



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

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

## **Monthly Chronology of Burma's Political Prisoners for June, 2012**

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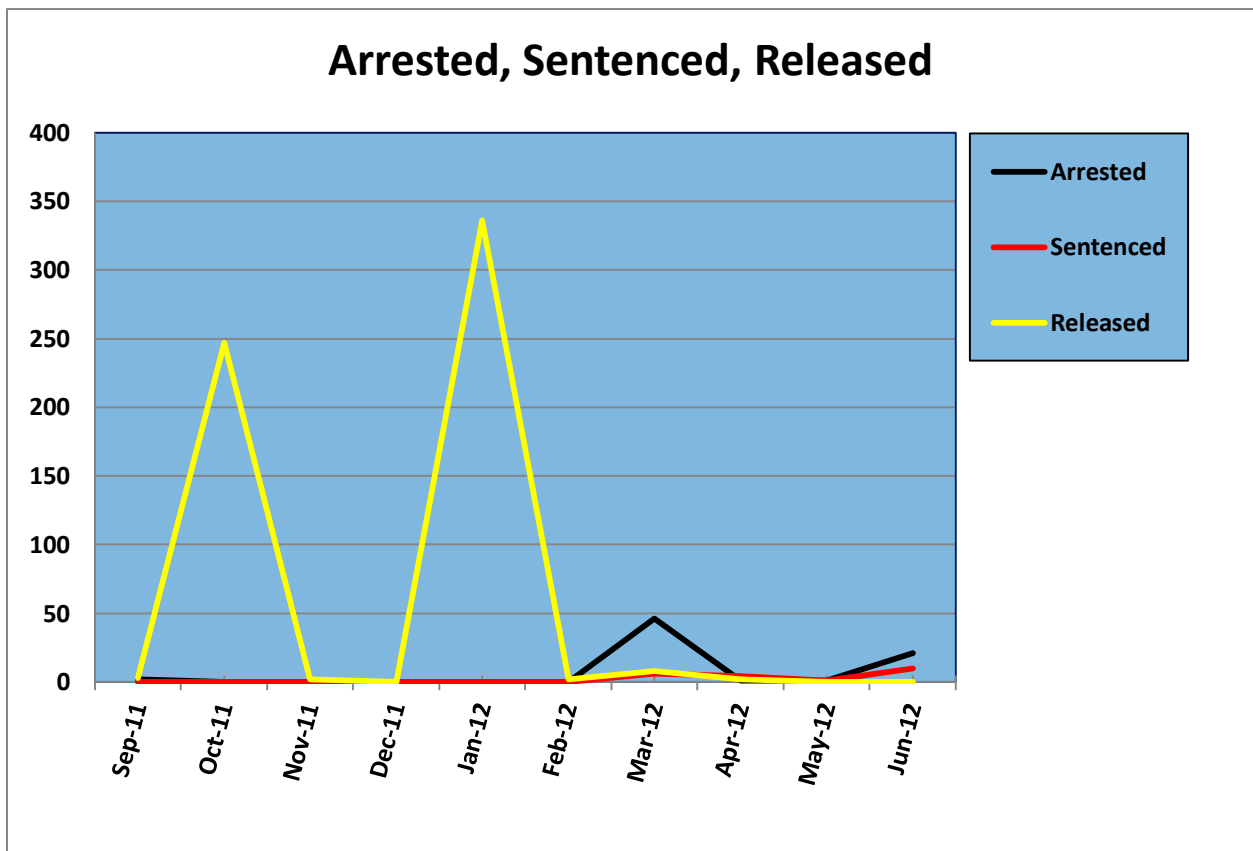
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### Monthly Chronology June 2012



### Summary of the Current Situation

**In the month of June 2012, 21 were arrested, 10 were released, and no one was sentenced.**

The month of June saw a breakout of sectarian violence in Arakan State – resulting in an official state of emergency. The line between arrests and detentions, as well as the

number of those apprehended remain unclear. However, we can confirm 15 were arrested in Arakan State: 4 RNDP members, 10 in Sittwe, and one monk.

Four were arrested in Chin State and 2 in Yamethin District. The 2 in Yamethin were released later in the same month.

