

**Democratic Voice of Burma  
Political Prisoners News  
May - 2007**

- 
- Three more rights activists arrested** *May 03, 2007*
- Karenni rebels jailed for 10 years** *May 04, 2007*
- Ninth-grader recruited by Burmese military** *May 10, 2007*
- Activists face spate of arrests** *May 15, 2007*
- More activists arrested then released** *May 16, 2007*
- Insider says militia behind recent Burma arrests** *May 18, 2007*
- Su Su Nway hospitalized** *May 23, 2007*
- Solo protestor arrested in Myitkyina** *May 24, 2007*
- Editorial – Reaction to Daw Suu's detention critical** *May 26, 2007*
- Pro-military mob confronts Daw Suu supporters** *May 28, 2007*
- Eight detained protestors released** *May 29, 2007*

## Three more rights activists arrested

May 03, 2007

Human rights activists Ko Aung Kyaw Soe, Ko Aye Lwin and Ko Yin Kyi were reportedly arrested by the Burmese authorities yesterday in relation to charges of violating guest registration laws.

Ko Aung Kyaw Soe and Ko Aye Lwin from Irrawaddy Division's Thapaung township and Oak Pon village respectively, were arrested in Rangoon by officials who said they had failed to properly register as overnight guests in the former capital on May 1.

The Burmese military requires every person planning to stay at a friend or relative's house overnight, to register with local officials. Failing to do so can result in a variety of punishments ranging from fines to imprisonment.

A colleague of the two men, Ko Aung Zaw Oo, told DVB the men were taken from a friend's house at 3am yesterday morning, with the authorities saying they wanted to check that the activists had registered.

"It is said [the men who arrested them] are from the ward authority and the police station. They wore no uniforms," Ko Aung Zaw Oo said.

He said the two men had previously been told by the ward chairman to register on May 2 instead of May 1, despite the fact they would be staying at an unidentified Rangoon residence from the first day of the month.

"They deliberately trapped them and did a surprise arrest. It was a trap," Ko Aung Zaw said.

The third activist, Ko Yin Kyi, was arrested later the same day after going to the police station to check on the condition of his two colleagues.

News of the arrests comes just days after it was revealed that human rights activist Ko Myint Naing, who was savagely bashed by a group of about 100 people in Oak Pon village on April 18, had been arrested and was being sued by the village chairman who joined in the beating.

Villagers Ko Win, Ko Mya Sein, Ko Hla Shein, Ko Myint and Ko Kyaw Lwin from the surrounding area are also being sued for aiding Ko Myint Naing and fellow activist Ko Maung Maung Lay after the bashing. They face court on Friday after being denied bail yesterday.

[Top](#)

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## Karenni rebels jailed for 10 years

May 04, 2007

The joint secretary and two members of the Kayan New Land Party have been sentenced to 10 years in prison after allegedly being caught in possession of fire arms last month.

KNLP joint secretary Saw Lwin and the two party members, whose names have not been released, were reportedly arrested in Yamethin, Mandalay Divison on April 27 when a house they were staying in was raided by the police, according to sources close to the men.

“U Saw Lwin is in charge of gold mining in Yamethin and was told by his party to go and supervise a mine there,” a source told DVB.

Saw Lwin reportedly stayed at a friend’s house in Yamethin with a group of about 11 other men, including the two who were also arrested and sentenced. The house was raided by the township authorities at about 1am on April 28.

“They found five guns and some chemicals used to purify gold,” the source said.

Saw Lwin and his two colleagues were immediately arrested and sent to Mandalay prison. They were later sentenced to three years each in prison for violating Burma’s weapons act and seven years each for breaching the sensitive commodities act.

But sources close to the case said key pieces of evidence against the three men never turned up during their court hearing.

“A viss of purified gold, a digital camera and a pair of sunglasses worth around 100,000 kyat never turned up at the court for evidence,” a source told DVB on condition of anonymity.

The KNLP, which has a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese military, said yesterday they planned to appeal against the sentences.

[Top](#)

[Top](#)

---

## **Ninth-grader recruited by Burmese military**

*May 10, 2007*

A young boy aged between 14 and 15 from Rangoon's North Okkalapa township was forcibly recruited into the Burmese military last month after leaving his home to visit his aunt.

