



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

P.O Box 93, Mae Sot, Tak Province 63110, Thailand

e.mail: info@aappb.org website: www.aappb.org

Monthly Chronology February 2011

Summary of current situation

There are **2076** political prisoners in Burma. This is a decrease of **113** from last month's figure of **2189**. In February **19** political prisoners were released. The significant decrease, however, in this month's reported figure does not reflect events in the past month rather retrospective information AAPP has obtained. In order to ensure accuracy and credibility in our reporting **167**¹ detainees whose current whereabouts is unconfirmed were removed from the AAPP current political prisoner list. They are now on the unconfirmed political prisoner list. AAPP will strive to find up to date information on these political prisoners and update the database accordingly. AAPP also learned about an additional **71** political prisoners who were arrested and sentenced prior to February 2011, most of whom are detained in Taungoo prison. These political prisoners, forty of whom are ethnic Karen, were added to the current political prisoner list.

The total number of political prisoners is 2067

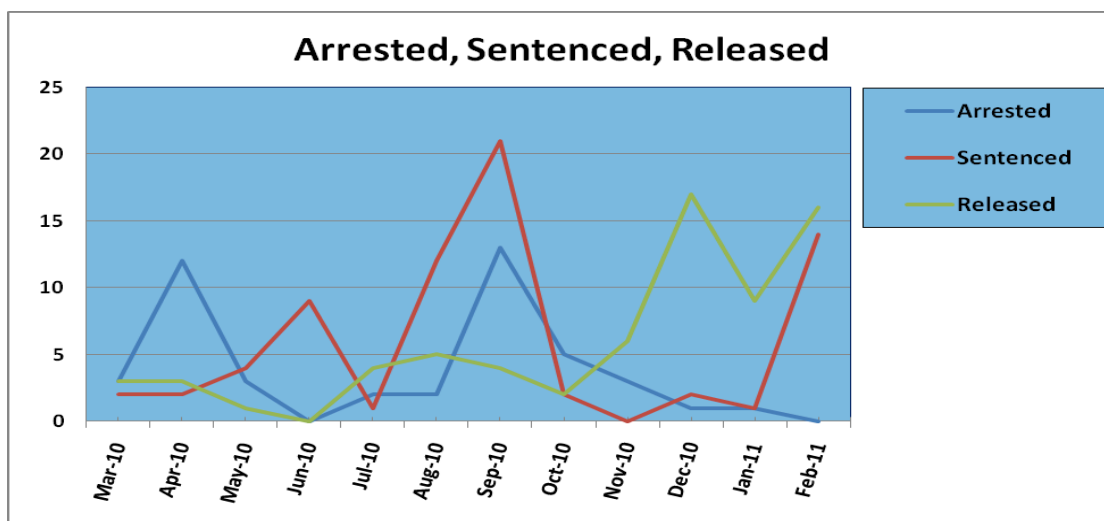
These prisoners include:	NUMBER
Monks	227
Members of Parliament	12
Students	267
Women	156
NLD members	374
Members of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters network	29
Ethnic nationalities	321
Cyclone Nargis volunteers	17
Teachers	24
Media activists	26
Lawyers	12
Labor activists	47
88 Generation Students	38
Doctors	8
Individual activists	624
In poor health	152

¹For 54 of these political prisoners their sentence had expired and they should have been released. We have removed them from the list until their current status is confirmed. For the other 113 we do not have enough information to confirm their whereabouts and are in the process of finding out more information. We have also removed them from the list until we can confirm their current status.

Since the protests in September 2007 leading to September's Saffron Revolution, a total of **846** activists have been arrested and are still in detention.

Monthly Trend Analysis

During the month of February **19** political prisoners were released, **14** political prisoners were sentenced, and **6** were transferred. Political prisoners continue to suffer the consequences of inhumane living conditions. At least **152** political prisoners are in poor health due to the harsh prison conditions, torture and transfers to remote prisons where there are no doctors, and the denial of proper medical care. In February AAPP learnt that **40** ethnic Karen had been arrested and sentenced prior to February 2011. Most of them were charged under 17(1) of the Unlawful Association Act.



