



FREE BURMA'S POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW!

Press Release

For immediate release - Tuesday 16 June 2009

UN Sec Gen targeted in biggest global action on Burma

Former political prisoners and human rights activists delivered a petition to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, demanding he make it his personal priority to secure the release of all Burma's political prisoners. Almost 680,000 signatures were collected in just ten weeks in the largest global coordinated action for Burma yet.

"My message to Mr. Ban Ki-moon is simple", said Nyi Nyi Aung, one of the delegates, whose mother and two cousins are serving jail terms of up to 65 years for their pro-democracy activities:

"Your words show you take this issue seriously. But now I want to see what action you will take to secure the release of my family and all Burma's political prisoners."

The petition comes in the week that Burma's best known political prisoner Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi address marks her birthday behind bars. The democracy leader and Nobel Peace prize winner was locked up on new charges, just days before her latest sentence was due to expire. She has spent 13 of the last 19 years in detention.

There are currently more than 2,100 political prisoners in Burma's prisons. Monks and students are among those who have been imprisoned for challenging the military regime with peaceful calls for democracy.

Last month, National League for Democracy member Salai Hla Moe became the 140th political prisoner to die in detention since 1988. His family was only informed of his death on a routine prison visit, almost three weeks after his death. The 48 year-old activist leaves behind a wife and four children.

"How many more political prisoners have to die before the UN will act?" said Tate Naing, Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners and imprisoned by Burma's military junta for 3 years, who was part of the delegation delivering the petition. "Political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, are the hope for democracy and future leaders of our country. Torture is endemic in Burma's prisons and labor camps, and medical care is systematically denied to political prisoners. Their lives are at stake."



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Khin Ohmar of the Forum for Democracy in Burma which represents Burmese exile groups added: "We urge Mr. Ban Ki-moon to accept nothing less than the immediate and unconditional release of all Burma's political prisoners in his current negotiations with the regime. Further delay should not be an option."

Ricken Patel, executive director of Avaaz which helped coordinate the global petition said: "The UN is long overdue to add bite to its bark on Burma. Complacency has become complicity with one of the world's most brutal and illegitimate regimes. All international cooperation with the junta should freeze until Aung San Suu Kyi is released."

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Press Conference 3pm Tuesday 16 June New York

Speakers: **H.E. Mr. Martin Palouš**, Permanent Representative of the Czech Rep. to the UN
- opening remarks.

Ms. Khin Ohmar, Free Burma's Political Prisoners Now! campaign spokesperson and Foreign Affairs Secretary of the Forum for Democracy in Burma - an umbrella organisation of Burmese political groups in exile.

Mr. Tate Naing, former political prisoner and Secretary and Co-founder of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma).

Mr. Aung Din, former political prisoner and US Campaign for Burma Executive Director and Co-founder.

When: Tuesday, June 16 2009, 3pm

Where: 777, United Nations Plaza, 2nd Floor, 44th St. & 1st Ave., New York, NY 10017

Organizer: Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations in New York



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2. The Campaign By Numbers

- A broad-based consortium of over 200 Burma exile and solidarity groups - including Avaaz, a massive online community of activists - have participated in the campaign, in 32 countries across 5 continents.
- 677,254 people from 220 different countries and territories have signed the petition.
- One person has signed the petition every 10 seconds since the campaign launched on 13 March 2009, Burma's Human Rights Day.
- In Thai-Burma border areas, over 60 roundtable discussions about political prisoners have taken place, for migrant workers and in refugee camps.

- Over 23,000 signatures were collected from refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border.
- Over 47,000 signatures were collected from migrant workers in Southern Thailand.
- Over 23,000 signatures were collected in the Thai-Burma border town of Mae Sot.

3. Campaign Consortium

The campaign is led by the [Assistance Association for Political Prisoners \(Burma\)](#) and [Forum for Democracy in Burma](#). Click on this link for a full list of all endorsing organisations involved in the campaign: http://www.fbppn.net/?page_id=1750

4. Nyi Nyi Aung's Family

- His mother, 60 year-old Daw Sann Sann Tin is serving a 9-year jail term in Meikhtila prison in Mandalay division.
- His cousin, 32 year-old Thet Thet Aung, is serving a 65-year sentence in Myingyan prison in Mandalay division. Her husband Chit Ko Lin is serving an 11-year sentence in Pakkoku prison, Magwe division. They are both members of the 88 Generation Students group led by Min Ko Naing. They have three young children who are currently being cared for by Nyi Nyi Aung's aunt.
- His cousin, 21 year-old Nwe Hnin Yee aka Noe Noe is a student activist serving an 11-year jail term in Ma-ubin prison in Irrawaddy division.



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5. Political Prisoner Statistics

- There are currently 2,155 political prisoners in Burma.
- Since October last year, more than 350 of them have been sentenced to harsh sentences of up to 104 years in prison.
- Since November last year, more than 230 political prisoners have been transferred to jails all around the country, far from their families. This makes it hard for their families to visit, due to the distances and costs involved. It also means it is very difficult for families to provide their loved ones with essential food and medicines. For more information about the health impact of prison transfers, please read this report [Burma's prisons and labour camps: silent killing fields](#) by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) <http://www.aappb.org>