

# Democratic Voice of Burma Political Prisoners News November - 2006



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## **Meikhtila District NLD demand the release of prisoners**

*November, 01, 2006*

Members of Meikhtila District National League for Democracy (NLD), Mandalay Division in central Burma, demanded the immediate release of Win Ko and Phyo Zaw Latt who were arrested for carrying out a successful signature campaign.

The call came at the end of a monthly meeting held today, and members also urged the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) authorities to cooperate with 88 Generation Students' signature and prayer campaign.

They insisted that the SPDC was also responsible for the deaths of political prisoners such as Thet Win Aung at Mandalay jail, Myo Min Htaik at Bassein (Pathein) and Than Aung at Moulmein (Mawlamyaing) and urged the junta to do its best to prevent such incident occurring again and to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff to visit the prisons on the humanitarian grounds. They also urged the junta to allow opposition groups including ethnic national parties to take part in the meetings with the UN representative Ibrahim Gambari when he visits Burma soon.

The meeting was attended by elected representatives Dr. Thein Lwin, Dr. Hla Aung, Theun maung, Maung Maung Lay, Mandalay Division NLD vice-chairman Thein Tan and organising committee members from Thazi, Wundwin and Pyawbwe Townships.

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## **Concerns over Burma's detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi**

*November, 02, 2006*

Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) leaders expressed their concerns over the police chief's revelation that their leader Aung San Suu Kyi's doctor has requested that she be allowed to receive an ultrasound during her next medical check.

"We are very concerned for everything," said Myint Thein, one of the spokesmen of the NLD despite the reassurance from the police chief that Aung San Suu Kyi is well. "As she has been detained, she must have (suffered) mentally and physically. As she is a human being, however strong she is mentally and full of beliefs, she will sure suffer. Therefore, we are always worried. Even with these worries, we now hear that there is a request for the ultrasound and we are more concerned and worried. Therefore, we again demand (for her) an immediate meeting with the doctor."

Khin Yi also claimed that the authorities gave permission for Aung San Suu Kyi's personal doctor Tin Myo Win to visit her two months ago for her general medical check-up and for an ultrasound, but he hasn't visited her yet. But Myint Thein rejected his allegation:

"I believe that Dr Tin Myo Win would not just ignore the healthcare for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for more than two months. What is sure is, it has been more than two months the doctor and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi haven't met. During that time, the request for ultrasound check would not be made unnecessarily. The reason is, 61-year-old Daw

Aung San Suu Kyi always needs to be given regular medical check-up at least once a week or two. I believe fully that he didn't see her because he was not allowed to see her.”

Khin Yee added that Tin Myo Win will visit her within a few days – maybe on November 11 or 12 and that no restrictions on the doctor visits and “we also have communication with her and whenever she needs her personal doctor, we allow him to visit, not only once a month,” claimed Khin Yi, who is known to have told lies in the past.

Aung San Suu Kyi is under house arrest in her lakeside home in Rangoon, as she has been for most of the last 17 years. Aside from her maid who lives with her, the 61-year-old is allowed no contact with the outside world, except for visits from her doctor who normally sees her once a month. The last outsider allowed to see her was UN under secretary general Ibrahim Gambari, who visited her in May. Gambari is set to return to Burma on November 9, but the information minister, Brigadier General Kyaw San, said he did not know if a second visit would be allowed.

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### **Burmese political prisoner Aung Pe's not well**

*November, 02, 2006*

Private tuition teacher Aung Pe who was sentenced to three years Rangoon in Insein Jail for saluting the photograph of Burma's national hero Aung San, the late father of detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, is seriously ill, according to his wife who went to see him at the notorious prison.

“I went to see saya (teacher) this week and he said he is suffering from acute stomach pain. He has gastric complaint and piles. Even when he was outside, he often had acute stomach pain,” Aung Pe's wife Htay Htay Lwin told DVB. “He can't have the wrong food. As you know food is not good inside (the prison) and there is no medicine and his stomach started to ache. Psychologically he was quite poor but not dejected.” She added that prison authorities would not allow her to bring in medicines from outside and they insisted that they must be bought from within the prison.