Cases of ill treatment and torture reported this month were particularly alarming. Reports revealed that political prisoner, Kaung Myat Hlaing, was tortured for 10 days until he confessed to being involved in 'anti-government' campaigns and being a member of Best Fertilizer, a youth underground organization, which raises awareness on human rights violations committed by military regime. The confession obtained under torture was used to sentence him to an additional 10 years on top of his two year term. Phyo Wai Aung, wrongfully imprisoned for the 2010 water festival bombing in Rangoon, was placed in a dog cell as punishment for highlighting concerns about a violent criminal prisoner. A further 12 political prisoners were put in solitary confinement after releasing a statement welcoming Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release and the National League for Democracy's efforts for national reconciliation.

The health of Khun Tun Oo, detained Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Party (SNLD) is reportedly deteriorating. He is suffering from severe prostate problems and there are concerns it could develop into cancer.

Prison transfers continued in February. Democratic Voice of Burma reporter, Maung Maung Zeya, was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment and was transferred from Insein prison and to the remote Hsipaw prison in Shan State.

The topic of lifting sanctions on Burma is a controversial issue both inside the country and outside. In February, the National League for Democracy (NLD) announced that after much

research they had discovered that those affected by the sanctions were individuals linked with the military rather than the majority of Burma's citizens. In response to the NLD's efforts to endorse foreign sanctions the regime stated that Aung San Suu Kyi and her party were "going the wrong way," and would "meet their tragic end." This statement heightened concerns for Daw Suu's safety.

Torture

Political prisoner and blogger, Kaung Myat Hlaing age 22 years, was handed a further 10 year prison term, under the Electronics Act, on top of his two year sentence after authorities discovered that he had been involved in various campaigns calling for the release of Daw Suu and all political prisoners. He sentenced in a closed court inside Insein prison. His confession was obtained under torture. Speaking on conditions of anonymity a family member said, "He was interrogated for 10 days and authorities found out that he took part in the poster campaigns, sticking up posters on police and army trucks calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners. He was not allowed to sleep and also denied food and water during the 10-day interrogation."

Following the Saffron Revolution Kaung Myat Hlaing began to blog under the name of Nat Soe ('dark angel') and the authorities have been looking for him since. He was initially arrested in April 2010 and falsely accused of being involved in the Water Festival bombing, which killed 10 people and injured 168. He was originally charged under section 505/b (making statements conducive to public mischief and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

Treatment of prisoners and their families

Shan ethnic leader Khun Tun Oo, in Putao prison, is still denied proper medical care even though his health is deteriorating rapidly (see ethnic section for more information).

Political prisoner, Phyo Wai Aung, wrongfully imprisoned for the 2010 water festival bombing in Rangoon, was placed in solitary confinement. After witnessing a criminal prisoner beating other prisoners on a regular basis, he complained to the prison authorities. The abusive criminal is actually the 'prisoner-in-charge'. His position was allocated to him by the prison warden. Phyo Wai Aung described feeling very scared and unsafe living with such criminals some of whom are murderers. Rather than investigating and ending the abuse, the authorities punished Phyo Wai Aung. On 4 February, he was placed in the 'dog cell'; a punishment cell once used to house the military dogs. The conditions in these cells are worse than ordinary cells and prisoners are at real risk of torture there due to their isolated position. In relation to Phyo Wai Aung's case lawyer, Kyaw Ho, later stated, "The prison's jailer showed me the notice which said Phyo Wei Aung had violated the prison's regulations, interfered with the prison's management, incited other inmates and wrongly accused prison officials."

