



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

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand

e.mail: [info@aappb.org](mailto:info@aappb.org) website: [www.aappb.org](http://www.aappb.org)

---



# Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand

e.mail: [info@aappb.org](mailto:info@aappb.org) website: [www.aappb.org](http://www.aappb.org)

## MONTHLY CHRONOLOGY – May 2010

### Summary of current situation

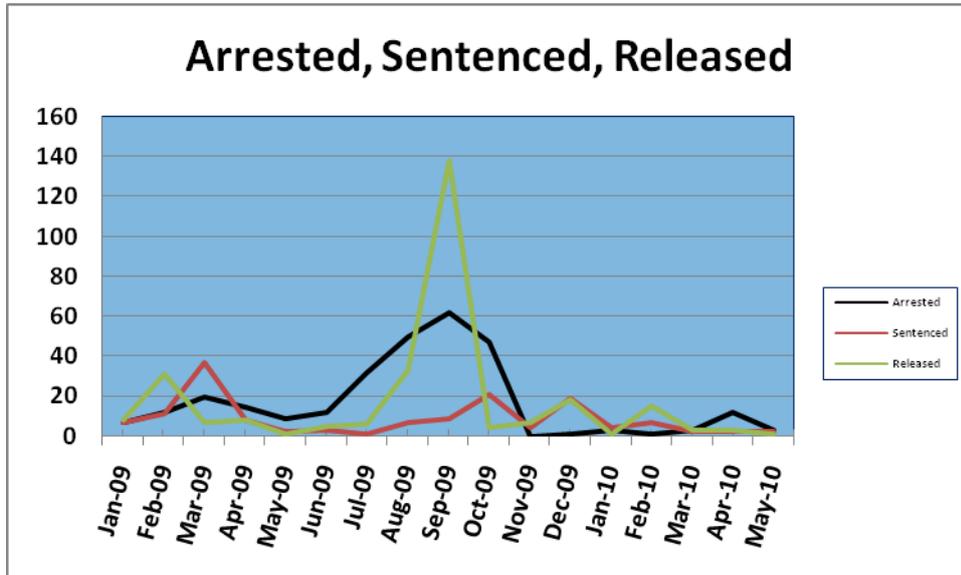
There are a total of **2,157** political prisoners in Burma. This is an overall decrease of 42 in comparison to last month's figure of 2,199<sup>1</sup>. In May **3** activists were arrested, **2** sentenced and **1** political prisoners was released.

CATEGORY	NUMBER
Monks	253
Members of Parliament	12
Students	282
Women	177
NLD members	431
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network	33
Ethnic nationalities	210
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	20
Teachers	29
Media activists	41
Lawyers	11
Labor activists	36
88 Generation Students	48
Doctor	12
In poor health	137

Since the protests in August 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **1,159** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

<sup>1</sup> The number of political prisoners in May dropped to 2,157 from 2,199 in April due to retrospective information regarding the release of prisoners and administrative error.

## Monthly Trend Analysis



During the month of May 2010, at least **3** activists were arrested, **2** were sentenced and **1** was released. At least **137** political prisoners are 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. There was **1** death this month, bringing the recorded number of political prisoner deaths to **144**, since 1988.

This month saw the legal dissolution of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The disbandment of the NLD followed a high court rejection of the lawsuit appeal against the controversial election laws that exclude Daw Aung Suu Kyi from participating in the coming national elections. After 20 years as the leading opposition party, the doors of the NLD office officially closed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May; however, some brave members turned up to work the following day. The dissolution led former members to register another party in the hope that this provides them with an option to run in the coming elections.

International outcry over the upcoming election reached a peak following the dissolution of the NLD. The European Union, United Kingdom, United States, and United Nations each issued strong statements calling for Burma to change pre-election conditions, and questioned the possibility of internationally legitimate elections in the current environment. Unofficial SPDC rejection of international election observers led to further criticism. In addition to concern over election legitimacy, the international community expressed deep concern over the possibility that North Korea may have delivered nuclear weapons to the Burmese junta in April. In May, the United States extended sanctions against Burma for a further year.

The bomb blasts in Myitkyina and Rangoon during April significantly affected locals, particularly in Myitkyina where there have been unconfirmed arrests, interrogations and torture of up to 70 youths. Leaders of regional organizations blamed for the bombing have left the area fearing for their safety. Although the junta made only one arrest in Rangoon, it has positioned itself to make further arrests in conjunction with the bombings by linking the arrested suspect with numerous organizations. The AAPP expresses concern that in response

to last month's bombings, the junta is set to add anti-terror laws to the sweeping legislation already used to arbitrarily arrest activists and opposition members and put them behind bars.

This month saw the death of Ko Kyaw Soe who passed away in Myingyan Prison on the morning of 19 May 2010 at age 39. He was the 144th political prisoner to die of malnutrition, maltreatment and inadequate medical care in a Burmese prison since 1988.

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

May brought the continued mistreatment of numerous political prisoners across Burma.

Ko Kyaw Soe, a member of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network, passed away in Myingyan Prison, age 39. He was the 144th political prisoner to die in prison in Burma, since 1988, due to malnutrition, maltreatment and inadequate medical care.

Also reported in May, Htin Kyaw, who is serving a 12 and a half-year sentence, needs to see a dentist. His family sent a request to authorities but is yet to hear a response. Additionally, political prisoner and student activist Di Nyein Lin is suffering from eye disease.

Families of 11 Arakanese youths have been denied access to their children's hearings, and Phyo Wei Aung, who has been detained in relation to the April 17 bombings in Rangoon, is denied access to a lawyer.

Photographer Sithu Zeya has been tortured during his interrogation and awaits sentencing for charges under the 1957 Unlawful Associations Act after he took photos of the April 17 bombing in Rangoon. Also tortured was NLD member, U Than Maung from Arakan State, after a recent arrest.

Sadly, Daw Hla Hla Myint, the mother of NLD political prisoner, Mya Than Htike, passed away after travelling to visit her son during the recent heat wave.

## **Prisoners Released**

May brought about the release of **1** political prisoner. The poet, Saw Wai, who was arrested for mocking a general in a poem, was released on May 26 following the completion of his prison term.

## **National League for Democracy**

There are at least 431 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) currently in prison.

May 2010 will forever be etched in the minds of Burmese people, as the month in which the NLD, the nation's oldest and most entrenched political party, was forced to legally disband. A lawsuit calling for a review of the election laws that excluded Aung San Suu Kyi's participation, which the NLD brought before the chief justice in April, was rejected a matter of hours before the NLD's disbandment. Regardless, leaders of the disbanded party resolutely vowed to continue their political work through social programs. Members campaigned on the voters' right to abstain from participating in the election, and the women's wing distributed drinking water in drought stricken areas. In a move rejected by

Aung San Suu Kyi, prominent members from the NLD formed and registered a new political party, the National Democratic Force.

It was a difficult month for individual members of the NLD. Sadly, 87-year-old Soe Myint, a central executive committee member and veteran of the NLD, died of heart disease. Another member, U Than Maung, from Arakan State was arrested and tortured. Chit Tin, who was attacked by members of the junta led Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), has remained in hospital for a month due to injuries obtained in the attack. The mother of Mya Than Htike, Daw Hla Hla Myint, passed away at the age of 66 owing to extremely hot weather during her travels to and from Taungoo prison to visit her son. Concluding the month, Kyaw Myo Naing received an extension of 10 years to his already 4½ year jail term.

