



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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"There can be no national reconciliation in Burma, as long as there are political prisoners"

Summary of the current Situation

Despite President Thein Sein's promise to release all political prisoners by the end of 2013, many individuals remain behind bars and the government continues to arrest and incarcerate new political prisoners. By the end of July, there were 70 political prisoners incarcerated in Burma, with approximately 114 accused activists awaiting trial.

Since the beginning of 2014, the number of politically motivated arrests and incarcerations has been steadily increasing, indicating a regression in the democratic progress Burma has received recognition for in the last few years. In particular, the month of July witnessed a backsliding of basic individual freedoms, particularly those pertaining to the rights of media professionals. With old draconian laws still being used to prosecute journalists instead of new laws being implemented and reformed to protect the rights of journalists, authorities are indicating their resistance to further democratic reforms.

MONTH IN REVIEW

Throughout the month of July, AAPP documented the arrest of 11 activists, sentencing of 21 activists, and the release of 2 political prisoners. Of the eleven arrested activists, two were freed. These numbers indicate that the government's trend of incarcerating political prisoners continues.

This month saw a number of arrests and incarcerations made by Burmese authorities for media related cases. Despite Parliament recently passing the New Media Law, the government has clamped down on the activities and freedoms of media professionals. On July 10, 2014, five employees of Unity Journal were sentenced to ten years hard labor for publishing an article in January about an alleged secret weapons factory. The sentence has sparked both international and domestic political criticism. International actors, particularly the governments of the United States and United Kingdom, Amnesty International, and Reporters Sans Frontiers, have criticized the government for the recent regression from Burma's democratic progress. They have argued that the responses of the authorities to media related problems are pushing Burma back into an undesirable position with the rest of the world. Burma's four press associations also issued a joint statement in response to the sentencing, comparing the actions of the current regime to the former military regime. Moreover, the decision was also met by opposition within parliament, most notably by Parliamentary Speaker Thura Shwe Man, who asked Thein Sein to consider a reduction of the sentence.

In addition to the harsh sentences handed down to the Unity Journalists, authorities indicted eight employees of the Bi Mon Te Nay Journal for publishing an article quoting the MDCF's statement that Aung San Suu Kyi had been elected president of an interim government. Five individuals were indicted on July 8, 2014,

under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. On July 16, 2014, three more individuals, including the journal's owner and his wife, were arrested in Mae Sot for avoiding their court summon the previous week. Authorities, who also confiscated documents and items from the journal's office, stated they are concerned about the article defaming the government, creating misunderstandings among readers, undermining the stability of the state, and damaging public interests. Despite mistranslations by some media outlets, the journal did not take an individual, personal stance on the claim regarding the interim government. The article simply quoted the MDCF in their statements and actions during the protest. The accused have argued that they were doing their job in providing information to citizens regarding local events. The individuals are being prosecuted under Articles 5(d) and 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, and if found guilty, the individuals could face up to fourteen years in prison.

[\(8 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - New Light of Myanmar\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - Bi Mon Te Nay Facebook Page\)](#) [\(11 July 2014 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(19 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(21 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 June 2014 - Eleven\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - Al Jazeera\)](#) [\(21 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

DETENTIONS

Employees of Bi Mon Te Nay Journal Indicted

On July 8, five employees of the Bi Mon Te Nay journal were indicted under the 1950 Emergency Provision Act by Thein Htun, Police Chief of the Pabedan Township Police Station, for releasing a news story regarding a statement made by the MDCF (Myanmar Democratic Current Force) about an interim government. The article, titled "M.D.C.F stated that the people elected Aung San Suu Kyi and the Ethnic Democratic Forces as an interim government," reported on the statements made by the MDCF during a demonstration in front of Rangoon's City Hall on July 7, 2014. The MDCF announced that Aung San Suu Kyi had been elected as president of an interim government. Authorities questioned the five employees, which included two editors, the coordinating editor, the reporter, Ko Min Wathan (Kyaw Zaw Hein), who wrote the article, and the father-in-law of the journal's business owner, about the information in the article. By July 11, authorities had still refused to reveal the whereabouts of Ko Min Wathan, a senior reporter, to family members.

On July 16, 2014, Kyaw Min Khine, the owner of Bi Mon Te Nay, his wife, and Yin Min Htun, the newspaper's office manager, were arrested in Mae Sot, Thailand, for avoiding a court summon and fleeing to the Thai border town a week prior. All eight individuals are being prosecuted under Articles 5(d) and 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. Violations of both articles carry a maximum sentence of seven years each. The individuals are currently being tried in Pabedan Township. Kyaw Min Khine's two sons, ages seven and ten, were with them at the time of their arrest and have been returned to Rangoon in the custody of their grandfather.

