

Democratic Voice of Burma

Political Prisoners News

January - 2007

- =====
88 generation students start a new political campaign *January, 04, 2007*
Activists un-swayed by prison time *January, 04, 2007*
Concern spreads over 88 student hunger strike rumours *January, 05, 2007*
Interview with author Nyein Thit on his release on 3 January 2007 *January, 07, 2007*
Man snatched from prayer meeting released *January 08, 2007*
New UN head calls for release of political prisoners *January,09, 2007*
88 generation student leaders released *January, 11, 2007*
Burma needs change, not words: Min Ko Naing *January, 12, 2007*
Conditions in Tharawaddy prison worsening *January, 15, 2007*
NLD member's detention extended *January, 19, 2007*
NLD member's court appeal rejected *January, 23, 2007*
Fake Daw Aung San Suu Kyi statement spread in Magwe *January, 23, 2007*
Tuesday prayer campaigners doused with waterv *January, 24, 2007*
Daw Suu receives medical check *January, 30, 2007*
Mandalay prisoners used as cheap labour *January, 30, 2007*

88 generation students start a new political campaign

January, 04, 2007

A letter writing campaign has been launched today, said Burma's 88 generation students.

The students are to collect letters describing the general dissatisfaction and grievances of the public and send them to the State Peace and Development Council chairman General Than Shwe.

According to the students' spokesman Mya Aye, the campaign is to highlight the fact that only the people of Burma has the power to banish the bitter burden of fear they are enduring. He added that the campaign will be carried out peacefully within the legal boundary and no law will be violated.

Another student leader, Jimmy a. k. a. Kyaw Min Yu said that he believes the public will take part in the campaign bravely. According to him, people are

encouraged to write down their grievances and the letters are to be sent to the SPDC chairman and other authorities concerned by post.

Some residents at Rangoon's South Dagon and Thinganggyun Townships told DVB that they had already written down their grievances and that other people will follow suit.

The students also issued a statement today to mark the 59th anniversary of Burma's independent from Britain.

"The absence of foreign dominance and colonial rule does not make us truly free and independent," says the statement. "We need to be free from any system that deprives us from enjoying life...any system that is oppressive and repressive."

[Top](#)

Activists un-swayed by prison time

January, 04, 2007

Several political prisoners released along with nearly 3000 inmates from across Burma on Wednesday have vowed to continue fighting for democracy. The state-run New Light of Myanmar reported that 2831 prisoners had been freed to mark Independence Day yesterday. According to prison officials, 192 of the released prisoners had been jailed for political reasons under Acts 5J and 17/1.

Than Win Hlaing, who was released from Tharawaddy prison after serving time for writing about Independence hero and father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi general Aung San, told DVB he would continue to "live for democracy".

"As we still haven't achieved democracy, we vow to join hands with the public in search for our democracy goal, following the lead of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," Than Win Hlaing said.

Ko Zaw Win, co-secretary of the National League for Democracy's southwest Mandalay division who was also released on Wednesday, said he had mixed feelings about his new freedom.

"I feel happy and sad. I am happy that I'm now a free man. But sad towards my comrades . . . who are still inside. I feel very emotional about it. When I was told that I was to be released, they approached and bid farewell to me. I just looked at their faces but couldn't say anything," Ko Zaw Win said.

Many political prisoners remain in jail in Burma under conditions described by groups such as the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma as deplorable. Ko Zaw Win said many aging political prisoners such as U Ba Chit and U Soe Myint suffered from ill health and had spent too much time in detention.

"I would be happier if our government leaders released those people who have been in prison for so long," he said.

Ko Jimmy, a member of the 88 Generation Students activist group, said while he welcomed the government's decision to release the political prisoners, they should not have been detained in the first place. He said releasing a few detainees was not enough and that all political prisoners needed to be freed if Burma was to move forward politically.

NLD spokesperson U Nyan Win echoed Ko Jimmy's calls and said while the opposition party welcomed the release of some political prisoners he was sad for those who remained in detention.

"We don't get our hopes high just by seeing this."

