



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for June 2011



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Monthly Chronology July 2011

Summary of current situation

There are a total of **1995** political prisoners in Burma. In July, **1** activist was arrested, **1** political prisoner was released. *

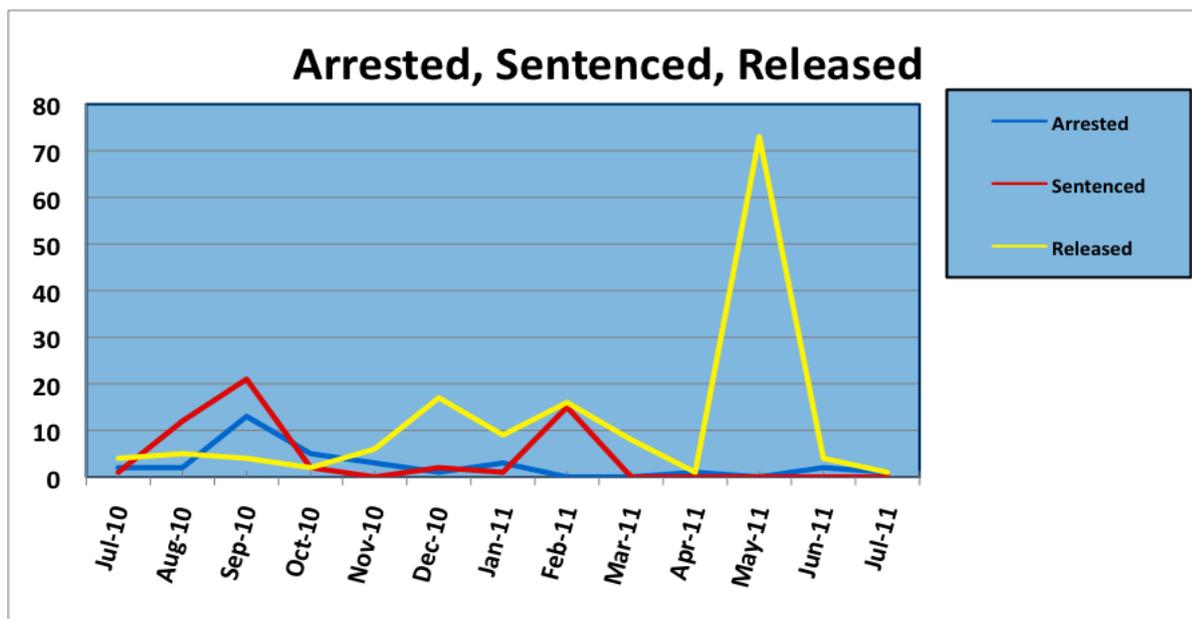
The total number of political prisoners is 1995

These prisoners include:	NUMBER
Monks	225
Members of Parliament	10
Students	269
Women	156
NLD members	347
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network	26
Ethnic nationalities	318
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	17
Teachers	24
Media activists	23
Lawyers	12
Labor activists	46
88 Generation Students	37
Doctors	8
Individual activists	487
In poor health	162

Since the protests in September 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **850** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

* AAPP continually receives new information on political prisoners who have been released or arrested. During the month of July 2011, AAPP learnt that 3 were arrested and 2 were released recently. The dates remain uncertain, and account for the discrepancy in the numbers with past chronologies.

Monthly Trend Analysis



The information received by AAPP during the month of July reports the ongoing mistreatment and poor health conditions of political prisoners in prisons. This month, AAPP has received several cases of prisoners suffering from severe health problems caused by the inhumane and harsh conditions of detention. Many of the political prisoners are suffering from health conditions that are caused by the poor hygiene and poor quality of food that they receive in the prisons. In addition, prison authorities often deny medical care and hospitalization when it is requested and needed by the prisoners, further worsening their health condition. While the return of the ICRC to the prisons appears positive, it is important to remember that prison authorities often try to hide the true picture of the reality inside the prisons. Former political have confirmed that the ICRC is never allowed to independently interact with prisoners during visits.

Despite promised improvements of the human rights situation, the military backed Thein Sein administration has arrested one more activist this month. On the 19th of July, Aung Hla Myint aka Phoe Htaung, a member of the NLD in Tatkon township and former political prisoner was arrested under unclear charges. AAPP is waiting to receive further information on the case.

