

Democratic Voice of Burma

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Detained Burmese student leaders' families express their anxieties

01, October, 2006

Burma's military authorities are still detaining five prominent 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho despite the calls for their immediate release.

The first three were taken away from their respective homes in Rangoon on the morning of 27 September by Special Branch (SB) police agents with the excuse of holding talks with senior government officials. The last two were taken away two days later.

“The latest thing I heard was, the five of them are holding discussions regarding the National Convention,” another student leader Jimmy told DVB. “But the discussions regarding the National Convention are not of regular form, but attempts to make them agree by forcibly summoning them for discussions. Therefore, I am very concerned. The reason being, those who want democracy and national reconciliation must accept differences in opinions. They must not do this kind of crushing pressurising with the attitude of ‘those who are not like me, they are my enemies’. This kind of action... is not the action of those who want to build a democratic country.”

Ko Ko Gyi's younger brother Aung Tun told DVB that the authorities took his brother away they said that it was for holding discussion with officials but the family members are still not allowed to have contact with them.

“We still haven't heard anything and there is no contact. As you know, we are only two brothers. It is still not very clear whether he is being detained or not. As a family of political activists, we have already surmised that we will face this kind of thing one day or another. Whatever you say, we have faced these before, but we still have anxieties,” Aung Tun said. “The main thing is his health. After he was released (a couple of years ago), he had a stone in his liver. His stomach also has wounds and had to take medicines every day. After the detention, we are worried whether he has been taking medicines regularly and how his condition is.”

Htay Kywe's sister Khin Mi Mi Kywe also expressed her concerns for the health of her brother.

“My brother had been seeing the doctor. Due to the operation on his stomach, as soon as he misses a meal, he suffers the pain in the stomach,” she said. “We are very worried. As they said that it was for a short while when they took him away, he didn't take the medicines with him. We have to feed him soft food. I don't know what is happening now. Our family is very worried. We wonder if he is having stomach pains. Mother is also very worried. Mother said she doesn't want to go to prison to see him again. She is feeling very sad. As she had suffered more than 14 years, nearly 15 years, now she is very worried that she will suffer that again.”

Pyone Cho's father Win Maung also told DVB how he has been coping with the recent detention of his older son and the imprisonment of his younger son Thet Win Aung at Mandalay Jail as follows:

“I am in a situation where I suffer in my heart. But I now have the courage to face this kind of situation. This is nothing strange to me. We started our activities in 1989. By (19)99, I had to go to two places. But even though I had no companion, I travelled there by any possible means. I did my best to take care of their health and my own health.”

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In their own words: Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi and Pyone Cho

01, October, 2006

Min Ko Naing : “Try to understand the weaknesses of each individual. Point them out gently. We have to fight with our hands linked together. I want people to avoid blaming each other and finding faults with each other before we reach victory.

“There might be different ideas on how to gain democracy. If we want to work, we can all work at the same time by finding similar facts. I want to say that those who are working for the emergence of democracy must be those who really treasure democracy.”

Ko Ko Gyi : “I am not afraid of being arrested. I am only afraid that I might not be able to work. When trying to work for the liberation of 50 million people, so that those who are important, (and) all the organisations to participate, all those from different sides must try harder with great understanding.”

Pyone Cho : “We believe that democracy could provide the security of all human beings. Therefore, I believe that if those who live in anxiety, those are full of doubts, those who do not know how to solve their own problems and losing their future depend on the protection and benefits of democracy, they will continue to create a peaceful human world. Therefore, whatever the difficulties or blocks or arrests there are, we are continuing to walk the path of our belief steadfastly and selflessly.

“Therefore, today I want to urge all the people of Burma, the people throughout the world to join hands and help us on the path of our belief, and to believe and share our belief with confidence for the hope in a future of the development of our country.”

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What Burmese student leader Pyone Cho said just before he was detained

01, October, 2006

“Try to understand the weaknesses of each individual. Point them out gently. We have to fight with our hands linked together. I want people to avoid blaming each other and finding faults with each other before we reach victory.

“There might be different ideas on how to gain democracy. If we want to work, we can all work at the same time by finding similar facts. I want to say that those who are working for the emergence of democracy must be those who really treasure democracy.

“I am not afraid of being arrested. I am only afraid that I might not be able to work. When trying to work for the liberation of 50 million people, so that those who are important, (and) all the organizations to participate, all those from different sides must try harder with great understanding.

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Lame excuse & old lies: Burma junta admits detention of student leaders

03, October, 2006

Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has at last admitted that 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Pyone Cho and Min Zeya are being detained for questioning.

The junta in the its controlled newspapers on Tuesday accused the five of being involved in terrorism and intending to cause ‘internal commotion’ as justification for their arrest last week, saying that the student leaders were brought in for questioning “in order to prevent internal unrest and instability and terrorism.”

But the 88 Generation Students in a statement issued today rejected the SPDC’s accusation that they were involved in terrorism and demanded the release of five student leaders who they claim were arbitrarily arrested. They insisted that they have been working peacefully to usher in democracy and national reconciliation and denied indulging in terrorism.

“We the 88 generation students have no plans to cause instability and have no connection with terrorism.”

The newspaper said the authorities received information that efforts “to cause internal commotion and terrorist attacks” are planned to time it with the United States successful push to put Burma on the United Nations Security Council agenda.

Some students believe that the detention could be prompted by the misinformation of lower intelligence agents of the junta and Union Solidarity and Development Council (SPDC) members who are intent on gaining favours from higher authorities.

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Unofficial translation of 88 Generation Students’ statement

03, October, 2006

“Statement regarding the description of the detention of 88 Generation Student leaders in today’s (state-run) newspapers, 3 October 2006.

3 October 2006.

1. We the 88 Generation Students issue a statement carrying our view and explanation regarding the description of the arbitrary detention of 88 Generation Student leaders Min

Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Htay Kywe, Ko Pyone Cho in the newspapers published on 3 October as follows:

2. The leaders of 88 Generation Students are people who have been contriving selflessly and peacefully for national reconciliation, the substantiation of democracy, the emergence of a form of long-term political solution for the sake of the future benefits of the country – which are the vital needs of Burma.

3. When these student leaders were taken away they were told and taken away with the excuse of holding discussions with the authorities, not for questioning or investigation, the family members of the detained student leaders explained and said.

4. “We the 88 generation students have no plans to cause instability and have no connection with terrorism.” We have no connection with the accused organisations described in the government newspapers, and moreover, the term ‘new generation students’ was wrongly used.

5. Therefore, for the emergence of a long-term political solution, we the 88 Generation Students seriously demand the unconditional release of the five detained 88 Generation Student leaders and the kick-start of a dialogue to begin the process of national reconciliation.

88 Generation Students”

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Detained Burmese student leaders’ families keen to see their loved ones

03, October 2006

As it has been a week since the 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe and nearly a week since Min Zeya and Pyone Cho have been detained, their family members are anxious to see them.

“If one has the permission to see, I would love to see him, of course,” said Kyi Kyi Oo, the sister of Min Ko Naing. “There are people who are in the same situation as us. They do not demand anything. We have to live like that. If we have the permission to see (them), we all want to see (them).”

“If the permission is given, I want to see him,” said Aung Tun, the brother of Ko Ko Gyi. “I don’t know whether we will get it. I am mainly worried for his health. When they checked his health, they found TB virus. Another thing, there are stones in his liver. There are wounds in his stomach. He used to take medicines regularly. During these days, I wonder if he could take medicines regularly and I am worried for his health condition.”

Both parents of Pyone Cho also want to see their beloved son.

“If there is the permission is given, we would love to see him, of course,” his father Win Maung said. “We would feel slightly better if we hear a little bit from them. We hear nothing. When they took him away they said smooth things and now as they are doing nothing and we have doubts.”

“I was up waiting for the whole night with the hope his return,” his mother Mya Mya Aye said. “If I have to all, I can’t let him out of my sight. As it has happened thus, I am suffering very badly.”

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Signature campaign for detained Burmese students kicks off

03, October, 2006

A signature campaign demanding the immediate release of five recently detained 88 Generation Student leaders and other political prisoners including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, has been launched at 10 a.m. local time today in Burma.

The campaign is set to last two weeks and it will be carried out nationwide, according to student leaders. The campaign has been supported by not only people from political circles but also from the artistic world, monks and ordinary people.

The petition states that Burma is facing the worst situation never seen before and that it is the most suitable time to solve the problems of the country.

“Therefore, there is an urgent need for dialogues for national reconciliation comprising of the State Peace and Development Council (the ruling military junta - SPDC), the National League for Democracy (NLD) and all ethnic national groups,” says the petition. “Therefore, we the undersigned call for the immediate release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Khun Htun Oo and ethnic national leaders, 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Htay Kywe, Ko Pyone Cho, who have all been working selflessly and vigorously for these matters.”

Jimmy, one of the student leaders said that the campaign is the laying of the foundation for activities befitting a democratic country.

“When they detained Ko Min Ko Naing and the like, Ko Min Zeya, Ko Pyone Cho and I wrote a letter addressed to the SPDC chairman, the Interior Minister and Information Minister. We told them to give us clear explanation but there was no reply. Moreover, they took away Ko Min Zeya and Ko Pyone Cho,” said Jimmy. “When that was done, some people proposed to me that they also want to get involved in this. We are making preparations so that people can get their desire included. In other word, this is the desire of the people. It is away of making their political beliefs, their hopes, things they want to be substantiated known to the persons concerned (the authorities) and the whole world.”

Jimmy added that nearly 2000 signatures including those of national authors Ludhu Daw Ama, Kyi Oo and her husband Nang Nyunt Swe and their son the famous comedian Zargana were collected within one day.

When asked if the students and the people who put their signatures to the petition are not afraid of the avenging repercussions from the authorities, another student leader Ant Bwe Kyaw said:

“Any citizen of any country is entitled to basic human rights. Everyone has the right to express their opinion. We are doing this by holding this policy. If they arrest (us) despite of this, let it be. Everyone has the right to express his/her desire.”