In February, news emerged that 12 political prisoners, from Taungoo prison released a statement on 15 January that welcomed the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the activities of the NLD in relation to their efforts for national reconciliation and democracy. In response to this the following political prisoners were placed in a punishment: Aye Swe, U Ghaw Thita aka Kyaw Shein, Aung Zay Phyo, Aung Aung, Mya Than Htike, Thein Htike Aung, Saw Myint Naing, Myo Myant aka Ko Yin, Myo Thant, Ye Kyaw Thu aka Pae Tae, Win Ko and Zaw Ye Win.

14 February

[AAPP has grave concerns for the safety of political prisoners detained with violent criminals \(AAPP\)](#)

13 February

['You're now on the dead list' \(Bangkok Post\)](#)

11 February

['Truckloads' of prisoners leave Insein \(DVB\)](#)

5 February

[Prisoners in Buthidaung Sent to work as Day Laborers \(Narinjara\)](#)

Prisoners Released

In February a total of 16 political prisoners were released. Among the 19 were five political prisoners from Buthidaung prison who had served their full sentences. The group was from the Taungup Township's National League for Democracy and are Ko Moe Nay Soe, Ko Than Htay, Ko Chite Maung Maung, Ko Maung Thet Thet, and Ma Ni Ni May Myint. They were arrested while staging a protest on the anniversary of the 8-8-88 uprising in 2008 wearing t-shirts with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's portrait and were sentenced to 2 years imprisonment charged under the Unlawful Act for Esteem and Unrest.

8 February

[5 Political Prisoners Released in Arakan \(Narinjara\)](#)

National League for Democracy

There are at least **374** members of the National League for Democracy party currently in prison. The family members of imprisoned father and son, U Tin Yu and Than Zaw Myint are reportedly struggling to survive. When the two men were arrested the responsibility of financially supporting the family fell on U Tin Yu's daughter, Thin Thin Yu. She is now working as a fish vendor to cover expenses for six family members including school fees and visits to their detained relatives. The NLD are providing some financial support which they are very grateful for. On a recent prison visit Thin Thin Yu discovered that her brother, Than Zaw Myint, had been beaten under interrogation and had wounds to his head, torso and ear. He is now suffering from back and ear pain which is exacerbated by the cold temperature. Her father, Tin Yu, is currently in bad health, since his transfer to Kale prison from Khanti prison and he has been hospitalized. "He has high blood pressure and gastric problems," said his daughter. "He is also blind so he has to stay in the hospital. I can't visit him every month. I can only go and see him once every three or four months."

On 2 February NLD member, Shwe Gyoe, who is serving a 3 year prison term charged under the Unlawful Association Act and Statements Conducive to Public Mischief, was transferred to Myitkyina from Insein prison. On the same day Sein Hlaing was also transferred to Bamaw from Insein prison. Sein Hlaing is currently awaiting trial.

In February, the NLD announced, after much research, their much awaited position on sanctions. Their research showed that those affected by the sanctions were individuals linked with the military regime rather than the majority of Burma's citizens. Sanctions were imposed on Burma to encourage an end to human rights violations and to discourage the military government from oppressing the people. In response to the NLD's efforts to push for maintaining sanctions the regime stated that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party were "going the wrong way," and would "meet their tragic end". On 20 February in state media the military regime called on the NLD to apologize to Burma's people for supporting sanctions asserting that the NLD's stance on sanctions was restricting the countries potential for development.

The NLD lottery project, which assists political prisoners and their families by providing financial and moral support, has sent a list of the prisoners' still needing assistance to Burma's

community living in the United States and Singapore knowing that some Burmese there would be willing to join the program. This was the first time that the NLD looked outside the country to seek support from the Burmese diaspora. The goal is not just to increase the level of financial assistance, but also to establish solidarity between overseas supporters of the democratic movement and prisoners who are suffering enormous hardships because of their commitment to the cause.

After two attempts to appeal to Burma's courts in relation to the dissolution of the NLD as well as an early appeal aimed at preventing the abolishment of the party members have decided to take the case to the UN Human Rights Council in an attempt to legally reinstate the party. The main points in the appeal focus on the lack of freedom of expression as a result of the party dissolution and the lack of law and order in the country.

