

Democratic Voice of Burma Political Prisoners News

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Min Ko Naing's health deteriorating

1 Apr 04

The health condition of Min Ko Naing who has been detained unfairly by Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) at Sittwe (Akyab) Prison, Arakan State is said to be deteriorating.

U Thein Nyunt, the elected representative of Thingganggyun Township, Rangoon told DVB that Min Ko Naing's mother and sister who recently went to see him at the prison said that he is suffering from acute pains but his morale is still high.

Min Ko Naing is the most famous student leader during the 8888 nationwide uprising in Burma and he was arrested in 1989 by the military intelligence agents and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Under the terms of general amnesty, his sentence should have been reduced to 10 years but he is still not released after 15 years in prison.

U Thein Nyunt said 15 years in prison is too harsh a life for a youth like Min Ko Naing and as his MP, he urged the junta to release him immediately on humanitarian ground. [TOP](#)

Appeal for 3 Burmese given death sentence

3 Apr 04

The appeals for three Burmese citizens who were given death sentence for allegedly giving 'false' information to International Labour Organisation (ILO) along with 6 other accused are to be lodged at a court in Burma on 6 April.

The imposition of death sentence on the three was severely denounced by the ILO and the legal advocates from National League for Democracy (NLD) going to take the case of the accused, according to one of the lawyers of the nine accused men, Naing Ngwe Ya.

The nine defendants were arrested on 16 July 2003 by the authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and U Shwe Mahn, Naing Min Kyi and U Aye Myint were sentenced to death on 29 November for reporting forced labour practices by the junta to the ILO.

Moreover, the editor of a sports journal First Eleven, Ko Zaw Thet Htway was given death sentence for having a phone conversation with a Burmese journalist in Thailand. [TOP](#)

Farmers arrested for refusing to grow dry season paddy

3 Apr 04

Four Burmese farmers from Shan State in eastern Burma were arrested by local authorities for refusing to grow dry season rice.

The four from Kunkauk Village in Theinni Township were arrested by the order of local township chairman U Ye Kyaw Khaing at the end of March and they are being detained at Theinni Police Station.

During previous months, farmers from Irrawaddy and Rangoon Divisions in southern Burma were arrested for similar reasons. It is still not known what the authorities are going to charge these farmers with.

At the same time, farmers are writing to General Khin Nyunt, the Prime Minister of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to help increase the price of rice in Burma.

Burmese farmers are finding it hard to survive as the price of rice plunged steadily since the junta imposed export bans on rice and other important grains after promising to liberalise the rice market.

To make the matter worse, farmers who are unable to sell rice at normal rate have been ordered to grow dry season paddy by the local authorities despite the lack of benefits to the farmers. [TOP](#)

Pagan Than Naing's health condition

4 Apr 04

The health condition of a Burmese political prisoner Pagan Than Naing who has been illegally detained by Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) at Moulmein Prison in southern Burma is deteriorating.

Pagan Than Naing was arrested by military intelligence (MI) agents and given a 10 year sentence in 1989 for taking part in underground activities at Rangoon for the defunct Burma Communist Party (BCP). He should have been released in 1999 but he was continued to be detained for another five years with Act 10a.

According to an ex-prisoner Ko Ne Win, Pagan Than Naing has been losing weight and suffering from psychological problems despite being healthy and strong at the beginning of his imprisonment.

Pagan Than Naing was arrested along with 80 other CPB underground activists including U Aung Khin and Dr. Zaw Minn on 12 July 1989 and tortured for a month by the MI agents at the notorious Ye Kyi Aing interrogation centre in Rangoon. He was transferred to Insein Prison in Rangoon and Taungoo Prison in central Burma before coming to Moulmein. [TOP](#)

Relative of Ko Ko Gyi business raided

5 Apr 04

Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) raided a jewellery store in Rangoon owned by the family of a political prisoner Ko Ko Gyi and arrested his sister in law.

Ma Thida, the wife of Ko Aung Aung Tun, the brother of Ko Ko Gyi was charged with possessing stolen goods and she is being detained at Insein Prison in Rangoon.

'Thida' jewellery store at South Okkalapa owned by Ma Thida was raided by local authorities on 3 April soon after her husband gave interviews to the foreign media on the condition of his brother who has been detained at Thayet Prison in central Burma and while the family was preparing to write a letter to the military leaders demanding his immediate release.

'Someone calling himself Captain Saw Yan Naing from Supplies Battalion based at Mingaladon came to the store. He said that someone sold his gold chain at our shop and pointed finger at us. Nobody came to sell it as he claimed. Neither did we buy the gold chain from him but they sent my wife to prison,' said Ko Aung Aung Tun.

He also added that his wife is the mother of two children and she has been feeling miserable and unable to eat, and that he and his wife would never risk their reputation by buying a tiny gold chain with their sense of standard and possession.