“They neither provide healthcares in the prison. Everyone should have the receive healthcares even if they are in prison.”

She also said that poor pupils who depended on Aung Pe's teaching are suffering most due to his imprisonment as he didn't put money first, and the pupils also called for his release for his immediate release.

40 year old Aung Pe was arrested on 14 February last year and sentenced to 23 August, and he was beaten up by gang members of Scorpion in Insein Jail on 31 October last year.

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### **Burma's 88 Generation Students vow to continue freedom campaigns**

*November, 06, 2006 (DVB)*

88 Generation Students vowed to continue to carry out peaceful movements that effectively express the true feeling of the people on genuine peace of Burma and national reconciliation.

‘As for us, we will continue to work for the substantiation of the national reconciliation process,’ one of the 88 Generation Students Mya Aye told DVB. ‘We will carry out all the methods that involve people’s cooperation. We will not retreat a little bit over this. There is no doubt about that. We believe that the public is always on our side.’

He also insisted that the signature campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners including detained student leaders, the White Expression campaign for the birthday of student leader Min Ko Naing’s birthday and the multiple religious prayer campaign were all successful.

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### **Propaganda: USDA members rally Burmese prisoners’ families**

*November, 08, 2006*

Mandalay’s pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) members have been rallying for the acquiescence of families of political prisoners, in an apparent attempt to counter criticisms from international human rights organizations.

USDA members entered Mandalay Jail and took pictures of prisoners, and showed them to their loved ones at home and told them that the prisoners are being looked after well and given a 10,000 Kyat (Approx US\$7) grant each.

‘On the third (of November), they came to Ma Hnin Pa Pa’s husband U Aung Ba,’ Mandalay Division National League for Democracy (NLD) organizing committee member Win Mya Mya told DVB. ‘They showed him the photograph of her taken at the meeting. Don’t you see? U Ba Aung, your wife is well. We met her for the sake of national reconciliation and gave her 20,000 Kyat, they said.’ Hnin Pa Pa’s daughter also confirmed the report. Curiously, USDA members also questioned her husband if the NLD has been supporting him or not.

The secretary of Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) Tate Naing said that the ‘public relation’ exercise it is merely an attempt of the pro-junta organizations to ward off criticism and deceive the people concerned as the ICRC supplied 50% of the healthcares for the prisoners when it was allowed to do so. The mother of political prisoner Myo Min Zaw who is currently detained at Mandalay Jail insisted that if the authorities really care, they must allow the international organization concerned to meet with prisoners.

The latest ‘public relation’ exercise of the junta came after the sudden and unexplained death of the prominent student leader Thet Win Aung in Madalay Jail last month, and pressure has been mounting on the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff to visit the prisons again.

The SPDC suspended visits by the ICRC to prisons and labour camps across the country at the end of last year without giving any specific reasons for the termination. Before the termination, the authorities forced the ICRC to take local government-affiliated agencies such as the Myanmar (Burmese) Red Cross or Myanmar Women's Federation and USDA on visits.

There are more than 1100 political prisoners throughout Burma, and the conditions within prisons had deteriorated further since the termination of the visits of the ICRC.

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## **Burma junta prepares to charge student leaders under emergency act**

*November, 09, 2006 (DVB)*

Many observers have been speculating that when the UN Under Secretary-General, Mr Gambari visits Burma, there may be some political developments, or at a minimum, the five student leaders who are being detained by the authorities may be released.

But, on the very day that Mr Gambari arrived in Rangoon, reports began circulating that the authorities had applied for a remand to formally charge the five student leaders, including Min Ko Naing, under Section 5J of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act.

