

Fallen Political Prisoners

You Cannot Survive Alone:

The Role of AAPP in the Democratic Struggle in Burma from
2000 - 2020

23rd March 2020



**Assistance Association for Political Prisoner
AAPP**



MEMORY OF THE PAST

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to all current, former, fallen political prisoners and their families.

We honorably record to those who share the experience of being a political prisoner which creates an unbreakable bond between us and resist and overcome with perseverance and brave for the people of Burma. We heard each other's screams under torture. We will never turn our backs on each other, or our friends and colleagues in prison. As long as there are political prisoners in Burma, we will continue our work until they are all free.

Thanks letter

AAPP has played a vital role in keeping the legacy of political prisoners alive and ensuring that society will not forget the sacrifices that political prisoners have made in the fight for a democratic and free Burma. For the last 20 years, AAPP has been documenting and campaigning on behalf of political prisoners and fighting for democracy. During these 20 years, AAPP has been recognized as a reliable source for political prisoners by both domestic and international communities. Without the hard work of all AAPP staff and those who have worked with us and empathized with political prisoners, AAPP would not be in this position.

Even though AAPP was started by just 10 former political prisoners, today 40 staffs are working full time at AAPP. AAPP would like to thank all those former political prisoners, foreign staffs or supporters for their efforts and contribution to AAPP at our office, inside Burma or abroad. We would also like to express our thanks to those volunteers and interns who have worked at AAPP and helped us on our journey.

AAPP thanks the National Endowment for Democracy for its consistent support for the last 20 years. AAPP also would like to thank the Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Department of the US State Department, Open Society Institute, and other international donors and individual donors who supported us both technically and financially.

Finally, AAPP offers thanks to all alliance organizations and individuals who have worked with and co-operated with us for many years. Our thanks also go to the Government and Government Ministers who have cooperated with us over the last few years.

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

The Journey of 20 Years

Everyone is knowingly or unknowingly involved in politics each day. Therefore, everyone should be interested in politics as it affects each of us each day. However, generations of people who were involved in political activities or movements in Burma were oppressed, threatened, detained, torture to death and sentenced in prison by the military regime. Despite this threat activists bravely fought against such oppression. As a result of that, roughly 10,000 activists were imprisoned. In Burma, ever since independence until right now, there has been political prisoners.

Despite the well-known existence of political prisoners, agreeing on an exact definition is still controversial. Despite large changes in political systems and different type of governments in Burma, no government has had the political willingness or desire to create the definition of, nor recognize the existence of, political prisoners. It has been left to former political prisoners and those who interested in this issue in recognizing the existence of political prisoners, working on political prisoners' affair and creating a definition of political prisoners. In doing so, AAPP has been through two decades under different type of governments. Still we believe that the continued existence of AAPP is significant requirement for the political prisoner society in Burma.

Regarding 20 Years

After the 8888 democratic uprising, Burma was under military rule. Military intelligence (MI) was the most powerful group inside the country and started looking for activists across the country and arrested many activists. They were sentenced under military court for many years without lawyers or being given the right to complain. Many, including myself, were arbitrarily sent to prison. Some of the activists gave their lives and soul during the MI interrogation. We struggled to survive in prison whilst facing torture and malnutrition. The conditions inside prisons were not suitable for human beings, "How bad a human rights violation this was!" After release, former political prisoners were constantly monitored by MI. If you did any political activity, you would be re-arrested. In those days, social justice was so far away.

In order to help combat this situation, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners was established on 23 March 2000. When we present about AAPP, we should categorize into three major stages.

Ko Tate Naing



Formation

The first is that former political prisoners who had been released from different prisons around 90s and those sympathized with incarcerated political prisoners, looked for funding to help their friends who were still incarcerated. Despite our ongoing oppression by MI, we went to different prisons all across the country travelling by bus and train. We raised money by fund raising at festivals and by selling goods and through donations. MI did not like such kind of activities and MI increased surveillance on all of us.

Therefore, some were prejudicially detained and were again put in prison. Some including myself fled to the borders to the neighboring countries of Thailand and India. In Dec 1996, there was a student led demonstration, which I was involved in. As a result, I had to hide inside Burma for 8 months and then fled Burma in Aug 1997.

When I arrived at the Thai-Burma border, I was warmly welcomed and helped by students, youths, politicians and revolutionaries. I took shelter at the office of Democratic Party for a New Society and All Burma Student Democratic Front for a year. Then I moved to the home of friends, Christina and Patrick, who were working at Open Society Institute for several months. After that, I moved again to the office of the National Council of Union of Burma in Chiang Mai. Then, I stayed with the ABSDF for a year while working with them. Then I stayed at the office of the People Power 21 in Mae Sot. I was able to stay at one office or house then move to another because I hadn't formally joined any organization.

In 1998, Ko Aung Moe Zaw, Chairman of DPNS arranged me to meet with Mr. Rajsoomer Lallah who was a special rapporteur to Burma in Chiang Mai. During the meeting, I discussed about the political prisoners and situation of former political prisoners. It was the first time I was able to meet with foreign diplomats and discussed issues related to political prisoners.

In June 1999, myself, Aung Zaw who is a chief editor of Irrawaddy magazine, Ko Thet and Aung Maw Zin who is working at NED, wanted to help political prisoners, so we set up a group called "Na Ra Thein" literally translated as "prison", along the Thai Burma border. The Open Society Foundation helped us in those early days with technical support and helped us document information on political prisoners.

On Dec 1, 1999, to increase our assistance to political prisoners in prisons and to let the International communities know about gross human rights violation occurred in Burma, 10 former political prisoners started organizing an agitating committee at Mae Sot, Thailand. Then a few months later, AAPP was officially established on March 23, 2000.

Life in Exile

In the second stage of AAPP, we got help from democratic forces and ethnic armed forces who arrived to Mae Sot before us, as much as they could and I thank to Ko Zaw Win Lwin (aka) Ko Moe Swe from Yaungchiox workers organization, Ko Kyaw Thura from All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Ko Nyo from Democratic Party for a New Society. However, we had some opposition as of nature.

In order to run AAPP, we needed to work hard. Ko Min Zin who is at ISP, Cristina Fink from OSI and Kelley Currie from IRI helped us by giving suggestions and technical support. We had to take time to collect political prisoners' list and we had to do so secretly. It was dangerous for those who helped from inside Burma to collect such information and to help political prisoners inside prisons. Some former political prisoners were arrested and sentenced for helping to assist for prisons visits. I regularly pay respect to those who were sentenced while working for AAPP. I would like to repeat again here.

There were thousands of political prisoners under military junta. There was no such thing as a fair trial. In prison, political prisoners were abused and had their prisoners' rights as well as human rights violated. They also suffered from malnutrition and communicable diseases. We worked hard over a decade in order to raise awareness of this issue amongst international governments, INGOs, and the public by writing reports and releasing our data. As part of our campaign to release all political prisoners in Burma, AAPP undertook several free political prisoners' campaigns, either alone or in collaboration with other alliances. Attending Human Rights Conference led by United Nations, Geneva based Human Rights Council at every year, working closely with United Nations, International Governments, and human rights organizations all over the world, was also a major part of our works.

Among those campaigns, our 2009 global campaign was the most successful. More than 80 countries all over the world, including diplomats,

participated in this campaign. We intended to collect 888888 signatures in order to honor 8888 revolution and asked for the UN to make the release of all political prisoners in a priority. In the end we had collected over 700000 signatures. The signatures were eventually presented to the UN Special Envoy. This acceptance of signatures collected by civil society was the first time for the United Nations to do so in its history. Not only this campaign but other campaigns applied a great pressure against the Burmese military junta to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Min Ko Naing and all political prisoners.

As a result of our effort, finally, International Governments, human rights organizations and United Nation paid attention to issue of political prisoners and took priorities to place this issue in their agendas regarding Burma. The International community used the release of political prisoners was the barometer for developing Burma political progress.

It wasn't just advocacy, we were a focal point for political prisoners. After 2000, when former political prisoners from inside Burma arrived Mae Sot, we helped them for in their accommodation, food, health and security as far as we could.

In our Mae Sod office, we opened a museum to showcase more details of prisoners' lives and of life inside prisons. During 12 years in exile, we published 20 reports, numerous papers, statements, information releases and translated books written by other political prisoners. Then we created AAPP web site – www.aappb.org, twitter and Facebook and we added our updated information in our web and social medias to know current situation about prisons and political prisoners.

Not only for the release of political prisoners but for democratic movements, we joined with other alliances in the Thai – Burma border. AAPP is a core member for the Network for Human Rights Documentation in Burma (ND-Burma), which is made of border based ethnic organizations and which documented human rights violations across the country. AAPP is still actively working ND- Burma until now.

AAPP leaders were removed from the blacklist in Aug 2012 but we did not know the exact date when the military junta had originally put us in the blacklist.

Return to Burma

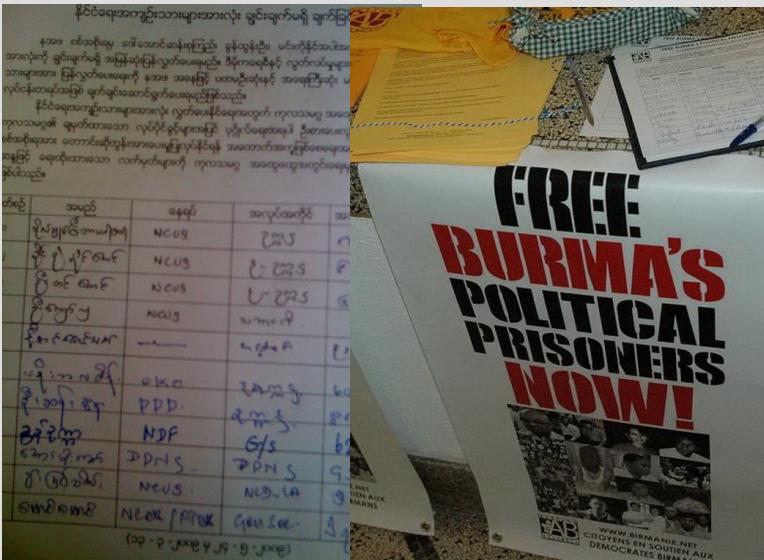
The third part of our journey was a major step forward. We returned to Burma in 2013 and opened AAPP offices in Rangoon/ Yangon and Mandalay. After we opened our offices in Burma, we changed our vision and mission based on our capacity and political climate.

We worked under the vision below, mission and activities: to achieve national reconciliation and to help transform Burma into a free and democratic society, where no political prisoners remain incarcerated and individuals' civil and political rights are protected, fulfilled, and maintained.

Mainly, we worked for the release of political prisoners, assisting current political prisoners, mental health assistance program, human rights promotion and protection, documenting and monitoring human rights violation, individual law changes, prison reform. We were also working with civil societies, government, international organizations. Moreover, we work also those work until now.

Our activities cannot be cover for all political prisoners or bring around democratic reforms by themselves. However we believe that AAPP's activities are helpful for the eventual achievement national reconciliation and peace.

Ko Tate is Secretary of AAPP.





Section 1

Life as an Exile Organization

Filling in Gap for the Political Prisoners

A history of the Assistance Association
For Political Prisoners (Burma)

23 March 2000 - 23 March 2010

THE FIRST DECADE

Thai – Burma border situation

The National Council of Union of Burma, which was made up of representatives from almost all ethnic armed forces in Burma, was one of the biggest alliance organizations operating along the Thailand – Burma borders. In addition, there was also the National Youth Forum, made up of students and ethnic youths (NY Forum), the Students and Youths Congress of Burma (SYCB), the Women's League of Burma (WLB), and various other workers' organizations, lawyers' organizations and civil society groups. There was around 200 in total, based along the Thailand – Burma border. Mae Tao Clinic, which was then known as the Student Clinic and led by Dr. Cythia Maung, which still operates today, was also founded along the border, and was heavily involved in helping & treating refugees, migrant workers and members of revolutionary organizations. These organizations all helped one another.

However, no organization was focused on the political prisoners.

Before AAPP was established, those who arrived at the Thai – Burma border, received help – food and accommodation and security – from the organizations that were already on the border. In particular the All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF), Democratic Party for A New Society (DPNS), National League for Democracy – Liberated Area (NLD- La), later Foreign Affair Committee of All Burma Federations of Student Unions played considerable roles in assisting new arrivals to the border. Some former political prisoners were also working in those organizations.

With the help of those organizations, newcomers had a chance to meet with ethnic armed forces, who also provided assistance. For individual security, the Karen National Union (KNU) and other alliance organizations took major responsibility. After AAPP was set up, AAPP worked with those organizations for human rights and democracy and helped each other.

First steps for the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

Former political prisoners arrived at the Thai – Burma borders with different reasons. After arrival, former political prisoners discussed about the way to provide the effective support to current political prisoners in Burma and for their release. Then, on Dec 1, 1999, they established an agitating committee for Assistance Association for Political prisoners with 5 purposes.

Early Days of AAPP

The early days after AAPP was founded were not easy. When we first started as an organization, we did not have proper funding nor necessary equipment and struggled to generate the resources needed to run our office. We were lacked knowledge, skill, international communication and a proper established network. The house rented by Ko Min Zin, Ko Tate Naing and Ko Bo Kyi was used as AAPP office. (Later, we were able to rent that house for AAPP office.)

We initially had to share a laptop computer donated by Christina Fink between two staff members. We had to connect it to a monitor as the screen was damaged. The first person would use it in the morning, and the second in the afternoon. We had to work very hard with limited materials. While we had the desire to work and the first-hand knowledge of being political prisoners, we had to learn how to work as an organization.

Our initial activities focused on documenting the number of political prisoners and attempting to create and expand our information sources along the border and within Burma, in order to get more information about what was happening inside the country. In addition, through our networks we were able to provide funds for the families of political prisoners so they could provide food and clothing for prisoners inside Burma. We studied several skills relating the organization, including typing, data maintenance, documentation, using email, establishing network with other organizations, writing news and reports and news release. With the help of colleagues from alliance organizations, we successfully overcame these challenges within a short period.

After that, on March 23, 2000, on the 11th anniversary of the arrest of student leader Min Ko Naing, and on the 124th Birthday of Sayar Gyi Thakhin Ko Daw Himine, the peace architect of Burma, 10 former political prisoners formally established the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.



For the first few years, we were primarily funded by individual and community donations from domestic and international individuals. In September 2000, we received our first grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which helped us grow and legitimized our organization.

