Division, in an attempt to assassinate her. An estimated 100 people were killed. Htay Kywe also highlighted his unwavering support for Daw Suu, as the leader of Burma's pro-democracy movement. He went further to say “all political forces need to cooperate under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi to achieve national reconciliation.” In relation to political prisoners he stressed that he wanted the regime to move political prisoners closer to their families. Phyo Min Thein reported that Htay Kywe, looking thinner than he had in the past, was suffering from a stomach ailment.

Min Ko Naing, is reportedly suffering pain due to cold temperatures in Kengtung, where he is serving a 65-year prison sentence in a remote township in eastern Shan State, which is one of the coldest places in the country at this time of year. Suffering from osteoporosis, made worse by poor diet and lack of exercise, he is experiencing pains in his arms, hands and legs.

Min Ko Naing's sister Kyi Kyi Nyunt said, "It is like living in a freezer there and he can't do much physical exercise to warm himself up, so his legs and hands are painful." Kept in solitary confinement, Min Ko Naing faces severe restrictions on his rights to exercise. He is only allowed out of his cell to wash and he is able to walk around then for about 20 minutes. Furthermore, Min Ko Naing is only able to meet with family members once every three months.

17 December, 2010

[Min Ko Naing in Poor Health as Temperatures Drop \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

4 December, 2010

[Imprisoned Student Leader Warns of Second Depayin \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Ethnic Nationalities**

There are at least 225 ethnic nationalities held in prison. Talks between ethnic leaders and the NLD regarding the establishment of a second Panglong Convention to reinstate the aims of the original, proposed by Aung San Suu Kyi's father, Aung San, in 1947, were met with negative remarks by the regime. Burma's state run media warned that such actions went against the regimes seven-step political road map and would "bring more harm than good." The article stated "without the Tatmadaw [armed forces], a conference like the Panglong Conference will be manipulated by organizations that oppose the government and its seven-step political road map, even if it is carried out with good will." Ethnic leaders, however, insist that they do not intend to exclude the military from the process.

A Rohingya leader recently reported that two Maungdaw district police officers had been arbitrarily arresting and torturing Rohingyas on charges of drug trafficking, and releasing them only after they paid a bribe. The two police officers have been identified as Assistant Sub Inspector Aung Khin Than and Corporal Maung Chay, who have close relationships with the district police chief.

16 December, 2010

[Arbitrary arrests increase in Maungdaw \(BNI\)](#)

8 December, 2010

[Second Panglong Would Do 'More Harm than Good': State Media](#)

## **Monks**

There are at least 255 monks currently held in prison. Buddhist monk and political prisoner, U Naymeinda, from Thanatpin, Pegu Division passed away on 8 December. U Naymeinda, aka Myo Min or Nay Win was 50 years old and

became a Buddhist monk 30 years ago. He was originally arrested for distributing leaflets urging a pro-democracy uprising on September 9, 1999.

U Naymeinda was charged under section 17/1 of the Unlawful Associations Act and 5(j) of the Emergency Provisions Act in late 1999. He was sentenced to a 20-year prison term and was detained at Insein Prison in Rangoon and then transferred to Moulmein Prison in Mon State in 2000, where his health began to deteriorate. He developed serious mouth ulcers and could no longer eat or drink, though he received no treatment for this. He also had a skin disease but the prison authorities did not provide adequate health care for this either. Reports also suggest that he had been on hunger strike at some point in the lead up to his death. According to the monk's donor, his family had difficulties getting to the prison to visit him.

He was forced to disrobe during interrogation but still lived as a monk in prison. Under interrogation he was tortured. Nyein Thit, a poet who was detained with U Naymeinda at Moulmein Prison for seven years, said that U Naymeinda had led the fight for prisoners' rights in the prison. His body was cremated on 9 December 2010.

U Gambira, who is currently serving a 63 year sentence for his leading role in the Saffron Revolution, is reportedly in bad health, last month news revealed that his health condition had begun to improve but AAPP has since discovered that his condition has again deteriorated; he is reportedly suffering from malaria but the authorities at Kale prison do not have sufficient medicine to treat him.

