



RELEASE OVER 2200 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!

“Only democracy is appropriate for freedom. This is the only way to peace.”

(Gen. Aung San, Independence Leader of Burma)

The release of all political prisoners, those who were imprisoned because of their fight for democracy, is the responsibility of all of the people of Burma who love freedom and peace.

AAPP's motivation for translating the report from Burmese to English:

The report, "*Release Over 2200 Political Prisoners NOW!*" was released on 1 January 2011 by 12 groups working to promote democracy, human rights and national reconciliation, inside Burma. In a country like Burma, the authors of this report face the threat of arrest and imprisonment, simply for researching and writing this report. Despite this risk, they endeavored to have it published. For this reason, AAPP felt it vital to translate the report from Burmese to English and release it internationally.

The report details the situation of Burma's more than 2200 political prisoners languishing behind bars. Not only does the report highlight the political prisoner situation, but it goes further, emphasizing the importance of the release of all political prisoners to current and future political situation in Burma.

The report argues, "***[t]he release of all political prisoners, those who were imprisoned because of their fight for democracy, is the responsibility of all of the people of Burma who love freedom and peace.***" For this reason, it is the responsibility of all people in Burma to work for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

The report also reminds everyone that "***[t]he existence of over 2200 political prisoners in prisons inside Burma clearly highlights that all people in Burma are still not free***" and that "***[t]he release of all political prisoners is the very first step for national reconciliation.***" Furthermore, the report warns the perpetrators of these abuses that the arbitrary arrest and detention of people for peacefully exercising their basic civil and political rights is, in itself, a crime.

By detailing the unlawful nature of the arrest and detention of political activists, the torture they are subjected to during interrogation, the secret court trials, and lack of due process, the report draws attention to the absence of the rule of law in Burma. It also shows that the abuse and torture does not stop after the interrogation period. Once political activists are transferred to prison they face a number of challenges and a cruel and often life threatening prison environment. The family members of political prisoners also suffer and this report highlights the hardship they endure.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) translated the report from Burmese into English to raise awareness at the international level, including at the UN Human Rights Council, and with international organizations working for human rights and democracy in Burma, about the political prisoner situation in Burma. It is also a way of honoring the bravery of those individuals working to promote human rights issues inside the country and the sacrifice made by the more than 2,200 still in prison for their efforts in the fight for freedom and democracy in Burma.

Tate Naing

Secretary

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

The existence of over 2200 political prisoners in prisons inside Burma clearly highlights that all people in Burma are still not free.

The arrest and detention of political activists is a crime.

The release of all political prisoners is the very first step for national reconciliation.

RELEASE OVER 2200 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!



Notorious Insein Central Prison in which political prisoners are languished under successive military dictators

PART I

NO FREEDOM

1

Even though Burma gained independence from colonial rule 63 years ago, the country and its people have remained under military jackboots. A handful of military generals and their thugs and economic tycoons have a monopoly over the benefits of independence, which General Aung San, generations of politicians, and all ethnic nationalities in Burma sacrificed much to gain for the country.

In fact, independence is a basic civil right, which all citizens of a country are entitled to enjoy equally.

U Nu, late former Prime Minister, at the Independence Ceremony on the 4 January 1948 said,

“The independence we gained is not for a social class, but for farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, students, government employees and even revolutionists; everyone at every level because independence was gained by a united effort and from the sacrifices of all people.”

However, for the people of Burma, not only are they unable to enjoy the fruits of independence, but they lost their freedom, suffer from increasing economic hardship and their dignity eroded under the military dictatorship.

2

In 1962, General Ne Win led a coup, dissolved the parliamentary system and ruled Burma under a one-party dictatorship. As a result, Burma became a Least Developed Country. In 1988 the Burmese Socialist Programme Party was ousted during the 8888 pro-democracy uprising, however, another group of military generals took power with much bloodshed and have been in power for over 20 years, first under the name of State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and then as State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Under the rule of successive military dictators, the sovereignty of the people of Burma has diminished rendering independence meaningless.

People in Burma cannot travel freely, they face numerous restrictions, are forcibly relocated from their land and their property destroyed. People are even required to inform the authorities if someone stays overnight at their house; in their own motherland, which their ancestors fought hard for.