He insisted that the authorities are still unable to provide solid evidence and that the case is a ploy to undermine his family for taking part in political activities.

According to an ex-political prisoner Ko Kaung Myat Thu, the junta has been systematically plotting against and persecuting the family members of political prisoners (and activists) by means of destroying their business interests, refusing to grant licenses, barring them from getting jobs at government departments and companies.

Ma Thida is to be tried at a court in Rangoon overseen by an army judge on 8 April. [TOP](#)

Appeal lodged for 3 Burmese sentenced to death

6 Apr 04

Lawyers representing three Burmese citizens who were given death sentence by Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) lodged an appeal at the Central Court in Rangoon on 6 April.

U Shwe Mahn, Naing Minn Kyi and U Aye Myint were sentenced to death on 29 November 2003 by a district court in Rangoon for allegedly giving false information on the forced labour practice in Burma to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) along with other six political activists.

Naing Ngwe Ya, one of the lawyers representing the nine defendants argued that the authorities found no incriminating evidence against the accused and they all should be released unconditionally.

Other six defendants including an editor of the sports journal 'First Eleven' Ko Zaw Thet Htway were accused of plotting to assassinate the SPDC leaders. [TOP](#)

Released: NLD leaders' U Aung Shwe and U Lwin

13 Apr 04

It has been learned that the authorities have released two of the four NLD [National League for Democracy] leaders who have been under house arrest - NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe and Secretary U Lwin - at 0800 [local time] today.

But, NLD Vice-Chairman U Tin Oo and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi still remain under house arrest. Although DVB [Democratic Voice of Burma] made several attempts to contact recently-freed U Aung Shwe and U Lwin they were not fruitful because the telephone lines remain severed. DVB contacted U Thein San, NLD elected representative from Kawlin Township Constituency in Sagaing Division, who had the opportunity to meet with U Lwin this evening. He began by saying that U Lwin is in good health.

[U Thein San - recording] I did not meet U Aung Shwe but I met U Lwin. He is in good health. Nothing special, I just went to inquire about his health and nothing else. He is fine and is just like before.

[DVB correspondent] Yes. Couldn't you go to U Aung Shwe's residence?

[U Thein San] Well, U Aung Shwe is in religious retreat and meditating. You can go but you will not be able to meet with him.

[DVB correspondent] We believe he was freed at 0800 this morning. How did you know and how did you meet him?

[U Thein San] I was informed about the news by a mutual friend. That is why I went to see him. Of course, I saw him in the evening together with U Soe Myint.

[DVB correspondent] Yes. Since you have personally met U Lwin and found out that two NLD leaders have been freed. How do you feel as a party member, do you feel encouraged?

[U Thein San] Yes. Of course, it is very encouraging to know that the leaders are freed. [End recording]

That was DVB interview with U Thein San. DVB correspondent Htet Aung Kyaw also interviewed U Than Tun, NLD Central Executive Committee [CEC] member, about the release.

[U Than Tun - recording] I know that they have been released but could not go and see them at present because of the traditional Thingyan water festival.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] How did you find out about the release? Was it officially announced?

[U Than Tun] NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe told one of the committee members to inform NLD CEC member U Soe Myint about his release. That is how we know. He was freed at 0800 this morning.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] Yes. We also heard that they were released but we were unable to contact them by telephone. Were you also able to telephone them in Rangoon?

[U Than Tun] No. Their telephone lines are still disconnected.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] Now that they have freed U Aung Shwe and U Lwin, how about the remaining leaders - U Tin Oo and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, have you heard anything about them?

[U Than Tun] Nothing so far.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] Well, it is good since two out of four have been released. Some are hoping that Daw Suu might be released after the traditional Thingyan festival. Are you satisfied with the release of U Aung Shwe and U Lwin? What do you have to say?

[U Than Tun] We are happy for their release but I think the National Convention has something to do with that. NLD members who attended the National Convention [adjourned in 1996] have been invited [to attend the National

Convention to be reconvened in May]. As their names are included, you could say that they were released to allow them to attend the National Convention.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] Daw Suu and U Tin Oo seem to be the main characters regarding the Tabayin incident and other matters. What are your expectations?

[U Than Tun] Although U Aung Shwe and U Lwin have been released, we have decided that only the nine-member CEC meeting including Daw Suu and U Tin Oo would decide about the National Convention, the road map and other matters.

[Htet Aung Kyaw] Some are saying, now that U Aung Shwe is freed, would it be like the last time when U Aung Shwe was pressured to lead the NLD delegation and attend the National Convention as Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo were under detention. The government seems to be repeating that trend. What is your opinion?

