



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများ ကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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

E-mail: info@aappb.org, info.aappburma@gmail.com Website: www.aappb.org

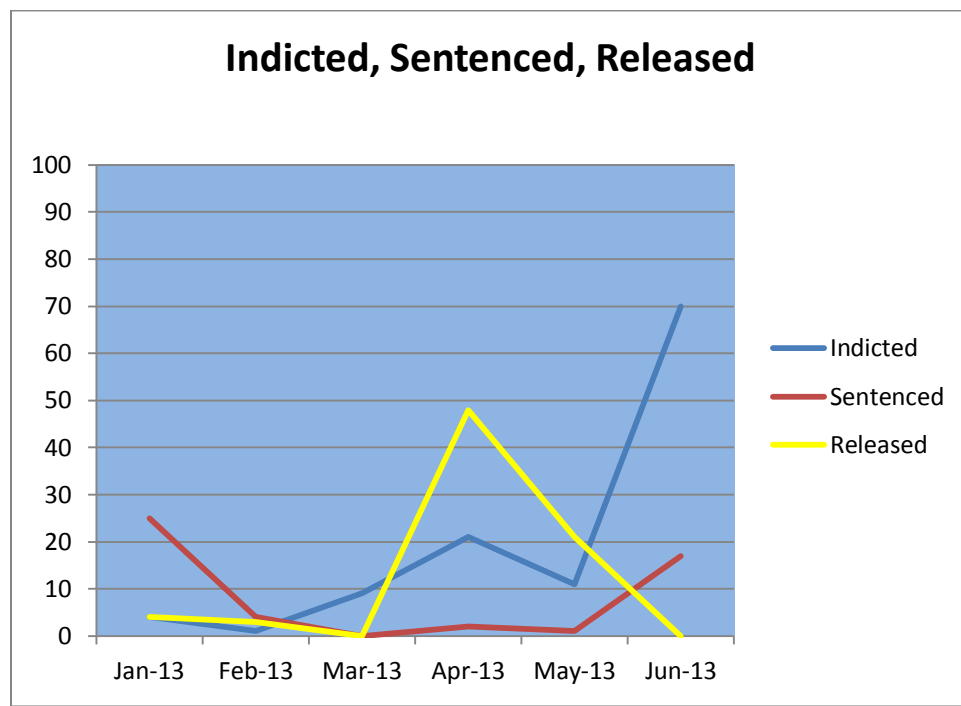
Political Prisoner Watch (Burma)

June 2013

Month in Review

During the month of June, many activists were charged and sent to jail under Section 505 of Burma's Penal Code and under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Law. An emerging trend is the nation-wide cases of "protest plows." Landless farmers have been contesting land confiscations by plowing and reharvesting their formally held lands, risking arrest. Further developments in the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project protests underline the conflict between the government and civil society groups, even if the government announced further improvements, especially with the meeting of the Committee to Scrutinize Remaining Political Prisoners.

Summary of the current situation



In the month of June, **70** new individuals are facing trial, **17** were incarcerated, and **no one** was released this month. In addition, there are at least **4** political prisoners in poor health with **2** suffering from AIDS.

Incarcerations

At least **17** individuals were sentenced in the month of June.

Two local farmers and one organizer of the “plowing protests” which took place at Sae Tae village near the Letpadaung Copper Mine project have been sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to one and a half years. The protest organizer, Aung Soe, and the two farmers, Soe Thu and Maung San, were arrested on April 24 following a police crackdown on the ‘plowing’ protest. Han Win Aung, who also took part in the protest against the imposition of Section 144 and the continuance of the copper mine on confiscated lands, said that “word finally got out this weekend that the three had already been sentenced and were being held at Shwebo Prison in Mandalay Division”, but “Shwebo Prison could not ascertain any details” (Mizzima).

A farmer leader from Prome Tsp, Ko Win Hlaing, who led the re plowing in Prome Tsp was sentenced to a total of 3 months imprisonment with hard labor under 3 counts of Section 18. He is currently being detained in Prome Tsp prison for peacefully protesting without permission.