Furthermore, in Chin and Kachin states, Christian people do not have any freedom of religion; churches and religious buildings are under threat of destruction. Currently, a historic and ancient Muslim graveyard in Pegu is being destroyed. The religious ceremonies of Buddhist monks are also restricted, and even participants in donation ceremonies face harassment.

The Military regime uses a divide and rule tactic to deal with the Ethnic groups.

Through the military regime's manipulation Kokang armed groups attack fellow Kokang armed groups, Karens armed groups attack fellow Karen armed groups, and armed conflict in the ethnic areas intensifies due to the military regime's policies, while at the same time working with ethnic political parties who participate in the 2010 elections.

There is no freedom of expression.

Under the control of the Censorship and Scrutiny Board, the slaughterhouse of Burmese journalists, media is suppressed and journalists cannot report the truth.

Recently, nine weekly news journals were banned from publishing because they published about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Furthermore, Burmese performance groups were ordered to perform in front of the board first in order to gain permission to perform publicly.

Human trafficking is a serious problem; children are trafficked and forced into the army as child soldiers. Forced labor is routinely practiced throughout the country in many different forms.

Artists and celebrities are even forced to participate in propaganda based TV series, movies and music albums.

3

It is tragic, how different the current situation in Burma is from the situation imagined by Burma's founding fathers. The people are denied their basic human rights, including civil and political rights, the rights of children and women, student rights, the rights of workers and farmers, and these rights are routinely violated by the regime.

Such a lack of freedom, as is the case with Burma, happens when there is no development or democracy.

The relationship between freedom and democracy is closely intertwined, as independence leader Gen. Aung San described in August 1945, at the 4th Conference of Leaders:

"We need to make sure there is no ism like fascism in our country. It is possible that authoritarianism, racism, militarism, feudalism, warlordism can emerge and if any ism in which rulers oppress people or rule without the consent of people, then democracy cannot develop and similar isms of oppression will take root in Burma. Then, people inside Burma cannot enjoy freedom. Thus, we need to make sure democracy is developed in Burma and establish an independent Burma with such a system. If we cannot do that, the people of Burma will suffer. Only democracy is appropriate for freedom. This is the only way to peace. So, we need to focus on democracy."

The existence of over 2200 political prisoners, imprisoned for their struggle to end authoritarianism and promote democracy, is evidence that the people of Burma, living under military servitude, are still not free.

Part II

HELL BEHIND PRISON WALLS

On September 18, 1988, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) led by Gen. Saw Maung and Gen. Than Shwe took power and brutally cracked down on the pro-democracy uprising. Since then, democracy and political activists, ethnic nationalities and anyone who dares to speak out against the military regime's rule face arbitrary arrest and imprisonment.

(1) Arrest

The military regime and its security forces violate their own laws and use draconian laws to arrest those considered in opposition to the regime. The security forces arrest dissidents without arrest warrants and without informing them of the reason for their arrest. During arrests, they search houses and leave family belongings damaged, seize property without warrant, physically violate dissidents in front of their family members, and even harass and threaten families who often have no involvement in any political activities. When authorities cannot find get the person they want, family members are taken to interrogation centers as hostages. When dissidents are arrested away from home, family members are not informed of the arrest. Furthermore, during arrests, USDP members and members of Swan Arr Shin, who do not have any authority to arrest people, arrest dissidents, beat them, and physically abuse them. Sometimes the authorities misuse criminal laws when they cannot produce any evidence of a political crime and, for example, will charge dissidents with theft.

(2) Interrogation

When security forces interrogate dissidents, detainees are denied adequate food and water for long periods of time and are interrogated throughout the day and night, without a break, by many interrogators who work in rotation. During interrogation, detainees are subjected to torture including: forced to stay in squatting positions, hung upside down, blindfolded the entire time, forced to take off their clothes and remain naked throughout the interrogation on, burnt with cigarettes and hot wax on their genitals, electrocuted, beaten on their feet, verbally abused and beaten all over their head and body. Some detainees do not survive the brutal torture. When detainees are tortured to death authorities lie to family members, claiming the detainee died from a disease or a heart attack. Furthermore, some detainees are tortured to confess to a crime they did not commit because when interrogators find out that they arrested the wrong person they do not want to admit that, so they force a confession instead. Rather than solving problems or finding out the truth in a case, authorities deliberately torture political dissidents and imprison them, regardless of their innocence.