21 February

[NLD's Prisoner Assistance Gains Momentum \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

[Families of Political Prisoners Barely Scraping By \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

10 February

[Do not lift economic sanctions: NLD \(Mizzima\)](#)

[NLD starts social networking for youth \(Mizzima\)](#)

8 February

[Aung San Suu Kyi's Group Calls for Talks to Review Burma Sanctions \(VOA\)](#)

[Alleging human rights violation, NLD to appeal to UN \(Mizzima\)](#)

88 Generation Students

There are at least **38** members of the 88 Generation Student group currently detained. On 10 February leading members of the 88 Generation Student group released a statement calling on the new Parliament to grant a general amnesty for all political prisoners. They stated: "In this new political dimension, they should get rid of all the old political dimensions. The old laws enacted in their old political dimension should not exist anymore".

11 February

[Free political prisoners now: 88 Generation leaders \(Mizzima\)](#)

Ethnic Nationalities

There are at least **321** ethnic nationalities held in prison. The health of detained Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, Khun Htun Oo, is reportedly deteriorating due to gout and severe weather conditions. He is 66 years of age and serving a 93 year prison sentence, in Puta-O prison in Kachin State. "Khun Tun Oo cannot sleep well and urinates at least 10 times per night," said SNLD spokesman Sai Leik. "His prostate is giving him problems. He is given no opportunity to see the doctor, and is constantly worried that his disease will manifest into cancer." A source close to Khun Tun Oo's family said he also had swollen legs. Khun Htun Oo was arrested in February 2005 after convening a meeting to discuss a political transition in Burma.

Six other Shan politicians including senior SNLD member, Sai Hla Aung, were involved in the meeting and were also arrested. Sai Hla Aung, aged 66 years, is just five years into a 79 year sentence and is also suffering from declining health. After a recent family visit to Kyaukphyu prison in Arakan state, where he is currently being held, his family revealed that he was losing hair, had sores on his arms and legs and that his body weight had dropped from 160lbs to 120lbs.

This month AAPP received reports of violence and abuse in room (3), Ward (1), Insein prison. Khaing Kyaw Moe, a member of the All Arakan Student Youth Congress (AASYC), feared for his life after a criminal prisoner violently attacked a prisoner he is friends with. The attack left the prisoner hospitalised. The violent prisoner routinely harasses and bullies Khaing Kyaw Moe, a source reveals, though Khaing Kyaw Moe does nothing to provoke him and never fights back.

Khaing Kyaw Moe was arrested, along with ten other young men, in September 2009 for links with an unlawful association. While the other members of AASYC are detained in special cell blocks, where political prisoners are usually held, Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe and Ko Kyaw Win remain in Ward (1), a large communal cell. The communal cells in Insein Prison house over one hundred prisoners and are grossly overcrowded. The conditions in these halls are dire and violence and abuse common. Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe is also sick and is suffering from piles and rectal bleeding. He is in desperate need of medical care, which he has not received.

“Both Khaing Kyaw Moe and Kyaw Win are worried they will be attacked. Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe said that anyone could attack him at any time. He is scared they will kill him. Despite repeatedly complaining to the jailer about the threats, nothing has been done to remedy the situation. We fear not only for his physical safety but also his mental wellbeing. This is psychological torture and while he is trying to cope he indicated that he is not sure how much longer he can stand it”, said Bo Kyi, Joint-secretary of AAPP.

On 21 February, eleven Karen youths appeared at a closed court in Insein prison accused of plotting a bomb attack. Their lawyer, Kyaw Ho, claims that he was not given a copy of their case report and has said that it is unclear which incident the court is referring to. Brother and sister, Saw Naing Win and Aye Aye New, are among the accused and also allegedly violated the Immigration Act and Unlawful Associations Act. The court failed to provide sufficient evidence linking them to the bomb attack but instead they were accused of having links to the NLD and Generation Wave. On 22 February, Thaung Htike Oo, Myo Min Thu, Yan Naung Soe and Thaw Zin, were each given sentences ranging from two to eight years, while Bo Bo Thein was handed an 11 year sentence. Charges handed to Bo Bo Thein included drug charges. His father, Han Thein, said that “there were no witnesses at all [to support the accusations], apart from the police report resulting from interrogation”.