AAPP received updates on the case of political prisoner Hnin May Aung, also known as Noble Aye, in the month of July. Prison authorities responded to her open letter demanding state authorities to retract statements denying the existence of political prisoners in Burma by banning family visits and holding her incommunicado in solitary confinement. This is a clear sign that the basic rights of prisoners are not respected, including freedom of expression.

Torture and Treatment of prisoners and their families

Mistreatment of prisoners has continued during the month of July despite the fact that the ICRC has recently been allowed to return to visit the prisons. This should not be seen as an easing of restrictions on behalf of the Burmese regime. AAPP continues to receive several cases of prisoners suffering from severe health conditions, which could have been prevented if prisons authorities had allowed hospitalization or adequate medical treatment to political prisoners. In addition, AAPP has received information regarding family visits that have been denied as a form of punishment or reduced to only a few minutes to some political prisoners who are in remote areas, where it is very hard for their families to travel and visit.

Ma Khin Khin Nu, a female political prisoner suffering from Hepatitis C, has been hospitalized at Insein prison for three-four days at the beginning of July. Her health situation has now deteriorated to the point that she can't even drink water. **(refer to Women section)**

Ko Than Tin, who is suffering from bleeding veins in his stomach, is currently hospitalized in Sittwe hospital since the 22nd of July. His wrist is swollen as his right hand has been handcuffed to the bed. Family members have requested the police to cuff his leg instead, though this request has been denied. His family will most likely be engaging in further action as a sign of protest. In addition, reports say that a prison guard has been punished by the authorities when a DVB reporter tried to film and get information on Ko Than Tin's health condition.

Ret. Captain Nay Myo Zin, is currently hospitalized in Insein prison hospital after he fell in prison. He was denied request for external hospitalization and as a consequence his legal representative has sent an appeal letter, requesting Nay Myo Zin to be transferred to a facility with adequate medical care.

Two prisoners from Hpa-an prison have been suffering from a health condition: Ko Nyan Lin is suffering from eye problems and is being seen by an outside specialist. Nay Kyaw is also suffering from a serious heart disease and needs urgent hospitalization.

In addition, political prisoner Ma Honey Oo, member of the 2007 Student Generation Union, currently serving in Lashio prison, is suffering from gastric problems due to the poor quality of the prison food. **(refer to Women section)**

Regarding family visits, AAPP has received information that Ma Hnin May Aung aka Ma Noble Aye, a female political prisoner at Monywa prison, had her family visits banned and is being held incommunicado in solitary confinement after she had written a letter criticizing the military-backed administration's denial of the existence of political prisoners in Burma. **(refer to Women section)**

Family visits have been limited to only a few minutes in some remote prisons. Ma Ni Ni Mar, the wife of political prisoner Ko Myo Min said that she visited her husband on 7 July in Kyaukpyu prison, in Arakan state, and she was only allowed fifteen minutes to see him by the prison authorities, explaining that this rule was in accordance with their responsibilities. She also said that due to the extreme distance from their native town (Rangoon), she is only able to

visit him once every two years. Many political prisoners face the same situation as prison authorities purposely transfer political prisoners to remote prisons in order to make it difficult for their families to visit them.

Torture also continues to be widespread in prisons. Ko Htin Kyaw, a political prisoner detained in Hkamti prison, has decided to take action by writing a complaint letter calling for action to be taken against the Hkamti prison superintendent who has abused his position and authority to mistreat political prisoners and his lower ranking staff. The letter was submitted to 10 departments, including the Minister of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw on the 4th of July 2011.

14 July

[Rights group says Burma army using prison labor on front lines \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)
[Traveling from one prison to another to visit relatives](#)

18 July

[Rights groups condemn 'war crime' use of convict porters](#)

Prisoners released

In the month of July, 1 political prisoner was released. On the 31st of July, U Pyinnya Thiri, a monk political prisoner was released after more than four years in prison. Phyto Sithu is a prisoner who was sentenced to death as a 15-year-old in 2003, and later changed to a 20-year jail term. He is now 21 years old and is currently detained in the remote Kale prison. His family is asking for his release as he was given a sentence before he turned 16, which is illegal in accordance with the Child Protection Law.