(3) Trial

When dissidents are put on 'trial', they are denied all legal rights to a fair trial, such as the right to legal assistance and a defense lawyer, and the right to call defense witnesses. Furthermore, prosecutors use confessions forced under torture as evidence, and use the wrong charges in attempt to imprison dissidents with long sentences. The trials are held *in-camera*, away from the public; family members are not allowed at the court hearing, and often in political cases the dissident is tried very quickly and the case is rushed through the court without due process. The media is not allowed to cover any political related cases. When dissidents are charged, the period when they were held under detention is not included in their sentence, a breach of Burmese domestic law. In addition, dissidents are charged with a number of different and irrelevant charges to ensure they are imprisoned for a long time. Magistrates cannot follow or are not allowed to follow the legal system; instead, they have to follow instructions and orders from the military and police intelligence forces. Consequently, the people of Burma have no trust in the legal system, or the officers of the law.

(4) Prison Life

Soon after being charged and imprisoned, most political prisoners are then transferred to remote prisons around Burma. When transferred, political prisoners are iron-shackled, handcuffed, and treated like common criminal prisoners. When they reach the prison, they are blindfolded and beaten as they enter the prison, their belongings are taken away, and they are kept in iron-shackles for a long time. Political prisoners are also placed in solitary confinement, a form of mental torture, and communication with each other is strictly prohibited. Some criminal prisoners are assigned to superior positions and are deliberately allowed to torture, attack and harass political prisoners.

In terms of prison health care, many prisons do not have prison doctors, and where prisons have a doctor, there is no adequate care, except for minor ailments such as colds and headaches. When political prisoners need to be transferred to hospitals outside of the prison, they have to wait for a long time to get permission from various levels of authorities and many political prisoners die while waiting for permission to go to hospital. There is not enough medicine in prison so whatever disease prisoners suffer from, they are provided with painkillers. Due to the lack of prison health care, prisoners need to rely on medical support from their families, however, a prison doctor's prescription is still required if prisoners are to receive medicine from their families. Prison authorities often arbitrarily restrict the use of medicine even when the prison doctor has written a prescription. Political prisoners are not given adequate time for physical exercise outside of their cells. Political prisoners are allowed out of their cell to wash for half an hour a day at the most; an impediment to the health and welfare of prisoners. Contrary to the military regime's propaganda, political prisoners, unlike ordinary prisoners, are not allowed to play cane ball or basketball.

The rice in prison is of very low quality and inedible. Prisoners are entitled to meat once a week but the meat is boiled, often undercooked and well below the standard mentioned in the regime's Jail

Manual. Prisoners are also given watery bean soup, vegetable soup and muddy fish paste do not meet prisoners basic nutritional needs. Therefore, prisoners rely on food from their families. Without this outside food source, no one would survive the excruciating prison life. The number of political prisoners in poor health has grown steadily due to malnutrition, maltreatment and inadequate health care. Prison authorities do not provide any mattress or mosquito nets even in malaria areas, and even family support of mosquito nets is not always allowed. Prisoners face the constant threat of malaria, Hepatitis B, HIV and other contagious diseases. There is no clean water for cleaning, washing and bathing in most of the prisons and in many there is no clean drinking water. Prison doctors also face pressure from the military intelligence and prison authorities to not perform medical treatments privately.

Regarding education, political prisoners are not allowed to study or take exams to get diplomas or degrees while in prison, which was allowed under the British colonial system. Even though the right to read is allowed, political prisoners cannot easily get books. Some English books and political books are banned. Political prisoners have to get books during family visits, and they can only get propaganda journals, newspapers and magazines from the prison libraries. Political prisoners are not allowed to listen to the radio, though in some wards prisoners are allowed to watch TV.