25 February

[Five activists given lengthy jail terms \(DVB\)](#)

14 February

[AAPP has grave concerns for the safety of political prisoners detained with violent criminals \(AAPP\)](#)

10 February

[15 Arakanese Youths Participate in Meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi \(BNI\)](#)

[Calls mount for Shan leader's release \(DVB\)](#)

9 February

[Jailed SNLD Chairman in Ailing Health \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

Monks

There are at least **227** monks currently held in prison. Four nuns, released from Insein prison in late January, have been banned from re-entering nun-hood. Reports indicate that authorities have been pressuring their former ministries not to take them back. “We are still looking for a [lay sponsor] to ordain us and we are frustrated as no monastery will accept us,” said one of the nuns. “It’s like we are being exiled”. The nuns, Daw Pyinya Theingi aka Nyunt Nyunt, Daw Seittavati aka San San Htay, Daw Theingi aka Than Yi and Daw Thila Nadia aka Aye Aye, were

arrested following the Saffron Revolution in 2007 and sentenced to 4 years and 3 months in prison.

According to wikileaks, a cable from the US embassy in Rangoon during the 2007 Saffron Revolution revealed that General Than Shwe had ordered troops to crack down on Buddhist monks during the demonstrations and even shoot them if necessary. Third in command, General Thura Shwe Man, opposed the instruction but went ahead with the order “quietly advising regional commanders to do so with minimal bloodshed.”

23 February

[Bhikku Matr \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

11 February

[Than Shwe ‘ordered shooting of monks’ \(DVB\)](#)

2 February

[Buddhist nuns released, disrobed \(DVB\)](#)

Cyclone Nargis Volunteers

There are at least **17** Cyclone Nargis volunteers held in prison. British filmmaker, Rex Bloomstein, has produced a documentary film, titled “*The Prison Where I Live*”, which looks at the life of renowned comedian and political prisoner, Zarganar. Part of the research for the documentary took place in 2007 prior to Zarganar’s arrest. Rex Bloomstein spent two days in Rangoon interviewing him. Zarganar was later arrested in 2008 for his efforts to distribute aid following Cyclone Nargis and criticizing the government's slow response to the crisis in foreign media. He was sentenced to 59 years, later reduced to 35 years. The film highlights how Zarganar dared to speak out against the regime and his use of humour to fight against repression.

12 February

[Documentary Highlights Plight of Imprisoned Burmese Comedian \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

4 February

[Zarganar documentary screened in India \(Mizzima\)](#)

Journalists, Bloggers and Writers

There are currently at least **26** media activists held in prison. The military regime continues to punish journalists who pose a threat to their power. Democratic Voice of Burma video reporter, Maung Maung Zeya, was sentenced to 13 years, on 4 February, under the Unlawful Association Act, Immigration Act and Electronics Act. Maung Maung Zeya was originally arrested for attempting to cover the aftermath of the Water Festival bombing in April 2010. His son, photographer Sithu Zeya, was also arrested for his efforts to cover the incident and was charged on similar accounts in December 2010. Sithu Zeya was reportedly tortured and placed in solitary confinement following sentencing. Towards the latter part of February news emerged that Maung Maung Zeya had been removed from his cell in Insein prison. He has since been transferred to remote Hsipaw prison in Shan State.