The boy, who can not be named, was taken off the street by a soldier from the 435th Infantry Regiment on April 23, according to his mother Daw Nu Nu Htway.

"[After they took him] we went to the military unit of that soldier but we weren't allowed to meet his commander. The guard at the gates told us that age didn't matter," Daw Nu Nu Htway said.

"We went to the recruitment centre . . . and it turned out our son was inside. We were able to send him some snacks and books and they let my son write us a letter back."

The boy remains in military custody and has not been allowed to see his parents, according to his family. It is not the first time a son of Daw Nu Nu Htway has been forcibly recruited into the military.

"Our older son once ran away from home when he was a ninth grader. He and his two friends arrived to Phayagyi train station in Bago and they were threatened by a soldier to join the army or else they would be sent into a prison," Daw Nu Nu Htway said.

"So they got frightened and had agreed to join the army. We followed to Bago immediately and requested their captain to let our sons go. They were let go after we had agreed to pay 20,000 kyats for each one of them."

The recruitment of child soldiers is unlawful under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and also violates child labour laws set down by the International Labour Organization. [Top](#)

[Top](#)

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## Activists face spate of arrests

*May 15, 2007*

Prominent Burmese rights activist Su Su Nway and a group of about 30 other campaigners were stopped and arrested by a military-backed mob during a peaceful prayer campaign today in Rangoon.

The confrontation between the activists and the group, reported to be made up of Union Solidarity and Development Association members, followed the arrest of about 11 activists who attended a prayer campaign session at about 8am this morning.

In a dramatic interview Su Su Nway spoke to DVB while she was being driven away from the scene of the protest in a police car.

"We are being taken in a car! We don't know where they are taking us. The video camera in which we stored all the footages of our campaign from the beginning until this morning was grabbed away by them," Su Su Nway said.

"They dragged us into the car. They said they were civilians."

In the past six months, Burmese political activists have staged a number of peaceful prayer campaigns for the release of detained democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

While there were few scuffles between activists and security officials in the past, the number of arrests appears to be on the rise.

Witnesses who saw the arrest of the 11 campaigners this morning at Rangoon's famous Shwedagon pagoda said they were grabbed by a large group of people claiming to be civilians.

"Arresting people who are peacefully praying is not such a kind of thing to do. No civilian in any country of the world has right to arrest someone else. We call for an immediate release of those prayer campaigners," said activist and eyewitness Phyu Phyu Thin. [Top](#)

[Top](#)

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## More activists arrested then released

*May 16, 2007*

A group of 15 more activists campaigning for the release of detained democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were arrested in Rangoon today before being released hours later.

The group of National League for Democracy youth members were reportedly staging a prayer campaign for the release of the party's leader at the Kyaikalo pagoda in Mingaladon

township when they were forcibly removed from the site by a large group of people in civilian clothing.

Ko Myo Min Soe, who was one of the 15 detained, said he was grabbed by the mob who stole his camera.

“They kept saying they were civilians but we could see walkie-talkies hanging from their wrists,” Ko Myo Min Soe said.

Members of the group said the 30 men who arrested and detained them failed to identify themselves, even after they were released.

A group of more than 30 people, including high-profile activist Su Su Nway, were also arrested yesterday after attending a prayer meeting for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They remain in detention.

The recent spate of arrests comes just weeks before Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s latest period of detention officially ends on May 27 and just days after a group of world leaders sent a letter to senior general Than Shwe urging him to free the Nobel laureate. [Top](#)

[Top](#)

---

## **Insider says militia behind recent Burma arrests**

*May 18, 2007*

A man who took part in the arrests of a group of Burmese activists, including Daw Su Su Nway, on Tuesday revealed today that the people’s militia, known as the Pyithu Swan Arr Shin, were responsible.

The man, who spoke to DVB on condition of anonymity, said that the militia group had been rounded up by the Insein Township Peace and Development Council one day before the activists were due to hold a prayer campaign and told to prepare for a “trip”.

“So on the next day at about 5am, we gathered up . . . Then we went to a bus-stop in Insein township in two trucks and waited there,” the source told DVB.

“Our duty was to stop them from coming to the pagoda and to advise them to go to some other pagodas and to arrange them transportation.”