The military regime's systematic transfer of political detainees to remote prisons far from their families, where there are often no doctors and where temperatures are extreme, serves as a form of torture for both political prisoners and their families, and has resulted in the death of far too many political activists. Such transfers has a significant impact on the families and limits the frequency with which families can visit their detained relatives due to the high travel costs incurred and poor infrastructure. Transport to these remote prisons is frequently unreliable and can take days. The transferring of political prisoners from the same households to different prisons goes further to highlight the intentional and cruel nature of this strategy.

In many cases, the authorities prevent family members from seeing their loved ones even after they have traveled a long way to remote jails at great expense. Those who are granted visitation rights are usually allowed a mere 15 minutes. According to Burma's jail manual, detainees are entitled to a family visit once every two weeks. In reality, political prisoners are granted a family visit once a month but this only includes immediate family members on the household list. The authorities restrict political prisoners and their family members from talking about politics during the visit.

Family members who submit complaints to the authorities relating to the mistreatment and torture of their loved ones are at risk of intimidation and even imprisonment. When family members deliver supplies to their loved ones in remote prisons, it can take such a long time that once the prisoners receives the supplies they have gone bad and are inedible. Political prisoners are allowed to write to family members though everything they write is censored. Communication among friends and in particular other political prisoners detained in other prisons is strictly prohibited.

Unlike ordinary prisoners, political prisoners are never granted a reduced sentence. In many cases political prisoners are arbitrarily held for months after their sentence has been served with no

explanation. Some face further arbitrary charges and have their sentences extended, or they are re-arrested on their way home shortly after being released.

If political prisoners dare to question or argue with prison authorities they are hooded, beaten, iron shackled, transferred and then placed in solitary confinement, where they are denied a shower and are prevented for emptying their toilet bucket for weeks. When political prisoners stage hunger strikes, prison authorities commonly cut drinking water to punish them. Prison authorities also deliberately delay medical treatment for such political prisoners. Sometimes, political activists who are charged under non-political laws are transferred to forced labor camps like common criminals. Due to inhuman prison conditions, mistreatment and psychological and physical torture many political prisoners suffer from mental break downs and are frequently left permanently scarred from the experience of imprisonment.

Difficulties of family members

- A. Financial difficulties for prison visits; the cost of travel, accommodation, food, medical supplies, money and books for political prisoners.

- B. Sometimes elderly family members are left at home but they have no companions to travel with them on the long journeys, alternatively only one person is at home and they are unable to leave their children alone in the house.

- C. Families are provided with no information about who to contact about their detained relative or how to file a complaint regarding mistreatment, violence or issues relating to prison visits.

- D. It is difficult for political prisoners to provide financial assistance to their children and ensure they have access to education and health care particularly if political prisoners' parents are no longer around or elderly.

The above list serves to highlight examples of the difficulties political prisoners and their families face, and is in no way exhaustive. Burma's Jail Manual is disregarded by the regime and prison superintendents exercise their own power, therefore, the rules and regulations differ from one prison to another depending on the superintendent in charge of the prison. It must, however, be noted that there are some prison authorities and wardens who possess sympathy for political prisoners and exercise respect for them and we appreciate their kindness.

Information about prisons and political prisoners**Table of the current number of political prisoners**

Category	Male	Female	Total
Political Prisoners	2028	175	2203
Sangha (Monks)	256 Monks	6 Nuns	262
Students	264	21	285
NLD Members	372	36	408

Currently in prison

Poor Health	Male 129	Female 13	Total 142
Death in Custody	Male 142	Female 4	Total 146

Table of General Amnesties

Year	Month	Total release	Political Prisoners	Percentage
2004	Nov/Dec	14318	60	0.42%
2005	July	400	341	85.25%
2007	November	8585	20	0.23%
2008	September	9002	9	0.10%
2009	February	6313	31	0.49%
2009	September	7114	127	1.79%
	Total	45732	588	1.29%