Eight political prisoners were released as they had reached the end of their terms.

## **Trends**

While DawAung San SuuKyi's trip to Europe and Burma's increasing economic openness have received extensive media coverage in June, the issue of political prisoners continued to take the back seat. Industry Minister U SoeThein suggested that the nominally-civilian Government is planning to free more political prisoners as early as next month. But there was no information that indicates that this announcement is formally backed by other Government officials. The minister added that they were currently reviewing cases to ensure no one guilty of a violent crime is released. As human rights advocates often stress, this distinction makes it easier for the Government to continue to deny the existence of hundreds of political prisoners. Meanwhile, activists continue to be detained, arrested, sentenced and harassed; political prisoners continue to face ill-treatment in Burma's notorious prisons; and ethnic minorities continue to face human rights violations.

Police officers and interrogators systematically infringe detainees' rights with total impunity, especially in the ethnic nationality areas. In one incident in Mon state, a 24-year-old was left paralyzed after being beaten and tortured by two police officers. In Kachin State, authorities continue to arrest displaced people fleeing from conflict areas, and in one case families of villagers who were arrested have reportedly been forced to pay tens of thousands of kyats per month so that their relatives receive food. Some reports that were released in June also affirm that despite the nominally civilian Government's promises to put an end to these phenomena, cases of human trafficking, forced labor and under-aged recruitment to the military are as wide spread as ever, especially in ethnic nationalities areas.

Interviews with former political prisoners who have recently been released indicate that the threat of torture is still very often used to force false confessions. NLD member U NyiPu, who had been released in late June, told reporters that he was forced to sign a false confession, as the interrogators threatened to arrest his family members if he refuses.

June also saw a wave of communal sectarian violence in western Burma's Arakan State. A few days into the clashes a state of emergency in Arakan state had been declared, and reports of mass arrests began to surface. Apart from locals who were arrested, detained or questioned, the UN and several humanitarian agencies that

operate in the area have reported that a number of their staff members had also been detained.

Land confiscation continues to be a contentious issue in Burma, as the Government forces owners off their property to make way for government or private projects, and more and more land owners face detentions and charges when they refuse to leave their property. The Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) has recently submitted a report that warns from an epidemic of land grabbing in Burma. In one incident this month, a court in HlaingTharyar Township briefly detained seven people in a case involving the eviction of 149 families from their lands.

As no significant shift in the Government's policy towards political prisoners is in sight, the past month is once again marked by a contrast between an international rush to commend the limited political reforms underway and take part in the economic blossom that awaits Burma, and the reality of continued human rights violations, especially with regard to political prisoners.

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**

[Burma to Free All Political Prisoners: Report \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

### **Torture and Treatment of Prisoners and their Families**

In an interview with the Bangkok Post, recently released former political prisoner KoKoGyi elaborated on how it is a deliberate Government policy to house political prisoners in remote jails as a way to mentally torture them. "My family was unable to visit me. I saw them three times in 3.5 years. We had no adequate medical care, no tests, no outside care. If you are seriously ill you have little chance of recovery."

Police officers and interrogators continue to infringe detainees' rights, especially in the ethnic nationality areas. This month, Mon community leaders claimed that a 24-year-old was left paralyzed after being beaten and tortured by two police officers in Chaungzone Township. Shortly after he had been admitted to a hospital, all charges against him were dropped. In Kachin state, the families of six villagers from Sut Len Yang arrested in May are being forced to pay between 30,000 and 50,000 kyat per month for their own food. They were arrested after fleeing from fighting between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese military, but the exact reason for their arrest is unclear.