Although it is still unknown where the student leaders are detained, the remand to charge them under Section 5J was applied at the Bahan Township Court on 6 November.

“We began hearing the news yesterday morning because people called to inform us. We were, however, unable to confirm it,” said one of the 88 Generation Students. “But, the information started coming in not just from a source or two but from many sources and that sort of authenticated the veracity of the news.”

Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya, and Pyone Cho were taken away on 27 September with the pretext that the authorities only wanted to have talks with them for a limited time only. Now that they have been charged under Section 5J, the undertaking of the generals no longer holds true.

“When they came to arrest us in 1988 and 1989, they used the same excuse that we were being taken away for a while only,” continued Mya Aye. “When the authorities came this time also, they told the parents that they were taking away the student leaders briefly only because the senior leaders wanted to meet them. I personally heard those words and we have evidence also. That is because I was present when they came for Ko Pyone Cho. The authorities said the senior leaders wanted to have talks. They never said anything about arrest, interrogation or prosecution. There are laws enacted in Burma and I am of the opinion the people who enact them should respect them too.”

National League for Democracy (NLD) Lawyer Nyan Win also confirmed the news this way:

“Sources in the legal circles confirmed the news. I heard they applied for a remand with the Bahan Court. Many people are saying that the news is true. We, personally, cannot ask the court about it, and even if we do, we will not receive any reply. Circumstances confirm the news to be true. The remand was sought to get a detention

order for further investigation. Legal proceedings will follow later. I understand they are seeking a detention order under Section 5J. The remand permits a 2-week detention.”

Nyan Win said that seeking a remand without producing the detainees in court is illegal.

“That is not permitted under the law. But it has been the practice for quite some time in politically connected cases. They continue to use that practice despite our protests.

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## **UN's Gambari meets Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon**

*November, 11, 2006*

Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is still under detention, has been permitted this evening to meet with Mr Ibrahim Gambari, under secretary-general of the United Nations.

The Nobel Peace Laureate was personally escorted from her lakeside residence in Rangoon by a three-car special motorcade led by Director General of Police Khin Yi at around 5 p.m. local time.

She then met with Mr Gambari for about an hour at the military regime's State Guest House. Although it is still unknown what was discussed at the meeting, Mr Gambari was said to have conveyed Senior General Than Shwe's message to her, according to diplomatic circles.

Earlier, before the meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, Mr Gambari also met with seven members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Central Executive Committee at the UNDP Office. The NLD said that the talks, which lasted for about 45 minutes, focused on five points, including a suggestion to approach political dialogue with a small step first.

Earlier this morning, Mr Gambari went to the new capital at Kyetpye to meet with Senior General Than Shwe, chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The meeting that lasted more than an hour was attended by Senior General Than Shwe, Vice Senior General Maung Aye, General Shwe Mann, and General Soe Win. No details were, however, available about what was discussed at the meeting.

Furthermore, we understand that Mr Gambari also met with the junta affiliated National Unity Party (NUP) and the women affairs associations which are backed by the military regime.

Mr Gambari arrived in Rangoon on a four-day visit and will complete his tour tomorrow. But, up to now, he has not met, nor has he shown any indication that he will be meeting with other important elements like the ethnic nationality leaders who won the elections, the veteran politicians, and members of the '88 Generation Students.

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## **ICRC forced to stop more Burma activities**

*November, 17, 2006*

The International Committee of the Red Cross was forced to halt several more of their projects in Burma early this month after the authorities ordered their field operations to be managed from Rangoon.

The ICRC has been unable to conduct its usual prison visits in the country for more than a year. Deputy head of the group's Burma delegation, Thierry Ribauh, told DVB the government had also stopped talks on the resumption of visits saying they would not be allowed to take place.

"We've been informed quite recently that from now on the field activities that we were carrying out from our field offices . . . would have to be carried out from Rangoon and that the detention activities and the visits to the prisons would no longer be possible," Ribauh said.