The longest prison term

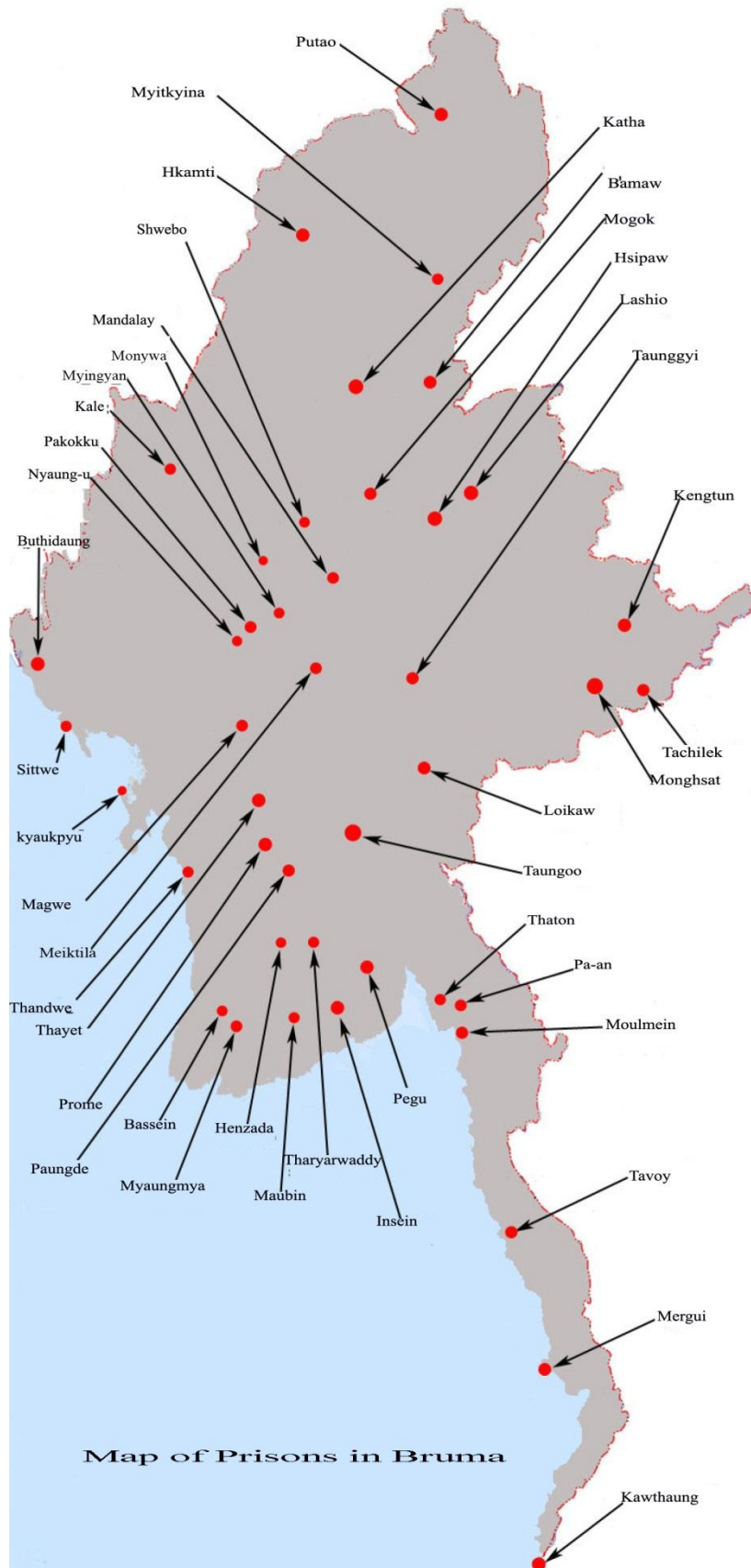
Gen. Hso Ten	Shan Ethnic Leader	106 years
Bo Min Yu Ko	ABFSU member ¹	104 years

Remote Prisons (Centering Rangoon)

Most remote	Putta-O, Khamti
Very remote	Myitkyina, Katha, Bamao, Kalay, Kawthaung
Remote	Sittwe, Buthidaung, Nyaung Oo, Pakokku, Myingyan, Monywa, Mandalay, Shwebo, Mogkok, Hsipaw, Lashio, Kengton, Tachilek, Margue
Far	Sadoway, Kyaukphyu, Prome, Thayet, Magwe, Meiktila, Taunggyi, Monghsat, Loikaw, Tavoy, Bassein, Myaungmya

¹ All Burma Federation of Student Unions

Remark: : Information was taken from AAPP website and from family members of political prisoners



Map of Prisons in Bruma

RELEASE OVER 2200 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!