### **31 May 2010**

#### **Burma's opposition not optimistic about US Sen Webb's visit**

Burma's opposition and ethnic group leaders do not believe that US Sen Jim Webb, who begins a three-day visit to the country on June 4, will achieve any important progress for the people of Burma. On the visit beginning June 4, Webb plans to hold a variety of meetings with government officials, military officials, business leaders and U.S. diplomats. It is unclear whether he will once again meet with Than Shwe and Suu Kyi. Webb has been critical of US sanctions on Burma and is seen by some opposition leaders as supportive of the coming election. Win Tin, a leading member of the now-defunct National League for Democracy (NLD), said he does not think Webb will achieve any progress towards democratic reform in Burma, and doesn't welcome the visit. Bo Kyi, the joint secretary of the Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), said, "We don't expect much from his [Webb's] trip. There are not many positive results that can be achieved for the opposition." Bo Kyi speculated that the regime might release some prisoners—but perhaps not political prisoners—during Webb's visit so the junta can take credit for the event. "The Burmese regime might grant some minor requests by Webb, but not significant ones such as the release of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, 88 Generation Student leader Min Ko Naing and other political prisoners," Bo Kyi said. This will be the second trip to Burma within one year for Webb, who has played a key role in reshaping the Obama administration's Burma policy. ([31 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **30 May 2010**

#### **Insein court tacks 10 years on to youth's term**

The jail term of a NLD youth member's sentence, for distributing Aung San Suu Kyi's portrait, has been extended 10 years bringing the total penalty to 14½ years. Rangoon East District court heard the case of NLD Tamwe Township youth wing chief Kyaw Moe Naing, a.k.a. Kyaw Gyi, inside Insein prison and added 10 years to his jail term under the Electronic Act. The military regime widely uses this Electronics Act to punish for punishing pro-democracy oppositions. Section 33(b) bans the disseminating of information on the internet which can destabilize the state and undermine state security. Kyaw Moe Naing was originally sentenced to two years in prison under section 505(b) of the Penal Code for offences against the state and public tranquility and another two years for contact with unlawful associations. He was already serving these terms in Insein prison. ([31 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

## **27 May 2010**

### **A sad ceremony marks a great victory**

Twenty years to the day since Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in Burma's last general election, a small group of party members and friends gathered at veteran NLD leader Tin Oo's house to commemorate the democratic victory. "The day of our victory in the election represents a victory for the people," said Yarzar, a member of the NLD youth league who joined the ceremony at Tin Oo's house. "However, today is still a day of sadness." Thursdays' gathering contrasted starkly with last year's party when thousands of members, elected representatives and students attended, and the party's headquarters was alive with songs of victory and defiance. "At last year's ceremony, our leaders read announcements and issued party statements," said Yarzar. "However, this year we could not even mention the word 'politics' during the ceremony." ([27 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **Confident NDF leaders register their party**

Leaders of the splinter political group of Burma's National League for Democracy (NLD) registered their party at the Election Commission office in Naypyidaw, claiming they were gathering increasing support across the country. "We have been contacted by a number of individuals from at least 42 townships across the country who wish to join us," said Khin Maung Swe, who is expected to become the political leader of the newly registered National Democratic Force (NDF). The new party was formed by NLD leaders who disagreed with the NLD executive committee decision not to reregister the party and participate in the upcoming general election. ([27 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **20 May 2010**

### **Veteran NLD politician dies**

Soe Myint, 87, a central executive committee member and veteran of the recently dissolved National League for Democracy (NLD) party, died of heart disease at his house in the country's main city Rangoon. "He had stopped breathing in his chair when we went to remind him of a medical check-up for his heart disease," one of his granddaughters, told AFP. Soe Myint joined the NLD when it was founded in 1988, after fighting for the Burma Independence Army and Burma Defence Army in the 1940s against Japanese invaders and British colonialists, until the country won independence in 1948. "We are so sorry for losing our colleague. He had many experiences as he went through the long history," said Tin Oo, 83, a vice-chairman of the dissolved NLD. ([21 May 2010 DVB](#))

## **19 May 2010**

### **USDA continues to harass water volunteers**

Members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) continue to try to co-opt local volunteer groups who try to distribute water in drought-stricken areas of Burma. One group, on their way to a drought-stricken area in Waw Township in Pegu Division, was stopped by police, volunteers said. They said police took the leader's name, car license number and recorded the amount of water to be donated. Myat Hla, the former party chairman of the defunct National League of Democracy (NLD) in Pegu Township, said, "Authorities are ordering volunteer donors to distribute water wherever they want, and they give them a USDA flag to put on the vehicles, but most volunteers throw the flags away." A fierce heat wave in Burma has combined with a drought to create serious water shortages in

many parts of the country. Many local volunteers have raised money to finance emergency water distribution to areas in need. ([19 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **17 May 2010**

#### **NDF responds to Suu Kyi's criticism**

Dr. Than Nyein, the leader of the newly formed National Democratic Force (NDF) political party, said detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi should understand the right of individuals to form a new party. “We formed a new party only after the NLD officially ceased to exist. As individuals, we have the right to do so. As a democrat, she [Suu Kyi] should understand us,” said Than Nyein, who along with the other NDF leaders believes in the need to have a political party to continue the democratic struggle. His comment followed the recent statement by Suu Kyi, through her lawyer, saying that the NDF decision to break off and form a new political party was “undemocratic” because the NLD had previously voted not to register and compete in the election due to the regime's election laws which would not have allowed Suu Kyi and other political prisoners to participate in the election or even remain as members of a registered political party. ([17 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **15 May 2010**

#### **A political prisoner's mother died after her visit to her son**

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma (AAPPB), was informed that a political prisoner's mother died after a visit to her son, Mya Than Htike (aka) Tayzar. Daw Hla Hla Myint, passed away at the age of 66 on May 15, 2010 due to extremely hot weather during her travels to and from Taungoo prison. AAPP expresses its deepest condolences to Mya Than Htike and his family for their loss. Mya Than Htike, a youth member of the National League for Democracy, was imprisoned for 9 years on 27 September 2007 for his involvement in the Saffron Revolution. While he was at the demonstrations, the security forces gunned down the peaceful demonstrators, including a Japanese journalist. Mya Than Htike was injured and taken to Rangoon General Hospital. Later, after he was sentenced to 9-year imprisonment, he was transferred to Taungoo prison in Bago Division, 175 miles north of where his family resides in Rangoon. Bo Kyi, the joint secretary of AAPP, said, “This is the tragic example of the military regime's brutal intention to torture both political prisoners and their families. Political prisoners are transferred to remote prisons thus family members have to face hardships to visit their loved ones in prisons.” ([16 May 2010 AAPP](#))

### **13 May 2010**

#### **NLD focuses on electoral rights**

Members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in parts of central and eastern Burma have been distributing leaflets among the public, conveying the message: “Citizens have the right not to vote in the coming election.” Khin Saw Htay, an organizing committee member of the NLD in Magwe Division, said they distributed the leaflets not because they were directed to by the party's headquarters, but because they were trying to let people in their areas know about the NLD's activities. “The NLD headquarters didn't give us any instructions related to these leaflets,” he said. “We are engaged in politics so we do what we have to. People in Magwe are wondering about whom they should vote for without the NLD in the election. So, in our leaflet, we also explain about a voter's right—to vote or not to vote.” ([13 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

**11 May 2010**

**NLD women's wing donated water in Pegu**

Chiang Mai (Mizzima) –National League for Democracy women's wing members are donating water to villagers in Pegu Division where wells and ponds have dried up because of drought and severely hot weather, group officials said. More than 60 villages in Pegu Division are facing severe water shortages after record high temperatures across Burma have accelerated evaporation of ponds and reservoirs, according to earlier reports. Villagers in the townships of Pegu, Waw, Thanatpin, Kawa and Daik Oo, all in Pegu Division, are lacking drinking water and water for hygiene needs as small dams have lain dry since the end of April. NLD women's affairs chief Dr. May Win Myint, central committee member Aye Aye Mar and Pegu Division NLD women's affairs chief Hla Hla Moe paid for 1,100 for 20-litre drinking-water bottles today in Thanatpin, party sources said. "We started our drinking-water donation in Thanatpin today. Since there are high demands from donors and well-wishers like us, the drinking-water bottling plants cannot produce to meet our demand so we'll only be able to receive our water bottles the day after tomorrow. We have already paid for them", Dr. May Win Myint said. ([11 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

**7 May 2010**

**NLD leaders continue to show up for work**

National League for Democracy party members including vice-chairman Tin Oo came to work at party headquarters in Bahan Township, Rangoon, a day after it was forced to disband, having decided against registering for polls this year over electoral laws considered unjust. The junta's Union Election Commission Law rendered the NLD party void from today but about 70 party leaders and members nevertheless came in to the office. "People came to the office as we opened it. There are social aid group members, women's affairs members and Rangoon Division members at the office today," Win Tin said. "They exchanged news ... and discussed political issues". "The atmosphere at party head office is as usual, even though it is not as lively or fun as before," he said. ([7 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