The source, a retired Sector Peace and Development Council official from Insein township said that the group were not paid cash to arrest the group of 29 activists but that they were “treated at a teashop when the job was done.

“There were about 50 of us in two trucks. We were given a new title, Swan Arr Shin . . . They told us not to mention ourselves as Swan Arr Shin but as just civilians. We have to say what we were told,” the source from within the group said. “They have titled us Political/General informers.”

The source also said the group of militia was misled by the township officials when they were told the activists were planning to stage a serious riot.

“But they weren’t like that in reality. They were peaceful people,” he said. [Top](#)

[Top](#)

---

## **Su Su Nway hospitalised**

*May 23, 2007*

High-profile Burmese rights activist Su Su Nway has reportedly been hospitalised in Rangoon at a Muslim clinic on Mahabandoola Garden street.

Su Su Nway was arrested along with a large group of activists participating in a peaceful prayer campaign for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on May 15. She is reportedly still in the military's custody.

National League for Democracy spokesperson U Myint Thein said today the party had been informed that Su Su Nway was in hospital by activist Ko Khin Htun who was arrested after attempting to visit her today.

“He went to the Muslim charity hospital . . . to visit Ma Su Su Nway. Witnesses confirmed that he was taken away by a group of about five or six people. We assume he is being held at the Kyaikkasan detention center,” U Myint Thein said.

It is unclear why Su Su Nway has been admitted to hospital but some activists have suggested she may have been attempting to stage a hunger strike while in detention.

The Burmese government has yet to explain the reasons for the activist's arrest. [Top](#)

**Top**

---

## **Solo protestor arrested in Myitkyina**

*May 24, 2007*

Former political prisoner U Htun Lwin was arrested today in Myitkyina, the capital of Burma's Kachin State, after he staged a solo protest calling for the release of detained democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

U Htun Lwin, from Aye Can Tharyar, reportedly dressed in a prison uniform, shackled himself and waved a placard saying ‘Free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo and all political prisoners’.

Eyewitnesses told DVB that U Htun Lwin protested for about 20 minutes before being arrested by an unknown group of men. “He was all by himself. He staged the demonstration in a crowded area between two markets,” an onlooker said.

“Details of where he is now are still unknown. It is unclear who arrested him but some people in town say they saw a number of people and special police.”

U Htun Lwin's arrest comes as the number prayer campaigns and political protests increase across Burma, with the military arresting a number of activists. [Top](#)

**Top**

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## **Editorial – Reaction to Daw Suu's detention critical**

*May 26, 2007*

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's latest period of detention expires tomorrow and reports have already emerged that a military delegation has informed her of their decision to detain her for a further six months to one year.

As usual, most people predicted that this would be the outcome. The UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon and the EU have already released a statement condemning the military's decision. It seems we get our hopes up every year for nothing. Why should this year have been any different?

Well for one thing, Daw Suu's detention had received unprecedented levels of international attention in the past few weeks as the world watched closely to see what the military's next move would be.

The amount of politicians, activists and public figures that had urged the military to release Daw Suu in the past three days alone was staggering, not to mention the amount of people who have braved taking to the streets inside Burma.

This appears not to have achieved the results we were looking for but at the very least the military must have been feeling some kind of pressure to perform. You can also bet they are reeling from recent events inside the country.

Since the official opposition-led Free Daw Suu campaign was launched at the start of this month, it has gained serious momentum. Hundreds of people have turned out to pagodas around the country to pray for the NLD head and draw the disillusioned public's attention back to their elected leader.

While not necessarily indicative of the mood or sentiments of the entire people of Burma, this movement is significant. It's a long time since there has been enough political activity on the ground in Rangoon and other capitals in the country to make the military noticeably nervous. And they are. But they were obviously a little too nervous to be comfortable risking the consequences of Daw Suu's release.

The harassment yesterday of a group of campaigners wearing Daw Suu t-shirts and praying for her freedom at the six story pagoda was also indicative of the military's decision not to let international attention affect their stranglehold on power or their tactics.

They know that the eyes of some of the most influential politicians in the world are fixed on them, but it seems they don't really care. In fact, why would they? International pressure hasn't done much to change the situation in Burma so far.

The military has almost certainly had some tough talks over their next move on Daw Suu in the past few weeks, but their discussions were likely to have revolved around whether or not now was the right time, especially with the supposed end of the National Convention drawing near.

