



Political Prisoners Experience in Interrogation, Judiciary,
and Incarceration Since Burma's Illegitimate Military Coup



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AAPP defines a political prisoner as anyone arrested, detained, or imprisoned because of their perceived or known active role, perceived, or known supporting role, or in association with activities promoting freedom, justice, equality, human rights, including ethnic rights, in association with the pro-democracy movement. (August 2014)

Methodology

As part of this study into the prison situation in Burma, AAPP interviewed recently released prisoners, used other confidential testimonies, and open-source documentation to establish conditions within interrogation, the court system, in access to health and other fundamental rights, for political prisoners since the coup. As well as utilising information and AAPP decades-long expertise on prison conditions and penal reform, evidence was collected from February 1, 2021, onwards.

Procedural fairness and right to a fair trial

Since the military coup on February 1, 2021, at least **12875** civilians have been detained at protests or by-standing on streets, from their homes or workplaces, on-the-run evading warrants or taken as hostage to threaten a wanted relative.

Legal basis for arrest

Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the right to a fair trial under international customary law, stating “everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him”. Yet, through AAPP open-source documentation and first-hand verification, we know the legal basis for the arrest is being systematically withheld from political defendants, who are not told cause of detention, type of lawsuit, date of charge, or kinds of evidence filed. AAPP documentation demonstrates majority of post-coup detentions occur without an arrest warrant. As far as we know, when specified, the legal basis is predominantly Penal Code Section 505 and Section 121, 122 and 124. As well as the Counter-Terrorism Law, Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Association Act, Weapons Act Section 19 (a), (f), Penal Code Section 188 and 302, and Section 3 of the Explosive Substances Act.

Section 505 of the Penal Code was widely used by past military regimes to criminalize its critics. On February 14, the junta amended Section 505 to encompass any comment that “cause fear” spreads “false news” or “agitates directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a Government employee.” According to Human Rights Watch, those amendments enable violation of human rights, such as the right to privacy and open the door to arbitrary arrest and detention.¹ The archaic colonial-era Penal Code was seriously flawed and in need of urgent reform as it was. But the post-coup amendments made it even easier to oppress critics.

Court hearings

At present, there are primarily two judicial systems for political prisoners. One is so-called civilian ‘Special’ Courts set-up in prisons, the other is Martial Courts inside prisons which hear cases from townships under martial law, currently 6 in Yangon and 5 in Mandalay.

Most political prisoners are not informed of the charges against them until trial, and neither are their lawyers. Some are being handcuffed during legal procedures, which can be seen stripping them of their dignity. In one reported case, a detainees’ court hearing was over video call, with four court

¹ Human Rights Watch. (2021) Myanmar: Post-coup legal changes erode Human Rights. [\[link\]](#)

hearing sessions, after which she was convicted, without a proper investigation process. This is a systematic *modus operandi* of Burma's military junta.

Both judicial systems are under the authoritarian control of the junta, both have no right to justice with convictions equivalently and arbitrarily handed down. Yet even legal representation is being denied in the Martial Courts. All death penalty convicted political prisoners have been sentenced in martial courts, 52 persons sentenced whilst detained, and 39 sentenced in-absentia, in total 91 persons.

(i) The ability to post bail

Most of the charged detainees since the coup have been filed under Penal Code Section 505-A, an unbailable offence. However, even with cases involving theoretically bailable offences, according to AAPP documentation and witness testimony, bail is not being granted and any legal defense disregarded. In one case, the judge refused the possibility of bail to a seventy-year-old requiring frequent medical treatment for his hernia.

(ii) Testimonies and other forms of evidence

In several court cases, police who were testifying for the prosecution did not witness the alleged violations. Moreover, the prosecution has also on occasion had no physical evidence placing defendants at the scene. First-hand testimonies gathered by AAPP, show the only thing needed for prosecution can be the testimony of police officers. In the hearing of an activist, the plaintiff for one lawsuit under Section 188 was a township administrator, and the plaintiff for another charge under Penal Code 505 was a chief of police.

In most court cases, the plaintiff and witnesses to the prosecution were allowed to, or even required to look at documents or notes whilst testifying. There are fundamental issues with the standard of proof in the junta's court system, not only false evidence, but misleading information. One detained political prisoner revealed someone in her group was doing community service during a protest, but then charged for being an anti-coup leader using fabricated evidence. During legal proceedings, reports say admissible evidence gathered is being thrown out, with the prosecution objecting to entire proceedings.