**New opposition says Suu Kyi 'is still leader'**

Four members of the now-disbanded opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party will form a new party and register for upcoming elections, the group's advisor has said. Khin Maung Swe, a Central Executive Committee member and spokesperson for the NLD, said that he would be joined in the party by other senior NLD members who had long called for the party to compete in elections. Nyan Win, the NLD's longtime spokesman, urged the founders of the new party to refuse to participate in the polls. "They should formally obey the unanimous decision of the NLD [to boycott the elections]", he said. "Whether they obey the decision or not is their choice. But I'm not preventing them." The new party, temporarily named the National Democratic Force (NDF), will "continue with the politics of the NLD and its unfinished duty and unfulfilled vows made to the people," Khin Maung Swe said. Other party members include Dr Than Nyein, Thein Nyunt and Sein Hla Oo, all from the NLD's Central Executive Committee, while around 20 people are expected to form the party's upper echelons. He added that the move is not intended to be an attack on Suu Kyi or the NLD. "For those who form the new party, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is still a leader to them. She always will be." ([7 May 2010 DVB](#))

## **6 May 2010 (happened in April)**

### **NLD member 'attacked by junta thugs'**

A National League for Democracy member in Burma's central Mon state is in hospital after being attacked by a local militia-type organisation, allegedly on the orders of two Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) members. Chit Tin, a member of the opposition party's Yay town wing, sustained injuries to the head after being attacked on 3 April whilst watching football on television in a teashop in Yay. Chit Tin alleges that the attacker was a member of government-proxy Swan Arr Shin group. "I was watching a football match at the teashop and someone hit me with a stool from behind," said Chit Tin. "The attackers name is Htay Aung; he's a Swan Arr Shin member. I immediately went to the local authorities and filed a charge but they told me to go to the police instead so I went. The attacker went gone into hiding after the charge was made." He added that the order was handed down by Ngwe Aung and Myat Moe, two local members of the USDA, a government backed social organisation. "I'm a township-level NLD executive and those men are also township-level USDA members," he said. "They went to the police station later and paid the police 1.2 million kyat [US\$1,200] to close my case. I knew that they were USDA and they knew I was NLD; we live in the same village." Chit Tin remains in Rangoon hospital, one month after the attack took place. ([6 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **NLD members to form new party**

Some leading members of Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), who disagreed with the party's decision to boycott this year's general election, have said they will announce the founding of a new political party in the coming days that will contest the polls. The party, to be called the National Democratic Force, will be registered at the Election Commission sometime in the middle of this month, and will be headed by several members of the NLD, according to Dr. Than Nyein, a former political prisoner and a member of the NLD, who is expected to lead the new party. "We are not in opposition to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," he said. "We just wish to continue our political activities. If we don't do this, we won't be able to achieve anything." ([6 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **5 May 2010**

### **NLD holds last event as legal party**

The party of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, founded more than 20 years ago to challenge military rule in Burma, held a final gathering Wednesday at its headquarters before its forced dissolution. The National League for Democracy held an early celebration of Suu Kyi's June 19 birthday, an occasion on which it gives children of political prisoners financial aid for their education. The League declined to re-register as a party this year, which new election laws required to contest an election supposed to be held sometime later this year. The League says the laws are undemocratic and unfair, and its non-registration is tantamount to an election boycott. At the party's central office in Yangon, desks were being cleared, paper files tied up and locked away in cupboards and party property was inventoried. Under the law, the party becomes "null and void," at midnight Thursday. About 150 members of the National League for Democracy gathered at their dilapidated two-story headquarters near the foot of Rangoon's Shwedagon pagoda for Suu Kyi's 65th birthday celebration. Several foreign diplomats also attended. Party spokesman Nyan Win said the party "may cease to exist under the law" but will continue to carry out social activities while party members will individually engage in political activities. ([6 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **3 May 2010**

#### **NLD member arrested and tortured in Arakan**

U Than Maung, a member of the Taungup Township NLD in Arakan State was arrested at midnight on 28 April, said a colleague on the condition of anonymity. The colleague said, "A group of law enforcement officers, including army and police, arrested him in his house in Taungup at midnight. During the arrest the officers tortured him severely. This was done by authorities in front of U Taung Maung's family members." A group of officers entered U Than Maung's house on the pretense of checking the visitor lists without his permission. U Than Maung complained angrily at their intrusion. U Than Maung is a member of the NLD township committee and is also working voluntarily for the ILO in the township. After being arrested, U Than Maung was brought to an unknown location in Taungup and family members have yet to receive any word about him since then. ([3 May 2010 Narinjara](#))

### **1 May 2010**

#### **NLD will cease to exist: CEC**

The National League for Democracy (NLD) will cease to exist as a political movement after the deadline for party registration on May 6, according to NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) members. The Burmese opposition party refused to re-register for this year's general election, saying the election laws were "unfair and unjust." The Burmese opposition party's CEC held a meeting on Thursday at its headquarters in Rangoon and discussed passing down instructions to township level offices on how to proceed. Win Tin, a leading member of NLD, said that Thursday's would be the last meeting for the NLD's CEC, but that the party will not remove its placard and flag from outside its office. Sources close to the NLD leadership said some leading members of the NLD will break away and form a new political party after the deadline. According to Political Parties Registration Laws, only existing parties must re-register by May 6. New parties are not subject to such a deadline. ([1 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **88 Generation Students**

There are 48 members of the 88 Generation Student group currently in detention. Concern continued in May with regard to the health status of imprisoned 88 Generation member Mya Aye who has been denied medical treatment while lodged with death row prisoners. Mya Aye is suffering from a serious heart ailment in addition to hypertension and gastric problems.

## **Monks**

There are at least 253 monks currently held in prison. This month they began a campaign urging people to boycott this year's general election.

### **26 May 2010**

#### **Monks and students urge poll boycott**

Clandestine monk and student organizations urged the people of Burma yesterday to boycott this year's general election to prevent activation of the junta's controversial 2008 constitution. People were also urged in the joint statement issued by the All Burma Monks' Alliance (ABMA), the 88-Generation Students and All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) to make votes null and void if they were forced to cast their votes. As per the

electoral laws, the election will be valid only if 51 per cent of eligible voters cast their votes. “We shall make this election void by increasing the numbers of uncast votes and void votes,” 88-Generation student leader Tun Myint Aung, who has been on the run from the junta since the August 2007 uprisings. “In this way the regime will not get the legitimacy for its rule which it so badly needs.” ([26 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

## **Ethnic Nationalities**

There are 210 members of ethnic nationalities currently held in prison. Throughout April there were numerous arrests in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, in response to two bombings; one on April 17 at the Irrawaddy Myitkyina dam site, and the second on May 5 in Myitkyina city. The junta has blamed the Education and Economic Development for Youth organization and arrested many youths but they maintain they had no involvement. Several have since been released but many continue to be detained, interrogated and tortured while awaiting charges. Locals’ believe the junta is using the bombs as an excuse to arrest people involved in a protest against the Myitkyina dam project.

Also in Arakan State, 11 youths who have been detained since September were again produced before the court in the notorious Insein prison; however, family members of the detainees have still been denied access to the hearings.