One of the biggest challenges we faced in our early days was our legal status in Thailand. At first, we were illegally living in Mae Sot without documentation, which meant we were at risk of arrest at the numerous police checkpoints around town. Later, we received UN documents which guaranteed our protection. However, around 2004/5 many AAPP members and other activists received third country resettlement through UNHCR and left the border region. Only five of us stayed behind, remaining in Mae Sot to keep AAPP running. This meant we no longer had enough staff to undertake all of our activities, which caused further difficulties. We had to work very hard to overcome such challenges but were motivated by the knowledge that our brothers and sisters remained in prison.

In these first few years, the political situation in Burma meant we had to rely on messengers to pass information from inside the country. Information was cut off; the internet was monitored, and



phone lines were tapped. Our informants were not all political activists or former political prisoners. We often relied on ordinary people, including migrant workers, who sympathized with our cause and supported the democratic movement.

Members of our underground networks would arrive in Mae Sot with information from Burma and would then bravely smuggle information and reports back into Burma. This required a high degree of trust. Through our underground network and word of mouth, we were able to spread information across the border and inside Burma. Now it is much easier, as we are able to use email and social media to share information.

We survived these tough initial years and were able to grow and strengthen our capacity after overcoming these initial setbacks.

After setting up the agitating committee in Feb 2000, the committee first published an information release, detailing emergency health care needed for U Tun Aung Kyaw and Ko Zaw Maung Maung Win, who were in Mandalay prison and Ko Nay Tin Myint in Myingyan prison, and called for the authorities to send them for treatment at a general hospital outside prison, which we believed could provide them with better medical facilities and treatment. After this, AAPP's first report, detailing conditions inside Myingyan prison, was published. Because of this report and information release, AAPP received a lot of attention by the media, international community and those involved in the democratic movement.



Social Assistance

During 2004 and 2005, hundreds of former political prisoners from Burma fled to the border. So, in order to help them more effectively, AAPP made a decision to set up a social committee. In 2004, AAPP rented two houses to serve as social houses and lodging for new arrivals and provided food, accommodation and basic health care. In addition, AAPP helped them during their applications for resettlement to third countries or to secure jobs in Thailand or to get access to education other countries.

Later, those former political prisoners lived in different organizations or part of Mae Sod. Some went to the refugee camps. They continued to be involved in political prisoners' activities or the democratic struggle. Therefore, we got help & supports from them when they passed on their contacts so we could create an underground network inside Burma to find out and distribute information related to political prisoners.

AAPP held numerous former political prisoners' event in order to build up friendship among former political prisoners from different periods who were living along the border and so they could share their experiences.



Political Co-operation with other organizations

A APP cooperated with the organizations, such as NCGUB, NCUB, ND-Burma, WLB, Forum Asia, FDB, Burma Campaign UK, US Campaign for Burma, Burma Supported Group (Europe), for activities related to federalism, human rights, democracy and future state building.



Exhibition and Internet page



AAPP opened a photo exhibition in 2002, which would grow into our museum, to provide a better understanding of the struggle that political prisoners face, the situation inside prisons and labor camps and the abuses of the government. Like the office, it remains to this day.

Hnin Khar Moe (aka) Ko Wai Linn who is a member of AAPP wrote about the introducing of exhibition as follow:

"When you enter a zinc plated gate of a compound somewhere in the border town of Mae Sot, you will see a two-story wooden house at the end of a yellow earthen track with shady mango trees along the way. Next to the house, there's a building more like a garage or storage shed, with a small entrance with iron bars. Beyond the entrance you will find a dim room known as the political prisoner exhibition room. Before entering the room for the first time, do not forget to take a deep breath.



Now, open the door. As soon as you enter the exhibition room, you might feel you are falling into a deep trench or drowning. But do not worry. This is not a trap. This is a forgotten, dark corner of an otherwise bright and beautiful world. The exhibition room represents the reality of the daily lives of people in Burma, not their fictional or imaginary representations. The exhibition room is displayed with the electric-shocked hearts, the blind-folded hopes and the jackboot crushed dreams of our iron-shackled existence. The exhibition room was created to invite visitors to experience the stories of people trapped inside the dark side of the world."

Inside the exhibition room, we display photos of political prisoners, prison photos and photos of labor camps, information about prisons, iron shackles and batons, handmade materials made by political prisoners and model Insein prison. Iron shackles and handmade materials displayed were secretly smuggled to AAPP from inside prisons.

There are photos of the "*Pounsan*" or stress positions a prisoner will be forced to adopt when the authorities are trying to break their spirit. The museum has played a major role of our advocacy work and thousands of people have entered through its small doors in Mae Sot.

AAPP launched the website in December 2001 in English version aiming those who are interested in Burma Politic, prisoners, and human rights situation in Burma, which included profiles of current and former political prisoners, listed prisoner numbers and published our briefings on the current human rights situation in Burma.

AAPP launched a Burmese version of the website on its fourth anniversary in 2004. We opened our Facebook account in 2012 and twitter in 2015.

Lobbying and Advocacy

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he key objective of the AAPP's advocacy work is to inform the international community about the human rights violations in Burma and the issue of political prisoners, and to pressure the Burmese Government through the International community.

Not many people knew how many political prisoners there were in Burma and that they were being brutally tortured while at interrogation centers and prisons.

To inform the public, first we needed to document and publish how many political prisoners there were in Burma, which prisons they were locked up in and how the conditions and human rights violations they faced in prison. In addition, we made sure that the community knew who we were, what kind of organization we were and where our expertise was. Without recognition, no one would listen.

On the other hand, AAPP selected well known political prisoners among political prisoners who may be interested by Burmese community and international community. For the selection process, we were not able to do it alone, and working together with Burma Support Groups that were founded in each country. By doing this, we tried advocating for the release of and nominating political prisoners for international awards to raise awareness.



In 2001, the International Peace Prize in Trondheim was awarded to Min Ko Naing, an award usually honoring student activists. Moreover, we later successfully nominated Min Ko Naing for the Homo Homini Award from Czech Republic.

In order to accept those awards, as political prisoners were behind bars and were not able to accept them, AAPP and All Burma Federation of Student Union (Foreign Affair Committee) were invited on behalf of political prisoners. This was the cause for the first international trip of AAPP, outside of Thailand.

In this trip of AAPP, AAPP representatives had a chance to visit to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands and the Czech Republic. AAPP also had a chance to accept Student Peace Prize and Homo Homini Award. Along that trip, we had an opportunity to meet with Prime Minister of Norway, various Foreign Ministers and former Prime Minister and Mayors. AAPP was also able to set up networks with international student unions. We also had a chance to held press conference together with President of Czech Republic Mr. Vaclav Havel at the famous castle of Czech Republic.

This first international trip helped AAPP to gain international political legitimacy of AAPP and it help influence the foreign policy of those countries, especially in regard to releasing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Min Ko Naing and political prisoners.

AAPP is also an association that based in Thailand-Burma border. Therefore, it collaborated with other border-based organizations. In 2001 November to 2002, AAPP organized Free Political Prisoners Campaign Committee (FPPCC) together with other border based 11 organizations and had done photo exhibition and preaching in 23 countries around the world, that meant free political prisoners is important issue of Burma's political changes.

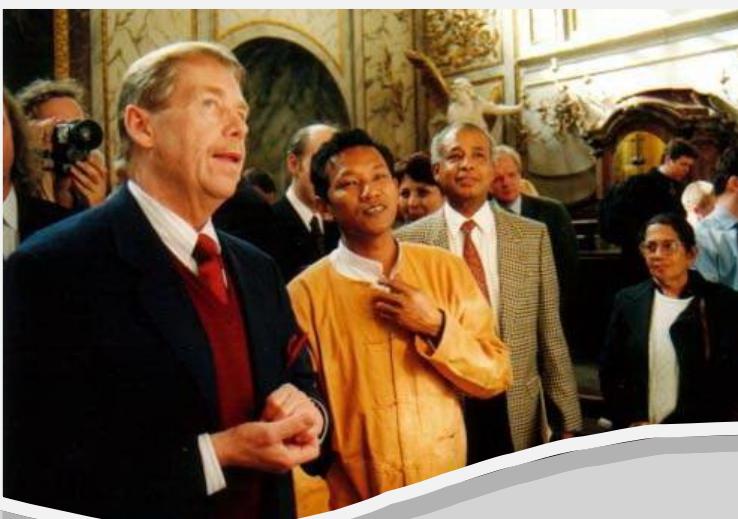




There are important forces on advocacy in exile. Among them, Dr. Sein Win led **National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma** (NCGUB) is one of the most important organizations. It was based in Washington D.C and lead to give pressure on Burmese military regime by the United Nations, the United States of America, European Union and other international governments. AAPP participated in these advocacy activities to reflect real situation of Burma in United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Human Rights Council, to include Burma in UN resolutions. For those activities, AAPP worked together with other border based Human Rights organizations, Ethnic organizations and Women Organizations as a group.

AAPP participates every year in those meeting to present about political prisoners. AAPP could submit torture and arbitrary detention by letter or verbal submission to United Nations Human Rights council.

In 2002 October, AAPP had a chance to meet first time with UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Paulo Sergio PINHEIRO in Bangkok, Thailand. During meeting, we highlighted that we have the information about his return due to find the secret microphone while he is speaking with 1990 elected U Nine Nine in Prison. Mr. Paulo Sergio PINHEIRO recognized AAPP's network and could build trust between AAPP and UN Special Rapporteur. Later on, AAPP briefed about the situation of the country before his trip to Burma and before he submits his report to the UN. Likewise, AAPP has continued providing briefing to next UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana, and the most recent UN Special Rapporteur Ms. Yanghee Lee.



On May 30th 2003, there was terrible political violence in Burma during what became known as the Dabayin massacre. In this massacre, many of the members of National League for Democracy, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo were attacked. Some of them died, wounded and arrested in this massacre. AAPP was able to report this incident to the diplomats in Bangkok, international governments, United Nations and international medias.

AAPP actively involved in the Ad Hoc Commission that led by National Council of the Union of Burma to investigate and report on the Debayin massacre. The commission issued the report on the massacre to Governments, United Nations and Human Rights organizations.

AAPP was able to build up such kind of important recognition and trust by the domestic and international community within a short time. Therefore, AAPP members were invited to receive a prize on behalf of political prisoner who were still in prison. AAPP members were also invited to join to the delegation for lobby and advocacy at General Assembly in New York and Human Rights Council in Geneva and other conferences and seminars all over the world. As a result, AAPP members were able to explain to representatives of governments and diplomats all around the world, as well as the Secretary General of United Nations and his special envoys to Burma, Special Rapporteurs to Burma, and international Human Rights organizations and the Medias. We were able to spread the word about Burma human rights situation, the link between the release of political prisoners and national reconciliation, lack of rule of law, how people were losing their basic human rights such as freedom of assembly & speech, and how vast military expenses were detrimental to spending on health and education. After our explanation, were able to use of information to information their policy of pressure against the military regime.

https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs/Depayin_Massacre.pdf

Acknowledgement

The Ad hoc Commission would like to express its sincere gratitude to the following organizations and individuals for their kind contribution to this report.

- (1) National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) for providing information and cooperation.
- (2) Member Organizations of the National Council of the Union of Burma for their co-operation.
- (3) Political Defiance Committee (PDC) of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) for providing information and the photographs of the Depayin victims.
- (4) Network for Democracy and Development (NDD) for providing information and the photographs of the Depayin victims.
- (5) Assistance Association for Political Prisoners – Burma (AAPP- Burma) for providing information to compile the list of victims of the Depayin Massacre.

The Commission also expresses its profound appreciation to the anonymous individuals inside Burma, who bravely helped provide the precious information and assisted to bring the eyewitnesses out of the country

There was a Burmese affair conference in the United States in 2003 that was organized by Free Burma Coalition, which was powerful advocacy and lobby organization in year 2000s. AAPP was invited to participate. During that trip to the US, AAPP had a chance to meet with key persons of U.S Congress and U.S Department of States, by the arrangement of Free Burma Coalition. AAPP explained about situation of political prisoners, oppression of the military regime and could urge them to give more pressure on to the leaders of military regime.

In 2004, some political prisoners were released including Min Ko Naing. He was awarded the Civil Courage Award by New York based "Northcote Parkinson Foundation". Ko Bo Kyi, Joint Secretary of AAPP accepted this award on behalf of Min Ko Naing by his agreement in 2005.

AAPP became recognised as a reliable resource of political prisoners and prison conditions by working with Governments, Diplomats, UN Special Rapporteur, US and EU based Burmese coalition groups. At the same time, the number of political prisoners released by the regime became an indicator of the improvement of Burmese political situation.



In 2006, we applied pressure through numerous human rights bodies and institutions. AAPP Joint Secretary Ko Bo Kyi was invited to testify at the US Congress. This trip was mainly arranged by US Campaign for Burma that is founded by ex. Members of Free Burma Coalition. AAPP submitted a paper to US Congress. Moreover, AAPP Joint Secretary Ko Bo Kyi has given expert evidence to the UNHRC and spoken to countless diplomats about the need for sustained pressure to be levied on Burma. AAPP has also submitted reports to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process.

AAPP testified before the US Congress and various other official bodies around the world. Since then members of AAPP have travelled widely for advocacy: to UK, US, South Korea, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ireland, always spreading the message of political prisoners. Around this time, AAPP also worked with a coalition of civil society and human rights organizations to put pressure on Burma about the political and human rights situation in the country.

This pressure contributed to Burma's decision to forgo its turn to chair the Association of South East Asian Nations meeting in 2006.

2007 was an important year of Burmese political changes and a very busy year of AAPP. Thousands of activists took to the streets in what quickly became known as the "Saffron Revolution" but were brutally repressed and hundreds were detained including Min Ko Naing and other leaders. During this period, a number of journalists based themselves in the AAPP office in order to receive information quickly. After the Saffron Revolution, AAPP prepared a comprehensive briefing on the status of political prisoners. In 2007, the UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement once again calling for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners in Burma. As a result of this, AAPP was accused as a behind controller by military regime.

In 2008, Burma faced the Cyclone Nargis disaster. The Cyclone hit in Ayewadday Delta area and tens of thousands of people died during the incident. Many activists were arrested after helping the victims of Cyclone. There was no permission granted by the government to accept international emergency aid. Within that circumstance, border based organizations helped to get link between international organizations and local organizations through difficult situations. AAPP is also one of the border based organizations that helps to link as possible as it could.

During this period, military regime sponsored to held referendum for 2008 constitution. Many activists were detained for NO VOTE activity to against referendum. AAPP was consistently doing advocacy to release those detainees AAPP prepared a comprehensive briefing on the status of political prisoners for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, prior to the release of his report on the situation inside the country. Mr Quintana visited the AAPP office in Thailand before he entered Burma in an effort to secure as much information as possible about the situation of political prisoners in the country. AAPP also provided extensive briefing notes to the staff of UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari before his visit to the country in February 2009. During this period AAPP also conducted a global signature campaign, petitioning UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to make the release of all political prisoners a priority. Additionally, AAPP Joint Secretary, Ko Bo Kyi, met with US President George Bush in Bangkok.