Physical evidence of torture is also being systematically disregarded. At least several defendants have been refused examination by medical professionals, and when specifically asked for, check-ups have been denied. In one case, a judge answered such request by saying they "could not record the condition of their face, as it was not my responsibility".

Access to lawyers

Access to lawyers has been severally curtailed for political prisoners since the coup, usually they either do not get representation at all, or they were not able to communicate with their lawyer before appearing in front of a judge.

Political prisoners are not able to tell their lawyers when or where they are arrested, and it can take weeks for lawyers to find out when a lawsuit was filed. It is common for political prisoners not to be able to meet their lawyers until the day of trial, even then, the meeting can last five minutes and without a private and secure setting, as they were watched closely by either prison staff, police, or junta troops. In such circumstances, giving legal advice would be dangerous for the client as well as lawyer or other related person.

Several released prisoners testified that they were able to communicate with their lawyer through letters only. It was made difficult for one prisoner from Tanintharyi to get a lawyer, and when he did, said lawyer was threatened and withdrew from the case, forcing the detainee to defend himself. Such intimidation of lawyers being pressured into relinquishing representative power is frequent. Lawyers have even been threatened with arrest under Penal Code Section 505 and followed around everywhere they went, hindered from entering prison and meeting with clients.

In Insein Prison, a female student declared that neither she nor her fellow inmates got access to a lawyer. According to another prisoner, the access to a lawyer depends on where you are arrested. In his case, the arrest took place in Hlaing Township, an area not under martial law. Those who are arrested in a martial court area would not be able to hire legal representation. But the entire military junta court system is a charade, political prisoners can be sentenced whether they have access to a lawyer or not.

Lawyers are also a target for arrest by the military, since the coup **28** lawyers have been arrested, and **19** of them remain under detention. Majority of detained lawyers have been representing political prisoners. Several of them have been charged under Penal Code 505. Such instances are alarming not least because it pressures the profession to relinquish representative powers for political prisoners.

Torture, cruel and unusual punishments

Interrogation center process

Successive military juntas in Burma have used torture as policy long before the 2021 attempted military coup, it is considered institutionalized.² This type of abuse is perpetrated in prison and formal detention centers, but also in ethnic minority areas.³ Successive dictatorships have resorted to such

² HRV Coalition. (2020) Mapping injustice in Myanmar, a report on human rights violations across Myanmar's states and regions over a 10-year period. [[link](#)]

³ Network for Human Rights Documentation (2012), Extreme Measures: Torture and Ill Treatment in Burma Since the 2010 Elections.

methods to control the population, for instance after the 1988 uprising, when thousands of pro-democracy activists were detained and tortured. AAPP has released evidence of the different methods of torture across the country since AAPP was founded on March 23, 2000.

The prohibition of torture is a norm of *Jus Cogen*, which means that even though Burma has not ratified the treaties that formally prohibit its usage, it is still bound by international law and acts of torture cannot be justified. Moreover, Burma is party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 37 of which formally forbids “torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” of children. In Domestic Law, Penal Code Section 330 and 331 prohibit it in the context of interrogation. Indeed, Section 330 states “whoever voluntarily causes hurt for the purpose of extorting from the sufferer, or any person interested in the sufferer, any confession or an information” shall be punished with up to seven years imprisonment, whereas Section 331 refers to “grievous hurt for purpose of extortion” or to cause suffering which shall be punished with up to ten years imprisonment.

Information gathered from recently released prisoners and AAPP data collection demonstrate the abuse committed by the military. Political prisoners are systematically physically and mentally tortured by the junta, of whom at least **103** pro-democracy supporters have been tortured to death in interrogation centers since the coup, most within 48 hours of arrest.