[Top](#)

Concern spreads over 88 student hunger strike rumours

January, 05, 2007

Members of the 88 Generation Students group expressed grave concern today over rumours detained group leaders had started a hunger strike at the Aung Thabye detention centre.

Min Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Htay Kywe and Ko Pyone Cho have been detained since September 27 last year. Rumours of a hunger strike by the men spread on their 100th day in custody, according to fellow 88 generation activists Ko Mya Aye and Ko Jimmy.

While Ko Mya Aye and Ko Jimmy said it was not possible to confirm the rumours since no one was allowed to visit the detained activists, they said many of the men had staged hunger strikes before.

"This morning, people came to tell us and we are very anxious," Ko Mya Aye said.

Police and prison authorities were not available today to comment on the reports.

Ko Mya Aye and Ko Jimmy told DVB that if anything happened to the five former student leaders, the remaining members of the group would be forced to take action. They refused to say what kind of action they would take.

[Top](#)

Interview with author Nyein Thit on his release on 3 January 2007

January, 07, 2007

DVB: Now that you are released, how is your health, Ko Nyein Thit?

NT: Yes, as for my health, I have the swollen nerve muscle. I have been suffering from this since 2003. I have the acute pain when I wash my face. It hurts when I touch water. When it drizzles, my face aches. I reported the matter to the prison (authorities) – to carry out a medical check for me. I told them that I want to see a specialist. But from 2003, for more than three years, I was not allowed to see a doctor. And I also have urinary problems and asked them to check it, but I was not obliged after I told them. But one or two months before the release, I was allowed to see a GP doctor for a check. This is the disease I have been suffering from more than three years.

DVB: As you are released now, when were you imprisoned, for how long, what was the sentence, how long were you in jail, in how many jails – could you tell us such things in brief?

NT: On the Independence Day (4 Jan) of 1996, I entertained the public with Papalay Anyeint (traditional all dancing, singing, joking troupe) in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's compound. I was the zatsaya (director) of the anyeint. Then, the whole anyeint was arrested – 13 people in all and four people including Papalay were sentenced to seven years each. I was issued warrant in connection that case. I was in fact virtually a wanted person since 1996.

DVB: You became a wanted person since Independence Day 1996. Now in 2007, you return to the so-called 'free' world. How could you explain the differences between the two worlds?

NT: In 1996 Independence Day; all free people have the right to celebrate the Independence Day. Each individual has the right to celebrate the Independence Day. Therefore, at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's compound, those who want democracy, all ethnic nationals and the people celebrated the independence. At that celebration, we staged the anyeint and the whole anyeint was sentenced to seven years in jail each – that shows the taste of independence. The public know whether there is freedom in the country or are we losing the freedom.

I was captured on 4 October 1999. I wrote articles and poems for pro-democracy groups. I wrote articles relating to the convening of the parliament and national reconciliation. I was indicted for writing the articles and given eight years. I served 7 years and 2 months. If I committed crimes such as murder, rape and others – misappropriation of the state money, and if I were given eight years, I would have to serve only five and half years. That is my entitlement. Now that I am a political prisoner, I didn't get these reduction days (for the sentence).

DVB: Now that you were released a day ahead of the independence day, how do you feel about that?...

NT: I was released as part of the general amnesty to honour the Independence Day and I am now free. Although I am free, many of my political colleagues are still remaining inside prisons. If the whole public doesn't enjoy the taste of independence, I don't deserve the taste of freedom. For example, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is still in custody, U Tin Oo, U Win Tin and the like are still in prison. Student leaders Ko Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Min Zeya, Ko Htay Kywe and Ko Pyone Cho are still in custody. If those working for democracy are still in custody, we have to question what the independence of the country is. And if you look at people outside (the prisons), the majority of the people are heard to be suffering. Therefore, if the people are not enjoying sufficiency in economy, how could they escape from social problems? When I suddenly saw the public which is facing all kinds of economical and social problems, I am unable to enjoy my freedom.

DVB: In Moulmein Jail, how many political prisoners are remaining there? What was their latest situation?...

NT: Nine political prisoners are still remaining in Moulmein Jail. At Ein-Gween?, there are around 25 people imprisoned with (Act) 17/1 alone.