In Burma, torture is often used to force false confessions. In a recent interview, former political prisoner Myo Min told reporters how he was forced to sign a confession that incriminated another innocent man. He was arrested in August 2008 in connection with the bombing of an office that belonged to a junta-backed political organization.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>**

[Burma inks deal to prevent use of child soldiers \(DVB\)](#)

**June 20<sup>th</sup>**

[Special Report: In the new Myanmar, the gulag endures \(Reuters\)](#)  
[Human trafficking remains big problem: report \(DVB\)](#)

**June 19<sup>th</sup>**

[Two Burmese children a week conscripted into military \(Independent\)](#)

**June 8<sup>th</sup>**

[Mon Leaders Call for Charges in Alleged Torture Case \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 7<sup>th</sup>**

[Early End to Forced Labor \(RFA\)](#)

**June 3<sup>th</sup>**

[The ugly face behind 'open' Myanmar's charm offensive \(BP\)](#)

## **Prisoners Released**

NLD member U NyiPu was released on the morning of 25 June, 2012, from Hkamti prison, Sagaing Division, as his 4 years sentence had expired. He was convicted in 2007 of planning to paint the NLD logo on the walls of Government buildings. In a recent interview he said that he was forced to sign a false confession, as the interrogators threatened to arrest his family members had he refused.<sup>1</sup>

**June 30<sup>th</sup>**

[To fight or reform? The role of Myanmar's former prisoners \(Aljazeera\)](#)

## **Update on Individual Cases**

KoPhyoWaiAung is receiving treatments at Rangoon Public Hospital after his liver cancer spread to his lower back. PhyoWaiAung is a 32 year-old engineer who had been sentenced to death on 8 May, 2012 on suspicion of involvement in a bomb plot. He has spent the last two years in detention, suffering from various health problems. Appeals by his family requesting appropriate medical care were all denied. It was only after he was sentenced in early May that KoPhyoWaiAung was finally sent to Insein public hospital, where he was examined by a general surgeon and diagnosed with liver cancer at its final stages, leaving doctors to predict he only has a few months left to live. An appeal in his case has been submitted by his family, but was later postponed at the request of this lawyer. Amnesty International has issued an urgent action demanding KoPhyoWaiAung's release.

**June 27<sup>th</sup>**

[Alleged Thingyan Bomber's Appeal Postponed \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 20<sup>th</sup>**

['Rangoon bomber' paralysed as cancer takes hold \(DVB\)](#)

**June 11<sup>th</sup>**

[Myanmar: Demand release of terminally ill prisoner: PhyoWaiAung \(Amnesty International\)](#)

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<sup>1</sup>From Democratic Voice of Burma (25 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

## **National League for Democracy**

The National League for Democracy party awarded the “Unknown Heroes Awards” to five current and former political prisoners. They were awarded at the NLD headquarters in Shwe-Gone-Dine Township. The awards were given to U KhaymarSarra (aka KoChanthar), Dr. KyawKyaw and KoLatyarTun, currently detained in Insein, Myingyan and Tharwaddy prisons; and to Ma HlaHla Maw and Kub Kham Khwar (aka Anthony) who were released from Myingyan and Bassein prisons. According to NLD Member of Parliament Ma PhyuPhyu Thin, the Unknown Hero Award is given to those who are not high-profile activists, but have nonetheless been engaging in politics and made significant sacrifices.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, NLD’s spokesperson and campaign committee manager Nyan Win stood in trial on June 26<sup>th</sup> over claims he issued concerning voter fraud in April’s by-elections. Zabuthiri Township’s court in Naypyidaw commenced the legal proceedings and judges heard the prosecutor’s opening arguments. According to Nyan Win’s lawyer Kyaw Ho, the next court date will be July 6<sup>th</sup>

**June 27<sup>th</sup>**

[NLD spokesperson’s trial begins in Naypyidaw \(DVB\)](#)

**June 18<sup>th</sup>**

[Court sets date for NLD spokesperson’s hearing \(DVB\)](#)

## **88 Generation Students**

In an interview with the Bangkok Post, recently released former political prisoner KoKoGyi talked about his experiences in prison. He said that it is important that the remaining political prisoners are not sacrificed in the stampede by the international community’s rush to do business in Burma (**see Torture and Treatment of Prisoners and their Families, and Key International Developments**).

**June 3<sup>th</sup>**

[The ugly face behind 'open' Myanmar's charm offensive \(BP\)](#)

## **Ethnic Nationalities**

This month, Mon community leaders claimed that their state’s Government failed to investigate the case of a man who was left paralyzed after being beaten and tortured by two police officers in Chaungzone Township. According to the leaders, the officers tortured 24-year-old HtetPaingSoe while interrogating him in connection with a murder case. His family says that after he had been interrogated for two days, the police admitted him to a hospital in Moulmein. But by then, he was unable to use his hands or legs. Shortly after, all charges against him were dropped.