### **26 May 2010**

#### **More youths with KIO links arrested and tortured**

The detained Kachin youths are being interrogated in connection with the serial bomb blasts. Almost all the detained youths are members of the Education and Economy Development for Youth (EEDY), the youth-wing of the KIO. They are now detained in No.1 Police Station in Myitkyina and were beaten up severely by the police during interrogation, said their parents. Only Gam Awng was released at midnight the day after his arrest, said sources close to him. He is a youth leader of the Kachin Nationals Consultative Assembly (KNCA) representing all Kachins in Burma. ([26 May 2010 Kachin](#))

### **25 May 2010**

#### **Kachin youth leader Labang Gam Awng freed**

Continuing with its cat and mouse game with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) the Burmese junta released Kachin leader Labang Gam Awng at midnight on Monday. He was detained for a day in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, northern Burma, said a source close to the youth leader. ([27 May 2010 Kachin](#))

#### **Helpless Myitsons villagers’ fervent plea for help**

Villagers facing forced relocation by the Burmese junta are in a helpless situation and have made a fervent plea for action from every organization including armed groups to halt the Myitsons Dam construction. The leaders opposing forced relocation in Myitsons Irrawaddy dam construction site have fled to the Sino-Burma border after facing arrest by the regime. No one is helping those opposing the project. The leader of the Village Solidarity Committee (VSC) formed with 13 members aimed to resist forced relocation from Tang Hpre village near the Irrawaddy Myitsons Dam project fled to the border after being chased by junta officials. “The situation has worsened after the bomb explosions for they arrested and investigated

almost all villagers and this kind of action (a bomb trap) is beyond our imagination,” said the leader. ([25 May 2010 Kachin](#))

### **23 May 2010**

#### **Surprise arrest of Kachin youths in Myitkyina**

In a surprise midnight crackdown the Burmese military junta arrested a youth leader and several dozen ethnic Kachin youths in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State in northern Burma. The arrested were Kachin youth leader Labang Gam Awng and several dozen Kachin youths, most being members of the Education and Economy Development for Youth (EEDY), the youth-wing of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). Sources close to the detainees said all detainees have been arrested and interrogated at the Northern Regional Command Headquarters of the junta. No one has been released. A resident of Myitkyina, capital of Kachin state, said that authorities were taking advantage of the bombings to arrest people who had protested the construction of the dam which is likely to displace up to 10,000 people and has been strongly opposed by Kachin locals ([24 May Kachin](#) and [26 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **15 May 2010**

#### **Police release sketch of Irrawaddy blast suspect**

A sketch of a suspect, who could be connected to the Irrawaddy dam serial bomb blasts in Kachin State, northern Burma has been released by Burmese police, said local sources. The police have distributed over 20,000 sketches only around Myitkyina from April 20, a resident told Kachin News Group today. Meanwhile, the police have detained 48 suspects in a prison cell in No. 1 Police Station and most bear some resemblance to the police sketch, said sources close to the police. ([15 May 2010 Kachin](#))

### **10 May 2010**

#### **Arrested local in serial bomb blast case released**

Marip La Ram, a local arrested in connection with the serial bomb blasts in the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam project site in northern Burma, was released by Burmese junta authorities. He was detained for more than a couple of weeks, said relatives of La Ram. La Ram is the chief organizer of the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) in his village. Sources close to La Ram said, he was interrogated and tortured by Burmese security agents during detention for over a couple of weeks in the company's office. The military authorities are making rampant arrests and releasing villagers, added the villagers. Since the bomb blasts, Tang Hpre's villagers are under severe pressure by the Burmese military authorities. They are restricted from going out of the village and use telephones. The entire village seems to be under house-arrest, said Awng Wa. ([11 May 2010 Kachin](#))

### **5 May 2010**

#### **Two bombs explode in Myitkyina**

Two bombs exploded in Myitkyina, the capital of Burma's northern Kachin State today at around 11 a.m. local time, but there was no casualty or damage, reports the Kachin News Group reporter in the capital. No one has claimed responsibility for the Myitsone blasts so far. However, local people believe the ruling Burmese junta triggered the blasts. ([5 May 2010 Kachin](#))

### **3 May 2010**

#### **Junta announces reward for information on bomb blasts perpetrators**

The Burmese military junta has announced rewards of Kyat 5 million (US\$5,102), a plot of land and a CDMA mobile phone to anyone, who can give precise information about the perpetrators of the April 17 Myitsone dam bomb blasts where at least 27 bombs exploded in Myitsone dam construction site, which left 4 dead and 12 injured. The northern regional commander Maj-Gen Soe Win is apprehensive of losing his post after Lt. Gen Ye Myint, Chief of Military Affairs Security (MAS) from military headquarters in Naypyitaw warned him that he will be removed if he fails to find the perpetrators of the bomb explosions. The junta is arresting and interrogating those who signed the letter protesting the dam construction and requesting that it be stopped. Township leaders in Kachin State had signed the letter requesting a halt to the dam construction on May 21, 2007. Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) leader Lanyaw Zawng Hra also sent an appeal letter on July 6, 2007. Rampant arrests are on of people suspected to have a connection with the bomb blasts. Hundreds of villagers from the dam construction site have been interrogated and some local people have been detained.

[\(3 May 2010 Kachin\)](#)

#### **KIO member arrested in bomb blast case**

Continuing with sweeping arrests, police picked up a Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) member on Saturday in connection with the April 17 serial bomb blasts in the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam site in northern Burma, said sources close to the arrested. Marip Tu Ring a Kachin youth was arrested by police from No. 1 Police Station at 10 p.m. local time from his house in Shatapru Quarter in Myitkyina, capital of Kachin State, said his family. Tu Ring is a member of the Education and Economic Development for Youth (EEDY) of the KIO. He does not have any connection with the 27 bomb blasts in the Myitsone dam site about 25 miles north of Myitkyina, said sources close to him. [\(4 May 2010 Kachin\)](#)

### **2 May 2010**

#### **11 Detained Arakanese youths brought before Insein Court**

11 Arakanese youths who have been detained since September last year were again brought before the court in the notorious Insein prison on May 2; however, family members of the detainees have not been given the opportunity to attend court hearings. On March 29, the families submitted an appeal through their lawyer to the court, yet they have still been unable to attend or have had a chance to learn of any developments in the case. The 11 Arakanese youth are now facing five charges in court, including charges of attempting to plant bombs, illegally crossing the Thai-Burma border, and having connections with illegal organizations. It was also learned that the youth were severely tortured and harassed by Burmese intelligence officers during their three months in detention from September to December, prior to being produced in court on charges. [\(6 May 2010 Narinjara\)](#)

### **1 May 2010**

#### **Serial blast suspect Ze Lum freed**

In an unexplained move, Burmese military junta authorities released the suspect of the April 17 serial bomb blasts in the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam construction site. The suspect, local businessman Ze Lum and two of his rubber plantation workers were released by junta's Military Intelligence (Sa-Ya-Hpa) on May 1 after they were detained by local police on April 18, on suspicion of being behind the blasts. [\(22 May 2010 Kachin\)](#)

## **Cyclone Nargis Volunteers**

There are currently 20 Cyclone Nargis volunteers held in prison.

There is no news to report in April.

## **Journalists, Bloggers and Writers**

There are currently 41 held in prison. In late May the poet and social activist, May Saw Wai, was released after completing his two-year sentence. Also in May, previously arrested photographer, Sithu Zeya, who photographed images of the April 17 bombings in Rangoon was tortured and denied food. He is charged under the Unlawful Associations Act. His father, Maung Maung Zeya, has also been detained in relation to the photographs but is yet to be charged.

### **26 May 2010**

#### **Jailed poet released**

A Burmese poet who was imprisoned for mocking regime chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe was released on Wednesday after 28 months in prison, his wife said. Saw Wai, 50, was arrested in 2008 following the publication of his poem, "*14th February*," which contains seven lines in which the first word from each line forms a vertical message reading "Than Shwe is foolish with power" in Burmese. Saw Wai was charged with harming "public tranquility" and sentenced to two years in prison. During his time in prison last year, the poet was presented in absentia a Hellman/ Mammett award by the US-based Human Rights Watch for his courage. At the time of the 1988 uprising, Saw Wai was on the staff at the communications office in Pegu Division, but was sacked after taking part in demonstrations. Before his arrest in 2008, he was the leader of White Rainbow, a social group organized by artists and writers to help care for orphans whose parents had died from HIV/AIDS. ([26 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **11 May 2010**