In 2009, AAPP and Forum for Democracy in Burma initiated the Free Burma's Political Prisoners NOW! Campaign, which connected 230 democratic, international, local, and ethnic organizations and aimed to collect 888,888 signatures before 24 May 2009, the date that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was due to be released. We can collect 677214 signatures (in total more than 730000 including late received). We contacted to UNGS to send those collected signatures to him and he agreed to accept. The representative of UNGS officially accepted those campaign signatures at the United Nations Head Quarter and held the press conference to international medias. This is the first time of officially acceptance of civil society organizations collected signatures in the UN record.

In November 2009, AAPP Joint-Secretary, Ko Bo Kyi, was awarded Human Rights Watch's Alison Des Forges Defender Award for Extraordinary Activism. En route to accept the award, Ko Bo Kyi made advocacy trips to Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. During these trips, he met with numerous government officials, including Brendan Cox, Special Advisor to English Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and several staff members from the Asia Pacific Directorate at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). During the meetings, Ko Bo Kyi outlined the current political and human rights situation in Burma and encouraged the UK government not to recognize the 2010 election results without the release of all political prisoners and a review of the 2008 Constitution. As a result of this visit, the FCO launched a political prisoner campaign in November 2009. This campaign highlighted one prisoner per week until the 2010 elections took place. AAPP also prepared a briefing for the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon on his visit to Rangoon to meet with Burmese leaders.





2010 brought big political changes to Burma.

On May 18 2010, Ko Bo Kyi went to Chiang Mai to brief the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Burma on the current state of political prisoners in the country. Ko Bo Kyi also met with US Senator John McCain when he visited AAPP office in Mae Sot in June.

In 2010 November, there was an election and President U Thein Sein led USDP won the election and became to power. There were some changes in USDP government. Therefore, we forecasted to be positive changes. However, there was no release of political prisoners yet. That is why, AAPP is continuing working on to release political prisoners unconditionally.

AAPP has been involving in the UPR process since 1st cycle and submitting reports consistently. Members of AAPP associated with Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Affair Minister, Delegates from countries supported for Burma Democratic changes, such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Slovakia, USA, Switzerland, Finland, Netherland, Ireland, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Cambodia, Malaysia, United Nations, Parliamentarians, CSOs, Labor Unions, Student Unions and Media, and we continue our effort in working towards successful democracy changes in Burma, with them.

Throughout our first 12 years, we continually tried to build political pressure regarding the existence of political prisoners and human rights violations in Burma, and to keep sustained political pressure on the Burmese regime in order to create positive change. In all our reports, press releases and statements, we continuously called for not only the immediate release of all political prisoners, but also for the international community to use economic and social sanctions to pressure the Burmese government to release all political prisoners and to reform the legislative system, which allows for confined imprisonment and the creation of new political prisoners.

Mental Health Assistance Program (MHAP)

In 2010-2011, after AAPP had assisted numbers of political prisoners who had had experience brutal torture, we then understood the long-term consequences of their experiences in torture. We also understand their need for both physical and mental assistance and rehabilitation. Therefore, AAPP translated and published the chapter "Former political prisoners and their families" from the book of "Counseling Torture Survivors" that was published in South Africa.

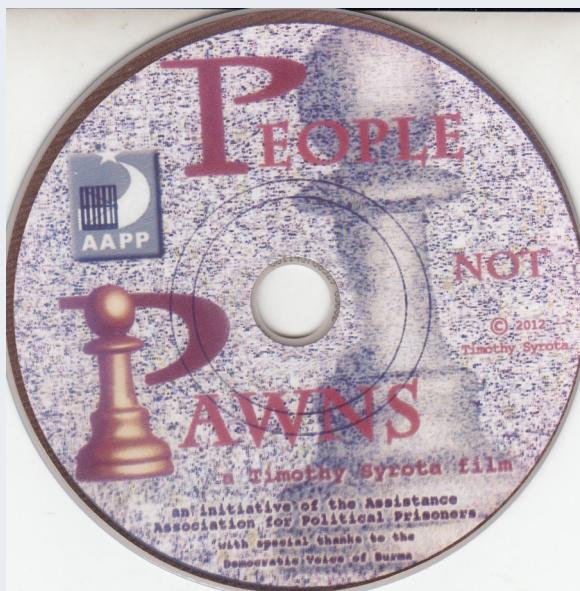
To address this need, AAPP started our mental health assistance program (MHAP), providing mental health counseling training and individual mental health counseling in Mae Sot, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University. AAPP expanded the mental health assistance program to Burma in 2013.



Awards and Recognition

By the end of our first 12 years of work, AAPP had become widely recognized, both domestically and internationally, and our work was often cited internationally. In 2004, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour testified to the House International Relations Committee's subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific that "Organizations like the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma have increased their professionalism and credibility in documenting and presenting information. Run by former political prisoners, AAPPB has earned a strong reputation for quality of information on the number of political prisoners in Burma and the conditions they face in prison."

During this period, AAPP members also received a number of awards for their work. In 2002, Bo Kyi was awarded a framed plaque by Amnesty International's Italian branch for AAPP's role in the fight for human rights in Burma. In 2003, he was awarded the 'Scholastic Achievement Award' by Senator Jem Battin of the California State legislature. The Massachusetts House of Representatives recognized his and AAPP's commitment to democracy for the people of Burma. Later Bo Kyi was awarded the 'International Human Rights Defenders Award' in 2008 and the 'Alison des Foges Award for Extraordinary Activism' from Human Rights Watch in 2009. When receiving both awards, Bo Kyi's acceptance speech highlighted the need for continued pressure and work for the release of all remaining political prisoners. In addition, he also received the 'Foundation for Freedom and Human Rights Award' for outstanding contributions to freedom and human rights in 2011.



Documentary and Music Album

We have also been featured in many interviews with media organizations and have been the subject of several documentaries. The documentary "Burma Behind Bars" was released in August 2003 which talks about the Burma political prisoners, the life in the Burma prisons and the Burma Prison system, followed by "Into the Current: Burma's Political Prisoners" in 2012. The later focuses on Ko Bo Kyi and Min Ko Naing and details the history of Burma's political prisoners, resistance and repression within the country and it was collaborated with Mrs. Jeanne Marie Hallacy. The same year, AAPP, in collaboration with Tim Syrota, produced "People not Pawns," a documentary that takes a historical look at political prisoners in Burma and the work that AAPP does to document and support them.

In the first week of May 2005, the documentary about Ko Aung Hlaing Win who died at the interrogation center was released by AAPP.

AungHlaing Win, lived in Mayongone Township, Rangoon Division and was a member of the National League for Democracy (NLD-Youth). On May 1, 2005, he was accosted at Lucky restaurant in downtown Rangoon by four unknown men, assumed to be soldiers. No one knew where he was taken. On May 10, 2005 the commander of an interrogation center, Lt. Col. Min Hlaing, came to his family and informed them that AungHlaing Win died on May 7, 2005 from a heart attack while at the interrogation center. According an autopsy confirmed by four medical specialists from North Oakkalapa Hospital, AungHlaing died before he got to the hospital and was sent to the hospital as a corpse.



In 2005 AAPP also released a revolutionary music album, "Songs from the Cage," featuring songs that were composed by political prisoners whilst they were incarcerated, which were then performed by former political prisoners.

"After 1988 Democracy Uprising, many political prisoners were imprisoned in the regime's prisons across Burma and experienced the brutal torture. The more they were oppressed, the stronger the belief of the political prisoners were! From this belief, the revolutionary songs were born with their hearts. They composed with heart, memorized and deliver verbally one another until it reached outside world. AAPP proudly released this music album for their feeling to be heard."

Publications We Produced

AAPP's first report detailed the prison conditions in Myingyan prison and helped expose the situation to rest of the world. Since then, alongside our documentation and other advocacy efforts, we have continued to write and release a wide variety of thematic reports.

AAPP has also published books written by prominent political prisoners, including U Win Tin and Min Ko Naing. During AAPP's first years, many former political prisoners worked with us to publish their memoirs, detailing their experiences in prison. Due to military censorship, they were unable to publish the books inside Burma, so they did so in exile with AAPP's support.

Below is a brief overview of some of the most important books and reports we published in our first 12 years. Full information on all reports published during this period, as well as the reports themselves, is available on our website.

Of 20 Years, the Journey



Spirit for Survival

"Spirit for Survival" was published in English in October 2001. The report includes articles on prison experience, poems, analyses, satire and opinion pieces written by former political prisoners. The book was also published in Korean, Japanese, and German.



Memoirs without Record of a Youth

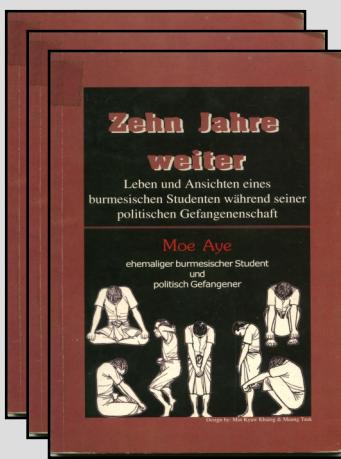
The book was written by author Win Naing Oo, a former political prisoner, and was published in October 2001. Saya U Tin Moe wrote the following introduction for the:

I thought about writing the preface for this book by wiping my tears with a poem. I can feel the experience in the book is more like a living hell, and for that I'd really like to thank the author Win Naing Oo for sharing this experience and for writing such a book.

Actually, I don't need to write the preface. I myself was once in Insein prison as a political 44 prisoner so I can vividly see and remember the experience in Insein prison. This book is both the heart and the window of democracy activists.

Brothers, I truly am so proud of your unwavering beliefs, and noble sacrifices. I believe that the tear streams from Win Naing Oo's book will turn into a spotlight beam for the people of Burma. Sacrifices will never be forgotten.

Tin Moe 1/8/2001



Ten Years On

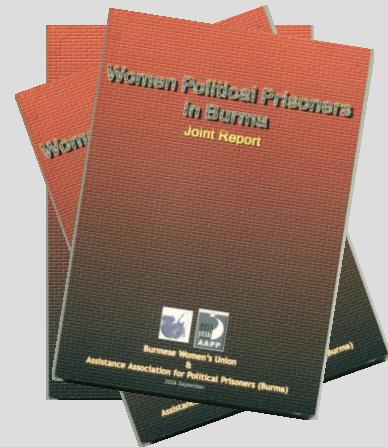
In July 2002, AAPP published the German translation of "Ten Years On", written by Moe Aye, a former political prisoner. In the book, the author recalls his 10 years in prison. It is the true story of life under military rule in Burma. This collection of articles sheds light on the horrific conditions political prisoners face.

20 Years AAPP

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

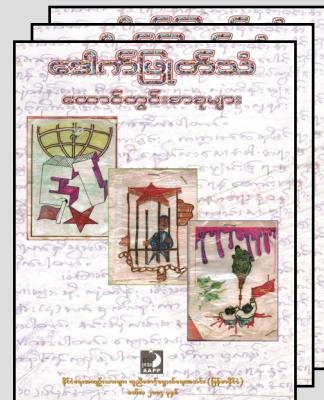
Women Political Prisoners in Burma

In February 2004, AAPP and the Burmese Women's Union (BWU) published a joint report, "Women Political Prisoners in Burma." It was published in Burmese. The report explores the experiences of women political prisoners. It exposes the sexual harassment women political activists in Burma have endured during interrogation and in prison. Through interviews with former political prisoners, the particular issues facing women are discussed, including pregnancy, motherhood, and women's healthcare and sanitary needs, both in prison and after release.



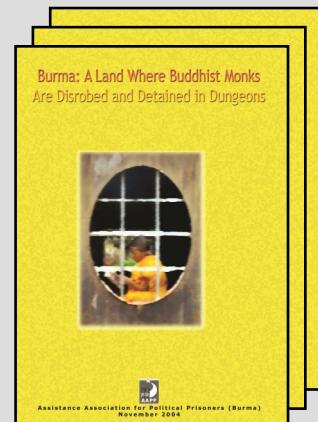
The Noise of the Hanging Gallows

"The Noise of the Hanging Gallows" was published in March 2004 in Burmese. The articles in this book were written by political prisoners while in prison. The articles reached AAPP through different channels and AAPP published the articles in a book to honor these political prisoners.



Burma: A Land where Buddhist Monks are Disrobed

The report was published in November 2004 in English. The report introduces Buddhism in Burma and reveals the arrests and imprisonment of over 300 Buddhist monks under the military regime since 1988. It also documents the death of monks in forced labor camps. Articles and memoirs of former political prisoners who lived in prisons with imprisoned monks are also included in the report.

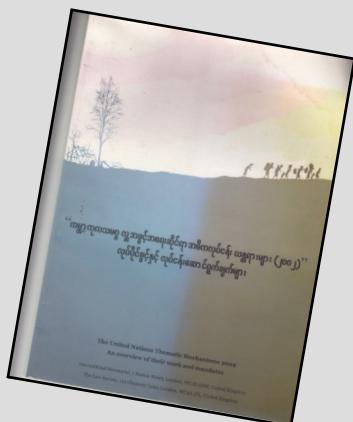
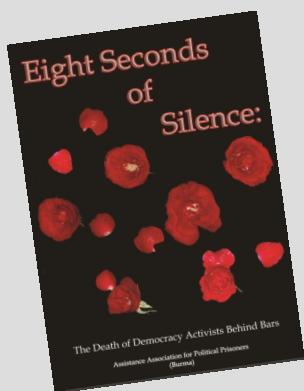
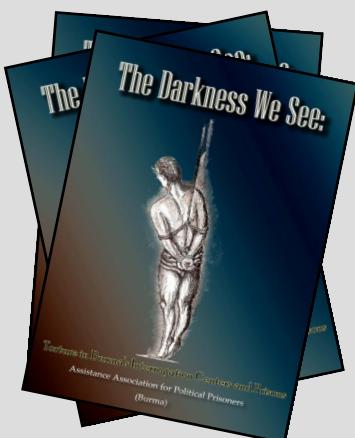


Handbook for Former Political Prisoners and their Families

This handbook, published in August 2005 in Burmese, is a translation of the chapter "The manual for Former Political Prisoners and Families" from the *Counselling Torture Survivors*. The handbook is for former political prisoners and their family members to help them cope with the brutal and systematic torture that political prisoners were often subjected to in Burma.



Of 20 Years, the Journey



The Darkness We See

This report was published in December 2005 in English. It exposes the methods of torture that were used systematically by the military regime's interrogation centers and prisons, and the conditions of detention. This includes the denial of medical care, which in itself may amount to torture. The report also explores the difficulties former political prisoners face after release.