[U Than Tun] Since they are inviting the delegates that attended the last National Convention, it seems like that. But, it is our duty to do whatever is necessary after careful consideration. We would decide after careful discussions. We would hold a meeting with all the CEC members and make a decision after thorough discussions. [TOP](#)

There are no laws that bar taking picture of Daw Suu, says photographer Ko Sonny

13 Apr 04

Ko Sonny, photographer and video cameraman was released from prison recently after spending several years in prison for taking video footage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. When he was arrested in 1997, he told the judges that he never heard of any laws that restrict taking picture or shooting video film of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi but the court sentenced him 7-year imprisonment. He spent seven-year in prison and released on 9 April. While he was in prison, he staged a hunger strike to high light the poor prison condition.

Ko Sonny (a) Ko Khin Maug Win is now back to his home in Rangoon. DVB's senior reporter Htet Aung Kyaw got a chance to talk to him over the phone.

Q: You were arrested for taking video film of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Can you tell us what exactly happened at that time?

A: Yes, they arrested me for taking video footage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. That footage was later broadcast from the Satellite TV. At the court, I told the judges that this is my job. I work as a video cameraman and photographer. I have worked for shooting movie since 1986. I have taken video film for wedding ceremony, birthday party and special events for military intelligent families. I have also been shooting video documentary for Daw Aung San Kyi's tour around the country and they (MI) knew about that. This time, someone asked me to help to get video footage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and that is what I did. And there are no laws that restrict taking video picture of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Q: While you were serving your prison sentence at Kalay prison in 2002, you had led a hunger strike. Could you tell us about that?

A: I was sent to Kalay prison in 1998 and stay there for four years. Prison condition was gradually getting worse. We were getting very poor food, very poor health care and even taking time for shower was shortened. Besides, our political prisoners were treated differently from criminals. They could get their prison sentence reduced but we don't. That's why we decided to stage a hunger strike. Up to four days, we had had no water and food and later, the prison authorities divided us and transferred us to different prisons.

Q: Do you think that your release from prison was related to Burmese New Year or up coming National Convention?

A: I don't think my release was related to National Convention. But I do wish all the other political prisoners are freed very soon. I always pray for that as well. [TOP](#)

SPDC released more Burmese detainees

25 Apr 04

The authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development (SPDC) on 25 April released 27 detainees from among those who were arrested during the 30 May Dipeyin incident at upper Burma.

The majority of them were from Khin-Oo and Monywa districts where the incident took place. They were released from the Shwebo prison in upper central Burma.

Similarly, 10 members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) who were detained at Khin-Oo and Madaya townships in central Burma were also released on the same day from Mandalay prison. They were sent back to their homes by the military intelligence.

Mandalay Division NLD women's leader Daw Win Mya Mya told DVB six people released from Madaya Township were U Nyo, Maung Tha Lin, Maung Hlaing Than, Maung Too, Maung Tun Tun, and Maung Tint Zaw Htwe. Also released were vice-chairman U Sein Tun, Ko Hla Tin, Ko Thin Naing, and joint secretary Ko San Oo Maung from Khin-Oo Township NLD. Those released from Madaya and Khin-Oo Townships had to sign Section 401-1 (punishment for belonging to gang of thieves) before being released.

U Tin Aung Aung, NLD elected representative from Mandalay Division said that six cars from among those confiscated during the incident were returned to the car owners. But three cars including the one ridden by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi are still to be returned because they were more badly damaged than the others.

On 30 May 2003, supporters and members of NLD including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were brutally attacked in an ambush by the junta-sponsored thugs and gangsters killing scores of them. All nine central executive committee members were detained following a systematic crackdown on the NLD. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy U Tin Oo are still not released up till the present. [TOP](#)

More NLD supporters remain inside prisons in central Burma

26 Apr 04

Although Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) recently released around 30 supporters of National League for Democracy (NLD) who were detained in connection with 30 May Dipeyin incident, 118 people including three NLD members from Monywa in central Burma are still languishing in Monywa and Mandalay Prisons, according to U Saw Aung the elected representative of Monywa.

Moreover, some organising members of Monywa Township NLD have been in hiding to avoid arrest by the junta. Daw Khin Than, a woman leader from Monywa told DVB that U Than Win, U Aung Soe, U Phyu Win and Daw Myint have been warranted for arrest by the authorities for their roles in the arrangement of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's upper Burma trip in May 2003.

U Lwin, the spokesman of NLD told DVB that the situation has been tight for all NLD members and supporters and they can't afford to make a single mistake but they are still doing their best for the release of their colleagues.

He added that the NLD Head Office sent letters to the authorities demanding the release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her deputy U Tin Oo but there has been no response from them. [TOP](#)

List of released detainees from Prisons in central Burma

26 Apr 04

The authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) recently released 27 supporters of National League for Democracy (NLD) who had been detained at Shwebo and Mandalay Prisons in central Burma in connection with 30 May Dipeyin incident.