13 December, 2010

[Myanmar: UN expert urges Government to release over 2,200 remaining prisoners of conscience \(UN\)](#)

[BURMA: Death of a prisoner from a curable disease is due to neglect by prison authorities \(Asia Human Right Commission\)](#)

## **Cyclone Nargis Volunteers**

There are at least 20 Cyclone Nargis volunteers held in prison. Since a new rule was introduced earlier this year permitting only immediate family visits, Zarganar, who is currently detained for his efforts to distribute aid following Cyclone Nargis and criticizing the government's slow response to the crisis in foreign media, has had no family visits for over seven months. His wife and children are re-settled in the US and as his sister-in-law is not deemed immediate family, and has therefore been denied visitation rights. His family has since written letters to General Maung Oo, the Minister of Home Affairs and the Correctional Department Office requesting that extended family are granted visitation rights.

## **Journalists, Bloggers and Writers**

There are currently at least 42 media activists held in prison. According to figures released by a New York-based press safety watchdog Burma is the world's fourth-highest jailer of media workers, following China, Iran and Eritrea. Just days later Burma's censors were ordered to block publications of interviews with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, according to editors of local journals and officials from the regime's censorship board.

Sithu Zeya, who was arrested in April 2010 for taking photos at the scene of the water festival bombing in Rangoon, was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for illegally crossing the border and association with an unlawful organization. However, reports suggest that further charges could be added relating to the Electronics Act. His father, Zeya, who also took photos of the bombings, is yet to be sentenced. Sithu Zeya's legal advisor, Aung Thein, stated that none of the accusations were supported by strong evidence. "The verdict was based on informal confession resulting from torturing the accused under interrogation," said Aung Thein.

22 December, 2010

[DVB reporter gets 8 year jail term \(DVB\)](#)

17 December, 2010

[Local Media Barred from Publishing Suu Kyi Interviews \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

9 December, 2010

[Burma 'fourth biggest jail' for journalists \(DVB\)](#)

[Sharp Rise in Jailed Journalists, Including Burma \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Women**

There are at least 174 women currently detained. A recent family visit revealed that Nilar Thein, who is currently serving a 65-year prison sentence for her efforts to bring democracy to Burma, went on hunger strike on 2 December. Her actions were in response to the authorities censoring a personal letter she had written to her family by removing the first page of the letter, insufficient food provided to female prisoners and to encourage the regime to grant her request to be placed in the same prison as her husband.

Her sister-in-law, Thandar Yu, went to Thayet prison to visit her on 6 December, bringing along Nilar Thein's 3 year old daughter, Nay Kyi Min Yu. However, authorities would not permit the family to see her because she was on hunger strike and highlighted that she would be banned from such entitlements for two weeks as a result of her actions.

Thandar Yu asked that Nilar Thein be allowed to see her daughter as they had traveled 340 miles to the prison, even if only for 5 minutes, but they were denied any visit. Nilar Thein is currently suffering from eye problems and she has a problem with her female reproductive organs but the family does not know exactly what it is. They are worried it might be cancer of the cervix or uterus. She urgently needs a check up but has, so far, not been allowed one

On 10 December the authorities agreed to Nilar Thein's first two requests and she ended her strike. Furthermore, her family was allowed to visit her on 17 December.

9 December

[Hunger Striker Nilar Thein Barred from Seeing Daughter \(DVB\)](#)

## **Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network**

There are at least 31 Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network currently detained. There is no news to announce in December.

## **Labor Activists**

There are at least 44 labor activists currently detained. Labor union activist, Naing Lin, has reportedly been transferred from Insein prison to Kale prison in Sagaing Division, 680 Miles from his home. He suffers from Leukemia and requires a monthly blood transfusion; yet there are no doctors in Kale prison. Without monthly blood transfusions he could die. This has caused his family huge concerns since they will not be able to afford the cost of frequent visits. Naing Lin is just 30 years old and serving an 8 year sentence for attending a political training course in Mae Sot, Thailand, he has been incarcerated since January 2010. Reports from a recently released political prisoner, who was in the same prison as him, indicate that he has received at least one blood transfusion, since being transferred.

## **Students**

There are at least 283 students held in prison. There is no news to announce in December.

## **Lawyers**

There are at least 11 lawyers detained in prison. On 17 December, Robert San Aung was released from detention after serving a 2 year and 6 month sentence for

his part in a demonstration outside the home of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The demonstration marked Daw Suu's 62nd Birthday and drew attention to the extension of her house arrest. Robert San Aung is a trained lawyer; he was barred from practicing law by the High Court in Burma in 1993 and served seven years in prison between 1997 and 2003 as a result of his political activities.