DVB: If you were asked how a literary person got involved in political circle, how would you answer that?

NT: Yes, in fact, I am not a politician. I am a literary person. I only want to submerge my life in literature and art. But what we are facing is a national problem. Today, the public is facing poverty and troubles. They are facing unfair repression. I can't just watch the suffering of the public. I can't just watch it. And the whole country demanded democracy with all their heart. And in the 1990 election, the public elected parliamentary representatives by means of voting, so that they could build and contrive for a democracy from the front. But the public is still far away from democracy today. They are still facing unfair arrests. I am very reluctant to ignore these national problems and get myself cocooned in the literary and art world. We literary people and artists are seeking the truth and beauty of the world. We are writing and composing by transfusing the feelings of the people.

DVB: A writer seeks the truth of the world, ends up in the political world and gets imprisoned. How did you keep in touch with the political and literary world inside the prison...

NT: We literary persons and artists are composing and expressing the feelings of the public, and creating arts. We are landing the feelings of the contemporary feelings on the pages as a form of art. Our art, creation would survive long only if there are contemporary feelings, and become classics and remain in history. If we are unable to write about and put forward the feelings of the people and the society we are going through, our art would never survive. Therefore, we artists must learn, investigate and seek out what the people are feeling, what they are facing. Life inside prison is very bitter. When I investigated and learnt as to why they ended up in jail, prisoners are filling up the jails because of the deterioration in the system and successive deteriorations on every front. For example, some of them ended up in jail because they were guilty, but I also found that there were many people who ended up in jail even when they are innocent. For example, some people arrested for loitering – i.e. (Act) 30/D. They arrested people depending on their situation and class and sent them to prisons. Some people do not have identity cards or jobs and they are arrested and imprisoned for three months. We have to question if we afford to continue to solve (problems of the country) in this way. We grassroots people, day labourers, are we to have problems with laws in Burma just because we do not have identity cards or do not have proper jobs? Do we not have the right to live freely anymore? That is the kind of thing.

DVB: Whatever it is, you are now free...are you going to plunge into political and literary worlds?

NT: Yes, I am a literary artist. But I am barred from writing before I was sent to jail. When Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's husband, Michael Aris died, we published a booklet of poems in his memory. Those who wrote in the poem were; Sagayi Minthuwun, Saya U Tin Moe, Monywa Aung Shin, me, Pyapon Nilon Oo and two remaining poets – seven in all. The military intelligence reported to the censorship board not to allow (the works of) all these poets to be mentioned (published) in magazines and journals. Since then, I was barred from writing. I don't know whether I will be allowed to continue to write. If I have the permission, I will continue to write literature and art. But, I could not just pass through (ignore?) the lives of people and the problems they are facing, while I am creating literary, artistic works. Although I don't want to get involved in politics, as it is the national cause, I will continue to carry out (political activities).

[Top](#)

Man snatched from prayer meeting released

January 08, 2007

Burmese authorities released activist Ko Tun Tun from a psychiatric institution on Friday after detaining him for shouting politically sensitive prayers at a Shwedagon pagoda prayer meeting last Tuesday.

Ko Tun Tun told DVB he was seized by officials after he arrived at the pagoda wearing a general Aung San t-shirt with friend Naw Ohn Hla who wore a t-shirt bearing the image of detained National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"I decided to wear a t-shirt with General Aung San's image to the prayer on Shwe Dagon pagoda, and I was stopped by three pagoda-policemen . . . ," Ko Tun Tun said.

"Then I started to pray . . . I prayed too loudly, saying, 'May all our Burmese citizens be freed from un-justice SPDC dictators' . . . I was about to do the last bit, but they came and grabbed me from each arm. I requested that I finished what I had to be done. After that, as usual, they took me straight to lunatic asylum," he said.

It was not the first time Ko Tun Tun had been sent to a mental institution by Burmese authorities. On July 7, 2006, he was sent to the Ywarthargyi Lunatic Asylum after praying too loudly at Shwedagon pagoda for students that had been killed by the military.