23 February

[Jailed DVB reporter taken from prison \(DVB\)](#)

9 February

[Another journalist gets a long jail sentence \(RSF\)](#)

7 February

[DVB video journalist gets 13 years \(DVB\)](#)

3 February

Young blogger gets 12-year jail term (DVB)

Women

There are at least **156** women political prisoners currently detained. National League for Democracy member, Htet Htet Oo Wai, is suffering from poor health. She is three years into a five year sentence in the remote Putao prison, in Kachin state, where there is no doctor. Recent reports reveal she has been denied family visits for at least 3 months now. Htet Htet Oo Wai's daughter, Aye Chan Pyae, recently traveled to Putao prison to visit her mother but was turned away. "I didn't get to see [her]; she is banned from receiving visits as she's in solitary confinement for allegedly breaking some prison rules for making noises. She isn't allowed to accept parcels either," said Aye Chan Pyae. "My mother's health is not good...she is losing feeling in her left leg." It can take up to five days to reach the prison from Rangoon, where her family live. Htet Htet Oo Wai has been in solitary confinement since 19 January 2010.

9 February

Ill political prisoner denied visits (DVB)

Human Rights Defenders & Promoters Network

There are at least **29** Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Network currently detained. There is no news to report in February.

Labour Activists

There are at least **47** labour activists currently detained. There is no news to report in February.

Students

There are at least **267** students held in prison. A group of seven political prisoners, believed to have ties with the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), had their sentences extended for a second time. The group was arrested in 2008 when the police allegedly caught them with gunpowder. They were subsequently charged under the Explosives Act and sentenced to between 20 and 38 years imprisonment. In September 2010, they were all accused of being involved in a 2004 bombing at Zawgyi House Restaurant in Rangoon and the Panorama Hotel bombing in Rangoon in 2005. They were all handed an additional 10 year prison term. This month they were accused of being involved in the Shwe Mann Thu bus terminal bombings, which took place in 2005, and once again handed additional sentences ranging from seven to ten years.

Kyaw Zwa Lin, 25 years old, a member of the ABSDF already serving a 58 years sentence in Insein prison was allegedly forced into making a confession that resulted in an additional 10 years added to his prison term. "Kyaw Zwa Linn was forced to give his fingerprint on an empty paper," a source said. "This is worrying for political prisoners' security – they don't know what [the authorities] will do next with those [fingerprints]." It is, however, unclear what he was made to confess to. Kyaw Zwa Lin was originally sentenced to 38 years, in 2008, under the Explosives Act. He was given a further 20 year sentence two years later and now an additional 10 years.

28 February

Jailed activist 'signs empty paper' (DVB)

14 February

'Activists' to serve up to 55 years (DVB)

Lawyers

There are at least 12 lawyers detained in prison. There is no news to report this month.

Individual Activists

There are **624** individual activists remain in prisons.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The United States expressed its concerns for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's safety after a threatening statement in The New Light of Myanmar following the release of NLD's sanctions policy. "We remain concerned about Aung San Suu Kyi's safety and security. This is a fundamental responsibility of Burmese authorities to ensure her safety and that of all Burmese citizens," said US State Department Spokesman P J Crowley. He went on to say; "If you look at history, there have been times where she has been released and then they found a way to bring her again under house arrest...We hope that with her release, she's able to do what she wants to do, which is reconstitute her political party as part of the process of opening up civil society within Burma."

On 22 February Canada's prestigious Carleton University honored Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with a *Doctor of Laws honoris causa, in absentia*. The award serves to recognize her efforts to strive for democracy, human rights and ethnic conciliation through peaceful means. In response to the news Daw Suu said; "It gives me great pleasure to thank the University of Carleton for the honorary degree of law which they are conferring on me. I have been aware of the great work the students of the university have done to help the movement for democracy in Burma."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also met with International Labour Organization Executive Director, Guy Ryder, where she learnt of their expansion plans and the mandate they presented to the Burmese regime. The ILO expansion projects include protecting labour rights and interests and advocating for the freedom to form trade unions.

In early February, during the Egypt protests, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi expressed her support for the demonstrators and encouraged them to stay strong.