## **Individual Activists**

There are at least 607 individual activists detained in prison. Authorities in Rangoon arrested five shopkeepers, on 24 December, who protested at the opening ceremony of the city's new Thirimingalar Market, because they had not been allocated space to trade. The shopkeepers were among 3,000 who lost their premises when the old market in Kyeemyindine Township was moved to Thirimigalar, in Rangoon's Hlaing Township. Authorities had previously warned locals that anybody who complained could face a fine or a six month prison term.

Zaw Weik, a farmer, from Tagondai village had his land and property confiscated and destroyed by Rangoon authorities earlier in the year and now faces a possible jail term after being accused of trespassing, these accusation stem from him refusing to leave the land.

24 December 2010

[Market Protestors Arrested \(Irawaddy\)](#)

16 December, 2010

[Victim of land confiscation facing jail \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi**

On 28 December Daw Suu invited many young people to a conference at the NLD head office in Rangoon. She opened the event by saying "We are holding this meeting because the involvement of Burma's younger generations in the country's political, social and economic affairs is essential. I would like to know how young people think and what is uppermost in their minds regarding how the country should progress." Daw Suu answered over 50 questions and listened to suggestions on how the country should face reform.

Radio Free Asia has launched a weekly question and answer show with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi giving the people of Burma a rare opportunity to communicate with their democracy leader. In the early stages of the show and in response to one question she said; "There are many things that are not satisfactory about the present roadmap for democracy. We think that this should be discussed very, very thoroughly between all those who wish to really promote the process for democracy in Burma."

Since her release, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has received no response from the regime in relation to her calls for dialogue. Following her release she relayed a message to the regime stating that she held no personal grudge towards anybody and was prepared to talk with anyone. "We [Than Shwe and I] can talk about anything so let's just talk...let's speak directly. Everything starts with dialogue and exchange."

The ambassador of Belgium, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on 3 December, at her home and reiterated support for her fight for democracy and said that the European Union would back efforts to bring democracy to the country. The minister also called for the release of the country's more than 2,000 political prisoners. "I urge the Myanmar regime to ensure that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's recent release be a first step towards the unconditional release of all the other political prisoners."

On 19 December Daw Aung San Suu Kyi highlighted her concerns for the more than 2,000 political prisoners who still remain in detention inside Burma and notified the International Committee of the Red Cross of the increasing hardship they face. Although, the ICRC continues to provide assistance to families visiting political detainees the regime has not allowed ICRC staff to visit prisons in Burma, since 2005. Such visits are aimed at monitoring the treatment of detainees and their living conditions. Daw Suu's talks with the ICRC also focused on the possibility of raising funds to cover the high travel costs incurred by families when they visit their loved ones, especially in remote areas.

On 10 December Daw Suu met with 150 family members of current political prisoners who shared their concerns about the deteriorating health of their detained relatives and the distance of their incarceration. Daw Suu announced that the NLD would distribute copies of the Burmese Jail Manual so that they could better understand the rights of prisoners in Burma.

To mark Human Rights Day seven paintings created by Daw Suu, whilst she was under house arrest, went on sale to raise funds for NLD related social welfare activities. The paintings have been printed on postcards and portray various seasons and pink and red flowers. Daw Suu's signature appears on the reverse.

29 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi calls on Europe and Germany to be more supportive](#)

28 December, 2010

[Canada offers Suu Kyi honorary citizenship \(DVB\)](#)  
[Suu Kyi Listens to Burma's Youth \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

27 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi Pays Tribute to Her Mother \(DVB\)](#)

24 December 2010

[Suu Kyi and Russian diplomat hold talks \(DVB\)](#)

22 December, 2010

## [Next Year Crucial for Democracy Movement: Suu Kyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

21 December, 2010

[Red Alert on Political Prisoners \(RFA\)](#)

19 December, 2010

[Aung San Suu Kyi's tragic love and incredible life come to the big screen \(Guardian\)](#)

18 December, 2010

[Laura Bush Speaks by Phone to Suu Kyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

15 December, 2010

[Technology lets us peer inside the Burmese cage, but not unlock its door \(Guardian\)](#)

10 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi and US envoy talk sanctions \(DVB\)](#)

8 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi to Sell Postcards of Own Paintings for Social Work \(Irawaddy\)](#)

7 December, 2010

[Radio Free Asia Launches Weekly Q&A With Daw Aung San Suu Kyi \(RFA\)](#)

[3.9 Million Kyat Donation from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Distributed in Cyclone-Affected Area](#)

