

PUBLIC

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UA 259/08 **Fear of torture or ill-treatment**

MYANMAR **Nilar Thein (f), aged 36**

Nilar Thein, the anti-government activist leader, was arrested on 10 September. She is under interrogation in Aung Tha Pyay Detention Centre in Yangon (Rangoon, Myanmar's largest city) and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Nilar Thein went into hiding more than a year ago after leading some of the initial anti-government protests in August 2007.

Nilar Thein was arrested on her way to visit the mother of Ant Bwe Kyaw, another detained activist, in a suburb of north eastern Yangon. Ant Bwe Kyaw and Kyaw Min Yu, Nilar Thein's husband (also known as Ko Jimmy), were among 13 anti-government activist leaders from the '88 Generation Students Group' who were arrested on 22 August 2007. The '88 Generation Students Group' is made up of anti-government activists who took part in the 1988 pro-democracy uprising against the then 26 years of military rule.

The day after the 13 anti-government activist leaders of the '88 Generation Students Group' were arrested, Nilar Thein led around 500 people in a demonstration in Yangon to demand the release of fellow activists and to continue the protest against the sudden increase in fuel prices that had been imposed by the state on 15 August 2007. When authorities began a hunt for the leaders of the protests, Nilar Thein went into hiding. After considering the unhealthy and dangerous conditions of living in hiding she decided to leave her baby daughter behind in the care of her family.

Rumours began to circulate three weeks after her husband's arrest on the 22 August 2007 that he had died in police custody. The rumours turned out to be false and are believed to have been planted by the government to bring Nilar Thein out of hiding.

Whilst in hiding Nilar Thein continued to appeal to the international community to take action in resolving the grave human rights situation and the abuses that women suffer under the military regime in Myanmar.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A year after the violent crackdown on anti-government protests of September 2007, the military leaders are showing no signs that they will relent in their efforts to silence all political dissent. Nearly 300 individuals have been arrested for their peaceful political activities in 2008.

Nilar Thein has been imprisoned twice before for her pro-democracy activities. She was detained for two months in 1991. In December 1996 she was arrested for participating in the student demonstrations in Yangon that of that year. She was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and was released in 2005.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Nilar Thein has been detained;

- calling on the authorities to treat Nilar Thein humanely, and not subject her to torture or other ill-treatment;
- urging the authorities to release Nilar Thein immediately and unconditionally along with all detainees arrested for taking part in peaceful protests of August/September 2007;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that while they remain in detention, all detainees are granted access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may require;
- calling on the authorities to cease targeting individuals who peacefully exercised their rights to freedom of expression and assembly during the protests last year.

APPEALS TO:

Senior General Than Shwe

Chairman
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

Nyan Win

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Bldg. (19), Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Phone: +95 67 412 335
Fax: +95 67 412 336/ +95 97 412 395
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Salutation: Dear Minister

Brigadier-General Kyaw Hsan

Minister of Information
Ministry of Information
Bldg. (7), Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 363
Email: media.moi@mptmail.net.mm
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

and to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 October 2008.