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Signature campaign continues inside, outside Burma despite threats

04, October, 2006

The signature campaign for the release of all political prisoners including recently detained five 88 Generation Student leaders, is progressing leaps and bounds within and without Burma despite the danger of punitive repercussions from the ruling junta.

The campaign has been joined by not only ordinary people and political activists, but also the pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and local authority members, according to local residents from Pegu in lower Burma.

At some regions, even soldiers are signing their names in the petition demanding the release of all political prisoners and the start of a political dialogue for national reconciliation, but they were told not to give the address of their 'mother' battalions.

"At the moment, there are not only people who are signing actively, but also those who are waiting for their chance eagerly," one of the student leaders Jimmy told DVB. "The monks are also participating fully. As far as I know and reach, the monks we could make contact with seem to regard that their acolytes' miseries and poverty are their business and they want to get involved in the way they could, and signed (the petition). We invite all to sign if you want to. If the USDA members, Red Cross members, fire brigade members, local authority members, soldiers all have the same desire, they can come and sign. We do not take sides. We are making the demands for the national issue/cause. As we are demanding for a dialogue for the national reconciliation process comprised of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), 1990 election winning National League for Democracy and ethnic national forces and for the release of all those detained, it involves us all. It is the national issue."

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Burma's 'Mother' author Ama supports call for prisoners' release

04, October, 2006

Burma's most respected and elderly author Ludhu Daw Ama (Ahma, Amar) was one of the first people to have put her signature to the petition demanding the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and recently detained 88 Generation Student leaders and urged others to do the same.

Ama, who is in her early 90s, added that student leaders such as Min Ko Naing should be immediately released as he had been imprisoned for more than 14 years. She also insisted that the students are neither involved in any efforts to destabilise the country nor terrorist activities as claimed by the state-run newspapers published yesterday.

"In Mother's (my) opinion, they (the military authorities) are telling fibs. They (the students) are not people to do that kind of thing. I think they should not be detained. The news we are hearing is not good. Mother wants them to be released immediately. They are talented people. They haven't committed any crime," she said. "In Mother's country, the sooner we could solve problems through dialogue, the better. If we are tardy, the country will suffer. That's all Mother wants to say."

Veteran journalist Ama with her late husband Ludhu U Hla opposed the British colonial rule and successive military dictatorships and paid dearly for their fights for truth

and human rights. In April this year, she also told the people of Burma to ‘explode’.

“Our country tends to explode from unexpected places. Only then would the camp be dismantled. That’s what I think. I think we have to explode,” said Ama from her home in central Burma’s Mandalay. “You can’t just despair, my sons (children). You have to do something. We have to find a way by public (movement) means to do things needed to be done. If you don’t do that nothing will happen. They will go on like that.”

In response to her call and example, Burmese people inside, outside the country are enthusiastically supporting the campaign by putting their signatures to the petition.

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Exiled Burmese nationals also support signature campaign

04, October,2006

Burmese nationals living abroad as migrant workers and refugees have been enthusiastically supporting the signature campaign demanding the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and recently detained student leaders.

Burmese activists, refugees and migrant workers living in Thailand formed a people’s desire substantiation committee, and put their signatures to the petition enthusiastically and proudly, according to an activist.

“We formed the committee in support of the signature campaign for 88 Generation Students,” Naw Khaingma Kyaw Zaw told DVB. “We will be collecting signatures from workers, refugees, Burmese nationals and Thai nationals living abroad.”

Karen National Union (KNU) General Secretary Phado Mahn Sha said that all the people of Burma including ethnic national groups should support the campaign as it is for the basic human right.

At the same time, the campaign has been intensified by exiled Burmese nationals in other countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, Norway in tandem with the activists and supporters of democracy within Burma. They are carrying out awareness campaigns with banners and stickers and by phoning up their relatives inside Burma to sign the petition.

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Unofficial translation of 88 Generation Student Mya Aye’s response to the accusations of Burma junta

05, October,2006

“If our desire is not allowed to be expressed anywhere, how could we believe the government’s claim of looking forward to (building) a democratic nation? – Mya Aye”

Date: 9.10.2006

“We have repeatedly said before. We the 88 Generation Students are walking on the path of national reconciliation.

We are holding three policies:

1. The (political) solution/settlement must be based on the result of the 1990 election.

2. We have to solve (problems) by means of dialogue.
3. The solution must look to the direction of democracy and human rights.

Based on these policies, the signature campaign that expresses the desire of the public within legal boundary is not an act of creating unrest (or) terrorism (as claimed by the military government). (Due to?) today Burma's dire straights, social troubles of the suffocated public, the tears of family members of monks and their acolytes, the public and students whose loved ones have been taken away at unsociable hours without any excuse, have dried up. In order to escape from these social troubles, the only way out is by having a friendly and open discussion on the table. Therefore, the act of signature signing (signature campaign) is just. It is not law-breaking. Therefore, we will carry on with this campaign.

(Signed)

(Mya Aye)

88 Generation Student

(P.S.?) The government accuses us of being 'early-desired' (impatient), of (wanting) confrontation. What did we do (to deserve such accusations)? If our desire is not allowed to be expressed anywhere, how could we believe the government's claim of looking forward to (building) a democratic nation?

*This is the response of 88 Generation Student Ko Mya Aye's response to the subjects carried in (the state-run) newspaper published today.

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Old trick: Burma junta claims students arrested for correspondence with exiled students

05, October, 2006

Today's newspaper of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) claimed that recently detained 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi corresponded with a member exiled All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU).

The papers claimed they are being detained for questioning in connection with the matter. But the papers didn't say as to why the students were detained only now although the letter was sent at the end of last year.

"What the newspaper is saying is, they obtained/intercepted a letter sent from Ko Zaw Zaw Aung of ABFSU to Min Ko Naing (and) Ko Ko Gyi," their colleague Jimmy told DVB.

"Min Ko Naing (and) Ko Ko Gyi never knew the presence of the letter. It is not known when the letter was sent and who intercepted it. These are old methods (of producing trumped up charges), not new. Someone gave you this and we intercepted it. How should we know? We haven't got it (the letter) in our hand or seen it. This is the old trick. It is not credible. Anyone can do it."

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EU calls for the release of detained Burmese student leaders

06, October, 2006

The current chairman of the European Union (EU) Finland, in a declaration issued yesterday, called for the release of five prominent student Burmese leaders.

“The EU notes with deep concern that former student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi and Htay Kywe, detained by the Burmese/Myanmar authorities on the 18th anniversary of the National League for Democracy (NLD) last week, have still not been released. The detention of two further activists, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho, on September 30 has given rise to further concern,” said the declaration. It continued:

“Dialogue between various representatives of the society in Burma/Myanmar, like in any other country, is indispensable for the development of the country. The EU reiterates that a genuine process of democratization can only be achieved by a dialogue between the government and all other political and civil society forces. The EU therefore calls upon the government of Burma/Myanmar to release the detained individuals immediately.”

A spokesman of the EU office, Mr. Vanska also told DVB that there has been no sign of improvement or progress in Burma. The political and economic situation of the country is particularly very worrying, he said.

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Regional NLD members continue the petition campaign

October, 06, 2006

The main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) members in the regions outside Rangoon are leading the signature campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners including recently detained 88 Generation Student leaders.

At Maguwe Division, Aunglan Township in central Burma 12 NLD members started to take responsibilities for the campaign yesterday, the township elected representative Nyunt Hlaing told DVB.

“We started to share the responsibilities from yesterday. It is very encouraging,” said Nyunt Hlaing. “The public in respective townships have been hearing about it from the media even before we started the campaign and they are very enthusiastic to put their signature to the petition. There are old people and young people.”

In nearby Taungdwingyi Township, a NLD youth called Aung Ko said that the petition form has been circulating among the local people so much that he has seen it since it arrived.

At Pegu Division in Lower Burma, people from all walks of life have been signing the petition, Nyaunglebin Township NLD organising committee member Aung Thwin Oo.

“We have got all the signatures now and sending them to Jimmy (student leader in Rangoon leading the campaign),” said Aung Thwin Oo. “We never thought that they would give us their signatures that easily.”

“Some signatories told us that they have only heard of Min Ko Naing and now that they have heard about him in the news, they are more interested in him,” a local resident in Paungde said.

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More than 50,000 signatures collected for Burmese students

06, October, 2006

More than 50,000 signatures have been collected inside Burma in support of the campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and 88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho.

Despite the way the 88 Generation Students are carrying out such peaceful and democratic means demanding the release of their leaders, the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) controlled newspapers are accusing them of being ‘early-desired’ (impatient) and trying to create confrontation.

“The arrest of student leaders, the demand for their release and the national reconciliation are not matters of being impatient. In fact, when we come to these, we are even late,” said Jimmy, one of the 88 Generation Students who is still not arrested and leading the signature campaign. “What they said, the word confrontation – we do not have it in our dictionary. And we do not understand it. What we understand is, all those who love democracy, there will be differences of opinions and disagreement. Therefore, one day will have to sort out differences. We can solve them. We believe these. The signature campaign we are carrying out is a kind of thing done by any organisation in every country. We are doing this because the public want to express their desire, within the legal boundary and peacefully. We will continue it. I am very glad to hear the public itself said that it is our desire and see their enthusiastic participation.”

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Number of signatures for detained students jumps to 80,000 in Burma

07, October, 2006

The number of signatures for the petition demanding the release of all Burmese political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, Shan leader Htun Oo and student leaders, has gone up to 80,000, according to student activists in Rangoon.

In some regions, the signatories have not only been giving their addresses but also their national identity numbers as a way of showing their supports.

Jimmy, one of the 88 Generation Students said that he particularly praises the bravery of the villagers of Yezaya in Moe Nyo Township who included their names, the names of their father, national identity card numbers, addresses and signatures in the petition.

He also thanked all other people especially those in Nyaunglebin and Thone Gwa Townships who expressed their desire to get involved in the campaign.

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Arakan Taungup NLD calls for the release of student leaders

07, October, 2006

Members of western Burma's Arakan State, Taungup Township National League for Democracy (NLD) called on the country's ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to release 88 Generation Student leaders immediately.

During a monthly meeting held on 4 October, members also decided to send a letter of protest to the SPDC for restricting the travel of ordinary people especially members of the NLD.