Seven shop keepers, who had protested against the authority's order without permission because they were forced to relocate from Kine-Dan night market to a different place, were sentenced on June 12, 2013, at Chan-Aye-Thar-Zan Tsp court. The defendants Ko Aye Thein, Ko

Sein Aung, Ko Win Swe Myint were sentenced to 1 year imprisonment under Section 505 (b) and they were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment under Section 18 of the Peaceful Protesting Bill. They were given a total of 1 year and 3 months imprisonment. In addition, Ko Nyi Nyi Kyaw, Ma Nwe Nwe Oo, Ma Ni Ni Aung and Ma Thae Thae were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment under Section 18. The reporter who attended the court hearing commented: "Women did not think they were sentenced to be detained in prison, but probably just to pay a fine. The defense women were shocked as they were sentenced to be incarcerated."

Ko Win Hlaing from Prome Tsp is currently facing trial under 3 counts of Section 18. On June 11, 2013, he was sentenced to pay 10,000 Kyat fine or 3 months imprisonment under one count of Section 18, and was also given 3 months imprisonment with hard labor under another count of Section 18 at Prome Tsp Court.

In August 2012, around 100 shop keepers had marched to the Mayor's office as they did not agree with the authority's order. At that time, Ko Aye Thein, facilitator for labors (Upper Burma), Ko Win Swe Myint and Ko Nyi Nyi Kyaw, member of Conflict Prevention Group were summoned by U Aung Maung, the Mayor's and they discussed with him. Later, the police arrested them and their case was brought to the court.

June 24th

[More than fifty farmers from Pyu Tsp were arrested \(RFA\)](#)

June 13th

[No police prosecuted for incendiary attack but seven activists so far imprisoned over Letpadaung mine dispute \(Asia Human Rights Commission\)](#)

[A protester in Prome Tsp, sentenced to 3 months imprisonment with hard labor \(Irrawaddy Blog\)](#)

June 12th

[The demonstrators from Mandalay sentenced \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

June 7th

[Latpadaung activist sentenced to hard labor](#)

June 4th

[Latpadaung 'ploughing' protesters sentenced \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Two detainees related to the Lapdaung Taung affair, transferred to a different court and tried \(RFA\)](#)

[Villagers in Pyin-Oo Lwin were indicted \(DVB\)](#)

Facing Trial

In the month of June **70** individuals are newly facing trial.

On June 17, 2013, Thet Wai, a labor rights activist appeared in court in south central Burma, to defend himself against charges of profanity, after a local chairman from the National League for Democracy (NLD) sued him for 'trespassing' and 'cursing' at members during a party meeting in March. Thet Wai insists that he has done nothing wrong and has vowed to fight the charges.

Six activists, who had protested to remove the building that was built on the Irrawaddy River shore, were arrested. They protested on June 17, 2013, and were all indicted under Section 18, on June 18, 2013.

Activists who are outspoken against the Letpadaung Copper Mine continue to face harassment and arrest under trumped up charges. Burmese authorities have issued arrest warrants against three local activists, who recently told reporters in central Burma that an emergency decree, which hands sweeping powers to the military near a controversial copper mine project, should be revoked. One of the activists, Moe Thway, is currently facing several other trials across a number of courts in Burma for staging “unlawful” protests against the November crackdown. He now faces an additional two years in jail under Section 505 (b) of Burma’s Penal Code, which was used to imprison hundreds of democracy activists during military rule.

Across the nation, landless farmers are protesting unlawful land confiscations by plowing their previously-held lands. State authorities have responded by arresting not only the farmers, but also any individuals who are perceived to be supporting the farmers. One individual is facing trial for providing assistance to farmers who are attempting to regain their lost lands. The indicted, U Mhan Aung Myint Thein, is facing trial under trespassing charges. The case was filed on 22 June 2013 at Twante Tsp police station, by Rangoon Divisional Military Head Quarters, battalion no-70.

There have been at least five cases of farmers facing trial for attempting to reharvest their lands this month. In one case, 13 farmers from Prome District are standing trial for reharvesting land confiscated by the Burmese Defense Industry, Ka-Pa-Sa No. 5. According to one of the defendants, U Htay Lwin, in Daun-Tike village, "At the moment, we don't know yet if the land is ours or if it belongs to them. Indeed, we have evidence but they also have the order letter." It is estimated that since 1989 Burma Defense Industry (DI), Ka-Pa-Sa No-5, confiscated a total of 226 acres lands.