On July 21, 2014, the three editors, Ye Min Aung, Win Tin, and Aung Thant (Editor-in-Chief), and Dr. Ei Ei San, the owner's wife,

stood trial. The three editors received an additional two weeks remand and were brought to Insein Prison. Dr. Ei Ei San was conditionally discharged under Article 169 of the Code of Criminal Procedure as there was a lack of evidence against her.

[\(8 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - New Light of Myanmar\)](#) [\(8 July 2014 - Bi Mon Te Nay Facebook Page\)](#) [\(11 July 2014 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(19 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(21 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 June 2014 - Eleven\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(25 July 2014 - Reporters Without Borders\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - BBC/Burmese\)](#)

Land Activist Detained

Land activist Khin Myint has been detained by authorities and indicted under Section 51(f/g) for allegedly inciting farmers to unrest. Land owners had requested the activist's assistance to regain land seized by Ayar She Wah Company, leading Khin Myint to file their case to the land administration according to legal procedures. "They told me that if I confess, they will release me on probation. They also told me that if I continue helping the farmers, I would get arrested. Since I haven't done anything wrong, I refused to confess. Therefore, the police asked remand and detained me for two weeks. The truth is they detained me because I filed an appeal to the state administration to regain the land," said Khin Myint. He was originally detained on July 9th.

[\(21 July 2014 - The Voice Myanmar/Burmese\)](#)

DETENTIONS

The Coordinator of MDCF Detained

On July 8, Naung Naung, coordinator for the Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF) of Rangoon, was detained by the Special Branch Police Force at approximately 13:30. He had chanted in front of the Yangon City Hall that people have chosen Aung San Suu Kyi and the Ethnic Democratic Forces as the new interim government. Naung Naung was followed by a large crowd as he was taken to the Kyauktada Township Police Office. Leaflets written by MDCF Director Htin Kyaw were also distributed in front of the city hall before being confiscated. The leaflets included information regarding high commodity prices, unemployment, communal conflicts, judicial problems, land confiscations, and requests that the current government should abdicate.

[\(8 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

INCARCERATIONS

Unity Journalists Sentenced

On July 10, 2014, Unity Journal CEO, Tin Hsan, and journalists Lu Maw Naing, Sithu Soe, Yazar Oo, and Aung Thura, were sentenced to ten years imprisonment with hard labor by the Pakokku Township Court. Authorities have charged the individuals with violating the 1923 Burma State Secrets Act for trespassing in a prohibited area with prejudicial purposes, a law intended to be used against spies. On January 25, 2014, Unity Journal published an article about a Burmese military facility in Magwe Division allegedly being used as a secret weapons factory. Defense lawyer Robert San Aung told media sources that the decision has been appealed, and will be heard in Magwe's Divisional Court. The appeal was submitted on the grounds that the verdict was in violation of the four journalists' freedom of expression protected under Constitutional Article 354. They want the court to reassess the case with regards to the recently passed Media Law. The five individuals are currently in Pakokku prison.

[\(10 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(10 July 2014 - Al Jazeera\)](#) [\(21 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

Speaker of Parliament Calls for Fairness

On July 22, 2014, Parliamentary Speaker Thura Shwe Mann sent a message to President Thein Sein, asking the government to consider a more tolerant approach to handling media cases. In the message he stated, "Parliament and the government are required to place emphasis on the media as represented by the interim Myanmar Press Council and media professionals. By making prompt clarifications we can ensure the reduction of the worries of concerned organizations and the smooth

transition to democracy." The letter also stated that the government should tolerate the mistakes of journalists because of their inexperience, which lead to the mistakes. He also requested Thein Sein to reduce the prison terms of the recently incarcerated journalists.

Khaung Maung Yi, MP of the Pythu Hluttaw (lower house), stated that the interim Myanmar Press Council must be informed if concerned authorities take actions against media professionals. He added that media professionals do not have full rights right now and that it is their responsibility to bring this to the attention of the public.

The interim Myanmar Press Council has since been granted a meeting with Thein Sein to discuss the current issues facing the press in Burma.

[\(24 July 2014 - Eleven Myanmar\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(31 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Two MDCF Activists Sentenced

On July 16, 2014, a Rangoon court sentenced Tin Maung Kyi and Zaw Win of the Myanmar Democratic Current Force (MDCF) to six months imprisonment for distributing pamphlets accusing the government of abusing power. The pamphlets warned citizens not to trust the Thein Sein government and his reform agenda, arguing that power still rested in the hands of the military and well-connected businessmen. The two activists were arrested by authorities in Kyauktada Township under Penal Code 505(b) on May 9, 2014, shortly after they began distributing pamphlets. On July 9, 2014,

INCARCERATIONS

Rangoon's Tamwe Township Court on similar charges; however, they will serve only one six month term.