25 February

[Aung San Suu Kyi Notes Parallels between Middle East and Burma \(VOA\)](#)

[Suu Kyi supports expansion of ILO in Burma \(Mizzima\)](#)

24 February

[Suu Kyi's determination to peacefully defy dictatorship remains unchanged \(Mainichi Japan\)](#)

23 February

[Canadian University Honors Suu Kyi \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

14 February

[U.S. criticizes Myanmar government threat on Suu Kyi \(Reuters\)](#)

[Burma Warns Aung San Suu Kyi to Avoid 'Tragic End' \(VOA\)](#)

[Suu Kyi Praises Egyptian Army \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

13 February

[Rule of law necessary for unity: Suu Kyi \(Mizzima\)](#)

1 February

[Suu Kyi backs Egypt protestors \(DVB\)](#)

Key International Developments

In relation to the Universal Periodic Review on Burma, that took place on 27 January 2011, the Hong Kong based Asia Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) has accused the regime of submitting a

fictional report. “Despite the meticulous and professional documentation submitted from numerous credible sources to the UPR process, the Government of Myanmar persisted with its usual approach, treating the process not as an opportunity for dialogue but as an opportunity for the making of fiction,” it said. They added “It’s just a showpiece and there is no freedom for anybody – no one is allowed to speak or organize themselves around an issue, and in terms of [access to] food, water, and so on, Burma’s situation are among the worst in Asia.”

Between 12 and 15 February prominent human rights activists and advocacy groups gathered in Prague to talk about the issues inside Burma. The groups called on the EU to put pressure on the regime to take meaningful steps towards democratic reform, maintain sanctions on Burma and provide financial support to civil society groups both inside and outside the country and increase humanitarian aid to the Thai/Burma border. In relation to encouraging dialogue between Burma’s stakeholders the European Burma Network (ENB) stated; “The EU must commit itself to doing all in its power to facilitate such dialogue, prioritizing the release of all political prisoners, and a nationwide ceasefire, as key benchmarks as part of the dialogue process”.

In February UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon called on the regime to open up to opposition parties during the formation of the new government in hope that his suggestion would mark the first steps to political change in Burma and a more inclusive civilian government represented by all parties and progressing towards a democratic transition. The top US diplomat in Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi have begun talks in relation to the type of aid the US can offer Burma. Talks have also commenced between the US and Burma’s new regime with regards to aid assistance.

25 February

[UN says Burma ‘a regional burden’ \(DVB\)](#)

24 February

[US in Burma aid talks with Aung San Suu Kyi \(BBC\)](#)

22 February

[Burma’s report to UN ‘is fictional’ \(DVB\)](#)

16 February

[Burma Activists at Prague Conference Call for EU Action \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

8 February

[Reviewing Burma’s Review \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

7 February

[UN chief hails ‘important step’ in Burma](#)

4 February

[Belgium Supports Burma UN Commission of Inquiry \(Mizzima\)](#)

3 February

[US says no to easing sanctions on Burma \(Australia Network News\)](#)

Other news

Further news emerged that prisoners had been taken from Buthidaung Prison in Arakan State, in January, to work as day laborers. Thirty of these individuals are believed to be producing stone for a railway that is being constructed, the other 50 have been forced to work in salt production fields and army-owned shrimp farms. Those who could afford to pay off the authorities were able to avoid the forced labor; "the prison authority asked for at least 70,000 to 80,000 kyats per prisoner if they did not want to go work in the two townships. If they were unable to pay the amount asked, the prison authority sent them to the work sites Ponna Kyunt and Mraybon Townships in Arakan state."

On 8 February reports revealed that five trucks full of inmates left Insein prison. It is widely believed that these prisoners were taken to conflict zones in Karen State. Prisoners were taken out of Insein prison last month, reportedly to act as porters on the frontline.

Sources from Military Affairs Security department have revealed that two foreigners, working as volunteers at a private school in Rangoon, have reportedly been arrested on suspicion of being CIA agents. The two individuals were arrested during the third week of February. However, details of their arrest and current situation are yet to be confirmed.