In Kachin State, authorities continue to arrest displaced people fleeing from conflict areas. Four Kachin, U Bayan Yone, U Laphine Gam, U ZawBawm and U Zakhon

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<sup>2</sup>From Mizzima (19 June, 2012), translated by AAPP

La Rain, arrested on 15 June near Tar Law Gyee village, Waingmaw Township, were not heard from since the arrest.<sup>3</sup>In another case, 29 year-old LahtawBrangShawng from Jan Mai Kawng Baptist Church camp was arrested by the Myitkyina-based Military Affairs Security Unit for allegedly being involved in a recent bomb attack. And finally, it has been reported that the families of six Kachin villagers from Sut Len Yang who were arrested on May 7<sup>th</sup> have been forced to pay between 30,000 and 50,000 kyat per month for their own food. One of the detainees has been released but five people are still being held at a police station in Mogaung Township: MaruAung, LabyaMadi, San Htu, Dabang La and Dabang La. They were arrested after fleeing from fighting between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese military, but the exact reason for their arrest is unclear.

In yet another incident, a 55-year-old man was beaten by the police in Arakan State. The man, U Tun Nu from Paukpin Village in Taungup Township, has been summoned to the police station in Kintaung Village to clarify a dispute between him and his business partner. According to him, during his appointment he was beaten with a stick by Second Corporal KhinMaungNyunt, who was intoxicated at the time. When he tried to escape, the corporal hit him on the head with a stone in order to stop him. U Tun Nu stipulates that his partner, with whom he was having a dispute, paid the police to beat him.

June also saw a wave of communal sectarian violence in western Burma's Arakan State. The clashes began on June 4<sup>th</sup> when a mob attacked a bus in Taungup, apparently believing some of the passengers were responsible for the earlier rape and murder of a Buddhist woman. Authorities estimate that around 80 people had been killed, and according to a UN body, around 90,000 people have been displaced by the fighting.

A few days into the clashes, a state of emergency in Arakan state had been declared, a status that allows the military to take over administrative functions. Reports on arrests and detentions soon surfaced, although access to reliable information is often very limited.

The murder apparently occurred on June 19<sup>th</sup>, but the bodies were found two days later, after the suspects had been interrogated.<sup>4</sup>On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 9 Rakhine detainees, among them a monk, who had been arrested in connection with the fires in Kyauktaw Township, were sent to Sittwe prison, where reportedly charges will be pressed against them.<sup>5</sup> Finally, The UN and several humanitarian agencies that operate in Arakan State have reported that a number of their staff members had been detained by the Burmese authorities on various dates and in various locations over the past few weeks, and that they were trying to secure their release.

Amid the unrest in Arakan State, four members of Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) were arrested and charged on June 17<sup>th</sup> for allegedly taking

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<sup>3</sup>From Mizzima (22 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

<sup>4</sup>From Radio Free America (21 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

<sup>5</sup>From Radio Free America (18 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

part in a riot in front of a police station earlier that month in Sittwe Township. Protestors originally gathered to call for a reduction in taxes in Narzi (or Sat-Yone-Zu) market. After a false rumor had spread that the organizer, U AungThanWai, had been killed by an opposition group, more than 100 people gathered around Sittwe Township's police station No-1 and threw stones on its walls. Later, some demonstrators were arrested, among them 4 members of RNDP. The four were later sent to Sittwe prison.<sup>6</sup>

On a different note, there have been some reports that the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) is no longer outlawed. According to Kachin State's Chief Minister La John NganHsai, Naypyidaw had told him to instruct the various departments within his regional assembly to ignore the constitutional act that outlaws the KIO. The KIO has been illegal under Article 17/1, which states that it is illegal for anyone to have contact with an outlawed organization. This law has been used for years to justify the arbitrary arrest of anyone suspected of supporting anti-government organizations or ethnic armed groups, including many ethnic Kachins who are currently detained under 17/1, accused of being KIO supporters or sympathizers.