#### **Rangoon photographer 'was tortured'**

Sithu Zeya, arrested along with his father for photographing the aftermath of the deadly Rangoon bombings on 15 April has been tortured and denied food, his mother said. Rangoon-based Sithu Zeya, and his 55-year-old graphic designer father, Maung Maung Zeya, were arrested by government officials shortly after three grenades exploded during the 'Thingyan' water festival celebrations last month, and are being held in separate Rangoon police stations. The wife of Maung Maung Zeya said she was yesterday allowed to visit their son for the first time since he was arrested. "[Sithu Zeya] was arrested for taking some photos and video footage of the scene," Yee Yee Tint said. "He was denied food for the first two days of the five-day interrogation. He also said was beaten twice during the interrogation and his ear has been ringing since." Yee Yee Tint said that he faces three different charges, while the family has asked for assistance from legal expert Aung Thein. "I don't fully understand their situation but the Burma police chief [Khin Yi] during his press conference [on 6 May] said that they were arrested for taking video footage of the incident," she said. "I am quite sad that [the authorities] let the bombers remain at large but detained people for just taking video footage." ([11 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **Bombing photographer accused of contacting 'unlawful associations'**

Rangoon authorities will reportedly charge photographer Sithu Zeya, who was arrested after taking photographs of the April 15 water festival bombings, with violating the 1957 Unlawful Associations Act for contacts he made with illegal organizations, will appear in court on May 18 according to his family. Sithu Zeya was arrested on April 15 and sent to Insein prison after photographing the aftermath of the bomb blasts that shook the traditional New Year's water festival in Rangoon, killing eight people and injuring 170. His father Zeya, son of the late writer Saya Linyon, was then arrested at home on April 16 and sent to Bahan Township Police Station and will appear in court on May 17. ([11 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **Women**

There are 177 currently held in prison.

There is no news to report in May.

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

There are at least 33 members of the Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network currently held in prison. In mid April, Kyaw Soe died in Myingyan prison of respiratory and abdominal disease after he was denied access to adequate medical treatment. Deaths are expected due to continue to the lack of adequate food, sanitation and exercise available in prisons, coupled with ongoing human rights abuses of torture and medical deprivation.

### **19 May 2010**

#### **A political prisoner passed away in Myingyan Prison**

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) has learnt that Ko Kyaw Soe passed away in Myingyan Prison on the morning of 19 May 2010, age 39. He is the 144th political prisoner to die in prison, in Burma. AAPP expresses its deepest condolences to the family of Kyaw Soe (aka) Kyaw Kyaw Soe (aka) Jeffery. Ko Kyaw Soe, a member of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network, known as HRDP, was arrested at his residence, No. 264, Shu Mhyaw Khin Street, Thittaw Ward, Taunggyi, on 17 September 2007 and taken to Insein Prison. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on 11 November 2008 under 3 charges: Article 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act, Article 13 (1) of the Immigration Act and Article 505 (B) of the Penal Code. He was transferred to Myingyan prison on 21 November 2008. He was tortured during interrogation, and was reportedly beaten, burnt with cigarettes and electrocuted. In Myingyan Prison, Ko Kyaw Soe suffered from a respiratory disease and stomach problems. "He was the 144th political prisoner to die in prison in Burma, since 1988, due to malnutrition, maltreatment and inadequate medical care. When his family members requested the Myingyan Prison authorities to buy appropriate medicine for Ko Kyaw Soe, the prison authorities replied that they had been taking care of him adequately and carefully. Now, it is obvious that they were not treating him properly," Secretary of AAPP, Tate Naing, said. "The deplorable conditions in Burma's prisons: the absence and denial of adequate medical treatment, torture and mistreatment, causes and exacerbates the health problems of prisoners, leading to the tragic deaths of far too many of Burma's human rights defenders and democracy activists," Tate Naing said. Ko Kyaw Soe has left behind a wife, May Han Ei, and a 7 year-old daughter. ([19 May 2010 AAPP](#))

## **Labor Activists**

There are currently at least 36 labor activists held in prison.  
There is no news to report in May.

## **Students**

There are currently at least 282 students held in prison. The bombings in Rangoon led Burmese authorities to crackdown on student groups. Early in the month, Phyo Wei Aung, a member of the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors (VBSW) organization, was arrested and has since been denied legal aid. The junta has positioned itself to make further arrests in conjunction with the bombings by linking other (political, social, opposition?) organizations with the VBSW. Also in May, it was learnt that political prisoner and student activist Di Nyein Lin is suffering from eye disease. Additionally, prominent Burmese student leader, Kyaw Ko Ko's jail term was extended by a further 5 years for activities "discovered" after initial sentencing.

### **24 May 2010**

#### **Rangoon bomb suspect denied legal aid**

Phyo Wei Aung who was arrested on suspicion of plotting a series of bomb blasts in Rangoon in April has been denied legal representation, his lawyer said. Kyaw Ho, the lawyer of Phyo Wei Aung, said that his client should, under domestic law, be released having been held for a month without charge. His lawyer said that he returned to court on 20 May to again request permission to represent Phyo Wei Aung, but was told that "it has not yet been approved". It is the third time he has requested permission. "So according to the law, if they cannot press [charges] on 23 May, then he has to be released. That's what we have to wait for and see. Maybe that's why they are not granting [legal representation]." ([24 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **21 May 2010**

#### **Dissident jail term extended**

A prominent Burmese student leader has been sentenced to an additional five years of incarceration while currently serving time in prison. Kyaw Ko Ko, a member of the 2007 New Generation Student Leaders who participated in Burma's September 2007 "Saffron Revolution", was handed a five-year prison sentence May 21 by two Kyauk Tada courts in the former capital of Rangoon. Lawyer Aung Thein said Kyaw was given "three years for illegal association, according to Article 6, and another two years according to Article 505 B." The provisions of the latter article were unclear. Kyaw Ko Ko was given the additional prison term based on "criminal acts" authorities discovered he had committed after he had already begun serving his initial sentence, according to Aung Thein. "This kind of judicial procedure [occurring after a trial] negatively affects defendants because they are not given a maximum term of jail time to serve for their offenses," Aung Thein said. "It's not just Kyaw Ko Ko who faces this kind of treatment—many other do as well," he said. Kyaw Ko Ko was originally arrested by Burmese authorities on March 16, 2008 and sentenced to three years in prison in February 2009 for "video acts". ([21 May 2010 RFA](#))

## **14 May 2010**

### **Jailed student leader has eye disease**

Political prisoner and student activist Di Nyein Lin is suffering from eye disease. "He says his eyes hurt and that he can't read books. We had 'power' glasses made for him but he still suffers from the pain," said Di Nyein Lin's mother Htay Htay. "We thought he might have a bulbous growth on the end of his nose, but my son says his eyes still ache and he feels dizzy." A leader of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions' activists during demonstrations led by Buddhist monks in 2007, Di Nyein Lin in 2008 was arrested by the junta and placed on a variety of charges, including one of "inducing crime against public tranquility". He was sentenced to a total of 15 years and six months in prison in November 2008, two weeks after his father, Zaw Zaw Min, became one of 23 members of the 88 Generation Students jailed for 65 years. His grandfather Saw Win was a member of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's now defunct National League for Democracy (NLD) party who died in prison about 12 years ago. ([14 May 2010 Mizzama](#))

## **10 May 2010**

### **Wife says husband had no role in bombings**

The wife of Phyo Wai Aung, who was arrested on April 23 after the bomb explosions at the Thingyan water festival, said her husband had no connection to the blasts. In a press conference on May 6, the military regime accused Phyo Wai Aung of being involved in the April 15 explosions that killed 10 people and injured 170 at a crowded festival pavilion in Rangoon. "None of the facts mentioned in the press conference with regard to my husband were correct," said Htay Htay. "He was at his work site in Yankin Center during the whole Thingyan holiday because he needed to finish his work. The accusation that he had rented a house was also not true." She said that on April 23 the authorities came to their home on 55th street in Pazun Daung Township, saying they were checking on the presence of guests staying overnight. "They arrived at our house around 1 a.m.," she said. "My husband showed them the official permit for the guests and tried to go back to sleep, but they asked him to sit down. They woke us all up and had us sit together with my husband." "Before they took my husband, they warned us not to let anyone know about this and threatened us that we would be put in jail if we told others," Htay Htay said. She said that she has been unable to communicate with her husband since he was arrested and authorities have not told her where he is being held. ([10 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **6 May 2010**

### **Student group blamed for Rangoon bombings, 1 held**

The Burmese junta arrested Phyo Wei Aung, 31, from Sanchaung, Rangoon an electrical engineer on suspicion of carrying out the water-festival bombings a week after the grenade attacks in Rangoon last month. The junta has accused the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors of responsibility for the explosions. In a press release they said that three members of the secretive Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors (VBSW) hurled three bombs into the crowd on April 15 and Phyo Wei Aung performed his picket duty on that day, and three are still at large. According to a police statement, the engineering diploma graduate and father of a son and a daughter, Phyo Wei Aung, visited the VBSW camp in Mae Sot, Thailand twice last year for bomb training. Police said that while he was working at Sakura Construction Company as an engineer in 2006 in South Okkalapa, Rangoon, Phyo Wei Aung had become acquainted with Thura Zaw, a.k.a. Thi Ha Zaw, a member of the VBSW. They had worked together on contract jobs, police said. "They said that the bombs were exploded by members

of VBSW, the student of ABSDF. The guardian of this ABSDF is DAB, whose godfather is [the] NCUB. The chairman of the NCUB is [the] KNU, they said”, a journalist who attended the press conference told Mizzima, quoting generals referring to the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front, the Democratic Alliance of Burma, the National Council of the Union of Burma, the Karen National Union ([6 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

## **Lawyers**

There are currently at least 11 detained in prison.