17 people were released from Shwebo Prison and they are:

1. U Win Myint Aung, elected representative from Dipeyin Township
2. U Win Maung, vice-chairman of Dipeyin Township NLD
3. U Tin Hlaing, member of Dipeyin Township NLD
4. U Taik Than, member of Dipeyin Township NLD
5. Ko Moe Swe Oo, youth member of Shwebo Township NLD
6. Ko Kyaw Shat, youth member of Ye-Oo Township NLD
7. Ko Tun Tun Han, youth member of Ye-Oo Township NLD
8. Ko Myint Zaw, youth member of Ye-Oo Township NLD
9. Ko Tin Myint, youth member of Khin-Oo Township NLD
10. Ko Myo Aung, youth member of Khin-Oo Township NLD

11. Ko Tin Ko, youth member of Khin-Oo Township NLD
12. Ko Kyee Nyo, NLD supporter from Kyi-Ywa (Village)
13. Ko Taik Minn, NLD supporter from Kyi-Ywa
14. Ko Thaik Ngwe, NLD supporter from Kyi-Ywa
15. Ko Tin Aung Lwin, NLD supporter from Kyi-Ywa
16. Revd. U Wimala, Buddhist monk from Kyi-Ywa
17. Revd. U Zawana, Buddhist monk from Kyi-Ywa

And those released from Mandalay prison are:

1. U Nyo, organising member, Madaya Township NLD, Mandalay Division
2. Maung Zaw Linn, organising member. Madaya Township NLD
3. Maung Naing Than, organising member, Madaya Township NLD
4. Maung Soe, organising member, Madaya Township NLD
5. Maung Tun Tun, organising member, Madaya Township NLD
6. Maung Tint Zaw Htway, organising member, Madaya Township NLD
7. U Sein Htaw, vice-chairman, Sinkkaing Sownship NLD, Sagaing Division
8. Ko Sann OO Maung, joint-secretary, Sinkkaing Township NLD
9. Ko Hla Shwe, Sinkkaing Township NLD
10. Ko Thein Naing, Sinkkaing Township NLD

They were met with and comforted by Mandalay Division NLD organising members U Ko Gyi and Daw Win Mya Mya on 26 April. [TOP](#)

Another NLD supporter released

27 Apr 04

Ko Shin Thant, a youth member of National League for Democracy (NLD) from Indaw Township in northern Burma who had been detained in connection with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's upper Burma trip and 30 May Dipeyin incident was released by Burmese authorities from the nearby Katha Prison on 25 April.

But his colleagues Ko Tin Maung Win and Ko Than Aung are still being held by the authorities at the prison. Ko Shin Thant was arrested during the crackdowns on NLD members following the attack on NLD members and supporters by thugs sponsored by Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) at Dipeyin in upper Burma on 30 May 2003.

His colleagues Ko Tin Maung Win and Ko Than Aung were arrested for distributing candles among the supporters who were welcoming Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after the authorities cut off the electricity supply.

Similarly, Ko Myint (aka) Ko Tin Myint a member of Dipeyin Township NLD who was arrested during the incident is still being detained at Shwebo Prison in central Burma. [TOP](#)

Political prisoners' situations

28 Apr 04

Naing Ngwe Ya, the lawyer of nine people including editor of the sports journal First Eleven Ko Zaw Thet Htway who were sentenced to death by Burma's military junta told DVB that the central court in Rangoon still hasn't announced the verdicts on his clients in connection with their recent appeals.

Naing Ngwe Ya was optimistic about the verdicts despite the lack of clues from the authorities and he insisted that his clients should be released scotch free because of the lack of evidence. Among the nine, Ko Zaw Thet Htway was given death sentence for receiving a phone call from an exiled anti-junta student and Ko Aye Myint, U Shwe Mahn and Naing Minn Kyi for having contacts with the ILO.

Meanwhile, the National League for Democracy (NLD) youth leader from Indaw Township, Sagaing Division in upper Burma, Ko Shin Thant who was recently released from prison told DVB that he was charged with drug-related offences as the authorities could find no fault with him politically.

He was, in reality, arrested and imprisoned for his active role in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's trip to Indaw during May 2003.

According to the latest reports, the following 12 NLD members who have been detained since the occurrence of 30 May Dipeyin incident were each given long-term imprisonment by a court inside Mandalay Prison on 9 April:

1. Daw Hnin Pa Pa (7 years)
2. Ko Htay Lwin Oo (7 years)
3. Ko Myint Oo (7 years)
4. Ko Aung Aung (7 years)
5. Ko Aung Naing Thu (12 years)
6. Ko Zaw Minn Lwin (12 years)
7. Ko Zaw Minn Naing (12 years)
8. Ko Than Win (12 years)
9. Ko Ye Minn Tun (12 years)
10. Ko Tin Oo -N. Okkalapa, Rangoon (12 years)
11. U Hla Soe (17 years)
12. U Win Tin - Mandalay (22 years)

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