



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

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Press Statement

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A New Year but the Same Injustice: Concerns for Dissidents in the Aftermath of Bombings

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) (AAPP) expresses its deepest condolences for those killed and injured in the bombings in Rangoon and in Kachin State during Thingyan (Burmese New Year). AAPP is concerned that the current bombings will lead to an increase in the harassment and arrest of political dissidents, as has occurred in the past. Reportedly, a few people have already been detained after the recent explosions.

Following previous bombings, such as those in 2005, 1996 and 1989, political activists have been falsely accused, tortured and unlawfully imprisoned for these crimes, in an attempt by the regime to damage the reputation of the NLD and other opposition groups.

In Burma, there is a well-established pattern of wrongful imprisonment of those who speak out against the regime, with the SPDC blaming political dissidents and democracy activists for crimes they did not commit.

"The scape-goating of political dissidents amounts to a serious abuse of the criminal justice system, prevents proper investigation and ensures the real perpetrators are not brought to justice" AAPP Joint Secretary Ko Bo Kyi said.

The tragic case of Thant Zaw and Nyi Nyi Oo, two NLD members wrongfully convicted of bombing a petroleum factory in July 1989, illustrates this travesty. In the absence of any evidence of involvement in the bombing, confessions were extracted under repeated and brutal torture and the two were sentenced to death for high treason and

murder¹. Despite a man confessing to the bombing and stating that the NLD members did not take part in the incident, Thant Zaw and Nyi Nyi Oo were never released. Twenty one years later Nyi Nyi Oo and Thant Zaw remain in prison for a crime they never committed.

“Those political prisoners, such as Nyi Nyi Oo and Thant Zaw, currently in prison on false criminal charges relating to bombings must be immediately released, their criminal records wiped and the suffering they have experienced, as a result of wrongful imprisonment and torture by the authorities, acknowledged and addressed” Ko Bo Kyi said.

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¹ They were sentenced under Penal Code, Section 122(1) – High Treason within the Union of Burma (punishable by death or transportation for life) and Penal Code, Section 302(1)(b) – Murder with premeditation (punishable by death). During an amnesty in 1996 their sentences were reduced to 30 years imprisonment.