8 Seconds of Silence

This report was published in May 2006 in both English and Burmese. The report reveals that at least 127 political prisoners died in interrogation centers, in prisons and just after release due to the torture and maltreatment they experienced in detention.

Transformation: The Czech Experiences

In February 2008, AAPP published a translation of "Transformation: The Czech Experience", a collection of 24 reports on the most important aspects of the transition of the former Czechoslovakia to democracy. It introduces the experiences of the people who actually handled the reform and summarizes the success and failures of Czech transformation.

The United Nations Thematic Mechanisms 2002: An Overview of their work and mandates

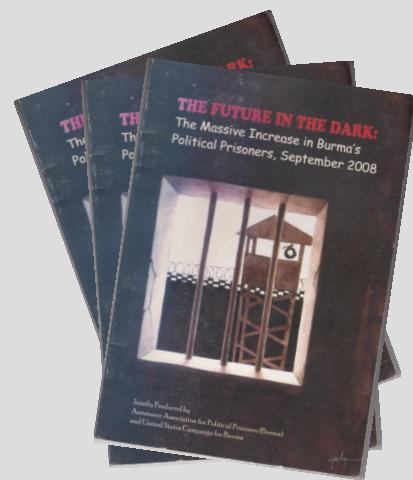
In June 2008, the translated version of "The United Nations Thematic Mechanisms 2002- An overview of their work and mandates" was published. The book was published originally by cooperation between Amnesty International and the Law Society of England and Wales to highlight the international norms and standards in addressing human rights violations, about human rights commission and human rights council and their mechanisms.

0 Years AAPP

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

The Future in the Dark

"The Future in the Dark" was jointly published with the United States Campaign for Burma in September 2008. This report documents the arrests of 88 Generation Student Group members in August 2007 and the arrests of political activists in the 2007 Saffron Revolution. It exposes the unfair nature of the political prisoners' trials and the treatment they were subjected to. The report was submitted to the United Nations Security Council.



The Rearview Mirror

AAPP published the novelette [m8] "The Rearview Mirror" to honor imprisoned 88 Generation Student Leader, Ko Min Ko Naing, in October 2009. The book was authored by Ko Min Ko Naing and reflects on the reality of the time when the people of Burma were fed up with the system and joined the student activists to try and change the system.



The Role of Students in the 8888 People's Uprising in Burma

Originally published in March 2010, this seven-page report introduces the 1988 uprising, which demanded an end to military rule. It outlines the successes and failures of the uprising, and the role students played. It highlights how these students continued to fight for democracy long after the 1988 uprising, thereby creating a space for more civil action.



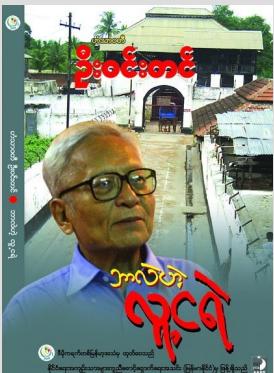
Silencing Dissent

This report discusses the lack of freedom in the areas of speech, media, expression, association and assembly, and access to information. The criminalization of free expression allowed the military government to detain political activists in an attempt to silence their dissent. This report argues that without freedom of expression, free and fair elections cannot take place.

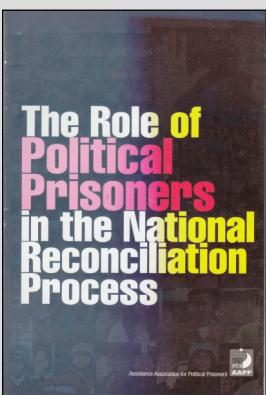
20 Years AA

Of 20 Years, the Journey

A Living Hell: Is That All You've Got

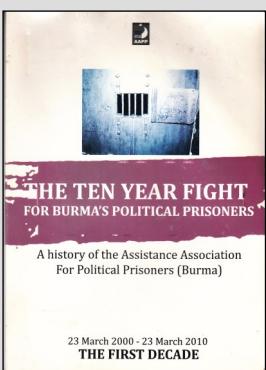


This book was published to commemorate the 80th birthday of the Secretary of the National League of Democracy, journalist and writer U Win Tin, on 12 March, 2010. The author, U Win Tin, recalls the 19 years he spent in prison. It tells the story of U Win Tin's unwavering commitment to freedom and democracy in Burma. Despite having spent more than 7,000 days in prison, he remains defiant against the regime. The book was published by Democratic Voice of Burma and distributed by AAPP.



The Role of Political Prisoners in the National Reconciliation Process

This book was published in March 2010 to highlight the importance of including political prisoners in the national reconciliation process. It explains the crucial role political prisoners play in politics and civil society. It stresses the importance of an ongoing dialogue between the government, ethnic groups, political prisoners and other stakeholders in the reconciliation process. In doing so, this book acts as a roadmap for national reconciliation, and outlines the importance of political prisoners within this process.



AAPP (2010) The Ten Years Fight for Burma's Political Prisoners

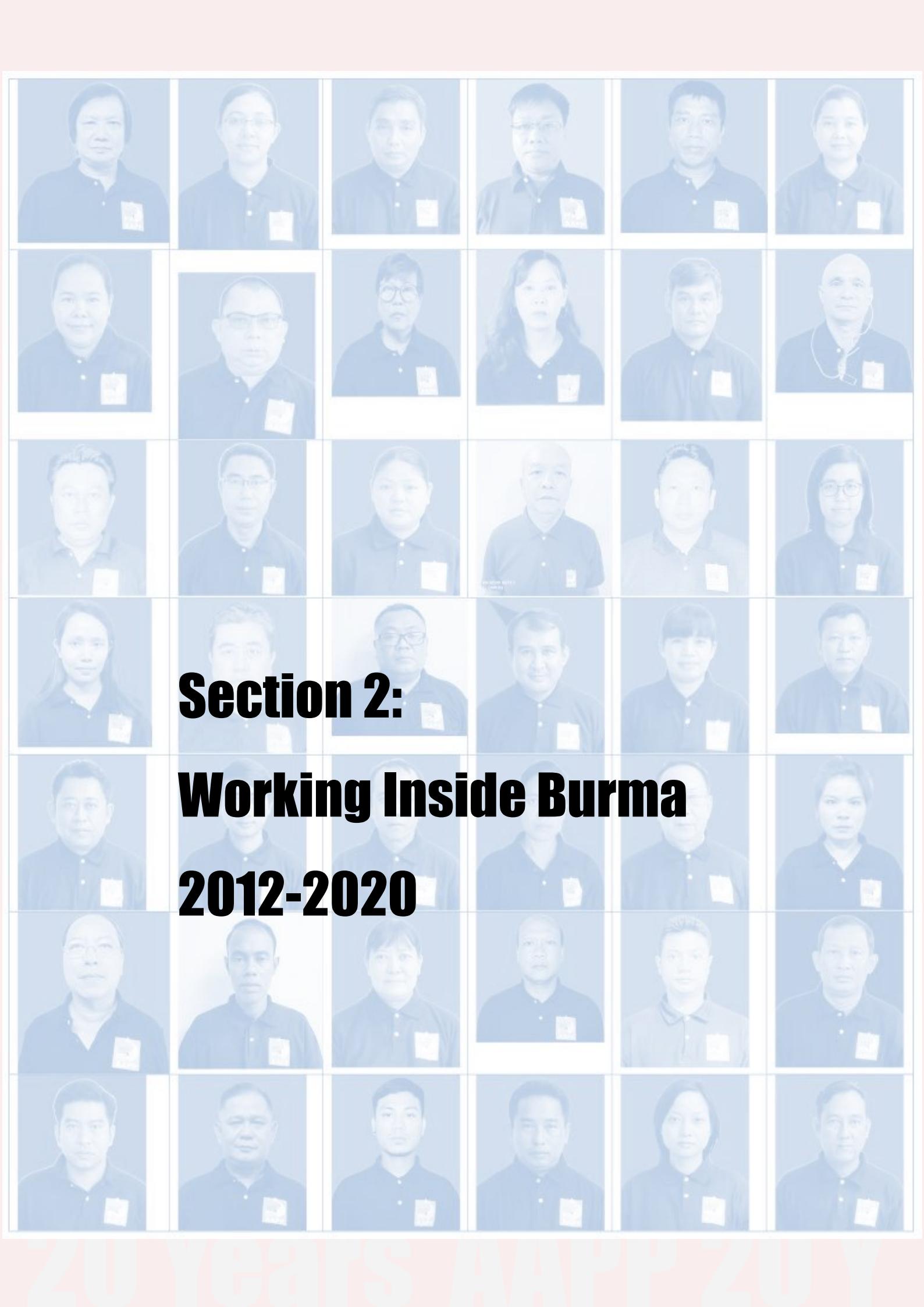
On 23 March 2010, the book representing a history of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners was published on the 10th Year Anniversary of AAPP, which reflects the ten years fight for the Burma political prisoners.



The Country of Heroes in the Dark Wave

On the 11th Anniversary of AAPP, the book written by writer Hnin Pann Eain was published in collaboration with Radio Free Asia. The book is organized by collecting the articles broadcasted weekly by Radio Free Asia. This book reflects the deep situation of the political prisoners in Burma.

20 Years AAPP



Section 2:

Working Inside Burma

2012-2020

2012-2020

Political Changes and Context

From 2012 onwards, President Thein Sein made some positive political changes in Burma. For example, on January 13, 2012, the Burmese government released 650 political prisoners, including Min Ko Naing, Hkun Htun Oo, and Ashin Gambira. Just a few days before, on January 5, the National League for Democracy's application for party registration was approved, thus guaranteeing Aung San Suu Kyi's candidacy in the upcoming by-elections. On April 1, 2012, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won 43 out of 44 contested seats in Burma's national by-election. It was in light of these changes that we decided to return to Burma.

Yet this brief period of reform was not to last. Despite his promises that all political prisoners would be released by the end of 2013, Thein Sein continued to arrest and sentence more political prisoners, whilst simultaneously releasing others and claiming that progress was being made. His presidency was defined by initial hope and promises of reform, followed by backtracking on his promises. He made minor reforms and released some prisoners, but ultimately no major substantive changes occurred during his presidency.

2015 saw the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the election of the National League of Democracy, which took office in 2016. With the NLD coming to power, over 100 former political prisoners were elected to parliament.

However, despite the election of the NLD, problems that had existed during the military rule and dictatorship continued. Political prisoners remained incarcerated, and the poor and sometimes abusive conditions within Burma's jails did not improve. To make matters worse, the new government started to detain journalists and activists just like the military regime before it.

Since then, over the last few years we have seen a decline in the space available for civil society. In 2018 and 2019 the number of political prisoners increased on an almost monthly basis. Despite major steps being taken towards democratic transition in Burma, much work remains to be done and AAPP continues to play an important role.



Photo From : Eleven Media Group

Re-Post By Aye Chan Mon

Deciding to Move Back

There were two major changes to AAPP in this period: returning to Burma and changing our missions and objectives in line with the changes in the political situation.

AAPP members were removed from the blacklist in 2012. In January 2012, AAPP Secretaries, Tate Naing and Bo Kyi, visited Burma to assess what impact the recent political opening was having on the situation of political prisoners. This was the first time they had been back to Burma since 1999 and 1997, respectively. Upon their arrival at the Yangon airport, numbers of interviews were conducted they provided the recent work plan as follows;

"We will work on the release of all political prisoners, recognition of political prisoners and rehabilitation process as our priority. Moreover, We will discuss with the relevant stakeholders about ensuring the rights of the citizens and the rehabilitation program for the released political prisoners as soon as they are released."

Challenges

We made the difficult decision to move back into Burma in response to the positive changes happening inside the country. After 2012, with the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her subsequent election to the Pyithu Hluttaw, alongside initial reforms from the Thein Sein government, the international community focused its attention inside the country. During the military regime, the international community did not consider the military government to be legitimate, and AAPP and other exiled civil society groups were often considered legitimate representatives of the people. But after Burma began to open up, the international community was increasingly willing to engage with the elected government and was no longer as interested in consulting exiled civil society groups. Therefore, we moved our operations inside Burma to remain part of the discussion regarding human rights and the democratic transition. If we stayed on the border, the legacy of political prisoners would no longer be heard by decision makers and the international community.

We opened our first office in Burma in June 2012 with the help of 141+ group which located in Tarmwe township. We later moved to Kyaukmyaung township and moved to Thingankyun. In 2017, we moved to North Dagon township and then we managed to open our new modern museum at North Dagon office on our 18-year anniversary on March 23, 2018. AAPP faced big challenges while settling inside country, such as taking time in trust building with partners, adapting the local society, creation of new activities and the stability of the organization.

AAPP is run almost entirely by former political prisoners, but we are working in a country where the law does not recognize the concept of a political prisoner. The current government is refusing to acknowledge our identity as former political prisoners, which creates an identity crisis for us. Despite there being over 100 former political prisoners in parliament, there has still been no formal recognition of political prisoners. This is highly problematic and a hindrance to national reconciliation.

Another challenge we are facing is the restrictions on the government organizational registration law. According to the current registration law, the Government only allows organizations involved in social work to register. Therefore, AAPP's application to register was denied because the General Administrative Department, which controls registration for all organizations under Union Government, said the work AAPP is doing does not qualify as social work.

Amending and Re-defining the policies of the Organization

When we moved back, we also changed and expanded our mission and vision to reflect the changing political situation inside the country. We felt it was not enough to work solely on the political prisoner issue. In the changing context, we also needed to talk about the general human rights situation, and help former political prisoners play a role in society and in the national reconciliation process. As a result, we have now expanded our work to include campaigning for reparations for former political prisoners, working on principles of non-reoccurrence, and trying to ensure that there will be no more political prisoners in the future. We started to lobby for Human Rights promotion and awareness and campaigned for the amendment and repealment of individual laws.

Our new mission and vision are as follows:

Vision

To achieve national reconciliation and to help transform Burma into a free and democratic society, where there are no political prisoners and civil and political rights are protected, fulfilled, and maintained.

Mission

- To secure the unconditional release of all political prisoners, assist in their reintegration into society through mental and physical rehabilitation, and ensure their right to safe participation in the democratization process in Burma.
- To prevent human rights violations and protect political activists, human rights defenders/campaigners, and the people of Burma from all human rights violations.
- To continue to be a reliable and credible source of information on political prisoner issues in Burma by documenting the issues political prisoners face, the wider overarching problems contributing to these issues, and how they can be resolved.
- To raise awareness domestically and internationally about human rights abuses and promote civil and political rights and the rule of law in Burma through advocacy and lobbying.
- To cooperate with local, regional, and international stakeholders in developing transitional justice programs to foster national reconciliation.