NLD's meetings, which we cooperated with NLD, with families of political prisoners

PART III

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. Recommendations to the SPDC

- (A) To release all political prisoners unconditionally
- (B) Before release
 - (1) To place political prisoners in prisons close to family members
 - (2) To place political prisoners from the same household or family in the same prison
 - (3) To allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit prisons
 - (4) To provide adequate medical care and medical staff and to allow prisoners to promptly be referred to hospitals outside of prisons when needed
 - (5) To provide nutritious food regularly and clean drinking water
 - (6) To provide enough mosquito nets, blankets, bedding, and beds
 - (7) To stop creating quarrels between criminal prisoners and other prisoners including political prisoners
 - (8) To allow the right to freely practice all religions, the rights to read, write, create art, to learn handicrafts, to study and take exams, to exercise, and for meaningful learning
 - (9) To allow reduced sentences in accordance with the law and Jail Manual
 - (10) To end the use of both physical and mental torture and inhumane and degrading treatment
 - (11) To end the use of prison transfers as a punishment.
 - (12) To allow family visits every two weeks as stated in the Jail Manual, allow family members not on the household list the right to visit, and to increase the family visit time from 15 minutes
 - (13) To end the intimidation and rude treatment of visitors during prison visits
 - (14) To allow official submissions regarding complaints in person, and by mail, and take action on complaints
 - (15) To review the outdated colonial Jail Manual, and where necessary repeal and reform in accordance with current international standards of prison management

The above-mentioned recommendations are practical and fair recommendations. It is time the regime turned the rhetoric into reality, rather than just paying lip-service to human rights and the establishment of democracy, as the SPDC claims to be doing, they must actually follow the rule of law and respect human rights. It is time they live up to these standards and allow for the full realization of all human rights throughout the country.

2. Suggestions to the National League for Democracy

- (A) We have seen and respect the fact that the National League for Democracy (NLD), Social Support Committee, has been working to support political prisoners and their families. However, the support is inadequate compared to the size and the needs of the political prisoner population. We would like to suggest the NLD to find a more effective way to support political prisoners.
- (B) U Tin Oo and U Win Tin's visits, after they were released from prison and house arrest, to family members of political prisoners was very effective in providing moral support to family members. It also highlighted the desperate political situation in Burma. We believe that such family visits are much needed until all political prisoners are released.
- (C) NLD members from all states and divisions should collect information about political prisoners in their areas such as prison visit, health situation, torture and inhumane treatment in prison, and work with other democratic forces to raise awareness about the situation. This kind of action is seen in Mandalay, Meiktila and some other cities but not so much in remote areas. Therefore, we would like to suggest all NLD members focus on increasing this activity in remote areas.
- (D) NLD recently established Central Law Support Committee, which is very encouraging. The committee can provide legal support not only to political prisoners but also to all people in Burma. NLD should enlarge and extend the committee, which is based in Rangoon, throughout Burma.

3. Recommendation to the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)

- (A) ICRC should endeavor to regain permission to enter and freely investigate prisons and to deliver support and humanitarian assistance directly to the prisoners themselves.
- (B) If they are unable to enter the prisons, we urge the ICRC to collect information or accept submissions from families of political prisoners about extortion, human rights violations, torture and inhumane treatment in prisons, and endeavor to work with authorities to take up an appropriate role as a mediator.

4. Request to the Burmese communities abroad

- (A) The campaign for the release of all political prisoners by the Burmese community abroad is very satisfactory. We would like the Burmese communities abroad to find new ways to effectively persuade the international community to participate in the movement for the release of all political prisoners.
- (B) We think that fund raising to directly support the NLD Social Support Committee, in particular the political prisoner support will be more effective. NLD is the credible and effective body for the management and collection of information about political prisoners. There can be other groups or individuals that can support, and participate in the activities for the release of political prisoners.

5. For us.....

- (A) We will try our best to organize public based political actions centred on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to develop the basic political situation, which will lead to the release of political prisoners.
- (B) We will launch some campaigns for the release of political prisoners
- (C) We will monitor and collect information about corruption scandals, torture, human rights violations and inhumane treatment in prisons, and inform the international community through media, and by submitting reports to international human rights organizations.
- (D) We will do our best to meet the general needs of political prisoners and their families, to do so; we will work closely with all democratic forces.

PART IV

POLITICAL PRISONERS AND NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Since the independence from British rule, Burma has suffered under civil war, mass uprisings, two military coups, violent suppression, mass imprisonment, poverty, disease, a burgeoning drug industry, refugees, and the absence of the rule of law. No one can deny the fact that the causes of oppression and the lack of democracy creates disunity and distrust among ethnic nationality groups and consequently the country remains underdeveloped under a tide of conflicts. The military regime's rule over two decades proves that peace and development cannot be forced with handcuffs and iron-shackles, or brought with weapons, lies, hatred and fear.

Despite the harsh oppression, many people, not only political activists but also farmers, workers, monks and people from all levels of Burmese society, show unwavering commitment to the struggle for peace, democracy, equality, freedom and the rule of law.

In the new paradigm of the 21st Century, Burma should no longer be under this oppressive cycle of poverty, war, and repression. We believe that no one wants this destructive situation for the people.

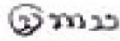
Therefore, the answer to the political problems in Burma involves all people Burma and will only be solved inclusively. The answer to the current political situation in Burma is in dialogue between the military, led by Senior Gen. Than Shwe, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all ethnic nationalities. If such a dialogue or national reconciliation is avoided, the solution found will be far removed from the reality of the problem and will lead to the total destruction of the whole country.

Dialogue not only guarantees the lives of the people but the security of the military personnel as well; and in doing so is a process that treats all parties fairly.

The release of all political prisoners is the very first step for genuine national reconciliation, as well as for the lifting of sanctions.

Rather than the release of all political prisoners, the military regime continues to unlawfully detain and torture political dissidents, which amounts to a clear abuse of power, causes disunity throughout the country, and is in itself criminal.

RELEASE OVER 2200 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!



(အသျှင်ကြတာသ)

(Ashin Aubarsa)



(အသျှင်ဓမ္မသီရိ)

(Ashin Dharma Siri)

All Burma Monks Alliance



(ထွန်းမြင့်အောင်)

(Tun Myint Aung)



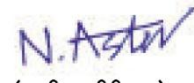
(အောင်ကျော်ဆင့်)

(Aung Kyaw Sint)



(ဇာနည်)

(Zarni)



(နော်အက်စ်တာ)

(Naw Esta)

88 Generation Students Group



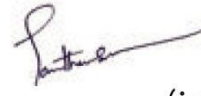
(ခိုင်ဇာနည်)

(Khai Zarni)



(ခိုင်နီလင်း)

(Khai Nilin)



(ပံသုစံ)

(Pan Thu San)

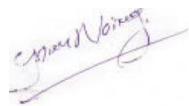


(ထက်ထက်စံ)

(Htet Htet San)

All Burma Federation of Student Unions

Arakan Students Union



(ရန်ခိုင်)

(Yan Naing)



(အောင်ဇော်မိုး)

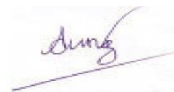
(Aung Zaw Moe)

Rakkha Alintan



(မင်းသွေးထင်)

(Min Thwe Thit)

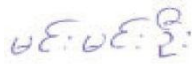


(အောင်တံခွန်)

(Aung Tagon)

Student and Youth Democratic Activists in Rangoon Division

2007 Generation Student Union




(မင်းမင်းဦး)

(Min Min Oo)



(နိုင်လင်း)

(Naing Lin)



(မင်းစိုးနိုင်)

(Min Soe Naing)



(ထူးရိန်)

(Thurein)

Basic Education Student Union

Mid-Land Burma Student Union



(မြတ်မင်း)

(Myat Min)



(ရန်ခိုင်)

(Yan Naing)



(မင်းသိမ်း)

(Min Thein)



(ထိန်လင်း)

(Htein Lin)

All Burma Youth Union

Saffron Generation