3 December, 2010

[Belgian ambassador meets Suu Kyi](#)

1 December, 2010

[Suu Kyi Calls for United Country in National Day Speech \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Key International Developments**

One month after the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi UN Special Rapporteur on Burma for Human Rights Tomás Ojea Quintana called on the regime to release all political prisoners, prior to forming the new government. “As Burma attempts to move forward in its democratic transition and the new government seeks to establish a new era of peace and prosperity for the people, it is critical that prisoners of conscience be released immediately and unconditionally. A release would be a very strong signal that the new Government of Myanmar intends to uphold these fundamental freedoms”. The Special Rapporteur also drew attention to the death of Buddhist monk U Naymeinda stating, “It is with much sadness that I learned of the death of yet another prisoner of conscience on 8 December.”

Michael Posner, US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy and Human Rights, visited AAPP on 18 December. AAPP staff showed him around the political prisoner museum and shared their prison experiences with him. There was discussion regarding the human rights situation in Burma, and political prisoners more specifically.

In December, the International Secretariat of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) released an urgent appeal in relation to the detention of leading 88 Generation members Min Ko Naing and Nilar Thein. They called for the international community to urge the regime to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of these prisoners; grant them access to a lawyer and doctor when necessary; immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners; and finally to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the country in accordance with national laws and international human rights standards.

Indonesia, which will be the Chair of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year, made it clear that it still sees Daw Suu as playing a central role in the solution of Burma's ongoing political problems. "In short, what we are going to suggest in the most constructive way, is that we need to see Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the authorities in Myanmar as being part of the solution to the situation in Myanmar." Foreign Affairs Minister Marty Natalegawa told a seminar on ASEAN policy at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Daw Suu has since expressed her appreciation for Indonesia's support during a telephone conversation with Mr Natalegawa. She also touched upon her hopes for the support to be upheld in the months to come.

22 December, 2010

[Aung San Suu Kyi Thanks Indonesia for Support \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

15 December, 2010

[Indonesia backs Aung San Suu Kyi's role in Myanmar political solution \(The Hindu\)](#)

14 December, 2010

[Release Political Prisoners, Says UN Rapporteur \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Myanmar: UN expert urges Government to release over 2,200 remaining prisoners of conscience](#)

## **Conclusion**

Harsh prison conditions, including the absence and denial of adequate medical care, inadequate food, torture and other mistreatment, cause and exacerbate the health problems of prisoners, leading to the tragic deaths of far too many of Burma's human rights defenders and democracy activists. AAPP has documented the deaths of 146 political activists, since 1988, during incarceration as a direct result of severe torture or from the denial of food and medical treatment. Many die needlessly from curable diseases such as diarrhea, tuberculosis or malaria. The case of Buddhist monk U Naymeinda, in December, is the most recent example of this.

Poor treatment of political detainees was a recurring problem throughout December, with many denied the medical care they urgently needed. During the winter season, the temperature drops considerably in northern and eastern parts of Burma. The cold temperatures worsen the deteriorating health of prisoners detained in these areas, such as Ko Min Ko Naing. If prison authorities continue

to transfer political detainees to remote prisons far away from their families, where the conditions are particularly harsh, and deny them adequate health care, then more are likely to die.

The regime's treatment of political prisoners is in direct contravention of international human rights law and standards, as well as its own prison standards, set out in the Jail Manual. International law protects prisoners against discrimination in receiving health care; all people have a right to the highest attainable standard of health. Prisoners do not forfeit all their rights upon incarceration, but only the right to liberty. The rights of detainees to health care are guaranteed in a wide range of international instruments including human rights treaties and United Nations standards and guidelines for the treatment of prisoners adopted by the UN General Assembly. Burma's human rights obligations require it to ensure that prisoners are treated humanely and with respect for their dignity. This includes ensuring that conditions of detention are not degrading, and that prisoners have adequate access to health care.

The regime must immediately grant all 142 political prisoners in ill health access to medical care, particularly those in a critical condition. They need to also provide substantial meals to all prisoners to prevent malnutrition and starvation. Prisoners in poor health should be kept in prisons with full medical facilities and close to their families.

The release of 16 political prisoners this month must not be seen as a concession on the part of the regime, while 2,186 political prisoners remain behind bars. None of those released were granted freedom under a genuine amnesty; all had served their full sentence and Thin July Kyaw had served an additional 4 months.