[\(17 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(9 July 2014 - RFA\)](#)

Htin Kyaw Sentenced Again

On July 9, 2014, Htin Kyaw, director of the Myanmar Democracy Current Force (MDCF), was sentenced by Bahan Township Court in Rangoon to an additional three months in prison under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Act. The alleged crime was holding an unauthorized protest outside of Aung San Suu Kyi's home in April. Defending himself, Htin Kyaw stated, "People from 293 households in No. 6 Block of Myangone Township were suffering from lack of food and shelter - that's why we went to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's home and asked for help... Because of this, I was sentenced today under Section 18. We were there to ask for help, not to protest." Htin Kyaw had led the residents through the city to raise their concerns in front of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house.

On July 21, 2014, Htin Kyaw was subsequently convicted by two courts in Rangoon, each conviction carrying a sentence of one year imprisonment. In both cases he had been charged under Section 505/b of the Penal Code for protesting and distributing pamphlets on April 28, 2014, which stated that the MDCF does not trust the government. Htin Kyaw had not asked for permission to protest. He was arrested during his 11th protest in South Okkalapa Township, and was sentenced after seven court appearances.

These will constitute the activist's fourth, fifth, and sixth prison terms under Thein Sein's government. Prior to this, he was most recently sentenced to six months imprisonment on June 23, 2014, under Section 505(b) for

distributing anti-government brochures. The MDCF will continue to protest despite his convictions.

[\(9 July 2014 - RFA\)](#) [\(21 July 2014\)](#)

DKBA Soldier Sentenced to Two Years Imprisonment

DKBA soldier, Saw Mya Saw, a.k.a. Man Sabay Lay, has been sentenced to two years imprisonment. He was sentenced to one year under Section 19/e of the Criminal Code for possessing a knife and one year under Section 420/486 of the Criminal Code for possessing two I.D. cards. One I.D. card was issued from his hometown and one was issued to him by the DKBA. During a visit to his parents' village, authorities came and checked his bag, confiscating a discharged bullet and knife while he was seeing other relatives. He was arrested and interrogated by the military before being handed to Wakema Township Police Station. He was detained for ten months prior to his imprisonment.

[\(8 July 2014 - AAPP Source\)](#)

NLD Secretary Sentenced

On July 4, Joint Secretary of the NLD of Aung Lan in Thayet Township, Myat Ko (a.k.a. Myat Thu), was sentenced to one month imprisonment for leading a protest calling for the resignation of the Minister of Livestock and Fisheries Ohn Myint. Myat Ko was convicted and sentenced in the same hearing, and he was immediately thereafter taken to Thayet prison.

On February 10, 2014, Myat Ko lead a protest against Ohn Myint with 1000 locals of Aung Lan after Ohn Myint reportedly made incendiary comments while speaking in Thityakauk Township.

RELEASES

Zaw Pe freed

On July 4th at 13:00, DVB video journalist Zaw Pe and co-defendant Win Myint Hlaing were released from Thayat Prison in Magwe. Their release comes at the end of a three month prison term, a reduced sentence from the original one year sentence. The two were found guilty on April 7, 2014, under Articles 448 & 353 of the Burmese Penal Code for conducting an interview on the irregularities in the allocation of Japanese scholarship money in August of 2012. International human rights groups welcomed the release of the journalists, but expressed concern over the development of Myanmar's press freedom, as the journalists were unfairly charged and convicted to begin with.

[\(4 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

CONDITIONS OF DETENTIONS

Reported Torture of Thein Aung

Thein Aung, Coordinator of Communication for the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society in Khin Oo Township, has been mistreated by prison officials in Shwebo Prison. Originally charged under two accounts of Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law on February 14, 2014, he is serving a yearlong sentence, while facing charges under Section 42 of the 1894 Prison Act and Section 420 of the Penal Code as well. Inside sources from AAPP have confirmed that he has been tortured, beaten, and threatened by prison officials on a daily basis. He has also been placed in solitary confinement and put in stocks.

(20 July 2014 - AAPP Source)

DEMONSTRATIONS AND RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Leader of Protest Camp Indicted

Sein Than, leader of the Michaungkan Protest Camp, has been indicted by Pabedan Court for breaching a rule of the City Development Committee, as well as Latha, Pabedan and Kyauktada Township Courts for violating Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act. He was refused bail and sent to Insein Prison. His court appearance will be next week.