Activities

- **Provide** humanitarian assistance and vocational/educational training to current/former political prisoners and their families.
- **Offer** mental health counseling services through MHAP to current and former political prisoners, their family members and members of the general population, and training CBOs in mental health counseling.
- **Promote and protect** human rights by delivering human rights awareness sessions as well as training on human rights, human rights documentation, and transitional justice.
- **Monitor and document** political prisoner cases, prison conditions and violations of human rights.
- **Publish** reports related to political prisoner issues based on trends identified through monitoring and documentation as well as translations of international human rights treaties.
- **Collaborate** with CSOs, governments, and international organizations on prison reform as well as institutional, legislative, and policy reforms relating to civil and political rights.
- **Advocate** for the amendment/repeal of repressive laws and **lobby** the Government to sign and ratify international human rights treaties.

Assistance

A APP provided assistance to current political prisoners, former political prisoners and family members for social/humanitarian helps, educations, health care support and vocational training.

AAPP assistance from 2013 to 2019 after AAPP returned back to Burma;

176,715,975 kyats for 488 Incarcerated political prisoners and 115 detainees and
19,011,300 kyats for 98 unhealthy political prisoners

144,176,665 kyats for 450 former political prisoners as Health care support, 50,989,845
kyats for 70 former political prisoners as Educational Support, 3,858,000 kyats for 45
former political prisoners as Vocational Training.

Support to 176 Family members of political prisoners for 22,620,000 kyats, Vocational
Training for 18 members of family members of political prisoners for 5,420,000 kyats

To support for 115 family members of fallen political prisoners for 84,500,000 kyats.

167 political prisoners who received a brutal torture both at interrogation and prisons for
42,870,000 kyats

During 2017 and 2019, AAPP supported 19 lawyers for defending human rights defenders
or farmers.

Recognizing, Reparation and Rehabilitation

Since AAPP return, we organized a number of truth telling events and networking meetings. In
that events, former political prisoners spoke out their torture experiences and how they over-
came their difficult time in prisons among public. Such kind of events and documenting are one
of the important parts for the National Reconciliation.

Recognizing, Honoring and Documenting

A APP and the Former Political Prisoners' Society held a joint event honoring and recognizing fallen political prisoners in January 2014 and on 23 March 2016 in Rangoon. We invited 115 family members of fallen political prisoners to the event and provided honoring certificates and supported funding.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's letter to the Ceremony Honoring Fallen Political Prisoners

သုရေကောင်းအာဏာနည်တွေဆိတာ စောင်အဆက်ဆက်မှာရှိခဲ့ကြပါတယ်။ တိုက်ပွဲအဆက်ဆက်၊ အရေးတော်ပုံ အဆက်ဆက်မှာ ပေါ်ပေါက်ခဲ့ကြပါတယ်။ သုရေကောင်းအာဏာနည်တွေဟာ ပုံစံအမျိုးမျိုးနဲ့ တိုင်းပြည်အတွက်၊ အမျိုးသာသာသနအတွက် စွန့်လွှတ်စွန့်စားကြ ပေးဆပ်အနစ်နာခဲ့ကြပါတယ်။ အခြေအထဲမှာမှ အသက်စွန့်ခဲ့ကြသူများဟာ အမြင့်ဆုံးပေးဆပ်ခဲ့ကြတဲ့သူတွေ၊ အဆုံးစွန်ဆုံး စွန့်လွှတ်ခဲ့ကြသူတွေဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

အသက်စွန်သွားတဲ့ သုရေကောင်းတွေ၊ အာဏာနည်တွေဆိတာ သုတို့ယုံကြည်ချက်အတွက် ရဲရဲပုံပုံရပ်တည်ခဲ့ကြတဲ့သူတွေပါ။ စစ်နည်းအားဖြင့် သုတို့မယုံကြည်တဲ့အရာကို လက်ခံစိုး အသက်စွန်ပြီး ငြင်းပယ်ခဲ့ကြတဲ့သူတွေပါ။ အဲဒါကြောင့် သုတို့ကို အကောင်းဆုံးဂက်ပြန့်ဆိုရင် သုတို့ယုံကြည်ချက် တွေကို ဆက်လက်ကိုင်စွဲဖို့ သုတို့ ပျော်စုံချက်တွေပြည့်ဝအောင် ဆက်ပြီးအကောင်အထည် ကျော်စွဲဖို့ သုတို့ ရည်ရွယ်ချက်ပန်တိုင်ရောက်အောင် တာဝန်သိသိနဲ့ဆက်ပြီးလျောက်လှမ်းကြဖို့ လိုပါလိမ့်မယ်။

အကျဉ်းထောင်တွေ၊ စစ်ကြောရေးစခန်းတွေကို အသုံးပြုပြီး လူတွေရဲ့ယုံကြည်ချက်တွေကို ရိုက်ချိုးဖို့ ကြီးသာဟာ တိုင်းပြည်ကို အညွှန်ကြီးစေတာပါပဲ။ တကယ်တမ်းကျေတော့ ဒီအကျဉ်းထောင်တွေ၊ စစ်ကြောရေး စခန်းတွေကို ဖြတ်သနနဲ့ကြသူတွေ၊ စိတ်ခါတ်တွေ၊ အယူအဆတွေ၊ ယုံကြည်ချက်တွေဟာ ဆက်လက်ရှင်သနနွဲပြီးပြီး တိုင်းပြည်ရဲ့ ဒီမိုကာရေးရေး၊ လူအဆင့်အရေး၊ အမျိုးသားပြန်လည်သင့်မြတ်ရေး၊ အတွက် အခြေခံကောင်းတွေဖြစ်ခဲ့ပါတယ်။ စစ်မှန်တဲ့ အာဏာညွှန်စိတ်ခါတ်ဆိတာ အာယာတက်းစင်ပြီး၊ မြင့်မြတ်တဲ့ ပေါင်းစည်းညီညွတ်ရေးကိုသာ လိုလားရပါတယ်။

ကျွန်ုမတို့တိုင်းပြည်မှာ ဒီလိုယုံကြည်ချက်တွေ လွှတ်လပ်စွာဖော်ပြန်ပြီး လက်တွေ၊ လည်းကျင့်သုံးနိုင်တဲ့ စောင်၊ အကျဉ်းတန်ခဲ့တဲ့ အတိတ်ရဲ့ အက်ရာဇ်က်ချက်တွေကို အကောင်းဆုံးကုတ္ထားနိုင်မဲ့ စောင်ကို အမြန်ဆုံးရောက်သင့်ပါပြီး၊ ဂုဏ်ပြုခွဲအခမ်းအနားကို ကျွန်ုမကိုယ်တိုင်မတက်ရောက်နိုင်ပေး တတ်နိုင်သမျှ ကျော်တာဝန်သိသား၊ ထင်းချက်ဖို့ ကြီးသားပြီး၊ ဂုဏ်ပြုစားနှင့် ပေးပို့လိုက်ပါတယ်။



ဒေါ်အောင်ဆန်းရုကြည်
Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

In order to reintegrate and rehabilitate, health is the most important for released political prisoners. Therefore, AAPP provided funding for medical checkup and necessary medical treatment as much as we can since operating at the border. Although we are not able to provide assistance for the medical check-up, we continue providing funding to the current and former political prisoners who need medical treatment, when financially possible.

From 2005 to 2015, for decade, AAPP provided educational support program for the children of the political prisoners and former political prisoners to be able to continue their schooling. Until now, AAPP is still providing funding to former political prisoners to continue their Bachelor and Master degree education inside the country.

Former political prisoners face difficulties related to health, education and the economic gap after they released. Most of the former political prisoners find it difficult to secure their livelihood. AAPP helps them to solve these difficult problems faced by former political prisoners, such as providing vocational training to former political prisoners.

Many of those who were detained or sentenced under the military regimes were tortured. After release, they continued to suffer from physical and mental trauma. In order to be rehabilitated into civilian life they need mental and physical rehabilitation assistance, and AAPP is helping them as much as we can.



Mental Health Assistance Program (MHAP)



Asistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) was founded by former political prisoners, therefore we understand about the traumatic experiences prisoners face in the interrogation centers, and the hardship of serving in prisons. We all had similar experiences are empathic towards former political prisoners' mental trauma. Further, many former political prisoners lost job opportunities after release due to the military regimes. They also faced the difficulties to set up their own business. As a result from these experiences and difficulties, most of the former political prisoners are suffering from post-traumatic stress , depression and insecurity. Due to those reasons, some former political prisoners become alcoholics. As a result of their drinking, their social life, economy and health are negatively affected and ultimately it contributed to their premature deaths.

AAPP is aware of such kind of problems that former political prisoners and their family members face, so "to rehabilitate physical and mental well-being" is one of a major objective of AAPP. However, AAPP was not able to implement programs designed to address this due to limitations in our public health and mental health technical abilities.

In 2010, the researchers of (Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Bloomberg School of Public Health, Apply Mental Health Research Group) came to AAPP Office in Mae Sot, Thailand and discussed the results of their research regarding Component Based Intervention technique, developed by JHU. Following these discussions, AAPP implemented our Mental Health Assistance Program (MHAP), using Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA), developed by JHU.



The common elements that CETA counselors learn include a number of basic therapeutic elements like encouraging participation and introducing the treatment, seven therapeutic methods, plus two additional ones to address alcohol abuse and suicidal thoughts. They are then trained to plan different “flows” of these common elements for a client. Such a flow could look like this:

- 1) Encouraging participation,**
- 2) CETA introduction,**
- 3) Thinking in a Different Way - Part 1,**
- 4) Talking about Difficult Memories, and**
- 5) Thinking in a Different Way - Part 2.**

The treatment takes about 8-12 sessions, in which the counselor gradually introduces new elements and continuously monitors and adapts the process. The plan for the flow is also flexible and can be adapted, if needed, based on individual client response to components and answers on the weekly monitoring form. The counselor learns to do this in a two-week intensive training. After the training, they continue practicing in groups, with pilot cases, and then start working under close supervision. This method relies on three layers of people: Trainers, supervisors, and the counselors. The trainers, usually from outside of the intervention area, train both supervisors and counselors during the intensive 2-week period. The supervisors are local individuals, trained as counselors, but selected to handle the additional responsibilities. This structure implies that, over time, the program can become independent of technical support from CETA, making it sustainable in the long-term.

To date, AAPP's Mental Health Assistance Program is run by a Chief Clinical Supervisor, one CETA trainer, four supervisors and 17 counselors in Rangoon, Mandalay, Taungdwingyi, Magway Region, Myawaddy, Karen State and Mae Sot, Thailand and we provide the clients with Post-Traumatic Stress, Depression and Substance Abuse symptoms. We have successfully completed more than 3000 clients until 2020 February.

In 2016, AAPP met with the Minister of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) and discussed collaboration between AAPP and MSWRR. As a result, the Minister gave permission to provide mental health counseling to Women Vocational Training Center, Women Development Center and Hgnet Aw Sann Youth Training Center under the control of MSWRR. AAPP is providing mental health counseling to those centers until now.

AAPP's Mental Health Assistance Program is running by five activities.

1. Providing individual mental health counseling to Depression, Post Traumatic Stress and Substance Abuse symptom people.
2. Providing the training on Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) and follow up supervision.
3. Providing mental health awareness and Self-care training throughout the country which intend to against stigma among the people in Burma and to be able to take care of themselves particularly human rights defenders, activists and potential political party leaders.
4. Providing Stress management, Basic Coping Skill and Self-care training/workshop to requested organizations. AAPP intends to share more skills of managing stress, coping skills and taking care of themselves to front line workers of human rights researchers, human rights defenders, activists who have had experienced of secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, compassionate fatigue and burnout.
5. Advocating promoting mental health counseling to the government, parliament, international community and local stakeholders.

The list of completed mental health counseling MHAP

F

rom 2013 to now, MHAP counselors keep providing individual mental health counseling to former political prisoners and their family members in Rangoon and Mandalay.

In 2014 – 2015, Rangoon based a team of MHAP travelled to Bogalay, Ayeyarwaddy Delta area and temporarily based for three months. That MHAP team provided individual mental health counseling to Karen ethnic former political prisoners and their family members. They successfully completed mental health counseling services to 29 clients. After providing counseling, MHAP counselors and supervisor could build trust between AAPP and former political prisoners of that area. We were able to set up a network in that area.

In 2014 – 2015, Mandalay based MHAP team travelled to Chaung U, Sagaing Region and were based there for three months. That MHAP Mandalay team provided individual mental health counseling to former political prisoners and their family members in that area. They successfully completed mental health counseling to 28 clients.

From 2017 to now, MHAP provides individual mental health counseling to Women Vocational Training Center, Women Development Center and Hgnet Aw Sann Youth Training Center in Rangoon area.

Providing individual mental health counseling services to the centers which are under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Center	Year	2017		2018		2019		2020 Feb-ruary		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Hgnet Aw Sann Youth Training Center	47	-		89	-	138	-	17	-	291
Women Vocational Training Center	-	25	-	45	-	18		7		95
Women Development Center	-	46	-	24	-	13		-		83
Disable Adult Vocational Training Center	-	-	-	-	-	15	17	-	-	32
Total	47	71	89	69	153	48	17	7		501

In 2019, MHAP has started providing individual mental health counseling to Disable Adult Vocational Training Center in Rangoon.

In 2019 – 2020, a counselor of MHAP is providing individual mental health counseling to former political prisoner and people living with HIV.

In 2019 – 2020 February, Rangoon based MHAP team 3 supervisor and three counselors travelled to Pakokku, Magway Region and provided individual mental health counseling services. The team successfully completed 18 clients in February, 2020.

Yearly successfully completed individual mental health counseling services

area Year	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020 Febru- ary		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Yangon	24	24	13	101	126	117	155	138	146	203	83	87	22	167	32	11	1771
Mandalay	4	-	30	11	36	15	36	15	38	11	10	-	23	8	1	4	242
Bogalay	-	-	-	-	21	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
Chaung U	-	-	-	-	23	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
Natmauk/ Taung Dwin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	8	8	23
Pakokku	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	9	18
Mae Sot, Thailand	91	88	71	132	45	32	27	42	82	32	73	42	10	60	3	4	928
																	3039

Our target populations are former political prisoners and their family members, victims of torture, victims of human trafficking, victims of raped, people living with HIV, LGBTIQAs, commercial sex workers, refugees, internally displaced persons, alcohol abuse personal, migrant workers and vulnerable groups.

Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) Training and Supervision

Name of Organization	Year	Number of trainee	Remarks
Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)	2014	17	
PU-AMI (Mae La Refugee Camp)	2014	26	
PU-AMI (Umpiem and Nupo Refugee Camp) at Umphang	2015	22	
Karen Department of Health and Welfare + Backpack Health Workers Team	2016	22	
Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)	2016	11	
Population Services International (PSI)	2017	7	
Nyein Foundation, Substance Abuse Research Association (SARA)	2017	27	
Metta Foundation, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), Kachin	2018	27	Keep providing supervision
PSI, SARA, KDG, and KBC at Myitkyina	2019	27	Keep providing supervision every week.