He was released after one month. Ko Tun Tun has spent four years in prison for playing the radio broadcasts of banned media groups such as DVB too loudly and was also briefly detained in June 2006 for staging a solo demonstration outside Rangoon City Hall.

"When [the authorities] threw me into the psychiatric hospital the first time, as I didn't want to make trouble for doctors and nurses there, I didn't

complain much. But I regret it now. They are still publishing articles in journals, saying that I'm a lunatic," Ko Tun Tun said.

"But I won't let them disgrace me again this time. So I told the doctors there that, I'll stay there only till January 4, their designated date to detain me, but if they still keep me in there without sending me back home . . . I'd kill myself by hitting my head against the wall there," he said.

"They doctors asked me not to do such things and in fact said that they'll sort the problem out by talking to the authorities. Then as I requested, they let me go on January 5, as they have no other choices."

[Top](#)

New UN head calls for release of political prisoners

January, 09, 2007

United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon released his first statement on Burma yesterday, calling for the release of all political prisoners in the country.

Ban said he welcomed reports that a number of political prisoners were among more than 2800 others released on January 3 as part of an Independence Day amnesty but urged the military to free all political detainees.

"The Secretary-General urges the [Burmese] authorities to go beyond this first step by releasing all other political prisoners in the country, including (National League for Democracy leader) Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and by making further concrete progress on all of the issues raised in the context of his good offices," a spokesperson for Ban said in the statement.

Several similar statements were made by former secretary general Kofi Annan. Ban's calls come at a time when the US mission to the UN is preparing to introduce the first draft resolution on Burma to the Security Council. For months US diplomats have attempted to rally members of the council behind the highly anticipated move.

But in the past week both Russian and Indonesia diplomats have voiced dissatisfaction with a circulated draft of the resolution, saying they did not think the situation in Burma warranted Security Council action.

"The current draft has a nuance of accusation of human rights violations and slow progress toward democracy. We should find more effective ways . . . to help overcome the problems in [Burma]," Indonesian foreign minister Hassan Wirayuda was quoted as saying in local press reports.

[Top](#)

88 generation student leaders released

January, 11, 2007

88 Generation Student leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Kyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zaya and Pyone Cho were released by Burmese authorities from an unidentified location at 1:30am.

The students, who have been detained since late September, are reportedly holding a meeting among themselves and are likely to talk to the media around noon, according to sources close to them.

Their release coincides with the introduction of a draft resolution on the situation in Burma at the UN Security Council.

The five men were released in two separate groups.



Burma needs change, not words: Min Ko Naing

January, 12, 2007

88 Generation Students group leader Min Ko Naing told DVB in an interview after his release from prison yesterday that Burmese people needed more than empty political promises.

The well-known activist and former student leader said government slogans and statistics on development were not enough and that the public wanted real change.

“[The public] just wants a way out of all these various hardships. They want a change. They want to overcome this situation which is going no where with these political words,” Min Ko Naing said.

“We do understand that's the true will of our people . . . we vow here that we will continue working putting all physical and intellectual efforts we can,” he said.

Five members of the 88 Generation Students group—Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kywe, Min Zaya and Pyone Cho—were released by the Burmese military in the early hours of yesterday morning after more than three and-a-half months detention.

The five men were not charged and were released unconditionally, according to Ko Ko Gyi who told DVB in a separate interview that he was encouraged by the results of several political campaigns launched by the 88 Generation Students during his time in prison.

“The importance is, as those [campaigns] search for the peaceful ways where the public can peacefully join in politics, it's the exact same attitude we all had, since before our detention,” Ko Ko Gyi said.

Min Ko Naing said he was “very satisfied” with the results from the recent Signature, Open Heart and Tuesday Prayer campaigns and said he felt deep appreciation for everyone who participated.

“We feel so happy to hear all those people and organizations from different places put in their effort . . . We would like to say we appreciate and thank their work,” he said.

Before they were arrested, the five men had been repeatedly accused by authorities of plotting terrorist attacks in Burma. All five had spent time in prison previously.

While analysts have said the men were clearly detained to stop them continuing their political activities, there has been some debate over whether internal or external political pressure led to their release.