#### **June 28<sup>th</sup>**

[Aid Workers Detained in Myanmar \(NYT\)](#)

#### **June 27<sup>th</sup>**

[Burmese government continue to arrest IDPs fleeing from conflict areas \(KNG\)](#)

#### **June 26<sup>th</sup>**

[38 Rohingyas Arrested in Arakan \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Over 100 Suspected Immigrants Arrested on Gwa Island \(Narinjara\)](#)

#### **June 23<sup>th</sup>**

[Convicts with Death Sentence Transported to Sittwe \(Narinjara\)](#)

[Nearly 100 Residents Summoned and Interrogated in Taungup \(Narinjara\)](#)

[Dozens Believed Killed in Helicopter Attack \(RFA\)](#)

#### **June 22<sup>th</sup>**

[Ethnic unrest kills more than 80 \(BP\)](#)

[Rohingya Boatpeople Sentenced on Immigration Charges \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Detained Kachin IDPs forced to pay for their food \(KNG\)](#)

#### **June 21<sup>th</sup>**

[Arrests Over Violence in Rakhine \(RFA\)](#)

#### **June 21<sup>th</sup>**

[KIO No Longer Outlawed \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

#### **June 20<sup>th</sup>**

[Fresh violence breaks out in western Burma \(DVB\)](#)

[Burma unrest: UN body says 90,000 displaced by violence \(BBC\)](#)

#### **June 18<sup>th</sup>**

[Villagers protest army's arrests \(DVB\)](#)

[Three men given death sentence for murder that sparked riots \(DVB\)](#)

[More rioters arrested in Rakhine State \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Police arrest refugees in Mogaungtownship in Kachin state \(KNG\)](#)

#### **June 10<sup>th</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> From Radio Free America (19 June, 2012) and Irrawaddy (June 18, 2012), translated by AAPP.



State of Emergency Declared for Western Burma (Irrawaddy)

Attack in Sittwe Raises Tensions in Arakan State (Irrawaddy)

**June 8<sup>th</sup>**

Riots erupt in Arakan state (DVB)

Riot Claims Three Lives in Arakan State (Irrawaddy)

Mon Leaders Call for Charges in Alleged Torture Case (Irrawaddy)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

Murder of Muslims in Taungup due to Lack of Legal Protection (Narinjara)

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**

11 injured as police crackdown on protestors in Sittwe (Narinjara)

Following attack, Muslims demonstrate in Rangoon (DVB)

**June 4<sup>th</sup>**

Nine killed in sectarian attack (DVB)

**June 2<sup>th</sup>**

Elderly Man Injured in Beating by Police Corporal (Narinjara)

**June 1<sup>th</sup>**

Rohingya forced labor widespread in north Arakan: report (Mizzima)

ILO to ease criticisms on Burma forced labor (DVB)

## **Monks**

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 9 Arakanese detainees, among them a monk, who were arrested in connection with the fires in Kyauktaw Township, were sent to Sittwe prison where reportedly charges will be pressed against them (**see Ethnic Nationalities**).

## **Journalists, Bloggers and Writers (media activists)**

While in past months, the nominally-civilian Government has announced several times that censorship laws are set to be lifted in June, in reality there was no indication that such a change indeed took place. Nevertheless, June saw a few developments that may indicate a continuous improvement in the military-backed government's attitude towards freedom of the press in Burma. One such development is the signing of a deal between Burma and the international broadcaster Voice of America under which Burmese state radio will broadcast VOA-produced English-language teaching programs.

In another encouraging development, a state-run newspaper called Aung San SuuKyi and President TheinSein “the hope of Myanmar” - a rare praise for the opposition leader. *The New Light of Myanmar* article also included veiled warnings to Aung San SuuKyi that she must follow “the rule of law” – apparently warning her over the NLD's support of recent public protests over power shortages.