Forced to kneel, asked the same questions over and over, if their answers did not satisfy the interrogators, they would be punished, through physical or mental violence. Some prisoners have been held at gunpoint during interrogation or burned with cigarettes. But the military does not only torture to force confessions. First, they torture for revenge like in front of loved ones at the place of arrest. Then the junta tortures to get information about others to arrest. By the end of such brutal torture some political prisoners confess whether they were actively resisting the coup or not. A defendant that was convicted under Section 505(A) was forced to confess his relations to the CRPH and his involvement in the CDM movement. He was previously heavily beaten and deprived of food and water, just like another political prisoner who was coerced into confessing that he had contacts with the CRPH, that he was personally involved and active in the CDM, and that he had helped investigate places where the PDF could establish bases. A reporter, charged and convicted under section 505 for critical coverage of the military, reported with precision exactly what his interrogation was like:

“I thought I was blind because my eyes got so big. After I arrived at the artillery battalion, I was interrogated the whole night. Lieutenant Colonel Myo Min Tun interrogated me. I was brought to the central guard office and kicked and stepped on my head. They punctured my face and hands with lit cigarettes. Then, they covered my head with a hood, making it difficult to breath. They surrounded me with a group and did it to me. I felt so weak. They kicked my head and I got injuries especially in the head. They kicked me with military boots at interrogation. They covered

my head with a bag. Then, they kicked and beat me with wet clothes. While one person who was wearing military uniform ran into and kicked me, I felt sudden pain on my waist and fell suddenly. They even tried to peel my nail and they couldn't find the pliers when they tried to peel my nail. I was interrogated with all kinds of methods.”

Two days later, different military personnel took a coerced confession.

Another detainee witnessed a woman's interrogation and reported she was frequently interrogated for nearly two hours each time, sometimes until 12AM. She had to kneel and raise her hands during interrogation. The experience of another female from Yangon lasted four days, during which she was physically and verbally abused, as well as discriminated against. Indeed, she was kicked in the face and legs, and as they were slapping her, they were asking why she was protesting instead of getting married. She was asked about many things, including where she was born, how many degrees she had, as well as questions about her family's business and her marital status. On top of the personal questions, she also had to answer questions about demonstrations, if she had participated in said demonstrations, which party she supported, and her thoughts on politics.

In another case, a twenty-two-year-old prisoner was threatened, intimidated, slapped and beaten during interrogation, including with an iron plate. He went through even more beatings when the officers were drunk at night. He also reported that people from Hlaing Thayar, an area under martial law, were beaten, almost to death, during interrogation.

A prisoner from Yangon was tortured as soon as he arrived at the interrogation center and lasted for four days. When the interrogator was not pleased with detainees' answer, he would be punched. Then, on his third day, the seventeen years-old was taken to a forest and brutally tortured, almost to death.

A transgender female prisoner arrested in September 2021 was assaulted consistently within a few minutes of reaching the interrogation center. Her nails were twisted with a small pair of pliers, and she was beaten with a large wire, causing welts. She was also forced to strip naked, show her breasts and flash her reproductive organs. This is another pattern of the military junta, to discriminate individuals and marginalize entire communities.

Another released political prisoner reported he could not walk following the severity of his beating during interrogation, when the interrogators requested his Facebook password, and he was tortured until he gave it up.

Physical torture

Violence against detained political prisoners starts from the moment they are arrested and can last until the comfort of release. It can take place inside interrogation camps, prisons, police custody, or on the streets.

Following a peaceful demonstration in North Okkalapa on March 3, 2021, four protestors were arrested and severely tortured, one of them, a 17-year-old, was shot and disfigured in the face with a rubber bullet.

In June 2021, a fourteen-year-old son of a prisoner was detained as a hostage and assaulted under arrest. The father was also tortured, and reported specifically being beaten from 8:30AM to 2PM, during which his back was kicked about 15 to 20 minutes at a time, leading to backpain even some two months after the arrest. They also burned the skin of his arms using a lighter.

A prisoner released on October 19 along with his younger brother reported his experience precisely:

“I was beaten five times, while kneeling in a stress position for 45 minutes. I was beaten with thorns and bamboo and was kicked. My feet were beaten with thorns, five or six times. My arms were beaten with bamboo. They kicked my back two or three times... The thorns left holes in my feet.”

Since the military coup, **324** people have been detained as hostage by the military, and **270** still languish in prisons and other secret detention centers. There does not seem to be a limit to how young a hostage can be. A woman was detained as a hostage with her two-year-old child in Insein Prison. The risks of detaining infants are profound. A two-year old child with pre-existing disease detained with the mother, died in Sittwe Prison from this neglect in February 2022.

Reports of brutal violence are extensive, in but one case, a prisoner was stabbed twice in the abdomen, twice in the shoulder and once on the knee by soldiers, at a police station. Their body was then sprayed with alcohol spirit. Another was tortured by the Central Military Command in Mandalay Royal Palace Interrogation Center. He was starved and beaten to the point of losing teeth to force a confession out of him, whilst another in the same interrogation center had his right forearm broken in three different places.