Michaungkan villagers had been protesting in front of City Hall in Yangon for over four months, calling for the return of land confiscated by the military regime. Police and staff from the City Development Committee destroyed the camp around 3 a.m. on March 30, 2014.

[\(31 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Women's Rights Activists Sentenced in Chin State

Eight women's rights activists from Chin State have been ordered to either pay a 30,000 kyat fine or spend one month in prison for organizing unauthorized protests last month. Ngun Chin Pay, Sui Sui Kyi, Kaw Htwe, Khin Khin Zi, Thang Zing, Khin Thluai Par, Maun Han, and Tei Maung had organized demonstrations in Rezua and Matupi on June 23 and 24, 2014, in response to the alleged rape of a 55 year old woman by a Burma Army soldier from Light Infantry Battalion No. 269. They had previously been denied requests to hold the protests and were therefore charged under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act. Women's Hand Myanmar Foundation (WHMF), an organization that had been assisting the women during trial, has offered to pay the

[\(24 July 2014 - DVB\) \(8 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\) \(25 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

High Court Lawyer Fined

On July 23, 2014, Prome Court ordered High Court Lawyer Myint Aye to pay a 30,000 kyat fine or remain in prison for a month. Myint Aye had held a protest on February 4, 2014, calling for the resignation of Minister Ohn Myint, who had used profanity when addressing Magwe locals. Myint Aye chose to pay the fine, stating that this was a fair punishment.

[\(24 July 2014 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#)

Solo Protester Fined

On July 22, 2014, Prome Township Court sentenced Kyaw Swe under Section 18 of The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act for a solo protest calling for the protection of Lae Tee Ordination Hall in the Latpadaung Mine Project area in March 2014. Kyaw Swe was offered the choice of either a 30,000 kyat fine or a month in prison, and opted for the fine. He was also detained for an hour in jail.

[\(23 July 2014 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#)

Journalist Yae Khe Fined 20,000 Kyat

Yae Khe, a journalist from Pyay who held a protest calling for the release of DVB journalist Zaw Pe, has been fined 20,000 Kyat in a sentence handed down on July 17. After ten court appearances, Ye Khe was found guilty of breaching Section 18 of The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act.

[\(17 June 2014 - DVB/Burmese\)](#)

DEMONSTRATIONS AND RELATED RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

FPPS Defines ‘Unity’ Journalists as Political Prisoners

Nyo Tun, a member of both the Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners and the Former Political Prisoners’ Society (FPPS), has advocated that the Unity Journalists should be defined as political prisoners as they were working in the interest of the people and not for their own sake. He will raise this topic at the next Committee meeting.

[\(17 July 2014 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Eleven Members of 88 and NLD Charged for Public Speech

Magwe Division Police Station has indicted six members of the National League for Democracy and five members of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society for organizing an unauthorized public speech in the Aya Pagoda compound on June 9th. The speech called for support for amendments to Article 436 of the Constitution. Permission had been granted for the speech by the authorities, but the five individuals were charged under Section 447 for trespassing because they built a stage in the pagoda compound. The pagoda’s authorities had granted the members the right to use the land of the pagoda compound. The administration of the Kantha section, the area where the pagoda is located, also charged Nay Myo Kyaw for the unauthorized use of a loudspeaker. The six Magwe NLD members indicted are Nay Myo Kyaw, Than Naing, Than Aung, Soe Moe, Chit Htway, and Ye Tin. The five 88 Generation Peace and Open Society members are Hla San, Maung Maung Soe, Than

Tun Aung, Nyunt Aye, and Tun Oo Khaing.

[\(3 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(7 July 2014 - Popular Myanmar/Burmese\)](#)

The First Protestors in Paukhaung Indicted

On July 1, Win Hlaing, Tun Yee, and Sein Myint, three leaders of a protest in Paukhaung Township, Pegu Division, were indicted under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act. The protest, held that same day, called for the return of land grabbed by the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited and Sugarcane Development Department between 1997 and 2006, as well as for an improvement in Burma’s rule of law. It was carried out in front of the General Administration Office and the Settlement and Land Record Department.

On June 24, 2014, U Thein Sein approved “The Law that Amends the Law of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession,” and the law was officially announced in national news the following day. Protesters said they submitted an official application for the protest to the police office a week prior to the July 1st date and also prior to the official amendment. The protesters are arguing that the local authorities needed to notify them if their request for permission to protest had been denied, since their request was submitted prior to the amendment that removed the subsections stating that authorities needed to send notification of denial 48 hours in advance.