It is far less likely that they could have been quivering under the international spotlight and talking of trying to appease global opinion.

But even though Daw Suu has not been released, some small steps towards the type of momentum that moved her into a position of power in the 1990s have started. And the end of her latest period of detention has provided the opposition with a rare rallying cry.

How the political situation in Burma develops from here depends as much on the opposition's reaction to the military's decision on Daw Suu as it did on the decision itself.

[Top](#)

## **Pro-military mob confronts Daw Suu supporters**

*May 28, 2007*

A pro-military mob confronted more than 500 activists in Rangoon yesterday as calls for the release of detained democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi intensified.

Marking the 17th anniversary of the National League for Democracy's 1990 election win, the activists and politicians gathered at the NLD headquarters on Shwegondine road yesterday morning to call for national reconciliation and the release of all political prisoners in Burma.

They then attempted to march to Shwedagon pagoda for a prayer vigil wearing Daw Suu t-shirts, carrying placards and shouting slogans. But the military-backed mob, made up of Union Solidarity and Development Association members, township peace and development council officials and unidentified men in civilian clothing, blocked their path and started shouting for the activists to "back off."

88 Generation Students leader Ko Ko Gyi told DVB yesterday that the Bahan township chairman, who was standing among the mob, had yelled at him and the other protestors to stop trying to cause panic among civilians.

"After that he disappeared and there were only people with civilian clothing left at the scene. They started shouting swear words and rude things at us," Ko Ko Gyi said.

The situation reportedly became extremely tense as the opposition supporters hurled insults back at the pro-government group. One NLD member was reportedly grabbed by the military's supporters and dragged away as other activists and junta supporters took turns in shoving and goading each other.

The tension eased slightly when the group of activists decided to return to the NLD headquarters to hold a mass prayer vigil there instead. High-profile activist Min Ko Naing said he used the opportunity to rally the crowd and speak out against the government.

"[Their decision to block the road] gave us the chance to give speeches in front of the NLD headquarters. If they had let us go to the pagoda we would have just prayed and left," Min Ko Naing later told DVB.

A rare public display of contempt for the military ensued as Min Ko Naing shouted slogans and called on the activists to brave government retaliation.

"We have sacrificed a lot of lives. A lot of people have died on the streets. But are we the kind of people who would be scared by threats?" Min Ko Naing asked supporters, DVB recordings show.

The crowd responded by yelling, "No way! No Way!"

Min Ko Naing then shouted, "Any government authorities or groups in disguise may threaten us or take action against us for doing this. Are we ready to fight them with courage?"

An overwhelming “Yeah!” was the response.

After the crowd dissipated, reports emerged that officials from across Rangoon had attempted to arrest pockets of protestors with seven NLD members seized outside a guesthouse across town and three NLD members abducted from the Maggin monastery.

[Top](#)

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## **[Eight detained protestors released](#)**

*May 29, 2007*

Eight people, including elected member of parliament U Bala, who were arrested by officials on Sunday as protestors marched in Rangoon have been released.

Zin Ma Ma Htun, U Zaw Win and U Thaug Han, who were grabbed by officials from a teashop near the Maggin monastery, were released yesterday, according to protestor coordinator Ko Yazar.

“The three of them were dropped at the Maggin monastery where they were staying by the Ministry of Home Affairs,” Ko Yazar said.

He said U Thaug Myint, Ko Pauk, Ko Aung Htay and Ko Win Naing and U Bala, who were also arrested in separate incidents, had also been returned to their homes by officials.

U Zaw Win told DVB yesterday that after he was arrested by a group of men who refused to identify themselves, he was taken to the Kyaikkasan interrogation centre for questioning.

“I was questioned by three groups including the special police and the military security forces . . . I was kept there overnight,” U Zaw Win said.

“It is a very worrying situation when unknown people who call themselves ‘the people’ are violently harassing other people . . . A special police officer told me that even they had to be afraid of these unknown people.

“He said he didn’t know who had been giving them the orders and who had been carrying them out. He said one of his vehicles was mistakenly attacked by a group who thought that it was full of democracy supporters.”

While the eight activists and politicians have been released, more than 60 people who have been involved in protests in the past month remain in detention.

[Top](#)

---

[Top](#)

[Top](#)