A female arrested in a crackdown when a vehicle rammed into the Kyeemyindaing Strike, was tortured in an interrogation center, and had an X-Ray showing her skull with marks created by a baton strike. Since the beating, the prisoner suffered headaches and nosebleeds due to nerve and blood vessel damage. The military junta even uses electric shocks, including through electric hoods, and leather straps as part of its torture. Methods can also be different depending on profession, for instance a reporter's hands were specifically targeted:

“I tried to take a nap when they left. But they came back and unlocked the door whenever I was about to fall asleep and then they beat me again. They slapped me on my cheek with a slipper, put me against the wall and punched me and beat my hands with the pipe. They covered my face with cloth and beat me, put me against the wall and punched me and kicked me. When they beat me at night, they used a plastic pipe which was put wood on one side. They asked to show my hand and beat. They beat my palm, as I am a reporter and hold a camera to take pictures.”

The prison department is appointing criminal prisoners as "wardens" because of a chronic lack of staff. In addition, political prisoners are mixed with criminals, such convicted criminal prisoners, together with prison guards, are used to harass, intimidate, and assault political prisoners.

Mental torture

On top of the omnipresent physical torture, even more political prisoners experienced mental torture. The military's pattern of torture starts upon arrest, but never really stops, even after they are released. Living in overcrowded small spaces can be traumatizing on its own, as well as the complete and utter lack of privacy that goes with it, but it was not all they had to deal with.

LGBT detainees are also subject to mental torture. One was kept in a male cell, mixed with different people convicted for murder, rape, and drug use. They were also forced to wear male clothes and the target of mockeries. The arrest and prison living conditions in many cases causes emotional trauma and insomnia. Several have mentioned to us, that the date they were to be released kept changing, without any reason given.

Mental torture takes many forms, for example one prisoner reported being forced to carry human feces. Another woman testified to a rather disturbing intimidation technique: "they forced me to raise the three-finger salute for more than an hour as a guard stroked my hair to intimidate me".⁴ Reporting psychological torture to prison guards' changes nothing.

Yet, the most common form of mental torture in prison is the use of isolation from the outside world. Indeed, visitation rights are non-existent in a vast majority of cases. Receiving packages or letters is difficult and sending them is even more complicated. Prisoners are completely isolated from their friends and family. The only opportunity to give information to families and friends is during their trial, and through their lawyers. A mother reported being very concerned for her children whom she was not able to hear from.

Solitary confinement is also used as a punishment, specifically in cases of strikes in prison. Such isolation puts prisoners at significant risk of serious psychological harm.⁵ In Insein Prison, an activist was placed in solitary confinement for more than 40 days. In her cell, there was nothing but her and the clothes on her back. Without the medication she needed, she was getting weaker every day. "I would lie in the dark and worry I was going to die... Sometimes I heard shouting and crying from nearby cells. I kept thinking about who was being beaten."

Moreover, the military Junta uses so-called "amnesties" to deceive the international community, but these releases, even when obtained, are not the end of the torture for many released political prisoners. For instance, at least 127 of the prisoners supposed to be released on October 18,

⁴ Owen L & Aung K. K. (2021), Myanmar coup: the woman abused and tortured in detention, *BBC News*. [\[link\]](#)

⁵ Haney, C. (2018). Restricting the Use of Solitary Confinement. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1(1), 285–310. [\[link\]](#)

2021, were re-arrested soon after. Such practices are traumatic for the prisoner and for their family and can be qualified as “psychological warfare”.⁶

Released prisoners are to serve the rest of their sentence if they participate in any anti-coup activities, which show the abusive use of the term “amnesty”, since they are not actually pardoned and must live with the constant fear of re-arrest. Such strategies and misuse of the term is like under previous military regimes.⁷

Another tactic of psychological warfare is the military’s seizure of some political prisoners’ homes and property. Since the coup, **523** homes and property have been illegally seized as of March 22, 2022.

Sexual abuse

According to our documentation, all genders are being subject to sexual abuse. A student reported to AAPP he was told by a sergeant in the interrogation center:

“There were some soldiers who wanted to have sex, and he would let them meet us. He mentioned that the soldiers would rape us. They looked at our bodies and criticized. They used bad and violent words.”