Likewise, recently, twelve farmers re-plowed a total of 60 acres in South Dagon Tsp, Rangoon that was confiscated by Golden Dragon Company Ltd. As a result, seven among twelve farmers were indicted under two different sections, including trespassing on 18 June 2013.

Twenty farmers from Kyauktaw Tsp in Arakan State are facing trial under Section 447 for « trespassing ». The farmers harvested a field now owned by the Light Infantry Battalion No 539. Four of the 20 farmers were initially tried on June 27, 2013, at Kyauktaw Tsp Court. The remaining 16 have been indicted at Ah-Pauk-Wa police station, in Kyauktaw Tsp. More than 130 acres owned by 28 farmers were confiscated without compensation by LIB No-539, in 2010.

On June 24, 2013, 52 two farmers were indicted, and tried under section 353 concerning assault or criminal force deterring public servants from discharge of their duty, voiced the farmer U Tin Ngwe. According to the villagers, they consequently were kept in the township police station. Afterwards, 36 among them were allowed bail on June 27, 2013. The 16 remaining were charged with one more accusation under Section 447 for trespassing. One hundred and forty one farmers from Phyu Tsp, Pegu division requested the authorities for plowing permission in the Pa La Pha (Ministry Of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement) field in Nyaun-Pin-Thar village.

Thirteen farmers reharvested 100 acres, near 446 Kyone-Ma-Nar fields in section 98, Dagon Seik Kan Tsp, Rangoon. The Golden Dragon Company Ltd confiscated the lands, and as a

result, farmers had to gain the permission to plow the land. One of the farmers, U Hla Htay said that: "since the lands are traditionally generation owned lands, we re-harvested them." The farmers were not given any compensation. The thirteen farmers received the letters explaining they were indicted; however, they have not learnt yet when they will be tried and under which sections they were indicted.

On June 24, 2013, fifty two farmers from Nyaun-Pin-Thar village, Phyu Tsp, Pegu division were indicted and tried under Section 353 for assault or criminal force deterring public servants from discharge of their duty at Tsp court. According to villagers, they consequently were kept in the township police station. One hundred and forty one farmers requested the authorities for plowing permission in the Pa La Pha field in Nyaun-Pin-Thar village. The farmers were indicted under Section 353, said farmer U Tin Ngwe, who claims that all the farmers were subsequently placed in custody.

The date for the final argument of Kachin refugee Lahtaw Brang Shaun, who was arrested under the Unlawful Association Act, has been postponed for a second time due to the order of an unnamed higher authority. Originally fixed for 13 June the final hearing will now take place on 11 July. The defense lawyer U Mar Khar said the case has already taken one year and that if it had been judged quicker, he could have already submitted an appeal.

June 29th

[More than twenty farmers, indicted by the Army \(RFA\)](#)

June 27th

[The date for final argument of KIO suspect U Brang Shaun, suspended again \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 25th

[MP indicted for giving assistance to the farmers affair \(RFA\)](#)

June 19th

[Burmese labour activist sued for 'cursing' at NLD \(DVB\)](#)

June 18th

[Farmers re plowed in Dagon Seik-Kan Tsp \(RFA\)](#)

June 17th

[Copper mine activists face prison for 'insulting' police \(DVB\)](#)

[Three members of Rangoon People's Support Network, summoned by the police \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 10th

[Thirteen farmers, re harvested, were indicted \(RFA\)](#)

Releases

No political prisoners were released this month.

President U Thein Sein pledged on June 4, 2013, to release soon all country's remaining political prisoners. In a monthly radio address, the president said: "I don't want anyone who is imprisoned with particular political beliefs in any jail". However, U Thein Sein did not reveal the number of prisoners that the government considers to be jailed for their political beliefs. In addition, he did not provide an exact timetable for the release of all political prisoners.