Taungup Township NLD organising committee member Khin Hla Maung said that the local tax officials have been collecting money from passengers without giving them receipts and they send a letter of protest to higher authorities to notify the underhanded activities of the tax officials.

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'White Expression' campaign begins in Burma

08, October, 2006

A nationwide campaign named 'White Expression' demanding the release of prominent student leader Min Ko Naing and four other colleges of his, is to begin on 10 October until his 44th birthday which falls on 18 October.

The campaign is being organised by 88 Generation Students who are still not arrested by the authorities of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Participants are encouraged to wear white clothing to show their support for the call for the release of all political prisoners in Burma including Aung San Suu Kyi, ethnic national leaders and student leaders.

One of the student leaders Mya Aye told DVB that the campaign is also to highlight the fact that Burmese students and the people of Burma are honest, selfless and pure and that they simply want national reconciliation and benefits of the whole country.

He urged people to wear white shirts and T-shirts and carry out their campaign within the rule of law.

Meanwhile, the signature campaign demanding the release of political prisoners, organised by the same students, has collected more than 100,000 signatures within Burma alone in a couple of days.

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Burma's veteran politicians urge immediate release of student leaders

08, October, 2006

The Veteran Politicians Group of Burma has demanded an immediate release of the five student leaders, including Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, and human rights activist Myint Aye, all of whom were detained last week.

An open letter signed by Thakin Thein Pe, chairman of the Veteran Politicians Group, was sent directly to the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) chairman Senior Gen Than Shwe today.

The letter said student leaders like Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Htay Kywe, Min Zeya, and Ko Pyone Cho had already gone through hard phases of life in prison and should not be arrested again. Hence, the Veteran Politicians said all political prisoners, including the student leaders, should be immediately released.

Furthermore, the veteran politicians said they hold the military government totally responsible for the prevailing social, political, economic problems and urge it to urgently hold talks with the National League for Democracy and the ethnic leaders to resolve these problems.

One of the Veterans, Thakin Chan Tun, said they believed that the student leaders were being detained unjustly and had, therefore, demanded their immediate release.

“Whenever such letters are written, we all consult with each other and contribute to the writing before it gets published. The fact is the accusations were unfair and we suspected that they were intending to arrest someone. For instance, they were accusing the NLD inside of committing this and that and also criticizing the student leaders, Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, and others of going here and there and doing all sorts of things. Of course, arrest them if they are really guilty. But to be making false accusations with the intention of framing charges later should simply not be done. For instance, people said that in Shwegu, the authorities came to search the home of the NLD secretary and another person and when they did not find anything, the authorities claimed they found some narcotics under some leaves in the compound of the NLD secretary. Based on that, the judge also imprisoned the NLD secretary.”

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Famous astrologer reportedly detained for predicting the end of Burma junta

09, October, 2006

Reports of the detention of famous Burmese astrologer and novelist Min Thein Kha who predicted that Burma military junta’s new capital Naypyidaw will last only two years and that there will be a change of the government, are coming out of Burma.

According to sources close to the notorious Rangoon Insein Jail, Min Thein Kha was taken to the jail and imprisoned there during this week.

“I don’t know when he got there exactly. I learnt that he is there when I went to see my husband. He has a big social circle,” a woman who visited the prison recently told DVB.

Tin Hlaing of Thailand-based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) also said that the reports could be true.

“According to the reports last week from the prison, he was not there. It is said that he only arrived at the prison only this week. It is certain. The people inside the prison would not say it unless it is true. There is no reason for a case of mistaken identity.”

When we contacted the prison supervising departments in Rangoon, officials on duty refused to make any comment. Min Thein Kha was also arrested during the 1988 Uprising.

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SPDC information minister dodges question on detained students

09, October, 2006

The information minister of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), tried to avoid questions posed to him by journalists on the detention of 88 Generation Student leaders, according to journalists who don't want to be named.

During the news conference held at the resumed Nyaung Hnabin constitution-drafting National Convention yesterday, the SPDC information minister Kyaw San (Hsan) was questioned on the detention of student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho.

When the journalists asked him as to why the students, who were told they were to hold discussions with authorities when they were taken away, were still not released, Kyaw San was unable to give any rational explanation. He only said that if they were found innocent, they will be released. And when he was asked by another journalist about the signature campaign demanding their release, Kyaw San was unable to say anything about it.

According to an editor of the state-run newspaper Kyemon (Mirror) who doesn't want to be named, Kyaw San, who used to order editors to publish all the contents of his news conferences, now told them not to publish all the contents of yesterday's news conference.

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Burma NLD youth arrested for taking part in signature campaign

10, October, 2006

A youth member of Pegu Division, Moe Nyo Township National League for Democracy (NLD) was arrested on 6 October with trumped up charges for enthusiastically participating in the signature campaign demanding the release of 88 Generation Student leaders.

The youth, Win Ko Ko was able to persuade all the villagers of Yethabya in Moe Nyo Township to give their signatures to the campaign, and the authorities bore grudges against him for his effort. He was arrested with another NLD member by 20 members of the township police force and pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) while travelling on a train to Letpandan, for allegedly keeping illegal lottery tickets in his possession. They are currently detained at Letpandan police station and indicted under gambling laws.

NLD spokesman Nyan Win insisted that the two were deliberately trapped and arrested for their political activities.

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Burma's going white as freedom campaign intensifies

10, October, 2006

People throughout Burma are wearing white tops and shirts to show their support for the 'White Expression' campaign carried out by 88 Generation Students who are demanding the ruling junta to release all political prisoners and start genuine political dialogues.

"90 out of 100 people are wearing them," a local resident from Rangoon told DVB. "But when I went outside today I saw many people in white."

Some of them are also wearing white triangle brooches distributed by the National League for Democracy (NLD), Han Tha Myint, an MP told DVB.

At Mandalay in central Burma, the public from all walks of life, young and old, show their support by wearing white shirts even while they are doing business in the market or teashops, a local resident said.

"Many people are interested in the White (Expression). The reason is, Min Ko Naing and the like have been in prison for 16 years, and now they are only free for only 11 months and they were taken inside (detained) and the people are all suffering with them. They wear the clothes thus because they feel that they are suffering under the bullying (of the ruling military junta)."

The campaign started today and it is set to continue until the 44th birthday of student leader Min Ko Naing on 18 October.

"People are not only wearing white and keeping quiet. As soon as they saw people, they draw attention to their white shirts with their eyes, they hold their thumbs up and the like," a resident from Pegu told DVB.

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Appeal for murdered youth rejects by Burmese court

10, October, 2006

The amended appeal lodged on behalf of the mother of murdered youth Thet Naing Oo, was summarily rejected by the Burmese high court in Rangoon on 5 October, according to her lawyer Khin Aung Shein.

"In Ko Thet Naing Oo's case, after cross examining 26 witnesses for the litigant, the mother of the litigant's mother Daw San Yi wanted to add more witnesses. Four more people were identified by names by the testimonies of the litigant (witnesses). She originally appealed to the district court to include the four as the accused but it was rejected. Then it was lodged at the divisional court by the litigant Daw San Yi herself and it was also summarily thrown out. Therefore, we lodged the amended appeal at the high court."

In the case of the untimely death of Thet Naing Oo, the court is hiding the real culprits and imprisoned three innocent people to three years in jail each on 13 September, Khin Maung Shein told DVB.

Thet Naing Oo, an ex-political prisoner and pro-democracy activist, was beaten to death by members of the police, the fire brigade and municipal officials on the night of 17 March in Rangoon.

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NLD youths deliberately arrested for political action – police officer

11, October, 2006

Two National League for Democracy (NLD) youths from Moe Nyo Township, Pegu Division, were deliberately trapped and arrested by Letpandan Township Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) organising committee members Than Myat Soe and Thant Zaw Win, a police sergeant who doesn't want to be named told DVB.

Win Ko Ko and Zaw Tun Latt were arrested on 6 October while travelling to Letpandan from Moe Nyo on a train saying that illegal lottery tickets were found on them. In fact, they were arrested for successfully persuading all the villagers of Yethabya to put their signatures to the petition demanding the release of all political prisoners and recently detained 88 Generation Student leaders, according the police officer.

Eyewitnesses told DVB that the police surrounded the two youth and after searching them they shouted that they found vouchers for the lottery tickets and they victims shouted in protest that they were deliberately trapped. Illegal lottery tickets are usually distributed by gambling syndicates under the control of local authorities.

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Signature campaign to extend and over 210,000 collected in Burma

12, October, 2006

The ongoing signature campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners and the start of a national reconciliation process in Burma, is to extend for another week due to popular demand, according to 88 Generation Students who are organising it.

The signature campaign, which runs along the 'White Expression' campaign was originally intended to last from 2 to 16 October, for a fortnight, is be extended to 23 October due to the requests of those who are living in remote areas of the country not easily accessed by roads and communication systems, explained Mya Aye, one of the 88 Generation Students leading the campaign.

“For example, areas such as Kachin State, Shan State, Chin State and the like, and in lower (Burma) regions such as Tenasserim Division and Mon State, people are saying that they want to sign (the petition). Villagers, students/pupils, workers, monks and people from all levels of the society are requesting us thus and we are extending the signature (campaign) for another week. The signature campaign will end on 23 October. We have no plan to extend it further,” said Mya Aye.

He said that more than 210,000 signatures have been collected so far at the last count and he thanked all those who took part in the campaign for the good of the country.

“We want to thank the public. I want to say that we all are feeling very happy and proud for all the people of Burma for coming out of the past dark cell of fear with unbowed head and bravery,” said Mya Aye. “As for us it is very clear. It is the expression of the true desire of the people. What is the true desire of the people? What is their need?”

Methods to solve the difficulties faced by the country are needed. When doing that, an individual, an association, a group can't do it unilaterally. We have this view even when the five detained students were with us. I want to say that the people have shown clearly and succinctly that they are yearning the path of national reconciliation with all their heart. If I have to say it from the point of view of 88 Generation Students, (the signature campaign) is fully successful.”