[\(9 July 2014 - Irrawaddy Blog/Burmese\)](#)

RESTRICTIONS ON FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS

Items Confiscated from Kyaw Hein's House

Kyaw Hein, the organizer of the Shwe Nya Wah preaching ceremony, announced at a press conference held in the 88 Peace and Open Society's office on July 18, 2014, that he will indict the judge for confiscating his properties. In June, he was found guilty of organizing a ceremony without receiving prior permission and was given the option of serving a one month prison sentence or paying a 10,000 kyat fine. Kyaw Hein chose to serve one month in prison. During his prison sentence, the authorities requested the 10,000 kyat fine. After refusing to pay, the authorities confiscated two chairs and two containers of instant coffee mix from his house.

[\(17 July 2014 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#)

LAND ISSUES

Local Farmers Indicted

Ten farmers have been indicted for trespassing and staging a ploughing protest in Dimawhso Township, and were summoned for questioning by the Township Police Office. "The officer mainly warned us to stop ploughing the confiscated land. However, [we're] workers and we all will be in complete trouble if we cannot plough. Therefore, we must get back our land by any means," said a local who had been questioned recently. Around the year 1990, No. 360 Artillery Battalion forced around 30 households to be moved and confiscated over one thousand acres of land to make a base.

[\(30 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Clashes between Farmers and Police

On July 26, there was a skirmish between farmers and police near the controversial Latpadaung copper mine project. The *New Light of Myanmar* reports that around sixty villagers, accompanied by eighty cattle, arrived at the compound and demanded that they be allowed to graze their cattle. Upon being refused, they tore down the fence surrounding the land in question. When police attempted to push their cattle out, the state media outlet claims that they attacked the police with stones and slingshots, injuring five security personnel. The newspaper then claims that the villagers attacked the police station, forcing the police to fire warning shots in order to disperse the crowd.

The villagers, however, deny the trespassing and assault allegations, and claim that the land is still theirs. Aung Ko Oo, a resident of Mongyo Pyi Ale Village, stated that the locals had not yet agreed to a compensation scheme and that the land had been unlawfully confiscated.

The villagers had requested permission to graze the land on July 23rd but had received a rejection notice from the Township Authorities. After three days of failed negotiations, the farmers went to the property in question to remove the fence, at which point Aung Ko Oo claims they were attacked by police with slingshot. According to him, two villagers were hurt in the clash.

Township Administrator Zaw Myo Nyunt denied that any villagers had been hurt, and said that the Salingyi Myoma police were pursuing legal action. The Latpadaung copper mine has been one of the most hotly contested areas with regards to the ongoing cases of land grabbing throughout Burma.

[\(28 July 2014 - New Light of Myanmar\)](#) [\(29 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

Over Fifty Farmers Imprisoned in Sagaing State

On July 17, 2014, twenty-four farmers were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three months to five years and three months and an additional 222 farmers have been charged for their involvement in a ploughing protest in Kantbalu Township, Shwebo Division, Sagaing State. Charges include trespassing and causing damage, and committing mischief after plowing land that had been confiscated by the military in 1997 and is currently being used as a sugarcane plantation. Individuals received three months for every charge against them.

In March of 2013, the Ministry of Defense had announced it would return most of the land to the local farmers; however, the current tenants of the sugarcane plantation refused to vacate, sparking tensions between the company and the local farmers. An agreement had been reached

LAND ISSUES

that would return the land to the farmers after the company completed its harvest. Following the completion of the harvest, the company refused to vacate, sparking further tensions and igniting a ploughing protest. The government had already officially returned the land and most of the farmers had received a Form 3, the official document for land ownership. Over 400 local farmers participated in a ploughing protest in May of 2014. Lawsuits were filed by the business owners of the sugarcane plantation. The public was banned from attending the court verdict. Nineteen other farmers were also fined for arguing with the authorities. On June 14, 2014, three farmers had already received prison sentences for their leadership in the protest. Two farmers, including Kaung Tun, coordinator of the ILO (International Labor Organization) Sagaing branch, received sentences of two years, while the other individual received a sentence of one year.

On July 18, 2014, thirty-two additional farmers from Kantbalu Township, Sagaing State, were sentenced for vandalism and trespassing. On July 23, 2014, many of the farmers were transferred to a number of different prisons. Kaung Tun, Kyaw Aye, and Myint Maung were transferred to Pakokku Prison. Wing Bo, Sein Tun, and Than Swe were transferred to Myingyan Prison. Maung Pu, Myint Htoo, Myat Lin, and Thaug Myint were transferred to Meiktika Prison. Zaw Min, Hla Moe, and Kyaw Tun Naing were transferred to Taungoo Prison. Thaw Tun Naing and Kyauk Khae were transferred to Pegu Prison. The remaining imprisoned farmers are assumed to still be in Shwebo Division Prison.