During the 4th meeting of the Verification Committee for the Release of Remaining Political Prisoners on June 16, 2013, U Soe Thein, Minister of the President's office as well as the

chairman of the committee promised that the authorities were planning to release all remaining political prisoners. U Soe Thein also added that the government would bring the issue of Article 401 before Parliament, to amend it so that no former political prisoner would be conditionally released under it anymore.

A member of the Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS), U Ye Aung, said that the Verification Committee members submitted not only the names of political prisoners who were sentenced under the military government, but also the names of those who were indicted under Section 18 or 505 (b), under the military-backed civilian government, and advocated for their immediate release.

The Committee charged with verifying the remaining political prisoners in Burma has vetted 155 political prisoners and forwarded the list to President Thein Sein for reviewing. Ko Bo Kyi, member of the government-appointed committee to investigate the cases of political prisoners and joint-secretary of Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), said that 155 activists might soon be released from Burma's jails including those arrested for participation in the Letpadaung protests.

June 18th

[Scrutiny committee forwards list of political prisoners to President's office \(DVB\)](#)

June 17th

[155 remaining political prisoners may soon be released, says campaigner \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 13th

[All the remaining political prisoners will be freed \(VOA Burmese\)](#)

June 11th

[Mass Political Prisoner Release Expected Soon: Activist \(Irrawady\)](#)

June 8th

[Burma: AAPP-B wishes Presidential amnesty for all political prisoners \(Asian Tribune\)](#)

June 5th

[President promises to free all political prisoners \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 4th

[Myanmar 'Soon' to Release Remaining Political Prisoners \(RFA\)](#)

Detentions

This month, a total of **65** activists and farmers were arrested and kept in custody.

Thirty six among fifty two farmers were allowed bail and released from police custody. Twenty two out of the sixty five detained activists and farmers are still in prison or under police custody; nonetheless, the information on the date they will be tried is unknown.

Human rights lawyer U Robert San Aung, who was released shortly after his arrest, was arrested around 12:30PM on 3 June for requesting state authorities to summon President U Thein Sein and others to be a witness in a case. He was temporarily held in Aungthabyay Interrogation Center where he was warned by authorities.

June 27th

[Thirty Six detained farmers, allowed bail \(RFA\)](#)

June 25th

[Torture occurred in Kengtung prison \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

June 24th

[More than fifty farmers from Pyu Tsp were arrested \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

June 20th

[Sagaing authorities seek arrest of 3 activists that criticized them \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

June 12th

[Social Network Activists arrested after supporting farmers in Pegu division \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

June 11th

[Daw Myint Myint Aye, a member of People's Support Network, arrested \(DVB\)](#)

[Three activists, supporting farmers, re harvested the confiscated land, arrested \(RFA\)](#)

June 10th

[Farmers, confiscated their lands were arrested \(BBC Burmese\)](#)

Conditions of detention and treatment of family members

A prisoner attempted to commit suicide after he was tortured and put in solitary confinement along with 6 criminal offenders by the prison authorities in Kengtung prison, eastern Shan state. According to a released prisoner, 6 prisoners were tortured on accusations of possessing cell phones. The released prisoner, Kyaw Win, states, « they were put in stocks and shackled, hooded and beaten on the head by the warders. Since they were not able to stand, in the morning of June 15, 2013, one of the victims attempted to commit suicide using his shirt. » His attempt was not successful as the prison authorities found him on time.

The released prisoner added that prisoners are often accused of having mobile phones. As a result they are brutally beaten by prison officers. The only way for prisoners to be free from beating and torture is to give a 50,000 Kyat bribe. A former Kengtung prison staff explained that "the warders did not beat much before; but torture increases when there are no political prisoners in prison."

Although the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recently visited Kengtung prison, prisoners had no chance to talk to ICRC members openly. The prisoners worried that if prison authorities found they talked to ICRC, they would be tortured, so they could not complain to them. In addition, ethnic Akhar, Wa, Lahu and Shan are the major ethnicities in Kengtung prison and they cannot speak Burmese very well. Therefore different ethnicities have faced many obstacles when trying to communicate with the prison authorities.