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Burmese civil servants and artists pressured not to sign petition

13, October,2006

Each Burma's military government ministry has been instructed not to sign the petition demanding the release of 88 Generation Student leaders, according to an official from the information ministry.

The latest action of the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) seemed to show that the generals are increasing becoming alarmed by the participation of members of the army, army veterans, pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and the public in the signature campaign, the official commented.

The information minister Brig-Gen Kyaw San (Hsan) was also said to be very angry by the participation of famous actors and actresses. Some followers of the minister have been ringing some artists warning them not to sign the petition, according to a famous actress speaking on condition of anonymity.

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Mater dolorosa: Student leader Htay Kywe's mother hospitalised

13, October,2006

The mother of recently detained Burmese student leader Htay Kywe was hospitalised in emergency in Rangoon today, according to sources close to his family.

Mi Mi Lay, who has been suffering from cancer, became overwrought with the lack of news from her son and her condition deteriorated after she became very stressed with anxiety.

She was sent to a private hospital named SSC in Rangoon Bahan Township after she was unable to eat and blood was found on her urinal tract, and the family is said to be very concerned for the condition of Htay Kywe.

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White Expression and signature campaigns in Burma latest

13, October,2006

Forum of Burmese in Europe (FBE), in support of White Expression and signature campaigns in Burma calling for the release of all political prisoners and the substantiation

of national reconciliation process, staged a demonstration outside the Burmese embassy in Brussels.

“The main purpose of the demonstration is to demand the release of 88 Generation Students’ leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zeya, Ko Htay Kywe and Ko Pyone Cho,” said one of the organisers, Nwe Aung. “While demonstrating, we are wearing white clothing and white bandanas in support of the White Expression. Moreover, we are going to the European Union and the European Commission to give them letters of our demands.”

In Thailand, Burmese migrant workers have been enthusiastically taking part in the signature campaign and around 8000 signature have been collected from them according to Kyaw Thaug, an organiser. More than 50,000 signatures have been collected from workers and refugees living in Maesod and Tak Provinces in western Thailand. The workers are also planning to hold a birthday ceremony for student leader Min Ko Naing who is going to be 44 on 18 October.

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Student leader Min Ko Naing’s birthday to be marked in Rangoon

14, October,2006

The 44th birthday of recently detained student leader Min Ko Naing is to be marked (at his family home) in Rangoon on 18 October.

A birthday party for the prominent leader the 88 Generation Students, was originally planned to be held at Tavoy (Dawei) Buddhist Monastery near his home in Thingangyun Township, but due to the current political situation, no invitation was sent officially and it was announced through the media thus, his unfettered colleagues told DVB.

All those who admire and respect Min Ko Naing are expected to attend the ceremony and wear white clothing in support of the White Campaign demanding their immediate release.

Min Ko Naing, meaning Conqueror of Kings, was student studying Zoology at Rangoon University as Paw Oo Tun when he led the 88 nationwide pro-democracy uprising in 1988. He was elected the chairman of All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABSFU). He was captured in early 1989 and given a lengthy jail term. He endured 16 years of tortures and inhumane condition of Burmese jails.

He was released in November 2004. Since his release, Min Ko Naing has been calling on the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to kick start the national reconciliation and substantiate democratic transition. He also won several international human rights awards for his unflinching, steadfast and peaceful fight for human rights and democracy in Burma.

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Htay Kwe’s mother discharged from clinic by pressure from authority

15, October,2006

The mother of recently detained student leader Htay Kywe who had been receiving medical treatments at SSC private hospital in Rangoon, was forced to be discharged due to pressure from local authority.

Mi Mi Lay was diagnosed with blood in urinal tract and she was sent to the RSS last Friday. According to the doctors' diagnosis, she must stay in the hospital for at least five days to receive medical treatments. But yesterday, she was told that nothing was wrong with her and asked to leave this evening.

According to a specialist doctor in the hospital who doesn't want to be named, the untimely discharge was prompted by special officials from Interior Affairs Ministry who rang the hospital at 3pm that day and pressured the doctors not to treat Mi Mi Lay. Sources close to the family and political circles told DVB that the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) authorities are not only detaining the students arbitrarily but also harassing their family members thus.

Htay Kywe himself has been suffering from gastric diseases and family members are very concerned for him and his colleagues Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zeya and Pyone, from whom they have nothing since their arrest.

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Mid-month NLD meetings support freedom campaign in Burma

15, October, 2006

Regional National League for Democracy (NLD) members today continue to express their support for 88 Generation Students' White Expression and signature campaigns, calling for the release of all political prisoners and the start to a national reconciliation process.

At the joint meeting of Magwe Division, Aunglan (Allen) Township NLD organising committee, social support group, youth and women members, a statement denouncing the detention of 88 generation student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho, was issued.

Members also discussed the best way to continue their activities in helping to fulfil the needs of the public under the condition of no legal protection and how to maintain and retain the cooperation of the people.

At nearby Magwe, a similar meeting was called and the same subjects were discussed by members.

At Madaya Township in Mandalay Division, party members discussed the most effective way to support the signature campaign out of the chaos caused by recent floods, not mentioning the difficulties in travelling, local MP Than Lwin told DVB.

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Burmese activists in Bangkok mark Min Ko Naing's 44th birthday

15, October, 2006

Pro-democracy activists in Bangkok marked the 44th birthday of prominent 88 generation student leader Min Ko Naing, in advance today. The actual birthday falls on 18 October.

The birthday party was held at a place called Sinrakchaung and it was attended by 80 people including former national school pupils and Taiwan reading association, an organiser of the event Kyaw Thaug told DVB.

At the same time, nearly 20,000 signatures have been collected from Burmese migrant workers, political activists and Thai supporters living in Bangkok for the petition demanding the release of all political prisoners and the start to a national reconciliation process.

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Nearly 300,000 signatures collected despite intimidations in Burma

16, October, 2006

Nearly 300,000 signatures have been collected for the petition campaign demanding the release of all political prisoners including recently detained 88 Generation student leaders despite intimidations carried out by the military authorities.

The latest figure at the time of the report of the death of Thet Win Aung, the younger brother of one of the detained students Pyone Cho, who died today in Mandalay Jail while serving a 59 years' imprisonment for staging a peaceful protest.

The signature campaign which runs along the 'White Expression' campaign is organised by 88 Generation Students who are still not detained and they expressed their sincere thanks to all those who gave their signatures with the desire for a genuine national reconciliation.

“We are very encouraged by and proud of the courage of the public who bravely took part in the signature campaign expressing their desire for the release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Ko Min Ko Naing and ethnic national leaders and the substantiation of the national reconciliation process,” one of the 88 Generation Students Soe Tun told DVB. “In May, the top abbots persuaded the army government to start the dialogues for national reconciliation. This shows how much the monks and the public want a peaceful transition and finding solutions through dialogues. The people of Burma had already shown bravely how much they want progress and democracy in the 1990 election. Now they are starting to express their desire bravely and without fear for a peaceful and prosperous nation and the national reconciliation. For this, we are very respectful and proud of the people of Burma.”

Another student leader Jimmy told DVB that the signature and the White Expression campaigns are carried out within the legal boundary to show that the Burmese people want a peaceful transition to democracy.

“There is no instruction more than that. We have no plan to do other things,” said Jimmy. “We will continue to build on our original policy of building a democratic country by non-violent means. We need to be patient with our differences in the long run. If we

have no patience, our country will still be far away from democracy. What are happening and what we are hearing now are very upsetting. In some areas people are pressured for having different views and they are told not to do this and that. These are not the signs that lead to democracy. If you want to build an advanced democratic country, these matters must be taken away and avoided completely.

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Burma AAPP takes up Aye Myint's case with UN representative

16, October, 2006

Thailand based Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) today took up the case of a Burmese human rights defender, Myint Aye arrested by Burma's military junta at the end of last month, with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders.

Myint Aye, who was taken away by Special Branch (SB) police agents following the arrest of five 88 generation student leaders, has not been in touch with his family and his whereabouts is unknown, said the AAPP.

The AAPPB hopes that after the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders reviews Myint Aye's case, they will question the military regime in Burma about the nature of the charges against him and the reason for his continued detention.

"As we sent (the letter) to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders, they will question the SPDC (Burmals ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council)government. The UN will continue to ask as to why he was arrested and on what grounds," said the General Secretary of AAPP, Tate Naing.

One of the members of the Burma Lawyers Council (BLC), Thein Oo also pointed out that the arrest of Myint Aye without notifying his family members where he is being detained and not allowing them to see him, is not in accordance with the international human rights laws.

Myint Aye has been arrested four times prior to his current detention and was a former NLD chairman of Rangoon Kyimyindine (Kemmindine) Township. The latest arrest of Myint Aye came after a human rights group led by Myint Aye issued a statement regarding the re-arrest of 88 generation students Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho.

Myint Aye had begun his activities peacefully in 2005 by talking and explaining to people, particularly youths about the United Nations declaration on Human Rights.

Magwe Division's public give their support to freedom campaign

16, October,2006

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The people of Magwe Division have also been giving their moral support and signatures to the 'White Expression' and signature campaigns demanding the release of all political prisoners and the kick-start to the national reconciliation process.

A local National League for Democracy (NLD) youth activist Nay Myo Kyaw from Saku told DVB that the petition forms arrived late to the region due to heavy rains but between 500 and 1000 signatures have been collected within recent days without much persuasion.

Local people, especially youths and students are increasing wearing white shirts to show their support for the White Expression Campaign, added Nay Myo Kyaw.

"Before, at the weddings, people tended to wear fashionable 'aingyis' (shirts/blouses) of the latest designs, but the majority of the people are now starting to wear white at wedding ceremonies. As they are of the majority, I think they deliberately chose it."

At Myothit Township, the local people are also starting to wear white T-shirts and giving their signatures as they feel that they are something they could do, the township NLD organising committee members. Local residents at nearby Natmauk, the birthplace of Burma's national hero Gen. Aung San, the late father of detained NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, also told DVB that the campaigns are also going well there.

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Burma junta takes another life: student Thet Win Aung dies in prison

16, October, 2006

Burma's well-known political prisoner, Thet Win Aung died in Mandalay prison this evening, his father told DVB from Rangoon.