It is reported that around 200 soldiers destroyed some of the families' crops on July 25. Furthermore, around fifty family members of the imprisoned farmers have also been indicted.

[\(15 July 2014 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(16 July 2014- DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(16 July 2014-RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(17 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(17 July 2014-RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(18 July 2014 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 July 2014- RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(25 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 July 2014 - AAPP Source\)](#)

Nineteen Farmers in Tavoy Township Convicted

Nineteen residents of Tavoy Township, Tenasserim Division, ten men and nine women, have been charged by the Tavoy Township District Director and convicted. The ten males were charged under three different sections of law: voluntarily causing grievous hurt to deter a public servant from his duty, defaming or verbal abuse, and destroying evidence. U Kyu Lwin was charged under all three and received a prison sentence of nine months and fifteen days. U Thaug Nyunt was charged under the sections pertaining to voluntarily causing grievous hurt to deter a public servant from his duty and defaming or verbal abuse and sentenced to six months imprisonment. U Tun Tun Oo, the leader of the Farmers Organization, and the seven other males were charged under the section pertaining to voluntarily causing grievous hurt to deter a public servant from his duty and imprisoned for three months each. They are currently all imprisoned in Tavoy Prison. The nine females received either a six month prison sentence or a 10,000 kyat fine. All of the women paid the fine. Twenty years ago the Divisional Government had confiscated over 500 acres of land for a New Town Project. On June 1, 2014, a dispute arose between the farmers that hadn't received proper compensation for the land and the district officials when the District Director came and plotted the land.

[\(16 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(16 July 2014 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(17 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

LAND ISSUES

Phruhso Farmers Indicted

One hundred and ninety farmers were indicted for trespassing, cultivating land that was seized in the 90's by the Infantry Battalion No. 531 in Phruhso Township, Kayah State. The farmers were summoned, in groups of ten, to the local police station for investigation. However, some farmers cultivating the land refused to heed the summons. The farmers had initially attempted to re-plow the land in protest but the military quickly filed an order requiring that anyone wishing to cultivate the land must sign a letter of recognition that the land is owned by the military. After the order was promulgated, the farmers began a protest camp, and soon after, the one hundred and ninety farmers were indicted.

[\(6 July 2014 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

Farmers Regain Half of their Confiscated Lands

On June 28, an official ceremony was held to mark the return of land in the district of Tada-U, Mandalay Division. Farmers from four villages were returned approximately 5,000 acres of farmland. They argue that this is only a little over half their original land. The land was originally seized in the early 1990s by the military government for the construction of the Mandalay International Airport. After the completion of the airport, about 9,000 acres remained unused. Despite the small victory, the farmers are still continuing to fight for the remaining acres of the confiscated land. A September deadline has been set by the presidentially-appointed Land Grab investigation Commission for land grab cases to be settled, calling for seized lands to be returned or adequate compensation to be provided.

[\(1 July 2014 - DVB\)](#)

AAPP IN THE MEDIA

BNI Reports on AAPP's Statement

Burma News International reported on AAPP's statement regarding the Burmese government's continued suppression of the media in Burma. The statement cites recent government actions as evidence of the government's lack of commitment to the protection of civil liberties, arguing that "the government's use of the 1923 State Secrets Act to sentence the Unity journalists - and the 1950 Emergency Act to charge the Bi Mon Te Nay journalists - is reminiscent of the press oppression seen under the military junta." In an interview with Karen News, AAPP Joint Secretary Bo Kyi said that he doubts that the Unity journalists were given a fair trial. The statement added that the long sentences they received is indicative of the frailty of freedom of the press in Burma.

[\(21 July 2014 - BNI\)](#)

Myanmar Times Cites AAPP

Myanmar Times reports on relaxed international pressure for the release of political prisoners, citing Bo Kyi of AAPP on the current state of political prisoners in Burma.

[\(14 July 2014 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

KEY INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Mon Activist Wins Asian Women's Award

On July 25, 2014, Khin Khin Kyu (Mon name: Kun Chan Non), won the N-Peace Award along with four other women from Afghanistan, Indonesia, Nepal, and Pakistan. The award is given by the N-Peace Network, an institution founded in 2010 that supports women's leadership in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. Khin Khin Kyu has been fighting for the rights of ethnic minority women in Burma for over fifteen years. She originally based her work in the territory controlled by an ethnic Mon armed struggle group and served as a member of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) for seventeen years. She is currently the director and deputy chairwoman of the Mon Women's Organization.