Irrawaddy media once tried to contact Kengtung prison to find out more about the suicide case; but the jailor, U Soe Moe Aung, responded that the prisoners had not been beaten, and were well treated by the prison authorities. He said no one tried to commit suicide. He clarified and said: "there has been no torture. Prison conditions, including prison food, are good. Moreover, ICRC visited Kengtung prison and even its members did not comment on the subject.

Restrictions on political and civil liberties

This month has seen a rise in arbitrary arrests linked to the “protest plows” cases. In 2013, the companies investing in the hotel project offered locals financial compensation for the crops grown on the more than 600 acres that had been confiscated. However, several villagers

refused to accept the offer because it allegedly only covered the value of the crops, not the property itself. In the beginning of June, the locals proceeded to plough the land in response to the offer. They were then hit with charges after they refused to accept compensation, which they saw as insufficient. According to local official Win Myint, the police were looking to arrest under 505(b) of the penal code for inciting unrest.

On June 5, 2013, fifteen activists who were calling to shut down the Lapdaun Taung Copper Mine Project, were issued an arrest warrant by the Shwebo Tsp court. According to the court, they had violated Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Law for protesting without permission and under Section 144 for invading the region. However, the activists have been in secure hide place highlighting that if the police treat them with violence, there will not be any fierceness.

Nevertheless, this month has shed the light on the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project and the government's lack of transparency and discrepancy. Since June 8, the Committee for the Protection of People's Benefit claimed for the removal of an arrest warrant that was issued to fifteen activists, who were calling to shut down the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project. Claiming for their freedom and underlining that neither the major Company, neither Burma's military owned U Pai Company Ltd had followed the report's recommendations from Letpadaung project. Nonetheless, the Shwebo Tsp Court has already issued a warrant for the arrest of seven residents who led the protest against the Letpadaung Copper Mine Project and 8 activists including Ko Han Win Aung, Ko Wailu and Ko Thaun Htike who went from Rangoon to Lapdaung region to give assistance to the protest.

Because villagers had become afraid of police raids, three human rights defenders, along with Aung Thu of the 1988 Student Generation, went to Monywa to calm tensions. They informed police of their intentions in this regard. While they were there, some local reporters interviewed Moe Thway, Wai Lu and Wai Hmuu Thwin. During the interview, observed by the police from the Special Branch, the human rights defenders gave their opinions on the use of Section 144 to keep the villagers from ploughing their fields, opinions which were perceived as damaging the police and government's credibility.

As a result, the three activists have been accused for speaking out their opinions about police actions in a civil rights movement case, during an interview with the media. The police have issued warrant to arrest the three activists under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code concerning the offence against the State or against public tranquility. The three concerned are highly supported by human rights activists who denounce a judicial harassment who merely aim at sanctioning their peaceful human rights activities, pointing out the limit of the Burma's democracy and the end of freedom of speech and expression.

June 27th

[Letpadaung Copper Mine Remains Mired in Problem \(Radio Free Burma\)](#)

June 24th

[Letpadaung activists face charges over interview \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

[The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\) and the World Organisation Against Torture \(OMCT\)](#)

June 21th

[Latpadaung activists say they're ready to fight charges \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 20th

[NLD, ethnic parties unite in push for constitutional reform before 2015 election \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 12th

[Latpadaung protesters to be listed as political prisoners \(Burma News International\)](#)

[Farmers in hiding near Inle Lake as officials crack down on 'plough protests' \(DVB\)](#)

June 8th

[Activists call for removing an arrest warrant \(RFA Burmese\)](#)

June 5th

[Shwebo Tsp court released detained warrant for fifteen Lapdaung Taung affair activists and residents \(Mizzima Burmese\)](#)

Restrictions on former political prisoners

There is no information regarding restrictions on former political prisoners in June.

June 17th

[A list of 70 political prisoners, submitted by the government \(BBC Burmese\)](#)

AAPP (B) in the media

Ko Bo Kyi, joint secretary at AAPP (B), said he was concerned that Section 505(b) is being used as a blanket tool to lock up activists. “[It] is very broad. People should be allowed to do interviews. It is freedom of expression,” he said, adding that he had sent a letter to the president about the case.