A cameraman who was documenting a meeting between farmers, land owners and lawmakers regarding land confiscations that took place on June 1<sup>st</sup> in Pyin-Oo-Lwin, was interrogated by local authorities and forced to sign a pact, promising not to film similar events in the future. According to director Wyne, who works with the cameraman, the recorded videos were destroyed.<sup>7</sup> On a similar note, The *Voice* news

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<sup>7</sup>From Democratic Voice of Burma (22 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

journal will soon face criminal proceedings, after losing an appeal for defamation charges brought by the Ministry of Mining over corruption allegations made against them in March. The journal's chief editor, Kyaw Min Swe, faces up to two years in jail and an undisclosed fine for printing an article that cited an auditor's report alleging the ministry had misappropriated billions of kyat in public funds.

**June 29<sup>th</sup>**

[Burma tightens control on press freedom: report \(Mizzima\)](#)

**June 23<sup>th</sup>**

[Burma Press Limits Tested by Arakan Violence \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 21<sup>th</sup>**

[News journal loses defamation appeal \(DVB\)](#)

**June 13<sup>th</sup>**

[Gov't suspends news journal's operations \(DVB\)](#)

**June 12<sup>th</sup>**

[Press Warned Against Inciting Arakan Clashes \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Journal Suspended for Publishing Photo that Sparked Arakan Riots \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

[Burmese State Media 'Praises' SuuKyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[State media issues correction after publishing racial slur \(DVB\)](#)

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**

[VOA, Burma Sign English-Language Programming Deal \(VOA\)](#)

**Women**

There was no news to report this month.

**Religious persecution**

There was no news to report this month.

**Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network**

There was no news to report this month.

**Labor Activists**

There was no news to report this month.

**Students**

Leaders of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) were told by authorities to register as an official association or potentially face imprisonment. "Basically they were warning us even though they said they are just 'informing' us about the rules," said PhyPhyoAung, secretary of the ABFSU organizing committee. "They told us how to register under section 2 of the Registration Act (6/88) as well as the punishments if the union is not registered". Members of the organization argue that registration is not needed as they consider themselves neither a political party nor a social organization and have no intention to stand for election.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>**

[Burma's 'Lost Generation' of Students \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

[Student Union 'to Register or Risk Jail' \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Lawyers**

There was no news to report this month.

## **Individual Activists**

Members of the bands "the Peace of Flower Road" and "Myanmar Social Development Network" that were performing in teashops to raise money in support of victims and refugees in Kachin and Arakan states were banned from performing. According to singer KoTharHtwe from the Peace of Flower Road, the band was performing at a car dealers' compound on June 17th when authorities showed up and stopped the show. In addition, some teashop owners were instructed not to invite the band any more.<sup>8</sup>

Also this month, a group of farmers in Kawthaung Township, Tenasserim Division, said they were worried they will be evicted from their land after a local army installation put up a signboard last week announcing that it was the owner of the property. Earlier this month, the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) submitted a report to the Asian Human Rights Council, warning from an epidemic of land grabbing in Burma. The report outlines the problems involved in land confiscation, and asserts that the new Farmland Law of 2012 has not improved the situation. It also mentioned that people who refuse to move often risk prosecution and jail. On the same note, KoKoGyi, a leading members of the 88 Generation Students group, accused local authorities of cheating residents of southern Burma's Tavoi Township who were forced off their land to make way for a major development project.

In another case, some 1500 protesting gold miners were detained in a monastery for several nights. In early June, tens of thousands of gold miners began protesting after the recipient of a five-year contract, Myanmar National Prosperity Public Company (MNPPC), told them to halt mining activities in the 6,000-acre MoehtiMoemi area in Mandalay Division. About 1,500 of them set off by foot from the mines in MoehitMoemiTaung to Naypyidaw. They stopped to rest at a monastery in Yamaethin Township, but then, police forces surrounded the compound, and refused to allow them to leave while also denying them access to food and water. Some of the protestors said that in fact, they were under detention, as they were restricted to the compound for several nights. Eventually, after talks were held between the protestors, Government

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<sup>8</sup>From Democratic Voice of Burma (19 June, 2012), translated by AAPP.

officials, invested businesses and the MNPPCL, a deal was reached and the protestors' demands were met.