"It is possible that when he heard the news about his brother (Pyone Cho who was recently re-detained), he might have had a heart attack," his father Win Maung told DVB. "The news we are hearing now is very upsetting/shocking. I was told that he died today. Officials from Mandalay told the local authorities (in Rangoon) and they came to tell me. That's all I know. It was already around 6.30pm when they notified me. They said that he died in the evening. I will try to get there by plane tomorrow. That is very upsetting."

The unexpected news of the death came as a great shock for the family members of Thet Win Aung, as it came in the wake of the re-arrest of his older brother Pyone Cho, a leader of the 88 Generation Students, at the end of last month with other student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Min Zeya and Htay Kywe.

"Only the other day when the incident occurred (when his brother was re-detained?), he said that his health condition was quite good (has improved) and insisted why he was not released yet. He tried to walk. He wanted to get more treatments outside (the prison) as soon as possible," Win Maung said with sorrow. "But whatever happens, if it is possible, we want to bring him back to Rangoon. If not, we will have to arrange something there for the funeral. I never thought that it will happen so quickly. Maybe he felt so hurt when he heard the news from here (of his brother's arrest)."

Thet Win Aung was arrested in October 1998 and in January 1999, sentenced to 52 years' imprisonment which was increased to 59 years after further investigation – for organizing peaceful student protests. He was tortured immediately following his arrest, and his health deteriorated constantly despite repeated medical treatments. Many human rights organisations, his family members and friends made repeated calls for his release on grounds of ill health but the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) refused to budge.

Since 1988, Thet Win Aung had taken part in organizing student protests against the government in Burma. He became Vice-General Secretary of the unauthorized Basic Education Student Union (BESU) in 1989 and dismissed from school and imprisoned in September 1991 for nine months because of his BESU activities. During this period of detention he was severely tortured. Following his release he became a leading member of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions, the unauthorized umbrella organization for student unions in Burma.

He again became involved in publishing leaflets and organizing demonstrations, and was forced to go into hiding after the authorities tried to arrest him in 1994. He nevertheless took part in student demonstrations in December 1996 and, in 1998, helped to organize student protests against the poor quality of education and denial of human rights.

May Thet Win Aung rest in peace!

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No homecoming for Thet Win Aung: his remains forced to be cremated hastily

17, October, 2006

The remains of student leader Thet Win Aung who died suddenly at Mandalay Jail yesterday evening, was neither allowed to be taken back to his home in Rangoon nor buried in a normal way. He was cremated without much ceremony early this afternoon during a funeral hastily organised by the military authorities.

His grieving father Win Maung, who flew all the way from Rangoon this morning, was forced by the authorities to follow the hastily arranged funeral, despite his pleas for a dignified funeral for his son. He was only allowed to see his beloved son's face for the last time, half an hour before the funeral and subsequent cremation.

Thet Win Aung's friend Marky and older brother Thein Naing went to the Interior Ministry of the ruling military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) this morning to request the authorities to allow his other brother Pyone Cho who has been re-detained recently attend the funeral of his brother, but their request was turned down by faceless officials.

Despite the short notice, the funeral was attended by more than 100 mourners including Mandalay Division National League for Democracy (NLD) social welfare group members, party members and 88 Generation Students group members.

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Another political prisoner seriously ill in Mandalay Jail

17, October, 2006

Amid the news of the sudden death of student leader Thet Win Aung in Mandalay Jail in central Burma yesterday, it has now emerged that another political prisoner is seriously ill inside the same prison.

The treasurer of Mandalay Division, Madaya Township National League for Democracy (NLD) Nyein Maung has been receiving medical treatments at the prison clinic for nearly a month due to his deteriorating health, according to his son Myint Soe.

“He is shitting blood and he is being treated at the prison hospital. He was sent to the hospital about one month ago. He is still in the hospital, not discharged yet. His back was operated on and that’s why he is still in the hospital,” Myint Soe told DVB. “When he went to jail he was quite plump, but, now that his health is not good he is quite thin.”

Nyein Maung was sent to jail in July with trumped up charges for refusing to resign from the NLD, Myint Soe added.

There are more than 1100 political prisoners in Burmese jails and more than 100 have died as the direct results of the imprisonments and tortures.

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AI issues statement on the death of Thet Win Aung in Burma

17, October, 2006

London-based rights group Amnesty International (AI) today issued a statement saying that 34-year-old political prisoner Thet Win Aung has died in custody, where he had been tortured and suffered from malaria.

The rights group said Thet Win Aung had been imprisoned since 1998 for organizing peaceful, small-scale student protests calling for improvements to the education system and the release of political prisoners.

Thet Win Aung died in Mandalay Prison, where he was serving a 59-year sentence. AI also urged the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to “initiate a prompt, independent investigation into the causes of Ko Thet Win Aung’s death and to make the findings public.” It added that the number of deaths of political and normal detainees was on the increase and that already poor prison conditions had deteriorated further in 2006.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suspended its prison visit programs at the start of the year after the SPDC said representatives had to be accompanied officials from local aid organizations. According to the United Nations, Burma also known as Myanmar has more than 1,100 political prisoners including Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for 10 of the last 17 years.

Thet Win Aung’s brother, Ko Pyone Cho, was among five 88 Generation student leaders arrested last month and accused of involvement in “terrorist acts.” Their father Win Maung told DVB that his son might have died from heart attack after learning the re-detention of his brother, but there is no way to confirm it as the authorities hastily arranged

a funeral and cremated his remains despite the pleas from the family for a dignified funeral.

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Thet Win Aung's family express thanks to supporters

17, October, 2006

The father of former student leader and political prisoner Thet Win Aung who suddenly died at Mandalay Prison yesterday, thanked all those who helped out in the hastily organised funeral for his son at Kyanikan Cemetery in Mandalay.

“All were involved, including 88 Generation Students, Zegyo Market members, (Mandalay Division National League for Democracy – NLD) organising committee members, (NLD) social welfare members enthusiastically participated and I want to give my special thanks to them,” said Thet Win Aung’s father Win Maung.

Win Maung flew from Rangoon with his family this morning to bury his son in Mandalay as his requests for a dignified funeral at home and a proper burial were turned down by the military authorities of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). His remains was forced to be cremated. The family was not allowed to take the ashes of their loved one home either. Moreover, the authorities also turned down the request for recently detained brother of the deceased, Pyone Cho to come and see the last journey of his brother.

“They (the mourners) said that they respect and are proud of Thet Win Aung for giving up his life for his belief in democracy and national reconciliation – May he goes to a good place, and they saluted Thet Win Aung. They observed a two minutes silence,” he said.

One of the organisers of the funeral and a member of 88 Generation Students, Mya Aye told DVB that even an old woman wearing white for mourning appeared from nowhere, cried and uttered dirges on the corpse as if Thet Win Aung is her own son.

Friends and supporters of Thet Win Aung are said to be feeling very angry by the inhumane behaviours of the authorities.

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Pre-birthday ceremony organised by a grandma for Min Ko Naing

17, October, 2006

A grandmother member of Rangoon South Dagon Township National League for Democracy (NLD) Khin Aye organised a birthday ceremony at her home for detained student leader Min Ko Naing this morning in his absence, one day ahead of his actual birthday.

The ceremony was attended by 88 Generation Students and NLD members, but Buddhist monks within the township dared not come to bless ceremony due to pressure from the authorities, Khin Aye told DVB.

“I donated ‘soon’ (meal) to three monks at 9am this morning, but I could not invite them to my home. No monk was available and I approached a monk who walking on the street and told him that I wanted to donate meals to him on the 44th birthday of my son. And if

you want to do so, do so, he told me,” said Khin Aye. “They tried to avoid my invitation. They (gave the excuses such as) they have to go to another house, that ceremony and the like. As I am a Burmese Buddhist, if I have a quarrel with the monk, I will be very guilty...so I just told them that I will make my donation to any monk that I happen to see.”

45 sparrows were released as a symbolic gesture of the quest for freedom.

“By nature, birds want to fly in the sky, travel and live freely in the air. I want all to be happy as they are. I want the freedom for all the children (students). I did it with this intention,” Khin Aye explained. “I did it by selling some possessions of mine. This is purely for religious donation. It has nothing to do with any organisation. It is not organised by the NLD youths or NLD adults.”

When asked what she wants to say on the birthday of Min Ko Naing, Khine Aye said:

“All are in trouble in everything. Therefore, if I have to say words of loving kindness, I want the situation to be peaceful. Release the children as soon as possible. Release the elders. Release all (political prisoners). That will be a happy event.”

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88 Generation Students urge Burma to release leaders

18, October, 2006

88 Generation Students today marked the 44th birthday of their leader Min Ko Naing in his absence by calling on Burma’s ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to release him and four others who were detained recently on compassionate grounds.

The students also insisted that the military authorities show no honesty in taking away their leaders with the excuse of holding a short meeting with officials and not allowing one of them, Pyone Cho to attend the funeral of his brother Thet Win Aung who died suddenly in Mandalay Jail two days ago.

More than 1,500 people wearing white shirts and symbols attended the birthday bash at Min Ko Naing’s family home in Rangoon Thingangyun Township, his older Yi Yi Nyunt and younger sister Thuza Nyunt told DVB.

Breakfasts and Katina robes were offered to five Buddhist monks in the early morning and the guests were given good and drinks.

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Australia ‘appalled’ over Thet Win Aung’s death

18, October, 2006

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was said to be appalled at the death of Thet Win Aung in Mandalay Jail and called on Burma military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to free all political detainees, according to a report by AFP.

“I was saddened and appalled at the death in Mandalay prison on 16 October of Thet Win Aung, a young Burmese student activist who was unjustifiably imprisoned by the Burmese regime,” Downer said.

“I call on Burmese authorities to undertake a thorough and independent investigation into Thet Win Aung’s death and to release immediately and unconditionally political prisoners in Burma,” he said in a statement.

The sharp comments came after rights group Amnesty International said Tuesday that Thet Win Aung had died in Mandalay Jail where he was tortured and may have been denied treatment for health problems, including malaria.