According to Aung Myo Thein of (AAPP) (B), the prisoner review mechanism evaluated the 155 prisoners’ cases during a meeting on 16 June and forwarded the names to the president’s office. Speaking at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on June 16, Ko Bo Kyi said, “We are working to release those 155 prisoners. To do so, we will work closely with the government group. We can’t say when they will be released, but I think it may happen sometime soon.” (Mizzima) AAPP (B) has announced recently that they consider 183 persons as prisoners of conscience, not counting three activists from the Letpadaung incident. Ko Bo Kyi acknowledged that there is a disparity in numbers of activists behind bars because of incomplete records.

AAPP (B) said on Friday that it welcomes Burma President Thein Sein’s pledge to ensure that all political prisoners in the country are released, but calls on him to “put his words into action. » “So far, however, his words have not translated into real and concrete action towards emptying Burma’s prisons of all political prisoners and ensuring no one is arrested for their political beliefs or activities,” it said in a statement. AAPP (B) said it acknowledged the President’s “powerful” message and said that the move was necessary for change and for national reconciliation. But it said that hundreds of political prisoners still remain behind bars and the issues surrounding thousands who have been conditionally released requires attention.

"We are concerned to see that on the one hand, we work hard for the release of political prisoners, but on the other hand, there are still too many possibilities for their number to increase simultaneously," said Ko Bo Kyi.

On June 20, 2013, a press conference was held at 88 Generation Peace & Open Society Office regarding the detainees who were issued a warrant under Section 505 (b) related to the Letpadaung issue. Ko Bo Kyi added that the Verification Committee just got the permission to talk about the release of political detainees who were currently held in prison; however, the committee members were not allowed to discuss about the activists who just faced trial. Therefore, the committee members talked over with the government to be able to extend the committee's authority.

Ko Ye Min Oo was arrested under Section 505 (b) as he was accused of agitating people in Meiktila Tsp. Also, Ko Aung Soe who is the member of Rangoon People's Support Network and gave assistance to the farmers, re plowed in the area that was released Section 144, and two villagers Ko Soe Thu and Ko Maung San were arrested. Ko Bo Kyi pointed out that their arrest was illegal as the activists were arrested without warrants. In addition, Sagaing Divisional district police station issued a warrant against Ko Moe Thway, Ko Wai Lu and Ko Wai Hmu Thwin under Section 505 (b) because they criticized Section 144, related to Letpadaung region. On June 16, 2013, the Verification Committee for the release of Political Prisoners published that a total of 155 political detainees, including the activists implicated in the Letpadaung issue, are still detained at the moment.

June 24th

[Letpadaung activists face charges over interview \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

June 21th

[Letpadaung activists say they're ready to fight charges \(Mizzima\)](#)

[The Association for the Assistance of Political Prisoners \(AAPP\) claims the number of political prisoners has increased despite tentative releases \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 20th

[Sagaing authorities seek arrest of 3 activists that criticized them \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

June 18th

[Scrutiny committee forwards list of political prisoners to President's office \(DVB\)](#)

June 17th

[155 remaining political prisoners may soon be released, says campaigner \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 8th

[Burma: 'AAPP-B' wishes Presidential Amnesty for all Political Prisoners \(Asian Tribune\)](#)

June 7th

[AAPP calls for political prisoner pledge to be put into action \(Mizzima\)](#)

Key Domestic and International Developments

Burma's President U Thein Sein said his government would soon release all prisoners of conscience, as part of sweeping political reforms following the end of junta rule. Burma has formed a committee to review the cases of political detainees and "all the prisoners of conscience will be free soon", President U Thein Sein said in a radio address. "We are taking time to investigate cases that confuse criminal offences and political offences," he said, adding that people convicted of violent crimes linked to political acts "deserve their sentences" (Burma News

International) and clarifying that if the prisoners were acting in accord with political belief, they would no longer belong in jail. However, the international scene understood U Thein Sein's political game, consisting in the release of many political prisoners ahead of some important political visit: his meeting with President Obama or his allocution at the United Nations in September 2012.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) announced that it would lift its remaining restrictions on Burma, in the hope that the Burmese government will boost trade and increase foreign investment as the country's economy continues to open after decades of isolation. Most of all, the European Union has appointed Roland Kobia as its first ambassador to Burma. Kobia, a Belgian, currently heads the Azerbaijan delegation and will replace David Lipman, the EU's ambassador to Thailand, who currently represents Burma. Once again this month, the international point of view and the national situation seems contradictory. While the international scene sees the democratization of a country, bringing attention to strengthen economic links to encourage its development and lifting sanctions, on a national level, political prisoners remain in jail and numerous arrests for peaceful protests are still ongoing.