[\(25 July 2014 – Irrawaddy\)](#)

Recent Actions towards Media Professionals Condemned by Many

Events this month pertaining to press freedom within Burma, including the sentencing of the Unity journalists and the arrest of the Bi Mon Te Nay employees, have been met with condemnation from a wide array of actors within Burma and abroad.

Burma's four press associations, the Myanmar Journalist Union, Myanmar Journalist Network, Myanmar Writers and Journalists Association, and Pen Myanmar, issued a joint statement that the government's recent actions compared to those of the country's previous regime.

Rupert Abbott, Amnesty International's Deputy Asia-Pacific Director, stated, "The authorities are continuing to rely on draconian laws to silence dissenting views or fair reporting, just like the previous military

amend all legislation that unlawfully restricts the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly." The government's actions were similarly condemned by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters Sans Frontiers, South East Asia Press Alliance, and the Asian Human Rights Commission.

The United States and UK have also raised concerns about the Unity sentencing. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Tom Malinowski argued that the government should not be dealing with media-related problems through the use of police tactics. He further warned the government that if their response to these problems is to arrest journalists, then they are retreating back to a relationship with the rest of the world that is not in their interests.

[\(24 July 2014 - Eleven Myanmar\)](#) [\(16 July 2014 - BNI\)](#) [\(21 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(11 July 2014 - DVB\)](#) [\(22 July 2014 - Scoop\)](#)

UN Special Rapporteur's Statement: Media Freedom, Remaining Prisoners of Conscience, Land Grabs

During her first visit to the country as the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Ms. Yanghee Lee congratulated the government on improvements, but also saw "worrying signs of possible backtracking". With regards to civil society and the media, she said that many people she had spoken to had witnessed a shrinking of freedoms, and she learnt of "continuing arrest and prosecution of people exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and association, particularly under Section 18 of the amended Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act". She also drew attention to the particular challenges faced by land activists and farmers who have been

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forcibly displaced from their lands.

With regards to political prisoners, she commended the government on the prisoner amnesties it had granted since coming to power, but said that it was a priority to release all remaining prisoners of conscience. She also encouraged the Prisoner Review Committee to be, “formally established as a standing institution with a mandate to review continuing detentions that may be politically motivated and to consider questions related to the rehabilitation of released prisoners.”

[\(27 July 2014 - Mizzima\)](#)

UN Recognizes Illegality of Brang Yung Detention

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has officially recognized the Brang Yung detention as illegal. Brang Yung is an ethnic Kachin farmer who was tortured and forced to falsely confess to a connection with the Kachin Independence Army. He was charged under Article 17/1 of the Unlawful Association Act, and after over a year of detention, was handed multiple sentences totaling over twenty years.

[\(12 July 2014 - Burma Campaign\)](#) [\(15 July 2014 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Conclusion / Analysis

The month of July witnessed the continuation and augmentation of some unsettling trends within Burma. First and foremost were the government's latest attempts to stifle the growth of a free and independent media within Burma. This issue was brought to the fore by the harsh sentencing of the five Unity journalists at the beginning of the month. The use of archaic laws against media professionals in an effort to silence them does not send a positive message to the Burmese populace regarding the current government's commitment to freedom of expression. Although the court's ruling has come under heavy criticism, Thein Sein has so far stood by the judiciaries' decision. Rather than taking definitive steps towards amending old laws or ensuring free and fair trials for those accused, President Thein Sein continually cites the need for 'responsible journalism' in this period of transition.

The subsequent arrest and indictment of the Bi Mon Te Nay Journal's staff for their publication of an article quoting the MDCF's announcement that Aung San Suu Kyi has been elected as a new interim leader only reinforces the undemocratic image of the government. It is worth noting that Naung Naung, the individual responsible for beginning the rumors about Aung San Suu Kyi, was also charged this month. Although such rumors may be seen as a threat by some within the current administration, this does not entitle them to the indiscriminate use of power to silence those voices.

This is particularly true when that use of power contradicts and weakens key aspects of the democratization process, such as the rule of law or freedom of expression.

Another trend that persisted through July was the continued arrest and detention of farmers in relation to land grab cases throughout Burma. Hundreds of farmers have now either been indicted or are awaiting sentences in relation to disputes over land ownership, with the number increasing every month. This should be of immediate concern to observers of Burma's development; not only is it a violation of the farmers' property rights, it is also potentially destabilizing. Clashes also arose this month between villagers and police at the Latpadaung copper mine project. Such occurrences will only increase unless steps are taken to remedy this difficult situation.