3. Providing mental health awareness and Self-care training throughout the country which intend to against stigma among the people in Burma and to be able to take care of themselves

2018

No.	Year and month	Place	Number of trainee		Total	Remarks
			M	F		
1	April, 2018	South Dagon, Yangon Region.	9	16	25	
2	June, 2018	Kyeintali, Rakhine State	19	14	33	
3	July, 2018	Myitkyeena	16	9	25	
4	August, 2018	Pyay, Bago Region	11	16	27	
5	August, 2018	Bago, Bago Region	9	13	22	
6	September, 2018	Homalin, Siggai Homemalin, Sagaing Region	11	9	20	
7	September, 2018	Homalin, Siggai Homemalin, Sagaing Region	15	9	24	
8	October, 2018	Moe Kaung, Kachin State	15	14	29	
9	October, 2018	Hopin, Kachin State	18	12	30	
10	November, 2018	Moe Mauk, Kachin State	7	18	25	
11	November, 2018	Hinthata, Ayeyarwaddy Region	15	15	30	
12	December, 2018	Taunggup, Rakhine State	16	12	28	
13	December, 2018	Kyaik Hto, Mon State	16	6	22	

2019

No.	Year and month	Place	Number of trainee		Total	Remarks
			M	F		
1	January, 2019	Sittwe, Rakhine State	13	9	24	
2	May, 2019	Kyaingtung, Shan State	7	16	23	
3	May, 2019	Pathein, Ayeyarwaddy Region	17	7	24	
4	June, 2019	Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region	9	15	24	
5	September, 2019	Kyaukpandaung, Mandalay Region	12	18	30	
6	September, 2019	Nyaung U, Mandalay Region	9	10	19	
7	September, 2019	Nyaung U, Mandalay Region	9	21	30	
8	October, 2019	Vimutti Women Organization, South Dagon, Yangon Region	25	2	27	
9	October, 2019	The Wings Institute, Puzuntaung, Yangon Region	10	13	23	
10	October, 2019	Ta'ang Women Organization, Lashio, Northern Shan State	19	-	19	
11	November, 2019	Taungtha, Mandalay Region	3	25	28	
12	November, 2019	Myingyan, Mandalay Region	16	17	33	

The participants of those trainings gain knowledge on mental health that is occurring among the community, at work place, among the colleagues. Therefore, they have some knowledge on against stigma. They also gained the skills on how to take care of themselves and some of them get started to change their lifestyle.

4. Providing Stress Management, Basic Coping Skills and Self-care Training/workshop

No.	Month / Year	Organization name and area	Participants	Number of Participants		Re-marks
				M	F	
1	February, 2018	Ta'ang Women Organization (TWO), Lashio, Northern Shan State	TWO members from Northern Shan State	-	26	
2	July, 2018	Sandhi Governance Institute, Yangon Region	Civil Society Organizations, Political Activists	12	15	
3	December, 2018	Population Services International (PSI), Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region	Management Board members of PSI	16	20	
4	February, 2019	Tavoyan Women Union (TWU), Tavoy, Tanintharyi Region	Members of TWU	2	20	
5	February, 2019	Sandhi Governance Institute, Yangon Region	Community leaders and political activists	16	12	
6	May, 2019	Sandhi Governance Institute, Yangon Region	Community leaders and political activists	16	12	
7	October, 2019	Women Initiative Platform (WIP), Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region	Focal Women Trainees	0	20	
8	November, 2019	Ta'ang Students and Youths Union (TSYU), Lashio, Northern Shan State	Senior Managers and Staff Members	10	9	
9	January, 2020	Sandhi Governance Institute, Yangon Region	Different political parties, Different civil society organizations. And the different ethnic groups.	18	11	

5. Advocating to the Government, Parliaments, International Community and local stakeholders for promoting community based mental health counseling services in Burma.

One of the major objectives that AAPP implemented MHAP to achieve is reducing is the huge treatment gap in Burma. Yet it is not possible to fill up this huge treatment gap by AAPP alone. It needs a government policy and working together with relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations.

On the 10th of October, 2019, on World Mental Health Day, AAPP's MHAP launched the report of "Treating Common Mental Health Disorders in Burma and the need for Comprehensive Mental Health Policies". Moreover, AAPP met with higher officials of the Ministry of Health and Sports, the Chairperson of Health and Sports Committee, Upper House and Bago Regional Parliament to advocate promoting mental health counseling services in Burma. Furthermore, AAPP is also lobbying and advocating to develop comprehensive mental health policy, including mental health counseling services, developing updated mental health law and to include a law for counseling services.

In June ,2019 AAPP was invited to participate in Revise National Mental Health Policy workshop in Nay Pyi Taw .AAPP discussed and suggested to include mental health counseling services in the national policy. As a result , in draft action plan includes "establish mental health technical strategic group (TSG) under Myanmar Health Sector Coordinating Committee" and "conduct a national mental health survey". In the draft activity, "develop a mental health and substance use research agenda", "stakeholder analysis for mental health survey" are included in the second draft policy.

In conclusion, AAPP's Mental Health Assistance Program is a necessary and vital component of the wider Reparation process for former political prisoners and their family members, victims of human rights violations and vulnerable, marginalized populations, internally displaced persons and general prisoners. This is a part of transitional justice process.

Human Rights Awareness, Human Rights and Transitional Justice Trainings

To promote and protect human rights, AAPP has provided Human Rights, Human Rights Documentation and Transitional Justice Trainings all across the country since 2013. This 12 days training is provided to former political prisoners, members of political parties, regional parliament members, ethnic youths, members of different religious groups, human rights defenders, and activists. At the training, we mainly provide information about human rights concepts, history of human rights, the universal declaration of human rights, international human rights treaties, discrimination, methods & techniques of how to document human rights violations and concept of transitional justice. Since 2013 AAPP has provided 106 training for 2680 participants.



AAPP is also providing human rights awareness lectures at Government run high schools, private schools and universities and colleges in order to raise human rights education among youths. We have already provided these lectures at 32 universities and colleagues in Pegu, Mandalay division and Mon state where 13,293 participants joined and at 466 government run high schools at 6 states and divisions with a total of 173,873 students and teachers joined our sessions. AAPP also provided these lectures at 15 private schools with 2104 students and teachers attending.

We were requested to do such kind of human rights awareness lectures in villages and have done so at 85 villages with 8,784 villagers joining our awareness sessions.

AAPP also provided a good governance and human rights training to all headmen and women of ward and village administration department at Pegu division with the support of regional government.

The Purpose of Holding Human Rights Awareness Seminars

- ❖ For every citizen to be aware of human rights and to be able to prevent and protect human rights violations
- ❖ Understand basic human rights in order to respect the rights of others
- ❖ Respect human rights in order for the emergence of future leaders who can protect human rights
- ❖ Not to discriminate people or use speak hate speech
- ❖ To be aware of the side effects of the drugs

Discussion Topics

- ❖ History of Human Rights
- ❖ History of UDHR
- ❖ The 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- ❖ Rights and Responsibility and Accountability
- ❖ Complaints mechanism for human rights abuses
- ❖ Eliminating discrimination & stopping violence
- ❖ Protecting and respecting the environment and proper management of natural resources
- ❖ Rules of War (Armed forces), Geneva Convention
- ❖ Drug Risk Education

Human Rights Awareness Seminars

No	Place	Number of Awareness	Participants
1	University/Collage	32	13293
2	High School	466	173873
3	Private High School	15	2104
4	Villages	85	8784
5	Head of Village and Ward GAD	28	2176
	Total	626	200230

Human Rights and Transitional Justice Trainings

No	Place (Region/State)	Number of Training	Participants
1	Kachin State	14	397
2	Kayah State	2	50
3	Kayin State	3	84
4	Chin State	2	41
5	Mon State	11	247
6	Rakhine State	4	93
7	Shan State (East)	5	112
8	Shan State (South)	8	191
9	Shan State (North)	7	193
10	Yangon Region	6	131
11	Mandalay Region	9	215
12	Bago Region	10	226
13	Magway Region	8	197
14	Sagaing Region	8	192
15	Irrawaddy Region	7	206
16	Tanintharyi Region	3	83
	Total	106	2685



Opening ceremony of the Alley Outside Gallery Garden

An Alley Outside Gallery Garden Area was launched between 31st and 32nd street lower block in Pabedan Township in Yangon on March 8, 2020. With the cooperation with MP from Pabedan Township Constituency 1, U Than Naing Oo, AAPP provided photos and pictures of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and pictures related to principles of human rights for display in the Alley Outside Gallery Garden Area.



Short Film on International Women Day “Cycles of Debt and the Threat to Young Girls”

In cooperation with the Central Women Working Committee of NLD and AAPP, the short film named “Cycle of Debt and the Threat to Young Girls” was produced and broadcasted on International Women Day on 8 March 2020.

This film is based on the true story highlights job scarcity, high commodity prices and the cause of the debt it aims;

- To help future youth have a better quality of life,
- To free all family from the dangers of endless debt,
- To warmly welcome back into society released prisoners .

This film was broadcasted through MRTV, DVB and Mizzima TV channels.



Documentation

AAPP has a documentation department which works on recording and systematically documenting human rights violation, political prisoners, threats to political activists & arbitrary detention and updating and presenting the list of the political prisoners on a daily basis or weekly basis. We also recorded those who died in prisons or detention centers, this information is vital for inclusion in our events which honor fallen political prisoner.

In October 2013, AAPP and FPPS jointly agreed to collect the individual former political prisoner's demographic all across Burma, to date we have already documented over 3500 former political prisoners' demographic.

AAPP is an actively participant in the Network for Documentation in Burma and Working Group for Reparation, AAPP is working with those alliances on data collecting about human rights violation across Burma, systematic documenting on those data, developing a reparation policy, lobbying and advocacy for reparation.

The AAPP documentation department also works with Burma Centre Prague and Post Bellum which are based in Czech Republic to former political prisoner profiles and used this information to create an evidence-based documentary short film based on the testimony of torture victims. This data is kept at the Memory of Nations web server at Czech Republic.



Based on the information we documented, AAPP regularly publishes month in review, monthly chronology, the list of political prisoners. Moreover, AAPP documentation department is an information bank for other activities related to as prison reform, reform of laws which are related with freedom of expression, research papers, law analysis, lobby and advocacy.

Now AAPP has created data base system and helps researchers and journalists and others who need information about political prisoners to access that data.

Museum and Meetings with Dignitaries

In March 23, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) held a ceremony commemorating the 18th Anniversary of AAPP and introducing a new exhibit entitled "The Memory of the Past – Photo Exhibition". Diplomats, Ambassadors Parliament representatives, international non-governmental organization officials, former political prisoners and guests attended the event.

AAPP has regular meetings with dignitaries, ambassadors, researchers, academics and parliamentarians. We would like to thank those who have shared AAPP's work and campaigned for the release of political prisoners in Burma. Those who have visited our museum and we have discussed our work with include, but are by no means limited to, are listed below:

British Foreign Secretary Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt;

US Ambassador;

British Ambassador;

French Ambassador;

German Ambassador;

Czech Ambassador;

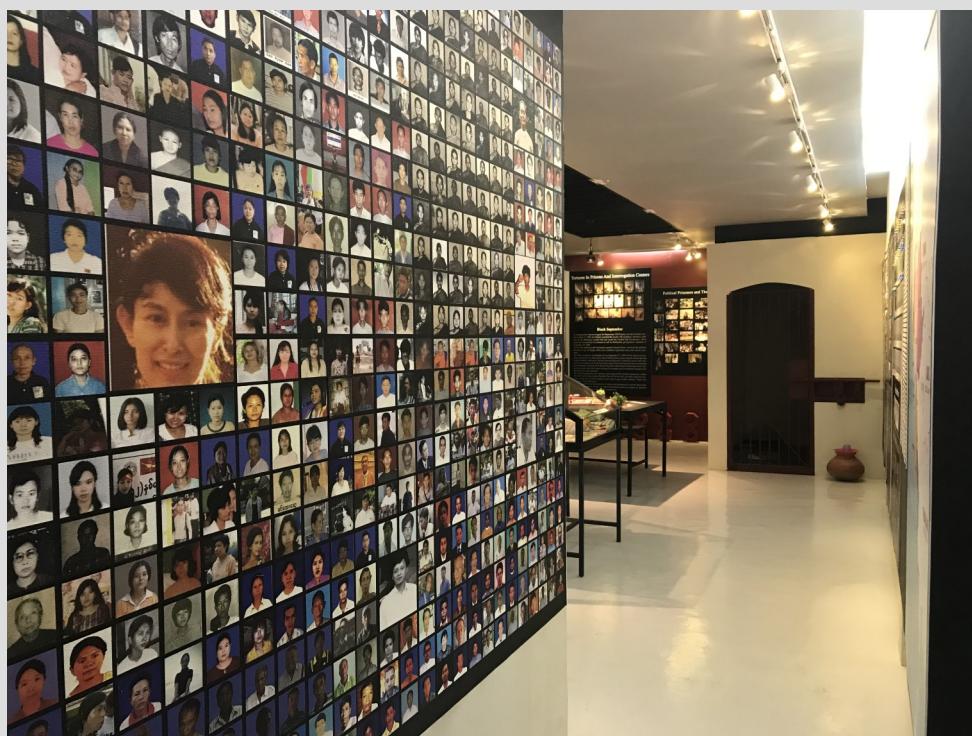
Norway Ambassador;

EU Ambassador;

First Secretary of Canada Embassy and other diplomats

We maintain and continue to operate two museums, in both our Rangoon and Mae Sot offices, and encourage anyone who is interested in our work and learning more about political prisoners and the current political situation in Burma to get in contact with us to visits.







Committee for Scrutinizing Remaining Political Prisoners

Ine month after AAPP's return to Burma, President U Thein Sein offered AAPP to participate in a committee for scrutinizing remaining political prisoners (CSRPP). Then, in Feb 2013, CSRPP was officially formed and it was made up of 9 representatives from Government side and 10 representatives including AAPP from civil societies. Participating in its committee was cooperating with the Government for the first time for the AAPP and it was a huge success for an organization like AAPP to be included, as the Gov has always denied the existences of political prisoners.

The establishment of the CSRPP proves that the Government cannot ignore AAPP or the issue of political prisoners. The CSRPP verified remaining political prisoners and recommended the president to release them. Following the recommendation of the CSRPP, 460 political prisoners were released.