June 19th

[ILO lifts all restrictions on Burma \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[EU officials discuss aid, trade but warn Naypyidaw on Arakan crisis \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Suu Kyi, Ethnic Parties discuss Constitutional Amendments \(RFA\)](#)

June 14th

[Thein Sein to visit UK, France \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 13th

[Latpadaung protesters to be listed as political prisoners \(Mizzima\)](#)

[EU grants Myanmar preferential trade rates \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 11th

[Aung San Suu Kyi's Narrow Road Can Burma's democracy icon avoid being trapped by the regime that freed her? \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

[Myanmar gears up for first human rights film festival \(Burma News International\)](#)

June 8th

[Thein Sein rejects Suu Kyi's constitutional reform demands \(Australia Broadcast Co\)](#)

June 6th

[Rule of law is work in progress at best: Amnesty \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Suu Kyi: 'I Want to Run for President' \(Radio Free Asia\)](#)

[A Conspicuous Trend in Myanmar's Transition \(Huffington Post\)](#)

June 5th

[President promises to free all political prisoners \(Mizzima\)](#)

June 4th

[Myanmar 'Soon' to Release Remaining Political Prisoners \(Radio Free Asia\)](#)

June 3rd

[EU appoints Myanmar ambassador \(Mizzima\)](#)

Conclusion

This month saw President U Thein Sein's tentative message to Burma and the meeting of the 'Committee to Scrutinize Remaining Political Prisoners' in Rangoon; it gave hope and strong encouragement to continue collaboration and work with the government. Nevertheless, there have been too many cases of detention, incarceration and cases of torture in Kengtung prison. The month of June underlines yet again that in Burma, words and promises are still more used than concrete actions, which show that the country is still in the heart of a laborious process towards pure democracy and the respect of human rights.

Earlier this month, President Thein Sein made a public statement acknowledging the numerous reforms to be implemented and the need to release all political prisoners. AAPP (B) welcomes this official and public effort to acknowledge the existence of a political prisoners' issue. But despite this recognition, Burma has lately seen an increasing amount of arbitrary arrests, most of which were based on Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code for making statements conducing to public mischief, and on Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Associations Act and Section 18 of the protest bill. These articles are detrimental to Burma's rule of law and form a barrier to the people's basic freedoms.

Indeed, the Letpadaung copper mine project especially underlines the restrictions on political and civil liberties. Many arrest warrants have been issued against peaceful protesters, and most of all three human rights activists have been charged under Section 144 of the Penal Code for speaking out their opinions on police actions during an interview with the media. The government perceived their remarks to be damaging the police and government's credibility, while activists denounced a judicial way to keep protesters shut while abolishing freedom of speech and expression. "[It] is very broad. People should be allowed to do interviews. It is freedom of expression," says Ko Bo Kyi, joint secretary of AAPP (B).

AAPP (B) calls for an ongoing support to current and former political prisoners but above all, requests concrete actions to put an end to human rights violations in the country. Indeed, AAPP (B) was granted the permission to visit remaining political prisoners in jail, to improve the current help that the organization is providing. In this perspective, and convinced that the respect of human rights is the first step towards the development of a true democracy, AAPP (B) urges the Burmese government to sign the United Nations Convention Against Torture in its press release of the 26th of June stating: "Ratification of the CAT would be a clear signal that Burma is not only committed to eradicating torture within its borders, (...) but would be a symbolic gesture of solidarity with victims of torture nationwide. It would help distance Burma from its militaristic past and move the country closer on the road to national reconciliation."

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

For more information:

Tate Naing (Secretary): +66 (0) 81 287 8751
Bo Kyi (Joint-Secretary): +66 (0) 81 962 8713