



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

**နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း**

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## **Statement on the Arrests of Three Candidates from Arakan State**

October 21, 2020

1. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) has been constantly working to release all political prisoners since our founding in 2000. In this, we work to release all political prisoners including those arrested due to the armed conflict. AAPP's motto is “there can be no national reconciliation as long as there are political prisoners” and AAPP is a politically independent human rights organization working on fulfilling individual’s civil and political rights.

As AAPP is based on the border, we have close relationships with ethnic armed organizations including in relation to Arakan issues and we release this opinion statement in this regard.

2. Pyithu Hluttaw candidate for Taungup Township, Daw Ni Ni May Myint, Amyotha Hluttaw candidate Daw Chit Chit Chaw and Arakan State Hluttaw candidate U Min Aung, three candidates of the National League for Democracy (NLD), were arrested by a group of armed men whilst campaigning at Phaung Khar village in Taungup Township, Arakan State on October 14. On October 19, the Arakan Army (AA) issued a statement with nine points stating that they abducted the three candidates.

3. An essential component of a free and fair democratic election is the right of candidates to campaign safely. Extrajudicial intimidation and arrests of candidates of any party violate the basic human rights of those individuals and affect a free and fair election.

4. U Min Aung and Daw Ni Ni May Myint, two out of three candidates arrested, are former political prisoners and were imprisoned for long years during the military dictatorship for

fighting against authoritarianism and sacrificing their freedom for the benefit of all people. Despite having different approaches after they were released, they have been constantly working for democracy, human rights and national equality. Such arrests of these three candidates by the Arakan Army (AA) are a cause of concern for the public.

5. On the other hand, the government and the organizations responsible for local security have an obligation to protect the free campaigning of these candidates in accordance with the election rules and regulations and in line with current infectious disease restrictions. In this case, the government must pay attention and ease the concerns of the people by responding and informing the public by releasing statements and instructions in a timely manner.

6. Individual people living in Arakan State have the right to adhere to their beliefs and to join any political party they wish. At the same time, we fully accept and recognize the right to freedom of speech and the right to conduct all non-violent political activities freely as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates. Accordingly, we strongly oppose the authorities who have recently arrested student activists protesting for an end to the armed conflict which destroys the lives and property of people in Arakan State.

7. The restrictions and threats of arbitrary arrests against the local people do not contribute to national reconciliation and internal peace. The fundamental human rights and democratic rights of the people should not be violated for any reason.

8. We urge for dialogue between the government and the military and ethnic armed leaders for an immediate end to the ongoing fighting in Arakan State.

We also strongly urge for the immediate safe release of the three NLD candidates arrested by the Arakan Army (AA).

In Solidarity

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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