There are other instances of sexual abuse, including a report of rape committed by troops of the military junta during detention. According to a statement from All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABSFU), such instances happen nationwide. They reported more specifically “the atrocity such as forcibly injecting bamboo poles into the victim’s anuses”.⁸

There is also at least one case of a wife being detained alongside her husband and sexually violated in front of him at interrogation centers.

Access to healthcare

Covid pandemic

Research conducted on the ground by AAPP underlines some of the biggest problems, such as the overcrowding of prisons and the resulting lack of social distancing. In Pyay Prison staff did not wear masks, further increasing the risks. Access to vaccines is limited, prisoners in Meikhtila Prison

⁶ Kyi B. (2021), Myanmar Junta’s tactic of re-arresting political prisoners is “Psychological warfare”, *The Irrawaddy*. [[link](#)]

⁷ Progressive Voice (2021), Release and rearrest of political prisoners underscores cruelty of the Junta. [[link](#)]

⁸ All Burma Federation of Student Unions (2022), Statement on the sexual abuses committed by the Junta troops led by Min Aung Hlaing upon the woman-comrade. [[link](#)]

reported that to get a COVID vaccine they were made to do forced labor. Moreover, not enough tests were carried out and the medical installation in prisons is insufficient, they specifically seem to be lacking proper medicine and oxygen. The Student Union Representative Committee made a statement following the August 28 strike in Obo Prison, asking for transparency from the prison and proper access to healthcare for the prisoners. In that statement, they also accuse the military junta of using COVID-19 to murder political prisoners, using it as a “biological weapon”.⁹

More than 600 political and normal prisoners were infected with COVID-19 in the span of two months, in July and August 2021¹⁰. Moreover, there are reports of people being treated in intensive care units, including some who died during such treatment. Since May 25, 2021, the number of cases spiked in prison, leading to the death of prominent politicians. U Nyan Win, a central figure of the NLD, U Nyunt Shwe, the NLD Hluttaw representative of Bago Region, and Dr. Maung Maung Nyein Htun; surgery specialist at Mandalay Medical University all died of COVID-19 whilst under imprisonment.

In Myitkyina Prison, there was only one doctor and one nurse for around 1200 prisoners, even after the first COVID-19 cases were detected. In Ayeyarwaddy Region, a police officer from the Special Branch tested positive who oversaw interrogating political prisoners. As such, the detained persons he interrogated were tested for COVID-19. Almost all of them were found infected and suffering symptoms. Treatment was provided, but the quantity of medicine and oxygen was insufficient.

Junta management created a humanitarian crisis from a human rights crisis. This mismanagement was most evident in detainment centers, prison centers, and prison wards and led to strikes, sometimes escalating to protests. Whilst the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has expressed a wish to resume visits in places of detention and assist with COVID-19 related health care issues.¹¹ The request has as yet been denied.

Access to treatment

On top of the pandemic, a lot of political prisoners reported the need for treatment from diseases, pre-existing conditions, or due to torture they endured. Access to such treatment was generally limited, and in most cases, the only medicine that would be given to detainees would be Biogesic, Decolgen, Paracetamol or sleeping pills. In Dawei Prison, Ma Khin Kay Khine had a bullet wound in her stomach, from a shot fired by junta troops during her arrest, as such, she needed to get ultrasound

⁹ Student Union Representative Committee (2021), Announcement regarding the state of affairs inside Obo Prison. [\[link\]](#)

¹⁰ Madeline Noh (2021), Covid-19 surge in Myanmar’s prisons, Junta Packs Jails with Opponents as Virus Thrives, *Human Rights Watch*. [\[link\]](#)

¹¹ ICRC (2021), ICRC Statement. [\[link\]](#)

scanning. She had gall bladder and gastric problems, because of the food provided to the prisoners and the ineffectiveness of the medications, her condition deteriorated. It was said she received no medical care and had to rely on paracetamol only, to treat her diseases.

Similarly, a woman who had a medical condition that impacted her kidney and reproductive organs, whereas another who had a tumor in her neck that needed to be surgically removed, did not receive the urgent medical care they needed once they were sent to Dawei Prison.

