



## Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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Media Statement - for immediate release

May 16 2009

### **Defence lawyer's licence revoked in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi case**

[Mae Sot, Thailand] The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) has learned that lawyer U Aung Thein has had his licence to practise law revoked by the authorities, on grounds that he was not abiding by professional ethics.

U Aung Thein is one of the lawyers in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy legal advisory team. Together with her lawyers U Kyi Win and U Nyan Win, members of the NLD legal advisory team are currently preparing the defence case for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her two live-in party members, Daw Khin Khin Win and her daughter Daw Win Ma Ma.

The revoking of his licence to practise law is a blatant attempt by the regime to damage the defence for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her two live-in party members. U Aung Thein's close associate U Khin Maung Shein - not directly involved in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's case - has also had his lawyer's licence revoked. This is yet another example of the regime's harassment of lawyers who choose to defend pro-democracy activists. There are currently 11 lawyers in prison.

## **Background**

During the trials in October and November last year, lawyers U Aung Thein and U Khin Maung Shein were defending leading members of the 88 Generation Students group, as well as other high-profile activists like labour activist Su Su Nway, Cyclone Nargis relief volunteer Zarganar and monks' leader U Gambira. In agreement with their clients, they withdrew their legal representation in protest at the grossly unfair way in which the courts were handling the proceedings. On 7 November 2008 they were sentenced to four months' each under Section 3 of the Contempt of Court Act. The charges were announced on 30 October 2008. The lawyers appeared in court on 6 November, but were not in court to hear the sentence handed down to them on 7 November.

Speaking from his home to the Democratic Voice of Burma whilst waiting for the authorities to take him to jail on 7 November 2008, U Aung Thein said, "Our clients verbally notified Hlaing township judge that they have no faith in the court proceeding and do not want to be tried anymore. He [the judge] insisted that the defendants must not communicate with him directly but through their lawyers. So we just said to him what our clients asked and withdrew our representation. If we are held responsible for this, we have to stick our heads out. I have no plan to counter argue or appeal against the sentence. This kind of thing will continue to happen now and in the future. Most lawyers make a living by conventional means but new lawyers will emerge to defend political activists.... There will always be defenders of the truth. If I don't do it, other people who do will emerge."

Both U Aung Thein and U Khin Maung Shein were released on 6 March 2009 after completing their sentences. Since then, they had resumed their legal duties.

-ENDS-

AAPP

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Notes to editors:

1. U Aung Thein is a member of the NLD central legal advisory board. U Khin Maung Shein is a member of the Rangoon Division legal advisory board, but is not directly involved in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's case.
2. Democratic Voice of Burma - <http://www.dvb.no/english/news.php?id=1921>