Downer said the circumstances of Thet Win Aung’s death underscored concerns about conditions in Burma’s prisons and made it urgent for the junta to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to resume their suspended prison visits programme in the Southeast Asian country. Canberra’s embassy in Rangoon would convey its concerns to the government, the minister said.

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Another Karen jailbird released by Burma junta

18, October, 2006

A member of the Karen National Union (KNU), Saw Richard who had been jailed since 1982 for the attack on the Burmese Broadcasting Service building in Rangoon, was released from Thayet Jail in central Burma this morning.

Originally Richard was given death sentence and it was subsequently commuted to 25 years’ imprisonment, and he was released after serving more than 24 years of his sentence. With the release of Richard, out of 4 KNU members involved in the case, only Saw Tookie, a.k.a., Khin Maung Lin remains to be freed.

When he was captured, Richard was in his early 30s and he is now 56 years old and his health condition is not good.

“I have the swollen lung disease,” Richard told DVB. “If I cool myself long, I tend to cough. And if I take a shower long, I cough at night.”

He added that he was unable to receive proper treatments while he is inside prison due to lack of medicines, and Thayet Jail was nearly running out of medicines. When asked what was the worse thing about prison said, dire food and lack of medicines.

He said that 40 year old Tookie’s health is not good as he could not afford the money to carry out operations on his legs, and he is unable to walk to walk properly for a year now.

Asked what he plans to do now that he is free, Richard simply said:

“I hope to resume my unfinished duty. I remember all politicians (activists). May God bless them”

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More than 300,000 signatures collected for freedom campaign in Burma

18, October, 2006

More than 300,000 signatures have been collected for the petition calling for the release of all political prisoners and the start to a national reconciliation process, according to 88 Generation Students who are leading the campaign.

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Another birthday behind bars. By Dale Stewart

18, October, 2006

Min Ko Naing turned 44 today, but it would hardly have been a ‘Happy Birthday’. In prison again after spending 16 years behind bars, the well-known student leader is probably feeling thoroughly demoralised.

Most of us get pangs of nostalgia when our birthday comes around. We think back to good times and people we used to know. We look at our life and how far we’ve come, evaluating our position and making fresh plans for the future.

Min Ko Naing can’t have had many good times in the past 17 years. Many of his friends are dead or in prison and his future couldn’t be less certain. It is impossible to predict when the Burmese military will let him out.

At his birthday party last year—one of the few spent free with friends and relatives—his mother said, “I have been waiting for this chance for 17 years.” It may be some time before she gets the chance again.

The military have tried hard to break Min Ko Naing over the years. He has been bashed and tortured, interrogated and oppressed. Prison guards have probably humiliated him in ways we can’t comprehend.

But there is one thing the military can’t take away from the determined student leader, no matter how hard they try.

Min Ko Naing is a hero. A battler. His struggle for democracy has captured the hearts and minds of people around the world. It is hard to imagine a Burmese pro-democracy movement without him.

The military’s decision to re-detain Min Ko Naing and several other student leaders took many people by surprise. With so much international attention on Burma, it is staggering that the junta would make such a bold move.

It flies in the face of United Nations under-secretary general Ibrahim Gambari and attempts by the international community to promote democracy. It feels as though the situation in the country has slipped backwards. When things like this happen it almost feels as though the military has won.

But they haven’t won. Not even close. While Min Ko Naing is still alive there will always be hope for his release and from his prison cell, he will continue to inspire students to stand up and demand their rights.

With any luck, when Min Ko Naing looks back on his life today, he will see that his sacrifices, though great, have been worth it. Hopefully he knows how much his battle means to so many people and that the years the military stole from him have not been wasted.

In fact, the military, in their stupidity, have helped galvanise support for the student leader and his colleagues. They have created a political martyr, a pro-democracy saint. Min Ko Naing is now so much more than a man in a dirty prison cell. He is an icon with support stretching across the world.

Burma's top military leaders probably look back on August 8, 1988 and wish Min Ko Naing had been counted among the dead.

Thank god for Burma he wasn't.

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Lawless: Three years for Win Ko for leading signature campaign

19, October, 2006

Monyo Township National League for Democracy (NLD) member Win Ko who was arrested for leading a successful signature campaign demanding the release of all political prisoners including recently detained student leaders, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Since the arrest on 6 October, Win Ko has been barred from seeing his family and denied access to legal representative. He was taken to Letpandan Court in lower Burma only once, and the sentence was passed on him yesterday.

"We heard that the case of Ko Win Ko was to start today at Letpandan Court and we went there," one of the 88 Generation Students, Ant Bwe Kyaw told DVB. "There, I saw the younger brother of Ko Win Ko, Ko Aung Kyaw Than and he told me the sad news. He said that he had gone to the police station and that he was told his brother was sentenced to 3 years in jail with two charges by the court. We sent your brother to Tharawaddy Jail this morning, they told him."

Ant Bwe Kyaw added that lawyers are finding it hard to understand as to why Win Ko was sentenced a day earlier than the appointed day of the trial. Another youth named Phyo Zaw Latt who was arrested with Win Ko is still in detention although he was not sentenced.

Win Ko was able to persuade all his fellow villagers from Yethabya to give their signatures to the campaign and he was trapped and arrested at Letpandan Station while on his way to deliver the signatures to Rangoon.

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Rangoon UNDP solo protestors released

19, October, 2006

Ohn Than who was imprisoned for staging a solo protest outside the UNDP office in Rangoon and Thet Wai who was implicated in the case, were released today having served their times.

Rangoon Sanchaung Township National League for Democracy (NLD) chairman Thet Wai, a.k.a., Pauksa was released from the notorious Insein Jail and Ohn Than was released from Moulein Jail in lower Burma, according to sources close to their families.

Both of them were each sentenced to two years' imprisonment and they were released because they served their times.

A friend of Thet Wai, Thandar told DVB that prison authorities unusually took him to a hospital for medical check-ups and drove him home as his health is poor. Ohn Than will be returning to Rangoon from Moulmein tomorrow, she added.

Ohn Than staged a peaceful solo protest outside the United Nations Development Programme office on 21 September 2004, demanding the immediate release of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the intervention of UN Security Council in the affairs of Burma. His latter demanded was eventually and partially fulfilled by the Security Council when it decided to include Burma in its agenda recently.

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Burma junta making preparations to vilify detained student leaders

19, October, 2006

Three ministers of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), are making preparations to try five detained student leaders with trumped up charges, according to an official of pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA).

According to the official from Eastern Rangoon District USDA who doesn't want to named, the three main plotters are U Thaung and Aung Thaung who are in charge of USDA and information minister Brig-Gen Kyaw San (Hsan).

During last week, the three ministers ordered their informers to urgently write up reports containing untrue facts about the detained leaders of 88 Generation Students Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho. The informers were instructed to paint a vivid picture that the student leaders were trying to form a domestic political front with the monetary support from foreign countries, according to another 'reporter' of the USDA.

The reporter added that the draft report written by informers were revised and retouched by two professional journalists 'adopted' by Kyaw Hsan. Copies of the finished report were sent to the SPDC chairman Gen Than Shwe, vice-chairman Gen Maung Aye and Sa-Ya-Pha HQs.

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NLD member Win Ko transferred to Paungde Jail

20, October, 2006

Monyo Township National League for Democracy (NLD) member Win Ko who was jailed for leading a successful signature campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi, ethnic national and student leaders, was transferred to Paungde jail today.

Win Ko was arrested on 6 October at the Letpa(n)dan train station, 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Rangoon, in possession of some 400 signatures and sentenced to

three years in jail at a trial on 18 October where he was denied a lawyer and defence witnesses and sent to the notorious Tharawaddy Jail on the same day, according to 88 Generation Students who are leading the signature campaign.

According to the students, Win Ko was approached by officers from the military junta-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and, searched his bag and asked him to explain the petitions, he declined. The officers also allegedly and conveniently 'found' illegal lottery tickets in his possession.

The court in Letpa(n)dan sentenced him to two years in prison for 'obstructing the work of a government officer' and to another year in prison for possession of illegal lottery tickets.

Yesterday, a NLD lawyer Khin Maung Yin went to Thrawaddy Jail and attempted to meet with Win Ko for the whole day to obtain his permission to represent him without success. This morning, Win Ko's brother Aung Kyaw Than himself went to the prison in an attempt to meet with his brother and obtain the permission but he was told arrogantly by the prisoner at the end of the day that his brother was transferred to Paungde Jail.

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UK McCartney condemns Burma junta for death of Thet Win Aung

20, October, 2006

The Foreign Office Minister of UK responsible for Burma, in a statement issued yesterday, denounced Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for the death of student leader and political prisoner Thet Win Aung in Mandalay Jail.

He also called on the junta to initiate an immediate investigation into his death, to release all political prisoners and those detained without charge immediately and to allow independent bodies to monitor conditions in Burma's prisons.

"I was appalled to hear that Ko Thet Win Aung, the 34 year old Burmese student leader and political prisoner, died in Mandalay Prison on 16 October," said Ian McCartney MP. "Ko Thet Win Aung was reportedly badly tortured in prison and suffered from a variety of health problems. He was one of a number of individuals whose release the EU had urged on humanitarian grounds. I also understand that Ko Thet Win Aung's parents were not allowed to see their son's body, in order to arrange a family burial, or to see their other son, Ko Pyone Cho, who has been detained without charge since 30 September."

Before issuing the statement, the minister summoned the SPDC ambassador to the UK and questioned him about the human rights situation in Burma and expressed his concerns, according to a spokesperson of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

"I call on the Burmese government to initiate an immediate investigation into Ko Thet Win Aung's death and to release all political prisoners and those detained without charge immediately. I also call on the Burmese government to allow independent bodies to monitor conditions in Burma's prisons," added McCartney.

In October 1988, Thet Win Aung was sentenced to 59 years in prison for helping to organise peaceful student demonstrations in Rangoon. During his time in prison, he was badly tortured and suffered from several health problems. He was recognised by Amnesty International as a Prisoner of Conscience and Reading University had appointed him an Honorary Vice- President. Thet Win Aung's brother, Pyone Cho, was detained without charge on 30 September together with 4 other student leaders. They have since been held incommunicado.