The ICRC has field offices in Hpa-an, Keng Tung, Mandalay, Moulmein and Taunggyi. According to Ribauh it is impossible for the health and sanitation activities of these offices to be managed from Rangoon for logistical reasons. Only the ICRC's orthopedic project in Hpa-an continues to operate. The group also continues to support orthopedic centres across the country.

In December 2005, ICRC prison visits stopped when the authorities insisted delegations be accompanied by non-governmental Burmese associations. The ICRC's mandate dictates that prison visits should be strictly independent and despite negotiations with the government no agreement was reached.

Speculation has spread that the ICRC would be forced to withdraw from Burma as a result of the restrictions placed on its activities. The organisation pulled out of the country in 1995 citing similar constraints, returning in 1998 after extensive talks with the Burmese authorities.

Ribauh said while the ICRC had no immediate plans to withdraw from Burma the organisation would have to seriously consider what the new restrictions meant for their operations.

"Of course we are really concerned about this decision and we will try now to have intensified discussions with the authorities to see what the concrete implications are," Ribauh said.

"[Withdrawing from Burma] is not something that we are envisaging now but we have to think about what these restrictions mean for ICRC in the country."

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## **Irrawaddy residents jailed after corruption complaints**

*November, 21, 2006*

Two men from Bogalay township in Irrawaddy division have been sentenced to two years in prison on unknown charges after filing a corruption complaint against local authorities.

During the past few months state-run newspapers have run advertisements carrying details of new 'corruption hotlines' that will allow members of the Burmese public to lodge

complaints against authorities.

Today's New Light of Myanmar carries a notice inviting the public to file claims of corruption, "delays or difficulties . . . abuse of power, official harassment," against the Ministry of Finance and Revenue.

According to lawyer Aung Thein, Win Nyunt, a Union Solidarity and Development Association member, and Aye Min, the headmaster of a primary school, were arrested and imprisoned after complaining that Village Peace and Development Council workers had siphoned money from their yearly agriculture loans.

"[The authorities] also raised about 700,000 kyats worth of funding to build a new VPDC office . . . so those villagers, addressing the State Peace and Development Council, filed a case complaining," Aung Thein said.

Phyar Pon division authorities reportedly investigated the men's claims before ordering the Bogalay Township Peace and Development Council to keep a record of budget invoices and warning the VPDC.

In retaliation, the village authorities took action against Ko Win Nyunt and Ko Aye Min. The military government's invitations for corruption complaints have been widely ignored in Burma, where people fear retribution for reporting officials' crimes. "If you really go and complain they'll just give you back a lot of harsh time . . . There are examples you can see, like force labour cases in the country," Tin Win, a lawyer from Rangoon told DVB.

"You don't dare to file a report even if you want to . . . So this new program is like a big joke to people," he said.

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## **Rangoon court dismisses poets' appeals**

November, 27, 2006

The high court in Rangoon has dismissed appeals lodged on behalf of two men sentenced to 26 years imprisonment for writing and distributing a politically sensitive poem.

Aung Than, a National League for Democracy member from Bago division, and Zayar Aung, a law student, were both arrested on May 29 and sentenced to 26 years in prison over the publication of a book of poems titled Daung Man (A Peacock's pride).

The symbol of the fighting peacock is widely used among Burmese opposition groups.

Myint Thaug, a lawyer acting on behalf of both men, told DVB the high court dismissed the appeals the same day they were lodged.

"We filed the appeal on November 21 and by four (o'clock) in the afternoon, they had dropped all four appeals already. We filed it at the high court since the Bago district court has dropped the appeals. But the high court, as well, dropped them immediately," Myint Thaug said.

Special appeals will now be filed within six months with the high court, Myint Thaug said, adding the outcome would depend on the judges' sense of dignity.

“At least we will be able to show how we are losing our rights according to the law, and the results of the case. This is my only concern now. Winning or losing only depends on the judges’ common sense . . .”

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