National League for Democracy

There are at least **347** members of the NLD remaining in prison.

At the end of June, the Ministry of Home Affairs sent a letter to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD chairman U Aung Shwe which demanding them to stop engaging in unlawful activities in opposition to the new Parliament and government. In response, the National League for Democracy party claimed that freedom of association is a universal human right, and stated that it is making plans to take its legal status case to the United Nations Council of Human Rights (UNCHR), as it has been threatened by the new government, which has called it an illegal organization.

19 July

[NLD to present its legal status case to the UN human rights council](#)

15 July

[At the mercy of Burmese 'law', Suu Kyi must play a wise game](#)

12 July

[Govt. pressure threatens NLD existence](#)

88 Generation Students

There are at least **37** members of 88 Generation Students group still remaining in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Ethnic Nationalities

There are at least **318** ethnic people still remaining in prison. There is no news to report in July.

Monks

There are at least **225** monks still remain in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Cyclone Nargis Volunteers

There are at least **17** Cyclone Nargis volunteers still remain in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Journalists, Bloggers and Writers (media activists)

There are at least **26** media activists still remaining in prisons.

Ko Nay Phone Latt, a blogger who is currently serving 12 years of imprisonment in Pa An prison, in the Karen State, said that if he was given the opportunity to meet with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), he would complain about the government's refusal to acknowledge the existence of political prisoners in Burma. His mother Daw Aye Aye Than who visited him in prison, told the BBC.

She added that there are around 10 political prisoners in Hpa-an prison: Ko Nyan Lin from 88 generation group, Ko Nay Kyaw, Ko Kyaw Kyaw Naing, Ko Pyae Phyo Aung, including Ko Nay Phone Latt.

7 July

[Media groups call for journalists release \(DVB/AFP\)](#)

Women

There are at least **156** women still remaining in prison.

Ma Khin Khin Nu, a member of the parliament of the National Human Rights and Democratic Party in Buthidaung township, in Arakan state, currently is detained in Insein prison, and reports said that she was hospitalized at Insein prison hospital this month for three to four days. She is suffering from hepatitis C and a close source to AAPP has reported that her health situation has deteriorated to the point that she can't even drink water.

Hnin May Aung (aka Nobel Aye), a prominent female political prisoner submitted a complaint letter to President U Thein Sein and his quasi-civilian regime demanding them to withdraw recent statements regarding the denial of the existence of political prisoners in Burma. As a consequence, the authorities at Monywa prison punished Hnin May Aung by banning her family visits and placing her in solitary confinement for breaking 'prison rules'.

Reports say that her parents were denied their visit in the month of July, and that they heard her screams calling for her mother when they tried to visit her on the 7th of July.

Hnin May Aung is currently serving her second prison term. She was first imprisoned in 1998 for her involvement in non-violent political activities. She received a 42-year imprisonment sentence, but was later released under an amnesty in July 2005. She was arrested for the second time on August 23rd 2007 for taking part in the September 2007 protest, and is currently sentenced to 11 years imprisonment.

Political prisoner Ma Honey Oo, member of the 2007 Student Generation Union, currently serving her sentence in Lashio prison, is suffering from a gastric problem due to the poor quality of the prison food. Reports received say that she has complained to the authorities on the matter, but has yet to see any improvements.

19 July

[Prisoner denied visit for sending letter](#)

Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network

There are at least **26** HRDP members still remaining in prisons. There is no news report in July.

Labor Activists

There are at least **46** labor activists still remaining in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Students

There are at least **269** students still remaining in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Lawyers

There are at least **12** lawyers still remaining in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Individual Activists

There are at least **487** individual activists still remaining in prisons. There is no news to report in July.

Key International Developments

The ICRC was granted access to prisons between 1-2 July, but visits were limited to observing water distribution and hygiene in the prisons, and did not include meetings with prisoners. The move was due to pressure on the Burmese regime. Although it is welcomed as a positive sign and improvement, this doesn't necessarily mean that prisoners' conditions will improve.

The Obama administration positively received the news that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been able to travel around the country and meet people. At the same time, US Secretary of

State Hilary Clinton this month called Burma to release its political prisoners, to open dialogue with the opposition, and to appropriately address concerns regarding weapon proliferation.