**June 29<sup>th</sup>**

[Court Detains 7 in Eviction Dispute \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 28<sup>th</sup>**

[Farmers in Kawthaung Fear Loss of Land \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**

[Miners iron out agreement over closure row \(DVB\)](#)

**June 13<sup>th</sup>**

[Protesting Miners Face Third Night at Mandalay Pagoda \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 8<sup>th</sup>**

[Authorities Accused of Exploiting Dawei Residents \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 7<sup>th</sup>**

['Epidemic' of land grabbing in Burma: report \(Mizzima\)](#)

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**

[Zargana's story shows Burma still has a long way to come \(Independent\)](#)

## **DawAung San SuuKyi**

Aung San SuuKyi spent the lion share of June on her first trip outside of Burma in 24 years. In early June she visited Thailand, where she met with Burmese refugees and migrant workers on the Thai-Burmese border. Later in the month she toured Europe, where she met with high ranking politicians, public figures and NGOs and collected some of the many prizes she had won over the years. In her long-awaited acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize she had won in 1991, Aung San SuuKyi urged the international community not to forget political prisoners. She said: "It is to be feared that because the best known detainees have been released, the remainder, the unknown ones, will be forgotten. Those who have not yet been freed, those who have not yet been given access to the benefits of justice in my country number much more than one. Please remember them and do whatever is possible to affect their earliest, unconditional release".

**June 29<sup>th</sup>**

[Myanmar tells SuuKyi not to call country 'Burma' \(AP\)](#)

**June 16<sup>th</sup>**

[SuuKyi's Nobel Prize lecture \(Mizzima\)](#)

**June 12<sup>th</sup>**

[SuuKyi in First European Visit for 24 Years \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

**June 2<sup>th</sup>**

[SuuKyi Meets Refugees \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

## **Key International Developments**

June has seen extensive media coverage of Burma's increasing economic openness, as it is becoming clear that the country is set to see a dramatic rise in the amount of international aid and investment it receives. During a visit to Burma,

Australia's Foreign Minister Bob Carr announced that after easing most of the sanctions against the country in April, Australia will now lift remaining targeted travel and financial sanctions on 126 individuals; and it has been reported that the possibility of direct military ties between Burma and the US is currently under discussion. But as time passes by and no significant shift in the Government's policy towards political prisoners is in sight, more and more members of the international community warn that political prisoners are being forgotten. In a recent interview, AAPP's joint-secretary Ko Bo Kyi reminded that "releasing all political prisoners is what's needed now, but these issues are mostly ignored. If the significance of these issues is not grasped it makes future reconciliation and peace an impossible task."

Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN special rapporteur for Burma, recently admitted that one of his greatest concerns with regards to human rights in Burma is the remaining political prisoners. "I have been calling for the release of political prisoners since the start of my mandate", said Quintana. "The Government lately has made important decisions in this respect, but the problem is that there are about 600 political, or 500 I would say, who remain in [Burmese] prisons. The government is forgetting about them. I haven't been able to clearly see that the international community has a clear message on the necessity of having the Government release the remaining political prisoners". Similarly, Derek Mitchell, soon to be the U.S. ambassador to Burma, said that "we remain deeply concerned about the continued detention of hundreds of political prisoners and the conditions placed on those previously released, lack of the rule of law, and the constitutional role of the military in the nation's affairs. Human-rights abuses, including military impunity, continue, particularly in ethnic minority areas." Recently released former political prisoner KoKoGyi also urged the international community not to forget the remaining political prisoners in their rush to do business in Burma. "We strongly ask the international community not to forget the political prisoners still in jail", said KoKoGyi. "If our Government wants to show the world there is real change they have to acknowledge there are political prisoners" (**see also Torture and Treatment of Prisoners and their Families, and 88 Generation Students**). Lastly, Burma Campaign UK (BCUK) has asked the British Foreign Office to pressure the Burmese Government to agree to investigate how many political prisoners remain in Burma's jails.

Enthusiasm from foreign investors has led to concerns among some analysts and politicians that rapid economic growth could impede further political reforms. For instance, some top American lawmakers have called for renewal of sanctions on Burma: this is not the right time to issue waivers to US companies for new investments in the Southeast Asian nation, they say. "Violence in Kachin State remains a serious problem. Numerous political prisoners remain behind bars. The constitution is still undemocratic", explained one US Senator.