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Burmese legal experts and students demand release of leaders

20, October, 2006

It has been three weeks since five 88 Generation Student leaders were taken away by the Burmese authorities and held incommunicado with the excuse of holding discussions with them and that it was time they're released, Burmese student leaders and legal experts insisted.

Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi and Htay Kywe were detained on 27 September and Min Zeya and Pyone Cho, a couple of days later, and it is not known where they are being detained, why they were detained, when they would be allowed to see their family members and lawyers if they are to be charged etc.

"It has been nearly a month since they summoned and detained our five friends," said one of 88 Generation Students Jimmy, a.k.a., Kyaw Min Yuu told DVB. "They (the authorities) are using terms such as 'detained for discussions or interrogation', et cetera, but for us they are simply being arrested/detained, and it is a lawless act. Whether they were 'summoned for discussions' or 'detained for interrogation', they are entitled to (protection of) the existing laws and they must be allowed to have contacts with their families. And they must be given the things they need. They must be allowed to be met. These are shown in the existing laws. They should be given remands (granted bails?), but they are not doing so. And they don't say that they are being detained. They are using and changing words such as they are being 'interrogated'. But what's sure is, they need to respect the law they themselves enacted. Another thing, the condition with which they are being detained is not suitable. If they are to release them, release them. As they are innocent, we want them to be released."

A seasoned Burmese lawyer Thein Nyunt and elected representative (MP) also pointed out that the existing law stipulates that if a person is arrested without the order of a judge, he/she must not be detained more than 24 hours.

"If he is arrested, in accordance with the charge he is being detained with, he can take a 14 days' remand if (the likely sentence?) is under seven years. If it is over seven years, he can take a one month's remand. After that, the remand could not be extended. You have to send him to the court with the charge. Even if he is remanded, he is effectively detained, or if the extended remand is not in accordance with the law, you have to argue it in front of a judge. These are the things allowed by the law."

When asked under which law the student leaders are likely to be detained, Their Myunt replied:

“According to the news conference’s statement, they (student leaders) are being interrogated. It was not said with which charges they were interrogated and investigated. But there is one of our experiences. In (19)98, they detained us elected representatives for 2 years and 10 months at Yemon ‘guesthouse’ (army cantonment) for discussions. At the time, there was no warrant against us either. They took us away and kept us well in the guesthouse. They told the nation through the news statements that we were detained for discussions. On this matter, there was no discussion with us. Five months after the arrest, they allowed us to stay in our house for a night and continued to detain us. We had the experience of being detained with the excuse of holding discussions on matters outside the legal boundaries.”

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Thet Win Aung’s family requests junta to let detained brother come home for memorial service

21, October, 2006

The family of former student leader Thet Win Aung who died in Mandalay Jail on 16 October, requested Burma’s military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to allow the detained brother of the deceased come home for a memorial service to be held tomorrow.

The request was made in a letter sent to the SPDC’s Interior Affairs Ministry at the new administrative capital Kyappay Naypyidaw in central Burma, asking the authorities to let Thet Win Aung’s brother Pyone Cho, one of the leaders of 88 Generation Students, come home to Rangoon Tamwe Township for a memorial service for his late brother.

“They (the authorities) told us to send a letter to the Interior Affairs Ministry. That’s why we did it. They told us to send the letter to Naypyidaw and we did it,” said Win Maung, the father of Thet Win Aung. “There has been no reply up to now. We doubt that he would be able to come home for the memorial service.”

Despite pleas from the family the Burmese authorities refused to let Pyone Cho attend the funeral for his brother at Mandalay on 17 October. It is not known where Pyone Cho is being detained with his four other colleagues including Min Ko Naing, who were taken away for ‘discussions with the authorities’ at the end of last month.

“We have paid dearly and suffered much for many years. The main thing is we are losing more human rights, I have to say that. It is more to do with social affairs. We should see him at this kind of event in accordance with the Burmese tradition,” added Win Maung.

The family is planning to invite several monks to their home to lead a memorial service and another service is planned one month after his death.

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No surprise: Burma's rights violations widespread – UN rapporteur

21, October, 2006

The UN special investigator for human rights in Burma, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro said in a recent report that widespread human rights abuses including summary executions, torture, forced labour, sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers are occurring in Burma.

Pinheiro said in the report circulated on Friday that this “culture of impunity” remains the main obstacle to safeguarding and securing respect for human rights in Burma and has contributed to the increased gap between the poorest and richest in the country.

“These violations have not been investigated and their authors (mainly members of the military) have not been prosecuted,” he said. “Victims have not been in a position to assert their rights and receive a fair and effective remedy.”

In the 19-page report to the UN General Assembly covering the period from February until last month, Pinheiro said the situation for democracy and rights advocates has worsened and military operations in ethnic areas have increased with the apparent aim of taking over land and forcing thousands of people to flee their homes.

“Given the scale of the current military campaign, the situation may lead to a humanitarian crisis if it is not addressed immediately,” he warned.

At the end of August, Pinheiro said, the number of political prisoners was estimated at 1,185, a figure that does not include numerous prisoners reportedly detained in ethnic areas and secret jails. The UN investigator said he was “extremely worried” at allegations that 1,038 members of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) were forced to resign since April “following various forms of intimidation and threats.” The government also continues to severely restrict freedom of movement, expression and assembly, he said. Pinheiro also said he received several reports alleging government involvement in cracking down on non-political initiatives by people, including programs to fight HIV.

Exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) UN representative, Dr. Thaug Tun said that the subjects summarised by Pinheiro in the report are also related to subjects being considered by the UN Security Council and they will be helpful to drafting a resolution concerning the human rights situation in Burma and help the future actions of the council.

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France and Norway slam Burma on death of Thet Win Aung

21, October, 2006

The Norwegian and French governments on Friday denounced Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) over the untimely death of 34-year-old pro-democracy activist Thet Win Aung at Mandalay Jail on 16 October.

“The news of the death of the political prisoner Thet Win Aung in a Burmese prison this week is disturbing,” Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere said in a

statement. “The student leaders’ – Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya, Pyone Cho, and Myint Aye arrested in September – courageous struggle for a democratic Burma should be taken as an invitation to dialogue with the authorities”.

Thet Win Aung had died in prison where he was tortured and may have been denied treatment for health problems, including malaria. He had been sentenced to 59 years in prison in 1998 for his part in organising student demonstrations that called for improvements to schools and the release of political prisoners.

Similarly, the French government said that it held the Burmese authorities responsible for the death of Thet Win Aung, calling for the release of all political prisoners.

“We learnt with sadness of the death in prison of Thet Win Aung. France holds the Burmese junta responsible for the deterioration of the health of this opposition figure,” the French foreign ministry said in a statement. “More than ever, France demands that the junta immediately and unconditionally release all other political prisoners to pave the way for a genuine process of dialogue and national reconciliation in Burma.”

The United Nations estimates that some 1,100 political prisoners are held in Burma. The most famous of them is Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the pro-democracy opposition, who has spent more than a decade under house arrest.

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Dr. Than Nyein is ill in Burma’s Prome Jail

22, October, 2006

The condition of Rangoon Kyauktan Township National League for Democracy (NLD) elected representative Dr. Than Nyein who is being detained at Prome (Pyay) Jail, is said to be dire as he is not allowed to receive medical treatments, according to his wife Khin Aye.

Than Nyein has been suffering from high blood pressure, urinary and gastric diseases, Khin Aye who recently visited her husband at the jail in lower central Burma told DVB. She added that as healthcare inside the jail is very poor and Than Nyein is not allowed to receive proper treatments outside, she is afraid that her aged husband who meet the same fate that of 34-year-old student leader Thet Win Aung who suddenly died at Mandalay Jail on 16 October.

“When I heard about Thet Win Aung, I was very disturbed. The reason being, as far as we know, many political prisoners are having poor health in respective jails. Although some of them are ill, their folks from home could not come and see them. As I have heard this kind of thing, I am very worried for uncle (my husband) as he has been suffering from combined illnesses for two years.”

Than Nyein was arrested in 1997 and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment for arranging a public rally for Aung San Suu Kyi at nearby Mayangone Township. After his sentence expired, the authorities extended it repeatedly with Act - 10A and he staged a hunger strike. He was transferred from Rangoon Isein Jail to Tharawaddy Jail, from there to Paungde and later to Prome Jial where is now being detained arbitrarily.

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Gone but not forgotten: Memorial service for Thet Win Aung in Rangoon

22, October, 2006

A Buddhist memorial service for 34-year old, pro-democracy Thet Win Aung who died in Mandalay Jail on 16 October, was held at his family home in Rangoon Tamwe Township today.

The religious ceremony was led by five monks who recited prayer for the departed soul of Thet Win Aung and it was attended by nearly 1000 mourners including National League for Democracy (NLD) members, veteran politicians, students, pupils, relatives and friends of the family. But Thet Win Aung's brother Pyone Cho who is being held incommunicado with four of his colleagues, was not allowed to attend the ceremony.

“We know nothing about his situation. He might not even know what is happening here,” said Win Maung, the father of Thet Win Aung and Pyone Cho. “We were told to write to the Interior Affairs Ministry and we did. They told us to send it to Naypyidaw (Burma's new administrative capital) and we did. Up to now, nothing has substantiated. We are still losing human rights as ever. And our feelings are running higher and higher. There were quite a lot of people who came to see us out of sympathy – more than 700-800, around 1000 people came.”

“Of course, I am still hoping (for Pyone Cho's return), but nothing has changed so far,” the grieving mother, Mya Aye told DVB. “I don't think he would be in time for today. Our desire is, we want him to return, that's why we applied for it. As they still haven't replied, we are not feeling good. I want all (members of the family) to be here. I feel it more than anyone, of course, just imagine. But I am controlling my emotion and trying to be resilient as much as possible.”

After the religious ceremony, student leaders read out poems in honour of Thet Win Aung, including a long poem from an anonymous political prisoner writing under the pen name 'Shwe Choo' who is still serving his sentence, written on 18 October 2006 and smuggled out of the prison.

