

UA 39/91

Fear of Torture/Death in Detention

6 February 1991

MYANMAR : U Tin Maung Win
(formerly Burma) U Hla Pe
U Soe Thein
U Tin Aye
U Khin Maung Tun
Daw Cho Cho Thein

Amnesty International has recently received reports that U Tin Maung Win, who was arrested in October 1990 (see follow-up to UA 440/90, ASA 16/35/90, 9 November 1990), died on 18 January in Insein Prison, Myanmar's largest jail. Military authorities told his family that he had died from blood cancer, but unofficial sources have raised questions about the circumstances of U Tin Maung Win's death, and there are suggestions it may have resulted in part from ill-treatment or harsh conditions of detention. U Tin Maung Win was an elected member of parliament for Kayan constituency and a member of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The NLD won over 80% of the seats in the May 1990 national parliamentary election, but the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the ruling military authorities, has not yet convened the National Assembly.

Unofficial sources have also reported the arrests of four NLD members on 16 January. They are: U Hla Pe, member of parliament for Tenasserim constituency; U Soe Thein, a former colonel and member of parliament for Sagaing constituency; U Tin Aye, member of parliament for Mandalay Southeast township; and U Khin Maung Tun, member of parliament for Hmawbi-2 constituency of Yangon (Rangoon) Division.

Daw Cho Cho Nyein, the leader of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, was also arrested recently. Daw Cho Cho Nyein had been detained previously on 16 June 1989 for 24 hours; she later said: "*..I was subjected to a gruelling non-stop overnight interrogation*". To Amnesty International's knowledge, Daw Cho Cho Nyein and the other four detainees have not yet been charged or tried.

Amnesty International is concerned that anyone arrested for political reasons in Myanmar is at grave risk of torture and ill-treatment. The Military Intelligence Service and other Myanmar security agencies responsible for the interrogation and detention of political prisoners routinely torture and ill-treat them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Large-scale public unrest erupted in Myanmar in March 1988. Mass demonstrations led by students, Buddhist monks and others called for an end to 26 years of military one-party rule and its replacement by a civilian interim administration. The military reimposed control in a coup on 18 September 1988 and formed the SLORC. It proclaimed severe martial law restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly while at the same time legalizing political parties and promising elections in May 1990. In the run-up to the elections, thousands of leaders and supporters of parties and student groups calling for restoration of civil liberties and multi-party democracy were arrested for breaking martial law orders. Hundreds or more of them are believed to remain in detention.

In late October 1990 the SLORC arrested scores of civilian political party activists and hundreds of Buddhist monks in the latest round of large-scale suppression of opposition to its continued rule. At least 50 NLD leaders were arrested as well as the entire leadership of the Democratic Party for A New Society, a student group

which has been compiling information on alleged SLORC human rights violations and also advocates multi-party democracy. The arrest of monks aimed at ending a protest movement launched after troops opened fire on an anti-government demonstration in the town of Mandalay on 8 August 1990, when up to two dozen monks were reportedly shot or beaten and five arrested.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern that U Hla Pe, U Soe Thein, U Tin Aye, U Khin Maung Tun, and Daw Cho Cho Nyein may be detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and ask that they either be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and fairly tried, or released unconditionally and immediately;
- expressing concern that U Tin Maung Win has died in detention and ask that the circumstances of his death be clarified and that the results be made public;
- urging that the treatment in detention of all political prisoners conform to international standards and that they be given access to their families and lawyers of their own choice.

APPEALS TO:

General Saw Maung
 Commander-in-Chief of the Army
 Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council
 Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Telegrams: General Saw Maung, Yangon, Myanmar
 Telexes: 21313 MOFARN BM (Attn: Gen Saw Maung)
 Faxes: + 95 1 2 2950 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Maj General Khin Nyunt
 1st Secretary
 State Law and Order Restoration Council
 c/o Ministry of Defence
 Yangon, Union of Myanmar

Telegrams: Maj Gen Khin Nyunt, SLORC, Yangon, Myanmar
 Telexes: 21316 MILPRO BM
 Faxes: + 95 1 2 2950 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

COPIES TO:

Gen Ne Win
 Patron
 Myanmar War Veterans Organization
 Yangon, Myanmar

and to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 March 1991.