However, in 2015, after Government abolished CSRPP, Government reestablished a committee for remaining political prisoners, yet this time AAPP was excluded. The Government received much criticism, both domestic and international, due to exclusion of AAPP from this newly founded committee. This new committee was also abolished after U Thein Sein transferred power to the new government.

Definition of Political Prisoners

To create an official definition of political prisoners in Burma, AAPP held a discussion with domestic organizations, law and prison experts from international like International Federation for Human Rights, International Center for Transitional Justice, ICRC, Amnesty International, individuals and professionals in 2013.

In 2014, AAPP and FPPS held a workshop on the creation of the definition on political prisoners and invited civil societies which were working for the political prisoners' issue, political parties, human rights organizations, former political prisoners and legal experts. From that workshop, we were able to create the working definition for political prisoners.



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.

However, the existing Government still does not recognize the existence of political prisoners.

AAPP and Presidential Pardons

Whenever Presidential pardon is announced, the list of political prisoners collected by AAPP is used as reliable source for the Government to consult and categorize political prisoners and has been since the political changes after 2010.

AAPP provides the list of political prisoners to the Government. In the run up to the presidential pardon, the Government has requested indirectly the list of political prisoners from AAPP.

- **Under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), 14 pardons were announced, releasing a total of 107,836 prisoners released.**
- **Under the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) Government, 14 presidential pardons were announced, releasing a total of 26461 prisoners were released, including 1148 political prisoners. When the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) Government handover the power to the National League for Democracy (NLD) Government in Mar 2016, 27 political prisoners remained in the prisons.**
- **Under the National League for Democracy (NLD) Government, 7 presidential pardons were announced, releasing a total of 31928 prisoners were released, including 348 political prisoners.**

At the time of writing this report, there are 653 political prisoners in Burma. Among 653 political prisoners: 84 political prisoners are serving sentences. 145 are awaiting trial inside prisons. 424 are awaiting trial outside prisons.

- Amnesty of Government U Thein Sein

No	Date	Total Number of Prisoner released	Political Prisoners	Criminal
1	16-May-11	14600	73	14527
2	12-Oct-11	6359	247	6112
3	4-Jan-12	651	34	617
4	13-Jan-12	336	302	34
5	3-Jul-12	46	25	21
6	17-Sep-12	514	88	426
7	15-Nov-12	452	0	452
8	19-Nov-12	66	51	15
9	23-Apr-13	93	69	24
10	17-May-13	23	21	2
11	23-Jul-13	73	68	5
12	8-Oct-13	56	56	0
13	15-Nov-13	69	66	3
14	11-Dec-13	44	41	3
15	31-Dec-13	5	5	0
16	7-Oct-14	3073	1	3072
17	19-Jan-15	1	1	0
Total		26461	1148	25313

- Amnesty of NLD Government

No	Date	Total Number of Prisoner released	Political Prisoners	Criminal
1	8-Apr-16	115	115	0
2	17-Apr-16	83	83	0
3	24-May-17	186	89	97
4	17-Apr-18	8541	36	8505
5	17-Apr-19	9535	2	9533
6	26-Apr-19	6948	3	6945
7	7-May-19	6520	20	6500
Total		31,928	348	31,580

AAPP and the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

AAPP kept in touch with National Level Myanmar National Human Rights Commission. Whenever AAPP received information about human rights violation in prisons, or different states and divisions, AAPP wrote complaint letters to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). AAPP has discussed about prison reform with MNHRC on numerous occasions.

AAPP and MNHRC held a joint workshop at Naypyidaw on March 8 and 9 in 2018. 39 MPs, and representatives from the respective government ministries also joined our workshop. During the workshop, representative from ICRC, (Mr. Shane Clive Bryan), explained about the Standard Minimum Rule for Prisoners by the United Nations and shared international experiences about prisons. Findings from the workshop were submitted to the president.

On March 2019, AAPP and MNHRC held a workshop on “Human Rights and Potential Prison Reform” in Nay Pyi Daw. 49 representatives from MNHRC, AAPP, MPs both from upper and lower house, Ex – prison officers and ICRC joined to the workshop.

In April 2019, delegations from MNHRC led by deputy chair, U Sit Myine visited AAPP office and discussed about promotion and protection of human rights in the country. Even though we cooperated with MNHRC, AAPP regularly lobbies parliament for MNHRC enabling law amendment, both individually and with other civil society groups.



AAPP and Parliament

To create an official definition on political prisoners, AAPP and FPPs invited 28 members of parliaments from both houses in May 2015 and held a workshop focused on the creation of a definition.

In July 2015, at the Upper House, U Thein Swe discussed the prison bill which was proposed from Ministry of Home Affair and AAPP provided various suggestions and information for U Thein Swe to discuss at the Upper House.

In May 2016, AAPP visited the Bill Committee of the Lower House and discussed about the amendment of the Peaceful Assembly Law and again in Aug 2016, AAPP met with Public Affair and Management Committee of Lower House and made suggestions for the amendment of the Peaceful Assembly Law.

In June 2016, U Pe Than MP of Myaypone township, Arakan State raised questions about the issue of political prisoners in the Lower House, after he requested AAPP to provide information to him for his questions.

On Dec 2016, AAPP held a discussion about prisons and human rights at the Upper House. Over 100 MPs attended, and U Aye Thar Aung held an open speech on that debate. In addition, an AAPP delegation met and discussed with the Public Affair and Management Committee of Lower House about potential prison reform.





On May 2017, an AAPP delegation visited and discussed with the Bill committee of Upper House about amendment to the Prison Law.

On March 2017, as a part of efforts for Transitional Justice, AAPP discussed with the Chairman of the Bago regional Parliament, Bago regional Parliament Members, Chairman of Health, Education and Social Committee of the Bago regional Parliament to build a democracy monument in Bago.

On March 8-9, 2018 at Naypyidaw, AAPP and Myanmar National Human Rights Commission held a joint workshop about prison reform. At that workshop, MPs, officers of Attorney General Office, Officers of Supreme Court, officers of Health and Sports, Officers of Ministry of Social Welfare, representatives from M NHRC and representatives from AAPP all participated.

On July 2018, a delegation from AAPP met with the Chairman of Health and Sport for Upper House and discussed about the need for a comprehensive Mental Health Policy.

On July 2018, a delegation from AAPP met with Citizens Fundamental Rights Committee of Lower House and discussed about the need to amend the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law.

On Dec 2018, the Public Affair and Management Committee of Lower House invited AAPP and the International Committee of the Red Cross to discuss prison reform.

On Jan 2019, AAPP held a discussion with the International Relation Committee of Lower and Upper House about the ratification of international human rights treaties.



On Jan 2019, the Reparation Working Group, including members of AAPP, discussed the report "You cannot Ignore us": where victims of human rights violations in Burma from 1970-2017 outlined their desire for justice, with MPs from both houses.

On March 9-10, 2019, AAPP and MNHRC held a two-day workshop in Naypyidaw about potential prison reform. We invited not only MPs but also ex-prison officers, representatives of ICRC, and Key Population Group. After the workshop, MNHRC and AAPP sent the report to the President and the Ministry of Home Affairs for their consideration.

On June 2019, the Public Affair Committee of the Upper House invited MNHRC, Myanmar Police Force, Prison department & ICRC to discuss about how to reduce the prison population.

On Aug 5, 2019, the Citizens rights, Democracy and Human Rights committee of the Upper House discussed with AAPP the amendment of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law.

On Dec 2019, AAPP organized a workshop for consideration to key population at prison reform. MPs from both parliaments and representatives from KP organizations joined the workshop.

On Dec 2019, the Reparation Working Group including AAPP members, discussed with MPs from different subcommittee of both houses about reparation policy.

On Feb 2020, to promote the ratification of international treaties, the HRV Coalition Group including AAPP provided suggestion to members of International Relation Committee, Citizen's Fundamental Rights Committee and Public Affair and Management Committee of Lower House and Citizen's Rights, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Upper House.

In Feb 2020, the Reparation Working Group including AAPP, discussed holding a workshop for reparation with MPs from both houses.

In total, AAPP was able to hold meeting with parliamentarians to raise question at the parliament regarding the definition of Political Prisoners, and two parliamentarians have submitted the question at the parliament. Relating Prison System Reform, Prison Law amendment and reducing prison population to solve prison overcrowding problem, AAPP managed to hold five official meeting with relevant working committee from both parliaments, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw.

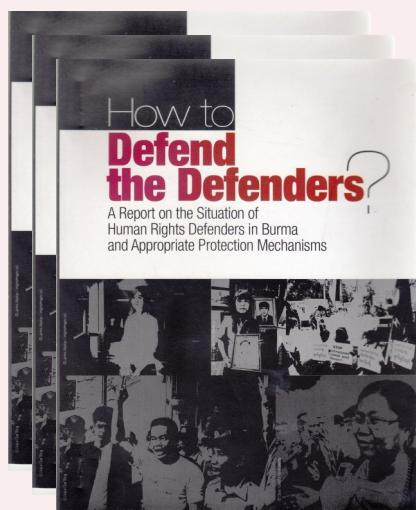
The analysis draft to the prison bill prepared by AAPP and FPPS played a key supportive document for the parliamentarians to response the prison bill submitted by the Ministry of Home Affair. Several facts of the AAPP's submission for The amendment of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Precession Act were included in the law amendment by the Parliament. AAPP held two official meetings with relevant working committees from Pyidaungsu Hluttaw regarding Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Reform and its enabling law. Moreover, AAPP's advocacy to Parliament included for the ratification of the international human rights treaties, such as ICCPR and UNCAT, and the developing reparation policy or reparation law. We have attended women empowerment programs and played a role in the erection of a democracy monument in Bago region.

Reports

A selection of the reports we have published since we returned to Burma are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list. Further information about the reports, and the reports themselves, are available on our website.

How to Defend the Defenders

This report is available in English and Burmese and was published in July 2015 in collaboration with Burma Partnership. The objective of this report is to explain the current issues facing Human Rights Defenders (HRD) in Burma. This is done through testimonials, reports, and practical research-based policy recommendations to protect HRDs.



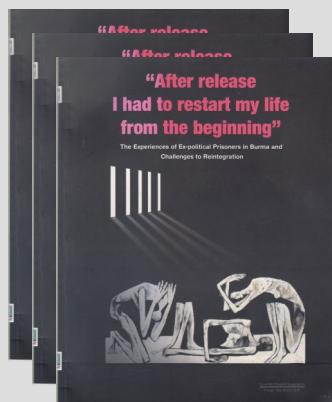
Documentation Interim Project Report

There are between 7,000 and 10,000 former political prisoners in Burma, who have little access to state support and reintegration. This report, published in February 2015 with FPPS, documents the social and economic status of former political prisoners. It aims to develop a needs assessment for this population, so organizations and governments can understand the role they should play in filling this gap.

After Release I had to Restart my Life from the Beginning (Interim report of the Data Collection Program)

Approximately, there are 7000 to 10,000 former political prisoners in Burma and they are living with very little support and help in reintegrating into society. This report published by AAPP and FPPS in 2015 highlights the economic and social situation of the former political prisoners, aims to analyze their needs and understand the role of the organizations and government in filling the gap.

This report discusses the various abuses political prisoners face throughout their lives, including the judicial process, incarceration, mistreatment in prison and detention centers, and the difficulty of reintegrating into society. It addresses political prisoners' need for mental and physical health assistance, education, and financial and social support.

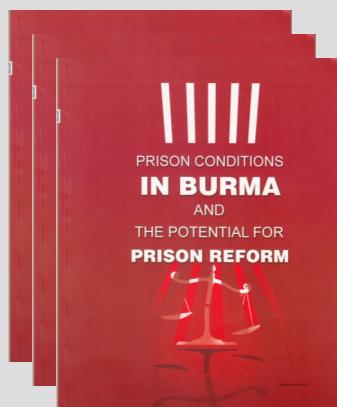


Prison Conditions in Burma and the Potential for Reform

This report highlights how prison conditions contribute to human rights abuses in Burma and how reforming the prison system would help reduce such abuses. It provides an assessment of the possibility of such reforms in Burma. The paper highlights important issues and proposes suggestions for reform, as well as recommendations for government, civil society and political parties.

Scorecard assessing Press Freedom

AAPP and fourteen other organizations, including PEN Myanmar and the Myanmar Journalists Association, published an assessment of press freedom in Burma in April 2017. The organizations evaluated freedom of expression in Burma under the NLD government in six thematic areas: media independence and freedom, freedom of assembly, speech and opinion, right to information, and safety and security [RBB14]. The assessment shows that freedom of expression did not improve under the NLD government.



Activism and Agency: The Female Experience of Political Imprisonment

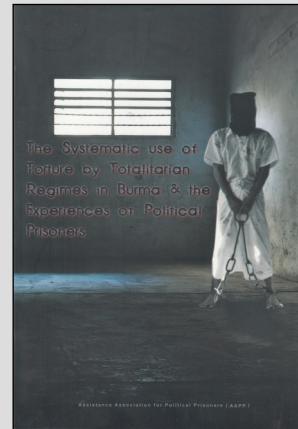
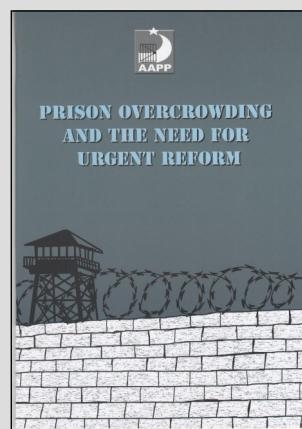
Published on International Women's Day, this paper discusses how gender influences political prisoner experiences. It examines topics such as sexual harassment/abuse, agency, vulnerability, and advocacy. By taking an agency-based approach to its view of female political prisoners, this report highlights how women continue to advocate and create change in Burma before, during, and after imprisonment.

Prison Overcrowding and the Need for Urgent Reform

This report details the current level of prison overcrowding in Burma, and the negative effects that it has on the well-being of prisoners. AAPP argues that the current level of prison overcrowding constitutes a form of torture. The report provides a list of recommendations on how to reduce overcrowding, as well as examples of potential solutions, including several international case studies.

The Systematic use of Torture by Totalitarian Regimes in Burma & the Experiences of Political Prisoners

This report documents difference types of torture and details its systematic nature in prisons and in interrogation centers across Burma. It goes into detail about techniques of torture that were used, how torture was used as a tool to oppress political dissidents, different experiences of political prisoner faced. Despite the fact that this torture happened years ago and all of those interviewed have been released, torture and human rights violations inside prisons are still occurring today.

