

AAPP and FPPS Press on the Definition of a Political Prisoner (2014)

The Definition of a Political Prisoner, reached at the seminar held on August 17th and 18th, 2014 in Rangoon.



The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners and the Former Political Prisoners Society sponsored a joint seminar on August 17th and 18th that sought to establish a working definition of a political prisoner. The seminar received 50 attendees, including representatives from political parties and human right groups, solicitors, former political prisoners and delegates from FIDH and the International Centre for Transitional Justice. The following is the definition that was agreed upon by those in attendance at the seminar.

The Definition of a Political Prisoner

1. Anyone who is arrested, detained, or imprisoned for political reasons under political charges or wrongfully under criminal and civil charges because of his or her perceived or known active role, perceived or known supporting role, or in association with activities promoting freedom, justice, equality, human rights, and civil and political rights, including ethnic rights, is defined as a political prisoner.
2. The above definition relates to anyone who is arrested, detained, or imprisoned because of his or her perceived or known active role, perceived or known supporting role, or in association with political activities (including armed resistance but excluding terrorist activities), in forming organizations, both individually and collectively, making public speeches, expressing beliefs, organizing or initiating movements through writing, publishing, or distributing documents, or participating in peaceful demonstrations to express dissent and denunciation against the stature and activities of both the Union and state level executive, legislative, judicial, or other administrative bodies established under the constitution or under any previously existing law. The seminar sought to create a unified definition of what it means to be a political prisoner. The need for a government agreed definition of this status is still as important as ever. Without this ratified definition, the existence of political prisoners can continue to be vehemently denied. Support for the discussion of this definition is extremely important to ensure the recognition of basic civil liberties and human rights for the people of Burma.

There is strong support for the drafting of this definition and a firm belief that its creation is the next essential step towards true political freedom and the recognition of basic civil liberties in Burma. AAPP, FPPS and our colleagues will continue to advocate for the discussion of this definition at a parliamentary level and for an official recognition of the existence of political prisoners in Burma.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

The Former Political Prisoners Society

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