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Myanmar: arrests continue two months on

Amnesty International condemns the new arrests of political activists inside Myanmar, despite the commitment by Prime Minister Thein Sein to the UN Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari in early November that no more arrests would be carried out.

"Two months after the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrests continue unabated as part of the Myanmar government's systematic suppression of freedom of expression and association, contrary to its claims of a return to normalcy," said Catherine Baber, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Programme Director.

"Normalcy for the military government may mean a return to systematic and widespread human rights violations away from media attention, but the international community must no longer tolerate this situation," added Catherine Baber.

Amnesty International confirms that the following arrests have occurred since early November:

- On 4 November, U Gambira, head of the All-Burma Monks Alliance and a leader of the September protests, was arrested and reportedly charged with treason. Two of his family members previously detained as 'hostages' in an attempt to force him out of hiding, have been kept in detention;
- On 13 November, the government arrested Su Su Nway, a member of the youth wing of the main opposition National League for Democracy party. Fellow youth activist Bo Bo Win Hlaing was arrested along with her while putting up anti-government posters;
- On 14 November, at least three people were arrested in Yangon for passing out anti-government pamphlets;
- On 15 November, authorities raided a monastery in western Rakhine State, and arrested monk U Than Rama, wanted for his involvement in the September protests. He was reportedly beaten during the raid and his whereabouts remain unknown.
- On 20 November, Myint Naing, a senior member of the National League for Democracy was detained;
- On 20 November, ethnic Arakanese leader U Tin Ohn was detained and his whereabouts remain unknown;
- On 20 and 21 November, other ethnic leaders, including Arakanese Cin Sian Thang and U Aye Thar Aung, Naing Ngwe Thein from the Mon National Democracy Front, and Kachin political leader U Hkun Htoo were rounded up but released after questioning;
- On 26 November, Aung Zaw Oo, a member of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters group, was arrested in Yangon, likely on account of his involvement in planning events for International Human Rights Day on 10 December.

Amnesty International is deeply disappointed by the fact that these arrests are still taking place despite the government's promises to the contrary. Just last week, the Myanmar government was attending ASEAN's 40th Anniversary Summit, where it signed the organization's new Charter committing it to the "promotion and protection of human rights".

To date, up to 700 people arrested during and since the September protests remain behind bars, while 1,150 political prisoners held prior to the protests have not been released.

Amnesty International is urgently calling on the government of Myanmar to release all those detained or imprisoned merely for the peaceful exercises of their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, including both long-term and recent prisoners of conscience, and to stop making further arrests.

Public Document

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