[Top](#)

Conditions in Tharawaddy prison worsening

January, 15, 2007

The conditions in Tharawaddy prison have worsened considerably in the past year, according to a recently released political prisoner.

Than Win Hlaing, one of almost 3000 prisoners released on January 3 as part of a country-wide amnesty, told DVB health conditions in Tharawaddy prison had deteriorated.

“At the hospital, there are people with serious conditions. They are dropping dead like leaves. At least one or two people are dying each month,” Than Win Hlaing said.

Than Win Hlaing said conditions in the prison had worsened since visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross stopped in December 2005.

“They ceased the rights to physical exercises which were allowed before, and there is no donation of books anymore,” he said.

ICRC prison visits stopped in Burma after military authorities ordered that representatives from the group be accompanied by officials from a third party. The ICRC’s mandate dictates that visits be made independently.

ICRC deputy head of delegation in Burma, Thierry Ribaux, said today there was no indication that the prison visits would continue.

“. . . For the time being, we are still waiting for further dialogues with the authorities,” Ribaux said.

According to Tate Naing, secretary of the Assistant Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), conditions in prisons across the country have worsened since ICRC prison visits stopped.

He said supplies of medicines were drying up and that basic healthcare requirements were not being met by prison officials.

"Like as in Tharawaddy prison, the healthcare service has been poor in other prisons [of Burma] as well. ICRC didn't have an opportunity to make any prison visits through out of 2006. Therefore, there was shortage of medicine and insufficient health-assistance, which worsen the prisoners' health-condition," Tate Naing said.

[Top](#)

NLD member’s detention extended

January, 19, 2007

Detained National League for Democracy member Dr Than Nyein has had his prison sentence extended by one year under Burma’s legal Act 10/A.

Dr Than Nyein was first arrested for political reasons in 1997 and was due to be released in 2004. Since then his period of detention has been extended several times.

His wife, Daw Khin Aye, told DVB that intelligence agents notified her of Dr Than Nyein's extended detention yesterday morning.

"In the morning on January 16, the Sa-Thone-Lone intelligence agents came to see me and told me that [he] would be released on the 17th . . . On the 17th, they came again and told me that they 'cancelled' what they said the day before . . . At 9 o'clock this morning . . . They told me (his detention was) extended for another year," Daw Khin Aye said.

Daw Khin Aye said her husband was also led to believe he would be released before being told he would remain in prison.

"I told him to live with self-control. As for him, if he can control his mind nothing bad will happen."

Daw Khin Aye said Dr Than Nyein was in reasonably good health despite not having access to medical attention.

[Top](#)

NLD member's court appeal rejected

January, 23, 2007

The appeal of National League for Democracy member U Myint Tun, who was sentenced to five years in prison for manslaughter, has been dismissed by the Insein northern-district court.

U Myint Tun's lawyer U Myint Thaug told DVB the court rejected the appeal yesterday without giving a reason.

"Now that the district court has turned the appeal down, we have to go to the Yangon division court," U Myint Thaug said.

U Myint Tun was charged with manslaughter in July 2006 after a Rangoon man stepped on a live electrical cable that had been illegally attached to mains supplies near U Myint Tun's apartment.

When the man died of his injuries, U Myint Tun was charged. But U Myint Thaug said the electrical cable did not belong to the NLD member and that he had, in fact, been arrested for his ties to the opposition.

In December last year, U Myint Thaug filed an appeal with the Shwepyithar township court to have a second man indicted over the crime. That appeal was also rejected.

U Myint Tun's wife Daw Shan Ma told DVB yesterday the Insein court did not allow the defendant's testimony to be re-heard.

"They just turned it down right on the spot. But the judge said as they can't do anything about the case, we should go up to the divisional court," Daw Shan Ma said.

[Top](#)

Fake Daw Aung San Suu Kyi statement spread in Magwe

January, 23, 2007

Copies of a forged statement by detained National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi are being circulated in Magwe township, according to local sources.

Magwe NLD member U Myint Oo said the written statement was clearly not from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as it claimed the NLD was no better than the Burmese military.