Despite the continued rhetoric by the government regarding their commitment to the democratization process, their actions this month continue to indicate their underlying prejudice towards maintaining power in an authoritative manner. The recent sentencing of the eight women's rights activists in Chin State exemplifies the government's continued authoritative grip on power. Last month, these activists had organized demonstrations in response to the attempted rape of a Chin women by a Burma Army soldier. In an effort to increase Western good-will, the Burmese government recently signed on to the international Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Conclusion / Analysis

Yet, instead of upholding this declaration and focusing on the alleged rapist within the army, it has instead taken measures to silence the opposition and, in doing so, has persecuted the very people it is meant to protect. Although the government solicits a liberalizing, cooperative image on the international stage, removing the mask and analyzing the domestic situation reveals the government's continued authoritative and oppressive actions.

The global audiences' ability to recognize this difference is crucial. The fact that the new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, Ms. Yanghee Lee, mentioned all of these issues in her first statement regarding the situation in Burma is a reassuring sign. Continued diligence is required in order to hold the current government accountable for the promises it has made to both its citizens and the international community.

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[Speaker of Parliament Calls for Fairness \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Leader of Protest Camp Indicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[Local Farmers Indicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[UN Special Rapporteur's Statement \(Mizzima\)](#)

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[Mon Activist Wins Asian Women's Award \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Women's Rights Activists Sentenced in Chin State \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Over Fifty Farmers Imprisoned in Sagaing State \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Employees of Bi Mon Te Nay Journal Indicted \(Reporters Without Borders\)](#)

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[Recent Actions Towards Media Professionals Condemned by Many \(Eleven Myanmar\)](#)

[Women's Rights Activists Sentenced in Chin State \(DVB\)](#)

[Parliamentary Speaker Urges Fairness in Dealing with Media Cases \(Eleven Myanmar\)](#)

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[Solo Protester Fined \(Mizzima/Burmese\)](#)

[Kantbalu Farmers Transferred to Different Prisons \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Parliamentary Speaker Requests](#)

[Reduced Prison Terms for Journalists \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[Bi Mon Te Nay Employees Arrested in Mae Sot \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Unity Journalists and CEO Sentenced \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Htin Kyaw Sentenced Yet Again \(Eleven/Burmese\)](#)

[Land Activist Detained \(The Voice Myanmar/Burmese\)](#)

[Recent Actions Towards Media Professionals Condemned by Many \(DVB\)](#)

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[Bi Mon Te Nay Owner and Office Manager Arrested \(DVB\)](#)

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[More Kantbalu Farmers Sentenced \(DVB/Burmese\)](#)

[Over 200 Farmers Charged and Twenty-Four Convicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[Eighteen Farmers Sentenced in Sagaing State \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Unity Journalists Defined as Political Prisoners \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

[Two MDCF Activists Incarcerated](#)

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[Property Confiscated from Kyaw Hein \(Mizzima/Burmese\)](#)

[Journalist Ye Khe Fined 20000 Kyat \(DVB/Burmese\)](#)

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[Nineteen Farmers in Tavoy Township Convicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Tavoy Farmers Convicted \(DVB/Burmese\)](#)

[Farmers in Kantbalu Township plow on seized land \(BBC/Burmese\)](#)

[Farmers in Kantbalu Township Convicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Recent Actions Towards Media Professionals Condemned by Many \(BNI\)](#)

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[Farmers Charged and Leaders Incarcerated in Sagaing State \(DVB/Burmese\)](#)

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[Myanmar Times Reports on AAPP \(Myanmar Times\)](#)

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[Police Refuse to Reveal Whereabouts of Bi Mon Te Nay Reporter \(Mizzima\)](#)

[Recent Actions Towards Media Professionals Condemned by Many \(DVB\)](#)

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[Unity Journalists and CEO Sentenced \(DVB\)](#)

[Unity Journalists and CEO Sentence \(Al Jazeera\)](#)

[Employees of Bi Mon Te Nay Journal Indicted \(BBC/Burmese\)](#)

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[Protesters in Paukkhaung Indicted \(Irrawaddy Blog/Burmese\)](#)

[Htin Kyaw Sentenced Yet Again \(RFA\)](#)

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[Coordinator of MDCF detained \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Employees of Bi Mon Te Nay Journal Indicted \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Employees of Bi Mon Te Nay Journal Indicted \(DVB\)](#)

[Action to be Taken Against Bi Mon Te Nay Journalists \(New Light of Myanmar\)](#)

[Bi Mon's Follow-up to Controversial Article \(Bi Mon Te Nay Facebook/Burmese\)](#)

[Women's Rights Activists Sentenced in Chin State \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

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[Phruhso Farmers Indicted \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[11 Members of 88 and NLD Charged \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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[Tada-U Farmers Returned Half Their Land \(DVB\)](#)