July 28th

[Clinton calls Burma to free Political Prisoners](#)

July 25th

[Second Australian resident admits to Burma killings](#)

21 July

[US pressures India again on Burma \(Mizzima\)](#)

[US House Renews Burma Sanctions\(VOA\)](#)

18 July

[Child torturer sentenced](#)

[Australia police to assess Burma 'war criminal'](#)

8 July

[Obama Urged to Push for Col on Burma War Crimes \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

7 July

[ICRC returns to Burmese prisons, but doesn't meet prisoners](#)

[Rights groups seek tougher Myanmar sanctions, say US diplomacy has not worked \(AP\)](#)

[US civil society urges more Myanmar pressure \(AFP\)](#)

Conclusion

Despite positive assessments from Naypyidaw that Burma is in the final stages of its transition to democracy, as claimed by Attorney General Tun Shin during the last session of the Universal Periodic Review in June, heavy restrictions on freedom of expression continue. The month of July marked the second arrest of a political prisoner since the swearing in of Parliament in March. It is unclear why Aung Hla Myint aka Phoe Htaung was arrested, although his membership in the National League for Democracy is evidence enough for a regime that operates under draconian emergency laws allowing it to arrest anyone vaguely deemed as a threat to the security and stability of the state.

An update on the case of Noble Aye, a female political prisoner who condemned Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo's public statements denying the existence of political prisoners in Burma, emerged in July. Prison authorities are effectively holding Noble Aye incommunicado in a punishment cell, in addition to banning her family visits indefinitely. When her father, who attempted to visit Noble Aye on 12 July, asked the warden of the prison why her family visits have been banned, he was told that Noble had violated prison regulations. This is a well-worn tactic by state authorities to stamp out resistance movements by separating the movement's key leaders from the rest of the prison population in an attempt to strip them of their dignity and spirit.

The decision to isolate a prisoner, whether short-term or long-term, must not be taken lightly or in an arbitrary manner. International standards dictate that prison authorities using solitary confinement must justify their decision in writing and be accountable for it. One aspect of this is having a prison doctor examine the prisoner to ensure he or she is fit for isolation. This almost never happens in Burma. Political prisoners, regardless of age or health status are placed in harsh solitary confinement cells that aggravate their health conditions. Moreover, international standards dictate that the decision to segregate a prisoner, or to continue his or her segregation, must be regularly reviewed by an independent body, and the prisoner must have the right to appeal against the decision. Complaining about issues in the prison system or any attempts to seek redress, whether through domestic or international means, virtually always results in more punishment.

Until the obstacles to freedom of expression are removed, any claims by the Thein Sein regime purporting to be a democracy will ring hollow. Freedom of expression is a basic cornerstone of democracy and is essential not only for individual dignity, but also to participation and accountability: elements vital for democracy to work. Burma has shown on countless occasions its insincerity in implementing a genuine democracy, doing only the bare minimum as a ploy to ease pressure from the international community.

Allowing the ICRC to enter Burma from 1-2 July is the most recent evidence of this. Although many hailed the move as a positive step, the ICRC was heavily limited in scope and was not allowed to meet with any prisoners. AAPP received several reports during July concerning the deteriorating health of political prisoners due to their conditions of detention, whether due to the poor quality of the food or the complete lack of adequate medical care. AAPP has continually called for the return of the ICRC to Burma, however it must be allowed unrestricted, independent, and regular access to all prisons and detention centers before the move can be considered genuine.

The positive encouragement Burma has received from Indonesia regarding its potential to chair ASEAN in 2014 is deeply troublesome. In potentially allowing Burma, a country with the worst human rights record in the region, this prestigious position, ASEAN is sending a strong symbol to the international community that respecting core human rights are irrelevant. This does not do Burma any good in its transition to democracy and will only embolden it to continue to make cosmetic changes while denying its people basic freedoms. AAPP urges the international community to pressure ASEAN member states to reject Burma's bid to chair ASEAN until it shows sincerity in transitioning to a democracy. This cannot happen until it unconditionally and immediately releases all political prisoners, who represent the very denial of freedom of expression.

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