On 3 February, independent member of Burma's new Parliament, Thein Nyunt, submitted a proposal to the Speaker of the Upper House requesting that all Burmese citizens living in exile be granted an amnesty and allowed to return without fear of punishment if they returned within 90 days of a given date. Thein Nyunt also highlighted that he will push for the release of all political prisoners, "We need to do what we can to free the country's political prisoners."

28 February

[Burma Arrests Two Foreigners for Spying: Sources \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

11 February

['Truckloads' of prisoners leave Insein \(DVB\)](#)

5 February

[Prisoners in Buthidaung Sent to work as Day Laborers \(Narinjara\)](#)

4 February

[Opposition MP Calls for Amnesty for Exiles \(Irrawaddy\)](#)

Conclusion

Political prisoners continue to face an array of rights violations. Torture, ill-treatment, and the denial of family visits and inadequate health-care are ongoing and systematic and used intentionally to punish and weaken political prisoners. Torture was used this month to force Kaung Myat Hlaing to confess to being involved in 'anti-government' campaigns. Amongst other methods of torture, he was subject to sleep deprivation and the denial of food and water during the 10-day interrogation.

The policy of prison transfers to remote prisons continued this month. Six political prisoners, musician Win Maw, Zaw Min aka Boung Boung, Zayar Oo, Ko Ko Gyi aka Thein Than Tun Maung Maung Latt and Maung Maung Zeya, were transferred to remote prisons in February. The authorities did not inform their families of the transfers. Transfers are a deliberate strategy employed by the regime to breakdown the resolve of political prisoners by removing the support provided to them by their families. The family of Shan ethnic leader Khun Tun Oo is unable to visit him regularly because the prison is so far from their home. At least 152 political prisoners are in poor health due to the harsh prison conditions, transfers to remote prisons where there are no doctors, and the denial of proper medical care.

This month political prisoners, including Htet Htet Oo Wai, were denied the right to family visits. The ban on family visits, along with solitary confinement, the denial of medical care and the transfer of political prisoners to remote prisons far away from their families has devastating consequences and in the case of Burma's political prisoners amounts to torture.

Another tactic, which can amount to torture, is the practice of putting political prisoners in the same cells with violent criminal prisoners. It is of particular concern when the prison authorities allow the criminal prisoners to intimidate and bully the political prisoners. The authorities have used this 'divide and rule' tactic since 1988. A hierarchical system of power develops among the prisoners. The criminals are often used by the authorities to threaten, intimidate and beat

political prisoners, as evidenced in the case brought to AAPP's attention this month of Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe, a member of the All Arakan Student Youth Congress. In a similar incident rather than investigating and ending such abuse, the authorities punished political prisoner, Phyto Wai Aung, for reporting such behaviour. On 4 February, he was placed in a 'dog cell'.

Both Ko Khaing Kyaw Moe and Phyto Wai Aung indicated fearing for their life in this unsafe environment. Their concerns are well founded. In past cases, violent criminals have beaten to death political prisoners in full view of the prison guards. Such crimes are never investigated as the tragic story of NLD member, U Min Tun Wai illustrates. On 29 May 2005, U Min Tun Wai died in Moulmein prison only five days into his sentence. His death resulted from severe torture and the events that preceded it are horrific. The torture was not inflicted by prison guards or wardens but criminal prisoners assigned by the prison authorities to beat and abuse him. He was forced to lie face down and his arms and legs were tied behind his back with a rope. He was repeatedly beaten, kicked and punched in the head by other prisoners. He was beaten this way until he died. The prison authorities ordered the prisoners in charge not to discuss the case. Tin Maung Ohn, a jailer who served as a duty officer that night, claimed that Min Tun Wai tried to climb the rafters in the ward and had fallen on his face, which caused the wounds and bruises on his body. An independent investigation into his death was never carried out. In Burma, prisoners and their families have no effective complaint mechanism to seek redress, granting prison authorities total impunity.