A lot of the injuries left untreated were the consequence of severe beatings, during arrest, interrogation, or in prison. For example, after being beaten, a prisoner was experiencing swollenness and soreness in his head for which he was not given treatment. Moreover, he also mentioned that his fellow detainee, U Nyi Kyaw suffered from a fractured skull, severe bleeding swollen hands and bloodshot eyes and was not treated for those injuries either.

A prisoner who was injured during his arrest in May 2021 was not treated right away, and when he did receive treatment, the quality was inadequate. The three stitches on his head and the one on his temple were made using a sewing awl, also used for sewing shoes. In other cases, detainees are never allowed to go to the clinic, or receive any medical treatment while in prison. According to a medically trained inmate, those who were sent to the prison hospital due to injuries were not treated correctly, the wounds were not dressed correctly, and oxygen was not provided to those who had trouble breathing. Medical treatment was allegedly not available at night. Consequently, the prisoners had to get access to medication they needed through their family members outside. For most reporters, students, and other political prisoners, such orders never arrived.

Access to food and water

Most prisoners had complaints about either the quality or the quantity of food provided in prison, if not both. Usually, the meals were consistent across days, with an added source of protein a couple times a week. Several released prisoners qualified the food they were given as “inedible” or “tasteless”. One told us he believed that it was “intentionally undercooked”, adding that the rice was so hard his plastic spoon broke after the first bite. Dietary requirements and allergies are not being considered, and Muslims have been forced to ingest lard.¹² Whilst another prisoner mentioned they did not eat fish nor beef, so when those were served, they were not able to eat. Only through bribes could they get access to higher quality food.

In Kalay Prison, inmates had to move forward in a sitting *Poun-Zan* stress position to be able to get food. Some people were sharing their rice with those who were not able to queue in that position, but when the warden found out, he said all prisoners had to take their own food according to the prison rules.

¹² United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2022) Situation of human rights in Myanmar since 1 February 2021. [\[link\]](#)

Access to drinking water is also very limited, specifically in interrogation centers, where multiple sources reported not getting any water during interrogation. One of them reported having to resort to drinking from the toilet to survive, which has been necessary for many political prisoners even before the attempted military coup. There were numerous cases in which the toilet was their only source of water, whether for drinking, showering, or brushing their teeth. Asking for more water could result in physical violence.

Access to hygiene

According to numerous reports, hygiene was a major problem in prisons, and access to basic toiletries was completely dependent on a prisoner's ability to receive parcels from the outside. Some reported being provided soap, but nothing else, and many could not shower each day. A prisoner reported not having the ability to bathe for the first two weeks of their imprisonment. Such situations could trigger physical reactions for prisoners, such as itchiness of their skin. In one report, around 80% of cellmates felt such discomfort, and there was not enough medicine to treat them. In most cases, because the cells were overcrowded, there was not enough toilets, and they usually were clogged, dirty, and in the room. Prisoners, specifically female ones reported being dicomforted by the lack of privacy.

Detention conditions

Prison strikes

There are various reports of prison strikes, with different consequences. Prison strikes are occurring from violent repression, torture, forced labor, and lack of adequate medical treatment. In the overwhelming majority of cases, prison strikes led to junta-perpetrated violence, torture, isolation, forced labor, coerced confessions, even death.

- Obo Prison:
 - On August 8, 2021, in Obo Prison, political prisoners chanted slogans against the coup to mark the anniversary of the 8888 uprising. They were beaten by drunken prison guards, leading to one of the inmates vomiting blood and immediately dying. Others were hospitalized with serious injuries; their exact health condition is unknown. During the beating, the guards played tapes of loud Buddhist praying to cover the noise.
- In Insein Prison:
 - A protest took place on the same day as Obo Prison (August 8), the alleged instigators of which were summoned to the main prison and beaten. They were punched in the face,

kicked in the ribs, and whipped with wire cables until their skin cracked. After the torture, one was not able to stand up anymore, then taken to the prison punishment cell, where he had to sign a confession, pleading guilty to the charges related to the protest. A couple hours later, when he claimed that said confession was illegal, he was beaten again.