Although the intelligence agents of the authorities watched and monitored the event, they kept their distance and did not harass mourners.

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Exiled Burmese hold memorial service for Thet Win Aung

23, October, 2006

Exiled pro-democracy Burmese activists held memorial service for student leader Thet Win Aung who died in Mandalay Jail in central Burma on 16 October.

At New Delhi, activists held a memorial service with monks offering prayer in memory of Thet Win Aung whose remains was not allowed to be buried with dignity but forced to be cremated by the paranoid authorities of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). His ashes and charred bones were not allowed to be taken home to Rangoon either.

Thet Win Aung had died in prison where he was tortured and denied treatment for health problems, including malaria. He had been sentenced to 59 years in prison in 1998 for his part in organising student demonstrations that called for improvements to schools and the release of political prisoners.

Similarly, a vigil was held at Sasana Ramsi Vihara Burmese monastery in North London's Colidale and mantras were chanted and prayer was offered for the smooth departure of the soul of Thet Win Aung to a better place.

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Unofficial translation of 88 Generation Students' statement at the end of signature campaign

23, October, 2006

“Statement regarding the end of the gathering of the expression of desire of 88 Generation Students and the public.

Date: 23 October 2006

1. The signature campaign (petition) expressing the desire of 88 Generation Students and the public, started on 2 October 2006 and ended successfully today on 23 October 2006 with the cooperation of the public, and, within a short space of time, many signatures expressing the desire were collected.

2. We the 88 Generation Students want to express our respect and pride for monks, students and the whole public who bravely put their signatures expressing their true desire despite the difficulties, problems and harassments. We especially want to record our respect and pride for Ko Win Ko from Yethabya Village in Hteintaw Monyo Township who was arrested arbitrarily with trumped up charges while transporting petitions/signatures and the villagers.

3. In order to respect and acknowledge the desire of the public, we seriously call for the release of all political prisoners including U Tin Oo, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Win Tin, U Khun Tun Oo and ethnic national leaders, leaders of 88 Generation Students Min Ko Naing Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Pyone Cho and Ko Htway Kywe who have been working selfless for the substantiation of national reconciliation and democracy which are the aims of the petition.

88 Generation Students”

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88 Generation Students insist signature campaign a success

23, October, 2006

88 Generation Students of Burma said that their signature campaign, calling for the release of all political prisoners and a start to the national reconciliation process, which

started on 2 October and ended today was a success and that 535,580 signatures had been collected.

When asked what they are going to do next one of the students, Mya Aye said that copies of the signatures, accompanied by a letter, will be sent officially to the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the UN organisations.

He also insisted the campaign was a success even though nothing extraordinary happened during it as the people from all walks of life bravely came forward and gave their signatures despite the difficulties, harassments and threats of arrest from the authorities.

“You cannot say that it is not successful by looking at it in a distorted way. The reason is, if we want to get to a place we have to go it step by step. You can't take just one large step. Therefore, if we are to assess it, we will be stepping towards our desired destination by peaceful means and by using the path which could be followed by the public within the legal boundary,” said Mya Aye.

When asked why the public had come forward bravely, leaving aside their fears, Mya Aye said that the main reasons are economic and social dire straights, and that they are starting to have the pragmatic and strong belief that under the current system there would be no security for them.

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Heartbreak: Political prisoner's mother dies

24, October, 2006

The mother of Phyo Zaw Latt who was arrested with Monyo Township National League for Democracy (NLD) members Win Ko, died from anxiety and heartbreak yesterday.

Shwe Yin has been lying in bed with stress and extreme anxiety since her son was arrested early this month.

“His 58-year-old mother Daw Shwe Yin had been lying in bed and suffering since the arrest of Phyo Zaw Latt and died at 1pm yesterday,” said Ant Bwe Kyaw, a student leader. “Phyo Zaw Latt's mother had no previous illnesses. I learnt that she died from anxiety for her son alone.”

The grieving family members tried to see Phyo Zaw Latt, who is being detained at a police station with no clear charges against him, to inform him of his mother's death, but the authorities refused them the permission. They also pleaded with the authorities to let him attend his mother's funeral tomorrow on humanitarian grounds.

Win Ko and Phyo Zaw Latt were arrested on 6 October at the Letpa(n)dan train station, 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Rangoon, in possession of some 400 signatures in support of the petition campaign demanding the release of all political prisoners and a kick-start to the national reconciliation process. Win Ko was approached by officers from the military junta-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and, searched his bag and asked him to explain the petitions, he declined. The officers also allegedly 'found' illegal lottery tickets in his possession.

He was sentenced to three years in jail at a trial on 18 October where he was denied a lawyer and defence witnesses and sent to Tharawaddy Jail on the same day, according to 88 Generation Students who led the signature campaign. The court in Letpa(n)dan sentenced him to two years in prison for ‘obstructing the work of a government officer’ and to another year in prison for possession of illegal lottery tickets.

Recently, detained 88 generation student leader Pyone Cho was not allowed to attend the funeral of his brother Thet Win Aung who died in Manadalay jail on 16 October.

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Burma’s 88 Generation Students launch another freedom campaign

October, 25, 2006

88 Generation Students are to start a new freedom campaign called ‘Multiple Religious Prayer Meetings’, hot on the heels of the success of their petition campaign calling for the release of all political prisoners, in which 534,580 signatures were collected within a couple of weeks.

During the multi-denominational prayer week, from 29 October to 4 November, candlelight vigils will be held in Buddhist monasteries, Christian churches, Muslim mosques and Hindu temples throughout the country.

Participants will be urged to wear white clothing and hold candlelight vigils in places of worship. The organizers say prayers will be offered for a peaceful resolution of the country’s political crisis, for political prisoners and for victims of the recent floods.

At the same time, a petition campaign calling for the release of all Buddhist monks arbitrarily detained in Burmese jails was launched at Sandidamma Vihara in Cologne yesterday.

According to Rev. Thawpaka, the abbot of the monastery, there are at least 85 Buddhist monks in jails throughout Burma, including two who were sentenced to death for urging the military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to return power to civilians. The campaign will last until March 2007.

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Lawyer not allowed to see Win Ko

October, 26, 2006

The National League for Democracy (NLD) lawyer Khin Maung Yin is still finding it hard to obtain a ‘power’ letter from Win Ko who was arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned by the Burmese authorities for leading a successful signature campaign.

Khin Maung went to Paungde Jail in lower central Burma in order to meet with Win Ko and get a ‘power’ letter from him so that he could represent him officially, but the prison authorities barred him from meeting Win Ko and also not allowed to get the letter from him.

“When I explained the matter prison official Myo Aung, he said that I could not given the permission,” said Khin Maung Yin. “He said that the matter must be put forward to the head office. He said that it could be detained in two days. It will be two days on

Friday. I wonder if I will get it on Monday. I am hoping thus. We want to lodge an appeal (for Win Ko).”

Win Ko was arrested on 6 October at the Letpa(n)dan train station, 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Rangoon, in possession of some 400 signatures in support of the petition campaign demanding the release of all political prisoners and a kick-start to the national reconciliation process. He was approached by officers from the military junta-sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and, searched his bag and asked him to explain the petitions, he declined. The officers also allegedly ‘found’ illegal lottery tickets in his possession.

He was sentenced three years at a trial on 18 October where he was denied a lawyer and defence witnesses and sent to Tharawaddy Jail on the same day, according to 88 Generation Students who led the signature campaign. The court in Letpa(n)dan sentenced him to two years in prison for ‘obstructing the work of a government officer’ and to another year in prison for possession of illegal lottery tickets.

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Prayer campaign supported throughout Burma

October, 29, 2006

Peace-loving people throughout Burma have joined the multi-religious prayer meeting campaign led by 88 Generation Students to pray for a solution to the problems of Burma, and for political prisoners and the victims of recent natural disasters.

A special prayer service was held at St. Mary Roman Catholic Cathedral in downtown Rangoon on Sunday led by the archbishop of Rangoon Archdiocese, according to an activist who attended the service.

“It was attended by more than 2000 faithful including political activists attended with white clothing – white eingyi (clothing for upper part of the body). But more than 100,000 must have listened to the sermon,” a political activist San San Myint told DVB. “Five priests were ordained in accordance with the Christian tradition by the archbishop himself. Then he declared that it was his birthday and people applauded with joy. Then, the archbishop said that he was going to bless all the people and political prisoners...and prayed for them. I felt so joyous.”

At Nyaunglebin in lower Burma, local National League for Democracy (NLD) members visited a historic pagoda Mahati Lawkatharaphu and offered up oil lamps, candles and prayer for all the intended people.

At Aunglan (Allen) in Magwe Division, activists started the campaign a day early by offering up oil lamps, candles and prayer at Kunnithayon Pagoda in central Burma. In nearby Chauk, activists carried out similar actions at Ayezedi Pagoda. The activists all vowed to continue their activities until the end of the week.

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Burma junta tries to link youth brawl with student leaders

October, 29, 2006

The newspapers of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), today carried a report on a town and gown brawl at Monya in central Burma and tried to link the incident to the 88 Generation Students in a blatant attempt to vilify the students.

The incident reportedly occurred on 27 October outside a girl hostel in Thalla Ward while male students were serenading residential girls with guitars and the newspapers added that the authorities are investigating whether it is connected to the 88 Generation Students and exiled political groups.

“As the ‘88’ generation student youths and destructive elements at home and abroad are hatching a plot to create unrest and violence in the nation, the incident is under investigation whether it is related to such destructive acts or not,” said the junta's mouth piece in English language, the New Light of Myanmar published yesterday.

But the father of a student who was detained in connection with the incident denied that there was any political motive as it was just a case of youths competing for the amour of one girl, and the violence was triggered off by the smashing of a guitar belonging to a rival group.

A local police officer on duty also confirmed that there was no political motive as the students were only showing off their wealth in a drunken revelry. He added that 12 students were arrested on the charges of violence and causing injuries. A hospital staff told DVB that three students are being treated in the hospital and another five are being treated at out patient department.

One of the 88 Generation Students, Kyaw Min Yuu, a.k.a., Jimmy told DVB that the groundless accusation of the junta is damaging the national reconciliation process.

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