There is no news to report in May.

## **Individual Activists**

### **4 May 2010**

#### **Jailed activist for Suu Kyi’s decision on polls**

Htin Kyaw, a Burmese activist jailed for 12 years and six months for taking a lead role in the 2007 demonstrations in Rangoon against spiraling essential commodity prices, has come out in support of the decision taken by Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD) not to contest the forthcoming election. His wife was allowed to meet him for about 30 minutes on May 4 in the Khantee Prison. Htin Kyaw is in fine fettle, she said, except for a toothache, for which he submitted a letter to the prison authorities wanting to be treated by a dentist. ([13 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

## **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi**

May proved to be a challenging month for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. Suu Kyi’s lawsuit against the election law, which disqualifies her from participating in the upcoming election, was rejected. The next day, the NLD was legally disbanded after a 20-year history of staunchly fighting for democratic rights under extreme repression. Following the dissolution of the party, former members formed and registered a new party, which Suu Kyi said is not “compatible with the democratic process” due to the NLD’s unanimous decision to boycott the election. On a positive note, Suu Kyi was granted leave to appeal her 18-month sentence. This is the final recourse she can pursue but it is unlikely the Supreme Court will grant an appeal until after the elections are held, if at all. In international developments, Suu Kyi was allowed to meet with US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell who later reported his admiration for her continued courage.

### **28 May 2010**

#### **Suu Kyi would snub US senator**

Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi would likely refuse to meet with US senator Jim Webb on looming visit to Burma, long-time party colleague Win Tin has said. Webb is due to visit Burma this week as part of a regional delegation that will also take him to South Korea and Thailand. His last trip to Burma, in August 2009, secured the release of US citizen John Yettaw, who was imprisoned for swimming to Suu Kyi’s Rangoon compound. But, said Win Tin, the visit would not be welcome by members of the NLD: “I do not believe that NLD general secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will want to meet him also,” he added. Webb was

criticised by members of Burma pro-democracy movement for his inability to pressure the junta to free Suu Kyi whilst successfully bringing Yettaw back to the US. Some also see his anti-sanctions stance as too soft on the ruling generals. Win Tin questioned whether his trip was related to murmurings in the US senate about ramping up sanctions. ([28 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **27 May 2010**

#### **Suu Kyi supporters mark 'stolen' polls**

Supporters of Burma's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi gathered to mark the 20th anniversary of their dissolved party's unrecognised victory in the country's last elections. About 100 of her supporters met at the Rangoon house of Tin Oo, vice chairman of the now-defunct National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the polls on 27 May 1990, by a landslide. The first elections since then are due later this year but the NLD was forcibly dissolved after refusing to meet a 6 May deadline to re-register as a political party – a move that would have forced it to expel its leader. "The NLD has struggled through very rough situations in the past two decades," 83-year-old Tin Oo said during a tea party for the gathering. ([27 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **21 May 2010**

#### **Counsel summoned over Suu Kyi home repairs**

Burma's High Court has summoned lawyers for pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her eldest brother to present arguments next Friday in a dispute over renovations to her crumbling lakeside villa in Rangoon, said a lawyer for Suu Kyi. Aung San Oo lodged an appeal with Rangoon Division High Court on May 13 against the Rangoon Division Court's April 6 rejection of his plea for an injunction to stop Suu Kyi repairing her home. His probate claim to a share in the house is the subject of a pending separate appeal. The Rangoon City Development Committee on April 29 had then issued an order to allow renovations to resume. Bamboo fencing has been erected on the Inya Lake side of the house and old roof tiles cleaned and reinstalled. The tiles were damaged when Cyclone Nargis lashed Burma in May 2008, so Rangoon municipal authorities ordered renovations to proceed between last November and April. ([21 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

### **14 May 2010**

#### **Suu Kyi Criticizes NDF Faction**

Detained National League for Democracy (NLD) icon Aung San Suu Kyi said that the act of forming a new party by some of the NLD leaders is incompatible with the democratic process, according to her lawyer, Nyan Win, after meeting her on Friday. He said "The NLD's decision [not to register for the election] was agreed by all members, but there are still some who have taken matters into their own hands—something that is not compatible with the democratic process, according to Suu Kyi." Some leading members of NLD, who disagreed with the party's decision to boycott this year's general election, have founded a new political party named the National Democratic Force (NDF), which will contest the polls. Dr. Than Nyein, a former political prisoner and a member of the NLD, who is expected to lead the new party, said the NDF will be registered at the Election Commission sometime in the middle of this month. ([14 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **Suu Kyi airs concerns over water crisis**

New Delhi (Mizzima) – Burma pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi voiced concerns over the water crisis facing the country yesterday and urged her National League for Democracy party to do more to help the people. The Nobel Peace laureate's comments came during a two-hour meeting with her lawyers Kyi Win and Nyan Win from 1 p.m. at her residence. The meeting also covered party social-work issues. "She told us the NLD party would never diminish among members and the people so we needed to study all procedures for social welfare programmes to make them more effective", lawyer Nyan Win said. ([15 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

### **10 May 2010**

#### **Supreme Court grants leave for Suu Kyi's special appeal**

Rangoon Supreme Court has given Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi special leave to appeal against the 18 month extension of her house arrest, one of her lawyer's said on Monday. After the Supreme Court had rejected her first appeal against the court verdict on her house arrest on February 26, she resubmitted the special appeal and the court has accepted, lawyer Kyi Win said. If Ms. Suu Kyi wins the fresh appeal, a chief judge from the capital, Naypyidaw, will hear the case; if she loses, there are no further legal avenues open to her. The Rangoon North District Court on August 11 sentenced her to three years in jail under section 22 of the 1975 State Protection Law. But junta leader Senior General Than Shwe commuted her sentence to 18 months and ordered it to be served under house arrest. ([11 May 2010 Mizzima](#))

### **10 May 2010**

#### **US envoy to meet with Suu Kyi**

Senior US diplomat Kurt Campbell, who arrived in Burma yesterday, is today due to meet with the detained Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Campbell told reporters in Bangkok yesterday that Washington had "very real concerns about the elections laws and the environment that's been created" for polls this year, which critics claim are a ploy to cement military rule in Burma. Upon his arrival in Burma yesterday afternoon, he travelled to the remote capital Naypyidaw and met with government ministers, including information minister Kyaw Hsan. It appears he was denied a meeting with the reclusive junta leader, Than Shwe, who regularly snubs visiting diplomats who aren't from the handful of countries still allied to the military regime. Details of what he will discuss with Suu Kyi have not been made public, although talks will likely focus on the demise of the NLD, who until 6 May were Burma's principal opposition party. ([10 May 2010 DVB](#))

#### **Burma's "Umbrella Dialogue"**

It was a scorching 43 degrees Celsius when detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell braced the heat and walked out of the state guest house to continue their discussion on Burma. The US embassy in Rangoon released a series of photos of Suu Kyi, Kurt Campbell and Larry Dinger, head of the US mission in Rangoon, walking and holding umbrellas with Inya Lake in the background. The US delegation and Suu Kyi did not want Burmese officials to listen to their conversation. Previously, Suu Kyi was allowed to meet visiting diplomats including US Congressman Bill Richardson at her lakeside house. ([11 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