According to U Myint Oo, the statement said, "We have officially stated that we will put the dictatorship to the point of no return in Burma's future. In term of democracy, there needs to be multiplied number of parties. If there's just one party, then it's not democracy."

"So, the NLD doesn't need to follow democratic policies. In fact [everyone] has to take what the seniors said as veto. Although we are using dictatorship within our party, we can swear and accuse each other with our rival parties under the name of democracy. Everyone's the same," the false statement said according to U Myint Oo.

It is unclear who wrote the fake statement but locals have that speculated that since it was widely distributed and was printed on expensive paper, Magwe officials could be involved.

"We can't exactly name who was behind this. But this work is similar to accusations against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the newspapers in order to disgrace the democracy forces," U Myint Oo said.

Last week the state-run New Light of Myanmar accused Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of tax evasion over her decision to keep the prize money from her various international awards out of the country.

Another Magwe division member, U Thein Zaw, said the fake statement had not achieved its purpose.

"The outcome is that no damage was done to the NLD. Disgraceful people cannot disgrace others," he said.

[Top](#)

Tuesday prayer campaigners doused with water

January, 24, 2007

Thirty activists were doused with water by pro-military groups and special police yesterday during a weekly political prayer meeting at Shwedagon pagoda in Rangoon.

Ma Mi Mi Htike, who was among the thirty campaigners praying for the release of all political prisoners in Burma, said about 700 military supporters threw soapy water at the group just after they started praying.

"There were a lot of their people sitting under the shelter we usually sit every time. So we had to sit among them . . . Once we started chanting our prayer, they washed the floor with soap water. That water was really filthy and it was draining everywhere," Ma Mi Mi Htike said.

“Then they turned up the volume of loud speakers from a donation center near by. It was louder than necessary and was really disturbing us . . . By the time we came down from the pagoda, we saw five police cars and two military police cars.”

Four men were also arrested for taking photos of the group. Three have already been released.

Another activist, Ko Thein Naing Oo, told DVB he expected the military to cause trouble during the prayer meeting.

“So we didn't really mind getting soaked. We were worried that, those strangers who were watching us from a place behind would give us trouble if we complained at the time,” Ko Thein Naing Oo said.

Shwedagone pagoda officials were repeatedly unavailable for comment.

[Top](#)

Daw Suu receives medical check

January, 30, 2007

Detained National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received a medical check-up from doctor and personal friend U Tin Myo Win last Thursday, according to NLD officials.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who has suffered from gynecological problems and other minor ailments in the past, has not been allowed access to a doctor since November last year. The Nobel laureate and pro-democracy icon has spent more than 11 of the past 17 years in detention.

NLD spokesman U Nyan Win told DVB yesterday that U Tin Myo Win visited Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on January 25, giving her several basic medical checks and dental x-rays.

“She has a bulbous growth on the back of her neck since 2000 to 2001. Sometimes it gives her a terrible headache to the point where she can't get her head up,” U Nyan Win said.

But U Nyan Win said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was generally in good health. U Tin Myo Win has not immediately available for comment yesterday.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's last medical checkup, in mid November last year, came just days after United Nations under secretary general for political affairs Ibrahim Gambari met the detained leader and called on the Burmese military to allow her regular access to her doctors.

[Top](#)

Mandalay prisoners used as cheap labour

January, 30, 2007

Prisoners from Myinchan prison in Mandalay township are being contracted out as cheap labour for local businesses by prison authorities, officials and former prisoners said yesterday.

A recently released inmate from the prison told DVB on condition of anonymity that prisoners who had served most of their terms were forced to work outside the prison in chains and without pay.

Staff at the prison confirmed they had received orders from the military government to use inmates as a means of creating income. The prison reportedly earns about 800 kyat per day for each inmate that works. The money is transferred into national funds, one official said.

“About 10 prisoners are going out to work every day . . . The money they earn is national property,” the official said.

The scheme has outraged local workers and labourers who said yesterday they found it harder to find work after the prisoners started offering cut price labour.

“The prison department offering inmates’ labour at cheap prices is making our daily business difficult,” a general labourer from Mandalay township said.

[Top](#)