

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WEB FEATURE

Date: 12 November 2007

AI Index: ASA 16/039/2007

MYANMAR

The Monk's Tale: Death in detention

"We only dared go back into the monastery in the morning. The whole building looked fairly messed up with doors that had been kicked open. We saw red stains on the floor... and solid red blobs that appeared to be blood."

Amnesty International has obtained disturbing first-hand accounts from monks who witnessed the brutal attack on a monastic training school in Myitkyina, in the far north of the country, on 25 September.

U Thilavantha was a respected and much-loved member of his local community. He spent several years studying as a monk in Sri Lanka and was the Deputy Abbot of the Yuzana Kyaungtai training school in Myitkyina. He gave English classes to local children. He was around 35 years old.

On 25 September, the day after Myitkyina's monks had taken part in peaceful marches calling for an end to restrictions imposed by the military government, U Thilavantha's monastery was raided by police. He was beaten and arrested. Once in detention, he received further beatings. He died of his injuries the following day.

Officials at the local hospital were pressured into declaring that he had suffered a heart attack.

The monastery in which U Thilavantha lived had originally housed 142 monks. On 31 October, only 11 remained.

Monks from the training school in Myitkyina have told Amnesty International of the day the police destroyed their home. The monks have described the events of the 25 September that led to the death of U Thilavantha and the beating of many others.

"The authorities cut the phone lines at about five in the afternoon. At ten past nine that night, they crashed open the main gate of the monastery with their military trucks," recalled one of the monks.

"They started beating the monks as soon as they came in. They kicked open the main door of the monastery after they crashed open the gate. They beat us indiscriminately as soon as they got inside the building. It was a preventive strike so that the monks could not resist the attack. They ordered us to stand against the wall and hit the monks who did not obey their orders with sticks. ..."

Listen

[The monks recount the full story of the military's brutal attack](#)

Read more:

[Myanmar: New evidence of mass detentions, hostage taking, deaths in custody and disappearances](#) (Press Release, 9 November 2007)

[Myanmar: No Return to "Normal"](#) (Briefing Paper, 9 November 2007)

Caption: U Thilavantha was killed after the Myitkyina monastery raid