**5 May 2010**

**NLD questions Central Court rejection**

Lawyers of the disbanded opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party have called on Burma's central court to provide an answer as to why an appeal over its dissolution was rejected. The NLD, which marked its final hours as a registered political party on 6 May, had filed a lawsuit on 30 April against controversial election laws that blocked party leader Aung San Suu Kyi from running in the elections and forced her expulsion if the NLD wished to take part. The lawsuit was however rejected on 5 May. "The court's rejection of our lawsuit was not in accordance with the High Court Code, in which the court must provide reasons for the rejection so that we can amend the lawsuit," said lawyer Nyan Win. ([13 May 2010 DVB](#))

## **Other News**

**21 May 2010**

**PM's party forcibly recruiting members in Shan State**

The newly formed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) led by Prime Minister Thein Sein is conducting a recruiting campaign by canvassing for votes and handing out incentives in Shan State using power of its parent organization known as the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). Khun Pont, a senior USDP member in Namhsang, and other members reportedly have been canvassing in the townships and villages in the area since April, sources said. "They choose organizers in each village and ask them to tell people to vote for the USDP." Canvassing for votes by using local village authorities is illegal, according to Aung Thein, a prominent lawyer in Rangoon. "Using the power of village authorities means that the USDP is violating the election laws," said Aung Thein. "But, as they [the USDP] are acting like an elected party, nobody dares complain about their activities." All village and village tract headmen in Shan State North's Namkham Township and Kengtung, Shan State East are pressured by local ruling military junta officials and USDA officials to collect household lists starting early this month. Namkham alone has to provide at least 5,000 members for the party, said a Namkham USDA member. In Shan State East's Kengtung Township, every youth age above 15 years old must apply for membership. If not they all would be put in a blacklists for high treason said a member of USDA in Kengtung. ([21 May 2010 Shanland](#) and [26 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

**20 May 2010**

**USDP begins election campaign**

The newly-formed political party led by Burmese prime minister Thein Sein has begun campaigning across Burma in lieu of elections this year. A resident in Kaw Thaug town, in Burma's southern Tenasserim division, said that local Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) members were going from door to door urging people to join the party. "They were six women and one man going from door to door, looking at the residents' ID cards and filling out [USDP] application forms for them," said the resident. "The first paragraph on the application form said 'Due to my belief and acceptance of the Union Solidarity and Development Party's policy, I hereby apply for the [group's] membership...'" "After filling in the forms, they asked the residents to sign them. They did this without explaining anything and some people, afraid [of the government officials] and unaware [of the intention], gave their signatures." He said that mirrored campaigning done by the ruling State Peace and

Development Council (SPDC) during the referendum for the basic constitutions in 2008. He added that local authorities called a meeting yesterday and today to discuss the building of ballot stations. ([20 May 2010 DVB](#))

### **9 May 2010**

#### **Parties must show sufficient numbers or face dissolution: EC**

Burma's Election Commission has warned registered political parties that they must submit lists showing they have the prescribed number of party members or face being abolished, state-run newspapers reported on Saturday. Under the country's party registration law, parties planning to run nationwide must have at least 1,000 members, while those contesting the election in a single state or region need a minimum of 500 members. The parties are required to present their lists within 90 days of registration. All political parties agreed to fulfill this requirement when they signed their registration applications and will face dissolution if they fail to prove they have sufficient membership, the commission's warning stated. To date, 42 parties have applied for registration, of which 24 have received official recognition. With the exception of the pro-regime National Unity Party, none of the major political parties that participated in the last election in 1990 have registered to run in this election. ([29 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **6 May 2010**

#### **Burma to enact anti-terror laws**

Burma is set to enact new anti-terror legislation in the next few months, Burma's police chief told reporters following the arrest of a suspect in connection with the Rangoon bombings. Few details of the laws were revealed by Khin Yi, and indeed most 'enemies of the state' are tried on spurious and unrelated charges, such as the Electronics Act. ([7 May 2010 DVB](#))

## **Key International Developments**

Burma continues to attract significant international attention resulting from the upcoming election and a possible nuclear arms delivery from North Korea. The month began with a visit from US assistant secretary of state Kurt Campbell who after meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD leaders expressed his "profound disappointment" at the pre-election conditions and called for the release of political prisoners. He later issued a warning to the junta, who may have imported nuclear arms, saying that "United States maintains the right to take independent action." Following his visit, the US extended sanctions saying, "Burma continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States". In a show of solidarity, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1990 election, six US Senators issued a joint statement condemning the Burmese regime's ongoing dictatorship and suppression of democratic freedoms.

Later in the month, the EU passed a strongly worded resolution condemning Burma's election laws saying they "make the holding of free and transparent elections impossible" and that they "deplore" the constitution, which keeps 25% of the military in power. Following the resolution, the EU plans to send a delegation to Burma, which, if the junta permits them to come, will be the first diplomatic visit since 2002. EU and ASEAN later issued a joint statement calling on Burma to ensure the elections be "credible, transparent, democratic and inclusive"

The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, released a disparaging statement on election conditions and called for the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. The UN also outlined in a report; North Korea's circumvention of sanctions and provision of arms to Burma, which is proving concerning to all who read it. In addition, the UN called for increased funds from international donors to deal with the ongoing humanitarian situation brought on by cyclone Nargis (compounded by junta incompetency?).

## **27 May 2010**

### **AI names Burma as human rights abuser**

Amnesty International (AI), in its annual report on countries that violate human rights, listed Burma, North Korea and China among Asian countries that have detained and harassed human rights defenders. The "*Amnesty International Report 2010: State of the World's Human Rights*," which documents abuses in 159 countries, said that powerful governments are blocking advances in international justice by standing above the law on human rights, shielding allies from criticism and acting only when politically convenient. Claudio Cordone, AI interim secretary-general, said in a statement: "Governments must ensure that no one is above the law, and that everyone has access to justice for all human rights violations. Until governments stop subordinating justice to political self-interest, freedom from fear and freedom from want will remain elusive for most of humanity." ([27 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

### **EU, Asean Urge credible election in Burma**

After a ministerial meeting in Madrid on Wednesday, the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) called on Burma's rulers to ensure that this year's planned election is "credible, transparent, democratic and inclusive." In a joint statement, the EU and Asean ministers said they believed that the early release of those under detention, including the main opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, would contribute to making the election more inclusive and help bring about a peaceful political transition. The EU and Asean ministers also encouraged the Burmese regime to continue to engage in a meaningful manner with the international community. ([27 May 2010 Irrawaddy](#))

## **20 May 2010**

### **Junta's laws make free polls impossible: EU parliament**

The European Parliament on Thursday passed a resolution condemning the Burmese regime's plan to hold a national election "under undemocratic conditions and on the basis of rules which exclude the main democratic opposition". The strongly worded resolution passed by a majority of 736-member European Union body also called for Burma's new electoral laws to be repealed because they "make the holding of free and transparent elections impossible". The resolution criticized Burma's new constitution, infamously ratified in May 2008 in what is commonly referred to as a sham referendum. The resolution "deplores the fact that, under the new constitution, the military will be guaranteed at least 25 per cent of the seats in parliament and will have the power to suspend civil liberties and legislative authority in the interests of national security". The Burma Campaign UK's Zoya Phan called the resolution "a significant step for human rights in Burma and one of the strongest statements about Burma to be issued by the European parliament". She added that she was

particularly pleased with the resolution because it called for the leaders of EU member states to publicly support the UN's creation of a commission of inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the regime in Burma.

