

PUBLIC

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Southeast Asia Team
Date: 2 September 1999

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Dr Shwe Bo (f) and two other female physicians
MYANMAR**

Theme: physicians / prisoners of conscience / fear of torture

Summary

Dr Shwe Bo, a 45-year-old physician, and two other unnamed female medical doctors were arrested in central Myanmar between 19 and 23 July 1999, together with 16 other people. The three doctors were among a group of activists who were reportedly involved in preparations for a pro-democracy march on 19 July 1999. Only one of the group that was detained, a three-year-old child, has been released in the meantime.

Amnesty International is concerned that all those arrested are at risk of torture and ill-treatment, and considers them to be prisoners of conscience.

Recommended Actions

Appeals from health professionals are requested to the addresses below:

- o introducing yourself as a member of Amnesty International's health professional network
- o expressing concern at the reported arrest of Dr Shwe Bo, two other female physicians and 16 other pro-democracy activists between 19 and 23 July 1999
- o urging Myanmar's military government to immediately and unconditionally release the three physicians and the other prisoners of conscience who were arrested at the same time
- o urging the Myanmar government to ensure that those detained, while they remain in detention, are not tortured or ill-treated, and that they are given immediate access to their families, lawyers, and adequate medical care

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response. Please send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat [attn: medical team] and check with your national coordinator or the medical team if you send appeals after 31 October 1999.

ADDRESSES

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 1 229 50
Salutation: Dear General

Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Director of Defence Services Intelligence (DDSI)
Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road
Dagon Post Office
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

COPIES

Myanmar Medical Association
249, Theinbyu Road
Mingalartaungnyunt P.O.
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 1 85169

**Please send copies of your letters to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar
accredited to your country.**

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**Dr Shwe Bo (f) and two other female physicians
MYANMAR**

Dr Shwe Bo, a 45-year-old physician, and two other unnamed female medical doctors were arrested in Pegu in central Myanmar between 19 and 23 July 1999, together with 16 other people. The three doctors were among a group of activists who were reportedly involved in preparations for a pro-democracy march on 19 July 1999. Between 16 and 18 July, pamphlets were distributed announcing the march and messages were spray-painted on walls in Pegu calling for support of the opposition National League for Democracy [NLD], for prices to be lowered, and for civil servants' salaries to be raised. Amnesty International has received reliable information that the leaflets that were distributed called for non-violent action only.

Reportedly the local Military Intelligence (MI) had wanted to arrest pro-democracy activist Kyaw Wunna on 19 July 1999, but instead detained his wife Ma Khin Khin Leh and his three-year-old daughter Thaint Wunna Khin when they could not locate him. Six more members of Kyaw Wunna's family were arrested on 23 July and a further 11 people, who distributed pamphlets, between 19 and 24 July. The three-year-old child was released after five days' detention, but the rest of the group, including the three physicians, remain in detention and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

In a statement issued by Myanmar's military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), on 29 July 1999, it denied that the 19 people had been detained but did say that "*some people were called in for questioning in Bago [Pegu]...*". The SPDC also denied that leaflets calling for a peaceful demonstration on 19 July were distributed in Pegu.

Background

The 19 July 1999 marked the 52nd anniversary of the assassination of General Aung San who negotiated independence from Britain after World War II. His daughter, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, is the leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) which has always advocated non-violent political activities and has opposed the use of violence. In a general election in 1990, the NLD won almost 82% of the parliamentary seats, but has never been permitted to form a government. Instead, hundreds of NLD members of the parliament-elect and other NLD activists were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Although many have been released since April 1992, hundreds of others have been arrested, again after the NLD announced in August 1998 that it would convene the parliament elected in 1990 by themselves and announced the formation of a 10-member Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP). Those still in detention include several medical doctors [see, for example, AI Index: ASA 16/29/98, 30 October 1998 (detention of Dr U Saw Mra Aung)].