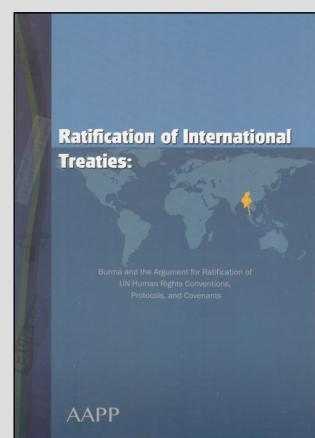
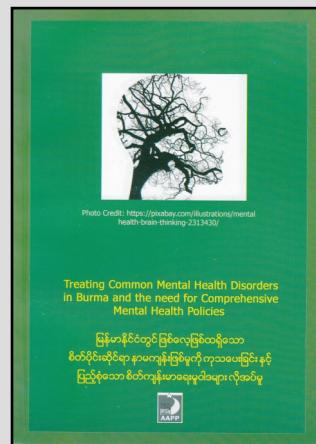


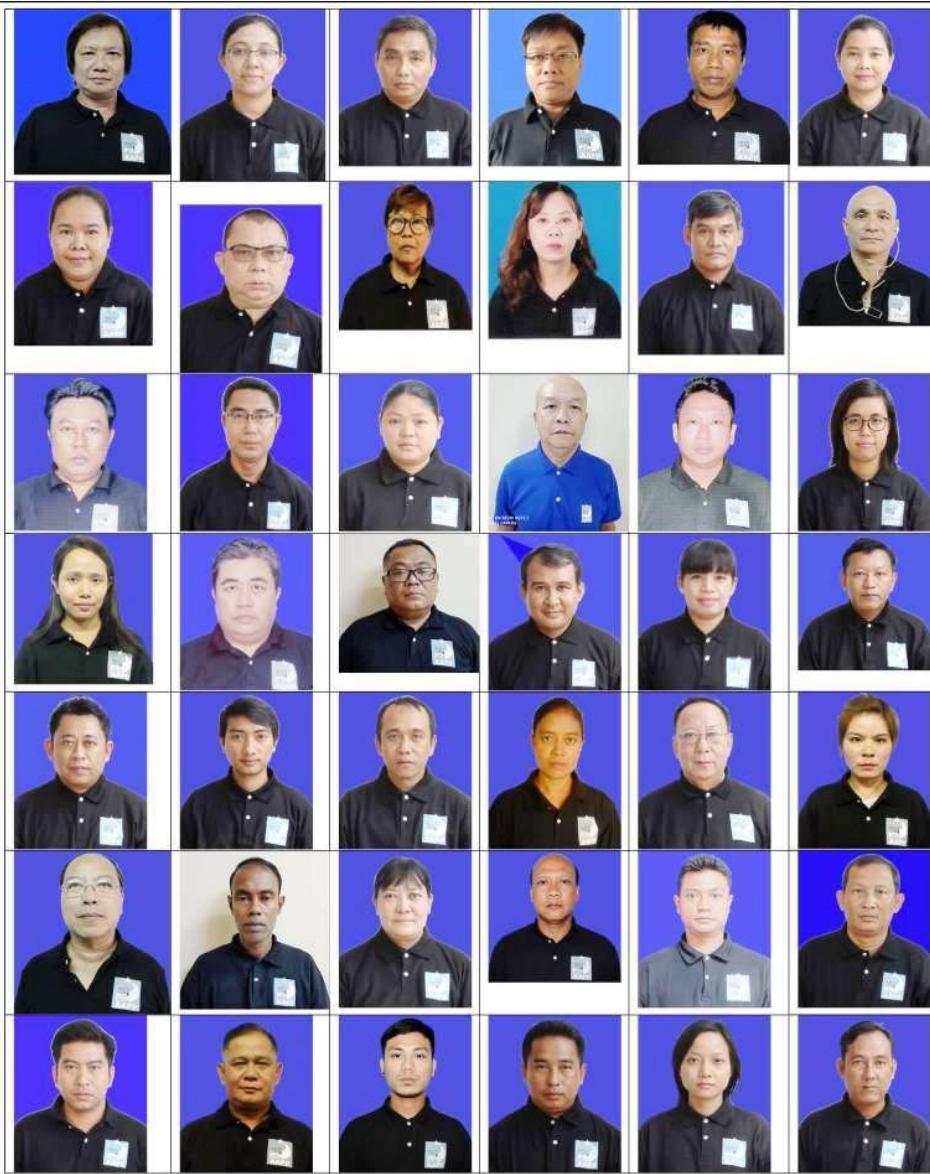
Treating Common Mental Health Disorders in Burma and the need for Comprehensive Mental Health Policies

In 2015, two of the ten health problems that cause most disability in Burma were mental health problems: depressive and anxiety disorders (IHME 2015). Prevalence of both of these disorders is increasing (WHO 2017a). They make up what are called Common Mental Health Disorders (CMHDs). Effective therapies are available for CMHDs, however, the majority of the world's population does not have access to these treatments. In Burma, the treatment gap for CMHDs is nearly 90% (Than Tun Sein et al. 2014). Recent political reforms in Burma create a window of opportunity for policy makers to strengthen the mental health system. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) is amongst Burma's leading implementers of, and supporters for the improvement of, mental health services. This is AAPP's first advocacy report on mental health.

Ratification of International Treaties:

By ratifying international treaties is the opportunity for the new civilian government to build up a country where respect human rights and international standards. In addition, by ratifying international treaties will prove the Governments' commitment to handle the human rights violations. By doing so, it can be restored international and domestic credibility of the Government.





Members of AAPP in these 20 years





Section 3

Future Forward

Looking Forward

Today, AAPP turns 20 years old. Now, we have a well-established office in Rangoon, which receives visitors from all over the world, including diplomats, ambassadors, journalists and researchers. Our staff are no longer blacklisted and can travel back to their homes. We can talk freely inside Burma about political prisoners and call for action and reform from inside the country.

In 2013, we embarked on a new journey of documentation. We began recording the experiences of former prisoners, so that the ongoing struggle of political prisoners does not go unrecorded. Our aim is to create an extensive database about experiences both inside prison and after release. Our eventual aim is for every political prisoner to be recorded in our database. The role political prisoners have played is a vital and important part of Burma's history that cannot be erased or forgotten.

Despite the many improvements over time, we cannot stop working yet. When we founded AAPP, we didn't think we would still be here 20 years later. We certainly didn't think we would still need to be campaigning for the release of political prisoners or documenting the continued arrests of activists with a civilian government in power.

The issue Burma faces today is not just about the numbers of political prisoners remaining. It is much larger. We need to abolish the laws that lead to people being imprisoned for political crimes in the first place. We need to end the civil war, solve the issues of land seizures and halt restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. The government needs to change its regressive policies. It is not as simple as just releasing prisoners. We need to abolish the outdated and repressive laws that are used to arrest and detain political prisoners. If not, even if all political prisoners were released today, they would simply be re-arrested tomorrow.

It is not just current political prisoners we need to campaign for, but also the rights of former political prisoners. Many have been released and there are now thousands of former political prisoners in Burmese society. We must work closely with them in their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society and assist them during civilian life. AAPP provides healthcare and educational assistance to former political prisoners, as well as mental health support. The Mental Health Assistance Program (MHAP), launched in 2011, focuses on the legacies of torture and imprisonment. The program works with former political prisoners to heal the trauma of the past. It aims to help all of civil society, which has suffered in Burma's decades long civil war and under the repressive military regime, to heal.

In the future, we hope to focus solely on collecting testimonies and documenting the stories of

former political prisoners, in order to ensure that their sacrifices are not forgotten. We want to ensure they are able to play a prominent role in the society they have given so much to create and to help them overcome the challenges of re-entering society after years of torture and abuse.

However, this goal is not yet possible. We have not been able to concentrate solely on working with former political prisoners, as we still need to campaign for the release of over 300 individuals who are currently detained for political reasons. Since we began 20 years ago, much of our journey, our work and Burma itself has changed. Sadly, one thing remains the same: the continued existence of political prisoners.

Today, many issues which hold back our progress still remain. The government, despite our lobbying, still does not officially recognize the existence of political prisoners. We have been unable to register as an organization. We are not allowed to conduct prison visits and we cannot directly provide aid, support or counselling to prisoners. The government needs to allow us to support prisoners more. We are able to be of more assistance and help work towards national reconciliation, but only if we are allowed and the existence of political prisoners is acknowledged.

Since AAPP was founded, we have worked towards the day when our organization is no longer needed. Our aspiration is to instead create a new organization, focused solely on rehabilitating former political prisoners. We do not want to have to campaign for the release of political prisoners anymore. While we are honored to represent political prisoners, we hope AAPP will not need to exist in its current form in another 20 years.

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



Long way to go but marching it

Suspicion, a lack of knowledge, scarcity of funding and insecurity and lack of safety, this characterized the first few days and years after we founded AAPP in Mae Sot, the small Thai Burma border town on March 23, 2000. When we founded AAPP, I myself had never even touched a computer before I arrived Mae Sot. Before then, the internet and mobile phones were of limited to use.

In those early days in Mae Sot I was lucky not to be killed. One of the Ethnic Armed forces operating in Mae Sot suspected me as working as a spy and thug for the Burmese army because my father used to be a soldier and the guest house I stayed at the Burmese market in Mae Sot, which cost 20 baht a night, was suspected as a place for used by information gathers working for Burmese intelligence. It was only after colleagues on the border vouched for me, that I no longer faced threats to my safety and I was no longer under suspicion. I have always been lucky to receive support from democratic forces in Mae Sod ever since my arrival.

Yet while I was no longer under threat by EAGs, my troubles were not over. I had no legal document to stay in Thailand. As a result, I was detained many times by Thai authority, they regarded me as an illegal immigration. I was arrested many times and had to work at AAPP in a cycle of detainment followed by release.

After the difficult early days, finally AAPP became trusted by ethnic armed forces and international governments and would go onto operate as a bridge between inside and outside of Burma. We needed to prove there were political prisoners in Burma. In order to prove it, we had to do documentation. That was really important.

First, we had to document and make a list of all current political prisoners in Burma. Then, we enquired into the prison conditions and situations inside different prisons in Burma. After that we wrote a report based on information we got from our network, and published that report to diplomats, United Nations, INGOs and medias. At this time AAPP was interviewed by many medias from all over the world including BBC, VOA, RFA, DVB, Irrawaddy, Mizzima, New Era Journal. With government censorship, information under the military dictatorship was very hard to access and we became a trusted source of information, documenting human rights violations and the existence of political prisoners in Burma through information smuggled out of the country.

As a result of political changes, AAPP leaders were removed from the government blacklist. Therefore, secretary of the AAPP, Ko Tate Naing and joint secretary of the AAPP, myself returned to Burma for the first time on Jan 5, 2013. In that year 2013, AAPP was invited to participate in the Remaining Political Prisoners' Scrutinize Board set up by President U Thein Sein and AAPP actively participated and tried our best to release the remaining political prisoners. The same year, AAPP opened its offices in Rangoon and Mandalay. Then in order to implement reintegration program, AAPP provide counseling training to former political prisoners to become counselors. As a result of that, AAPP created jobs for 42 former political prisoners and their family members until now.

In order to fulfil civil and political rights for the people, Burmese society needs to know their rights and responsibilities. Therefore, AAPP provided Human Rights Awareness at Government run schools, Universities and villages. In addition, We are doing 12 days long basic Human rights, Human rights documentation and Transitional Justice training to members of political parties, ethnic youths, human rights defenders at all states and division in Burma. AAPP believes that in order to have a rule of, we need just laws. Therefore, AAPP has also focused on advocacy to abolish or review laws disturbed to the democracy such as peaceful assembly law, telecommunication law (66/D), prison law, Myanmar Human Rights Commission law. AAPP joined in collaborative with other civil society organizations to abolish above mention laws.

AAPP also continues working on collection and documenting political prisoners' numbers, assisting incarcerated political prisoners, free political prisoners, rehabilitation programs for former political prisoners – support for some funding for former political prisoners and family members for education, and support to funding for illness political prisoners.

AAPP urged the government to handle the cases of human rights violation in the past. This is part of Transitional Justice (TJ). When we consider about TJ issue, Truth is the most important thing. In order to have truth, documentation is necessary. Therefore, AAPP made and interview with an individual former political prisoner's demographic and experience in detention and prison. We have already documented for 3500 individual former political prisoners. Such kind of documentation will be helpful for truth commission in the future.

The Government also needs to address the problem human right violations it committed in the past. The government needs to recognize past actions and needs to provide reparation for suffered committed by army or government agents. We worked with other civil societies including ethnic groups to achieve that goal. What AAPP is doing is the things government must do in the country.

We believe we must do institutional reform not to occur such kind of gross human rights violation again in Burma. So, AAPP is lobbying and advocacy for prison reform, police reform, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and so on. AAPP encourages international governments especially to US and EUs to apply pressure and engagement policy on Burma. In the meanwhile, we explain them the Government does not have bureaucratic mechanisms and to help transfer General Administrative Department (GAD) under Union Government. Finally, GAD is transferred under union government. We now focused on police force to be independent one free from Army control. We also advocate US and EU to come and invest more in Burma for creating jobs for Burmese people.

The issue of political prisoner is directly related with the country's politic, economic, social, equality and federal for ethnic minority. Because of armed conflicts, villagers nearby armed conflict zones were detained arbitrarily, tortured and extra judicial killing. Farmers confiscated their lands under military junta in the past and they are fighting get back their lands. As a result of that, they were detained and sentenced. Freedom of press, Freedom of assembly, Freedom of speech are the basic principle for democracy. However, government and its agency interpreted with different way and activists and human rights defenders were detained because of practicing basic democratic principle. Government must stop it. Above mentioned are reasons the increasing numbers of political prisoners. To solve the issue of political prisoners, government needs to approach holistically. We cannot do one after one. For example; we need to end up arm conflicts, we need to solve land grabbing problems rightfully and quickly. Government needs to respect and allow people to practice basic democratic principles such as freedom of speech, write, assembly and press. We need a law to protect workers. Any government needs to implement above mentioned actions. If Government respected and allowed people to practicing democratic principles, people can practice civil and political rights. Otherwise, Burma will not be proud of among the international communities and more sanction can impose to Burma. In order to overcome that situation, we need to improve human rights situation inside the country.

In fact, we intended to abolish AAPP as soon as possible after we established it back in 2000. Yet in order to do so, we need to create the society where no political prisoners exist anymore. Sadly, we have as yet been unable to do so. I hope we achieve our goal soon. To achieve it, we need the government who respect the human rights and people who respect the human rights. Even though our title is Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, what we are doing is more than for the release of police prisoners but to achieve national reconciliation and to help transform Burma into a free and democratic society, where no political prisoners remain incarcerated and individuals' civil and political rights are protected, fulfilled, and maintained.

We still have a long way to go, but we are still marching towards our goal.

Bo Kyi

Joint Secretary