**June 28<sup>th</sup>**

US Envoy Voices Concerns about MOGE (Irrawaddy)

Webb calls for U.S. to drop ban on Burmese imports (Mizzima)

**June 27<sup>th</sup>**

No Removal of Sanctions, Only Suspension: US (Irrawaddy)

US Envoy Urges Continued Engagement with Burma (VOA)

**June 26<sup>th</sup>**

A Myanmar I thought I would never see (BP)

**June 22<sup>th</sup>**

SuuKyi, Cameron Stand Together on Burma Reforms (Irrawaddy)

**June 18<sup>th</sup>**

Bill Introduced in Congress to Renew Sanctions on Burman (Irrawaddy)

**June 15<sup>th</sup>**

Burmese political prisoners remain in jail (Mizzima)

**June 13<sup>th</sup>**

International Donors Pledge Massive Funding for Burma (Irrawaddy)

**June 8<sup>th</sup>**

Activists Worry About Investor Interest in Burma (VOA)

**June 7<sup>th</sup>**

Australia lifts remaining sanctions (Mizzima)

**June 6<sup>th</sup>**

Tomas Quintana: 'The rule of law for any system is crucial' (DVB)

**June 5<sup>th</sup>**

U.S.-Burma military ties possible: U.S. (Mizzima)

**June 4<sup>th</sup>**

Who's the host of 2013 WEF meeting: Burma! (Mizzima)

**June 3<sup>th</sup>**

The ugly face behind 'open' Myanmar's charm offensive (BP)

**June 2<sup>th</sup>**

US Looking to Forge Military Ties with Burma (Irrawaddy)

## **Conclusion**

The “rule of law” remained an abstract political slogan espoused by the government rather than a concrete goal to work towards during the month of June. Although the rule of law has many interpretations, it is most broadly understood to mean the government is of laws, not of men. The World Justice Project has defined essential components of the rule of law. Most notably, these include: government and officials are accountable under the law; and laws are publicized, clear, and protect fundamental human rights. It is under these two components the government failed most miserably in the month of June.

Cases emerging in June show that the people of Burma are still being abused by government officials, especially those who are farthest from the reach of the law in ethnic areas and in detention centers/prisons. In Mon State, a 24 year old was left paralyzed after being beaten and tortured by 2 police officers. If the past is the prediction of the future, this pair of abusive cops will continue in their posts without

being held accountable, only to abuse again. SumlutRoiJa, an ethnic Kachin mother of a 16 month old daughter, last seen being inappropriately touched by members of the Burma Army, is still missing and has been for 9 months. Burma's Supreme Court inexplicably dismissed the case brought forth by Sumlut's husband in May despite there being sufficient evidence, leaving her suspected captors free.

This sort of shameful behavior by Burma's security forces happens so often that it cannot be dismissed as the act of one bad seed. There comes a point where too many bad seeds infect the entire crop – and Burma's security forces are well past that point. The only remedy is to hold perpetrators of abuse accountable. The preferential treatment and protection of government officials must be dismantled in order for Burma to exhibit the bare minimum of a functioning democratic society. In addition, the National Human Rights Council should make it a priority to investigate abuses in hard to reach areas such as detention centers and ethnic regions.

Industry Minister SoeThein hinted at a release of prisoners in July. In anticipation of a potential release, it must be reiterated that small-scale periodic releases do little to empty Burma's jails of innocent political prisoners. Unless the laws that criminalize peaceful dissent are eradicated or amended, new generations will restock the prisons, hindering any transition to democracy. The month brought a high number of arrests, particularly in ethnic areas where the Burma military assert their authority by practicing wide-scale indiscriminate arrests. In Kachin State, authorities continue to arrest displaced people fleeing from conflict areas. Often, they are sentenced under fabricated accusations under Unlawful Association Act. Authoritarian laws that continue to authorize mass arrests and deny people of Burma most basic rights need to be dismantled. Until then, the government is leaving wide open the door to arresting any one in Burma as a way of intimidating activists from partaking in humanitarian and oppositional political activities.

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