[\(21 May 2010 Mizzima\)](#)

#### **14 May 2010**

##### **UN rues Burma election monitor ban**

The UN will continue to encourage the Burmese junta to open its borders to foreign election observers later this year “to inspire confidence” in the highly controversial polls. Spokesperson Martin Nesirky also defended in a press conference yesterday the UN's silence on the decision by the National League for Democracy (NLD) party to boycott the elections as a marker of respect for parties to “take their own decisions”. Thein Soe, the head of the Election Commission, said on Tuesday: “the nation has a lot of experience with elections. We do not need election watchdogs to come here.” Although no official ban has been introduced, it is the second time a senior minister has made such comments. [\(14 May 2010 DVB\)](#)

#### **12 May 2010**

##### **Junta rejects international election observers**

The Burmese government has rejected the role of international election observers in the upcoming election this year, according to state-run newspapers. The newspaper The New Light of Myanmar on Wednesday reported that the chairman of the Union Election Commission, Thein Soe, told visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell of the government's decision during their meeting in Napyidaw. “The nation has a lot of experience with elections,” Thein Soe is quoted as saying. “We do not need election watchdogs to come here.” His remark came after a question by Campbell on whether international election observers, including Asean, would be allowed to monitor the election. [\(12 may 2009 Irrawaddy\)](#)

#### **10 May 2010**

##### **Quintana says conditions not present for credible elections**

The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, in a press release said that, “The Government of Myanmar [Burma] has not yet responded to pleas from inside and outside the country for conditions that allow credible elections”. One of the main obstacles to a free and fair election is the fact that more than 2,000 political prisoners—including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and members of the 88 Generation Students—are held in prisons across Burma, and the election laws forbid all of them from taking part in the election. Quintana said that the release of prisoners of conscience would allow political parties that have decided against participation to reconsider, and would facilitate the active participation of all citizens in Burma's first election since 1990. Bo Kyi, the joint-secretary of Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma, agreed that prisoners should be released but is not optimistic. “All the political prisoners should be released so that they can take part in the political process,” Bo Kyi said. “I don't anticipate general amnesty for the prisoners before the elections. But perhaps only a small number of prisoners who have almost served their terms would be freed just for show.” [\(6 may 2010 Irrawaddy\)](#)

## Opinion Section

### **Ban Ki-moon must stand tall – Bo Kyi (17 May, 2010)**

Full article online at: <http://www.dvb.no/analysis/ban-ki-moon-must-stand-tall/9065>

At a recent press conference, the spokesperson for UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon asserted that “the United Nations has strongly encouraged the Myanmar [Burmese] authorities to invite regional and international monitors because we believe that that will inspire confidence in the elections”. It is hard to imagine anything inspiring confidence in the elections. To speak of election monitors in Burma misses the point entirely. An election is more than just what happens on the day: to be effective, election observation must look at the entire electoral process over a long period of time, rather than at election-day proceedings only. For this to occur, there needs to be genuine support from the state, as occurred in Cambodia in 1993, where over 50,000 Cambodians were trained as election officials by the UN Transitional. Elections are a process and it is the process itself that is fundamental to democracy. The legitimacy of the election in Burma will not rest on the whether international observers are allowed to monitor the election – the legitimacy of the election rests on the regime’s response to dissent. In Burma, some 2,200 people remain in prison, where they live in dire conditions and endure appalling abuses at the hands of the military junta for their simple desire for a more peaceful and democratic Burma. If it is democracy that this election is meant to serve, then why does the junta keep locking up the very people who seek this aim? In 2009 Ban Ki-moon stated: “It is high time to turn the promise of the responsibility to protect into practice”. It is high time he gave meaning to these words; it is high time he stood up for the people of Burma. Without the support of the UN and the countries which make up its mandate, then all you are left with is bravery of the Burmese people to fight alone; with their words and with their hearts. It is time Ban Ki-moon stood on the side of the Burmese people. He has the freedom to speak out and those who have the freedom to speak out should do so for those who cannot. The risk for him is far less than the risk my courageous brothers and sisters take, for they will continue to risk torture and even death before renouncing their non-violent struggle.

### **The Courage of Clandestine Video Journalists - Kavi Chongkittavorn (3 May, 2010)**

Online at: <http://www.dvb.no/analysis/the-courage-of-clandestine-video-journalists/8879>

### **Game Over? No, Not Yet - Aung Zaw (7 May 2010)**

Online at: [http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion\\_story.php?art\\_id=18412](http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=18412)

### **Than Shwe's Election Dilemma -Bamargyi (May 24 2010)**

Online at: [http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion\\_story.php?art\\_id=18539](http://www.irrawaddy.org/opinion_story.php?art_id=18539)

## Conclusion

It seems that the SPDC will soon have a new means with which to silence dissent and put activists behind bars. Burma is set to enact new anti-terror legislation in the coming months. This was reiterated in an announcement by the Police Chief in May, after the arrest of a suspect in connection to the water festival bombing in Rangoon. The timing of the laws, in

the lead up to elections, indicates that they will be used to clamp down on any unrest as the election draws closer or in its aftermath. It seems likely that the anti-terrorism laws will be employed to imprison members of dissident groups or individual activists who contact opposition groups in exile in an attempt to prevent democracy activists and the opposition movement from effectively mobilising.

If anti-terror legislation presented serious challenges to international law, in western democracies such as the United Kingdom and the United States, then the nature of anti-terror laws drafted by a military regime, operating in a culture of impunity and without Parliamentary oversight, is deeply concerning. Anti-terror legislation usually includes provisions allowing for the suspension of regular procedure. In the US, for example, the laws allowed for warrantless searches and in the UK detention without trial. The Patriot Act, introduced in the US, one month after September 11 dramatically increased law enforcement agencies' ability to search telephone, e-mail, medical and financial records, and also expanded the definition of terrorism to include domestic terrorism, thereby, enlarging the number of activities to which Patriot Act's expanded law enforcement powers could apply.

Terror laws usually allow for harsher penalties. In Burma, any individual or organization who is contacted by or receives support from illegal groups such as dissident and armed groups can be charged under the Section 17/1 of the Unlawful Associations Act, with those convicted sentenced to 3 to 5 years in prison. The Unlawful Associations Act is usually used in conjunction with other draconian laws, such as the Electronic Transactions Act. Under this Act, the prison term is much longer, carrying a maximum sentence of 15 years, than the law used previously to imprison dissidents and journalists, which had a maximum sentence of 7 years. The Electronic Transactions Act was used to sentence prominent student leaders for their involvement in the peaceful 88 Generation led demonstrations (August 2007) and the Saffron Revolution (September 2007), after detaining them for one year without trial. Many 88 Generation members are now in prison with extraordinarily long sentences, some in excess of 65 years. Under the new anti-terror laws we can expect much harsher prison sentences than currently occurring under the Unlawful Associations Act.

The government has, in the past, charged numerous activists, students, and opposition members of being "terrorists", even accusing them of stockpiling explosives and weapons in monasteries. The new anti-terror laws may be tried out on those charged with the recent bombings in Rangoon, in April and in Kachin State. In May, at least 60 Kachin were detained and interrogated in relation to the bombing. As has happened in the past, these bombings are used as an excuse to clamp down on anti-government activities. Many of those arrested in Kachin State had been involved in peaceful protests against the construction of a dam, which is likely to displace up to 10,000 people and has been strongly opposed by local Kachin people. In Burma, there is a well-established pattern of wrongful imprisonment of those who speak out against the regime. Following previous bombings, such as those in 2005, 1996 and 1989, political activists have been falsely accused, tortured and unlawfully imprisoned for these crimes, in an attempt by the regime to damage the reputation of opposition groups. The tragic case of Thant Zaw and Nyi Nyi Oo, two NLD members wrongfully convicted of bombing a petroleum factory in July 1989, illustrates this travesty. In the absence of any evidence of involvement in the bombing, confessions were extracted under repeated and brutal torture and the two were sentenced to death for high

treason and murder. Despite a man confessing to the bombing and stating that the NLD members did not take part in the incident, Thant Zaw and Nyi Nyi Oo were never released.

Of interest, with terror legislation is the definition of terrorist. In the past the military regime have already accused armed groups such as the Karen National Union and the All Burma Students' Democratic Front of terrorism. To what extent will those associated with these groups also be classified as terrorists? Comments made late last year by Pol Col Sit Aye, the head of the Burmese Police Department of Transnational Crime, indicate that "Action will be taken against those who offer financial or material support to terrorism". In Burma, we can expect any new anti-terror laws to have far-reaching and pervasive consequences for those involved in the peaceful fight for a more democratic Burma.