

4 September 2000

AI Index ASA 16/016/2000 - News Service Nr. 169

Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi at risk

The Myanmar government should immediately reveal the whereabouts of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her colleagues, who have been held incommunicado since 2 September, Amnesty International said today, expressing grave concern for their safety.

"The whereabouts of National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders is still not clear, which increases fears for their welfare. If they are being confined to their homes, we strongly urge the Myanmar government to allow them freedom of movement. The government should also remove the security forces surrounding Daw Suu's home compound and the NLD headquarters in Yangon," the organization said.

At approximately 1.30am on 2 September 2000 riot police forcibly removed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD General Secretary, U Tin U, NLD Vice-Chairman, and 12 NLD youth leaders from Dallah, a suburb of Yangon. Subsequently diplomats, the press, and others have been blocked by security forces from visiting any NLD leaders, including Daw Suu. The group had been at the roadside there since 24 August, after they had been stopped by security forces while attempting to visit NLD members 30 miles outside the capital.

The NLD headquarters were raided over the weekend, when Military Intelligence officials removed files and documents from their offices. Today the government issued a statement claiming that all 10 NLD Central Executive Committee members, including U Tin U and Daw Suu "have been requested to stay at their respective residences", while denying that they are held under house arrest.

The government also said that they were conducting an investigation at NLD headquarters about a recent visit there of foreigners. The statement further alleged that "certain quarters of the NLD have been conspiring with...an armed terrorist group, God's Army".

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, Myanmar's military government) frequently claims that the NLD has links with armed opposition groups operating on the Thai-Myanmar border. Such claims are routinely used to justify the arrests of dozens of NLD members and supporters. However, Amnesty International believes that there is no evidence of support by the NLD, which has always espoused non-violence, for armed opposition groups operating outside of the country.

Background

Over the last four years the SPDC has arrested hundreds of NLD members for their peaceful political activities. The government has also forced thousands of NLD members to resign from the party, and has closed down offices around the country. The NLD is a legal political party which won the 1990 elections.

This level of intimidation is all part of the general repression by the SPDC against the NLD and student activists. Hundreds of them are held in poor conditions, serving long terms for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

God's Army is an armed opposition group which broke away from the Karen National Union (KNU -- one of the main ethnic minority armed groups fighting the central Myanmar Government) in 1997 and is led by 12-year-old twin Karen boys. After the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors, a group of exiled young Burmese activists, seized the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok in October 1999, God's Army provided sanctuary to them at the base in Kamaplaw, Myanmar.

In January 2000 the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors seized a hospital in Raatchburi, western Thailand, holding the patients and staff hostage for 24 hours. The siege ended when Thai security forces stormed the hospital, shooting dead all 10 young Burmese men.

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