- On July 23, 2021, anti-military slogans emerged from Insein's Annex Prison and spread through the main walls. The reason behind the protest was the state of healthcare in the female quarters, specifically because COVID-19 was spreading, and they did not have access to any medication. A crackdown by military troops was rapid and brutal, with more than twenty people put into solitary confinement.
- In another instance of a violent crackdown, on December 10, 2021, eighty-nine prisoners, including Waiyan Phyo Moe, Vice President of All Burma Federation of Student Unions, and Lay Pyay Soe Moe, Representative of Student Rights at the University of Yangon Student,¹³ were dragged out of their cells and beaten in front of the dormitories. According to the report, they were then taken to the main prison where they were attacked with metal pipes, rubber sticks and sling shots until the prison officers were too exhausted to continue. Ten of the students lost consciousness, and their skin shredded. They were then dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE) by the prison authorities to hide their injuries and denied medical treatment. All eighty-nine were thereafter put in solitary confinement.
- A civilian called Ko Aung Aung who was arrested in March 2021 and charged under Penal Code 505(A) took part in the strike and underwent beatings at night whilst being locked away in the annex prison. Though asking for medical care due to the injuries, he died without receiving treatment on February 6, 2022. The wardens fabricated his death was due to tuberculosis when he had no history with the disease.
- Monywa Prison:
 - According to a statement from the Monywa University of Economics Students' Union, prison authorities beat political prisoners who prayed to Buddhist chants on Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday in Monywa prison, Sagaing Region.
- Patheingyi Prison:
 - On February 22, 2022, five political prisoners chanting the slogan "Regather 222222" were brutally beaten and put in solitary confinement.
- Kalay Prison:
 - At around 4PM on March 15, 2022, seven prisoners were shot dead following a brutal crackdown on a prison riot, leaving at least 30 others injured. The junta prison guards, and military troops carried out such an act on unarmed prisoners. AAPP demands

¹³ All Burma Federation of Student Unions (2021), Joint Statement on the Torture of Political Prisoners inside Insein Prison. [[link](#)]

confirmation whether the injured prisoner will receive adequate and humane medical treatment. A military announcement soon after the incident, said 7 people died after they were shot in the lower body, however photos show gunshots to the head and upper body.¹⁴

Forced labor

Multiple instances of forced labor are being reported in various prisons, if prisoners seemingly break a rule or cannot give enough bribe money, they will be assigned degrading jobs. Forced labor is also used as punishment for the alleged instigator of prison strikes. In Insein Prison following the August 8 strike, alleged instigators were forced to work with sewage.

In Myeik Prison, inmates have been ordered to make fake eyelashes. None of the prisoners wanted to do so because it requires very high levels of concentration and can cause visual impairment. Moreover, sitting for long periods of time can lead to physical impairment, since they work from 8AM to 3:30PM with only a thirty-minute break. In order to avoid having to make fake eyelashes, it was possible to bribe the prison staff, 150.000 kyat (USD \$85). In one case, someone who could not afford the bribe were so desperate they reportedly jumped from the second floor to break their legs or hands, to not be forced into such labor anymore.

Conclusion

Across Burma there are 48 prisons, with political prisoners held in the majority of them. From AAPP open-source documentation, country-wide networks, and confidential testimonies, we know prison authorities accustomed to dealing in bribery and injustice have made the situation inside the prison system more perilous than ever before. Overcrowding, corruption, malnutrition, and mental and physical torture are severely threatening the lives of every single prisoner in Burma.

Only one organization has junta permission to visit the prisons with prior notice, Myanmar's National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). An organization which despite its mandate has tried to hide facts on the ground inside the torturous prison system since the coup. Like how convicted criminal prisoners work together with the interrogators, authorized to harass, and assault political prisoners whenever they want. Only bribery can stop inhumane treatment by criminals and prison guards, for those who cannot pay – stress positions and torture are used to punish.

This military junta has become desperate in its attempt to take power in the country. As demonstrated in this briefing, political prisoners are being denied adequate medical treatment and healthcare to treat pre-existing diseases or injuries from interrogation. Even though prisoners have access to reading material, there are limits to letters from families, and prison visits are still banned.

¹⁴ Myanmar Now (2022), Seven inmates shot dead inside northwestern Myanmar prison. [[link](#)]

There is no judiciary in Burma anymore, but successive military junta's have exercised penal law and institutions in a widespread pattern of repression. AAPP has always maintained, as long as there are political prisoners, there can be no national reconciliation. The unconditional release of all political prisoners is necessary in any path to federal democracy.

Hence, we again urge the international community, whilst lending no legitimacy, to put thorough and effective pressure on the military junta to release all political prisoners, including Burma's democratically elected State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and President U Win Myint.

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners