



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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AAPP demand the release of Social Media Activists

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) call for the immediate and unconditional release of Patrick Kum Jaa Lee and Chaw Sandi Tun who have been arrested and detained for mocking the Military on Facebook.

Forty-three year old peace activist, Patrick Kum Jaa Lee was arrested at his home in Rangoon on the evening of October 14 after sharing a photo on Facebook of a man stepping on a photo of Commander-in-Chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing. He is facing charges under Article 66(d) of Burma's 2013 Telecommunications Law, which pertains to defamation and threats, and carries a maximum three-year prison sentence. His phone and computer were confiscated and the post was deleted. He is currently being detained by police.

Earlier this week, on October 12, 25 year old Chaw Sandi Tun – also known as Chit Tha Mee, was arrested for her social media post that pointed out that the new military uniforms were of a similar color to the clothes worn by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. She also included a satirical image of General Min Aung Hlaing with a Longyi (htamein) wrapped around his head, an imagine that can be considered highly offensive in Burma. Chaw Sandi Tun faces a potential several years in prison if formally charged, however it is unclear exactly which laws she is being detained under. Her next court appearance will be on 27 October. She has not yet had access to a lawyer and is currently detained in Maubin prison, Ayeyarwady Region.

AAPP is gravely concerned that the arrest and detention of Patrick Kum Jaa Lee and Chaw Sandi Tun demonstrates a new trend by authorities toward repression in the digital sphere. This is a deeply concerning development for a country where freedom of expression and political dissent is already so tightly restricted.

Social media is a pivotal communication and information dissemination tool for human rights defenders and political activists. Further repression in the digital sphere will be detrimental to the countries progression towards democracy. It is therefore imperative that the two currently detained for their actions on social media are immediately and unconditionally released and that this progression toward repression in the digital sphere is put to a halt.

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