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## ARTICLE 19

For immediate release – 14 May 2009

### Burma: Aung San Suu Kyi Facing Trial and Incarceration in Insein Prison

Burmese democracy leader and *de jure* prime minister Aung San Suu Kyi has early this morning been taken from her home and incarcerated in Insein Prison, on a charge of breaching the conditions of her house arrest order.

**ARTICLE 19** urges the international community, and in particular India, China and ASEAN, to pressure the Burmese military government not to continue Suu Kyi's 13-year detention on the basis of these outrageous charges. The organisation also calls on interested stakeholders to write to newspapers editors in India to call attention to the Indian government's role in propping up the illegitimate Burmese regime.

The National League for Democracy, the Burmese political party which Suu Kyi leads, says that she faces an immediate trial on Monday 18 May. Under section 22 of the State Protection Act, Suu Kyi faces up to five years in prison.

Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for almost 14 of the last 19 years at her home in Rangoon. Last week, an American citizen, John William Yettaw, swam across Inya Lake and entered Suu Kyi's house uninvited and without being stopped by guards. According to Suu Kyi's lawyer U Kyi Win, Yettaw begged Suu Kyi not to alert her captors of his presence and allow him to stay while he recovered from a muscle strain.

According to Burmese law, it is mandatory to notify the military authorities about any overnight visitor and foreigners are not allowed to spend the night in a Burmese home. The State Protection Act is frequently used against democratic activists, and other members of Suu Kyi's party have been imprisoned for similar offences.

Last week, Suu Kyi's appeal against her imprisonment was rejected, even though, under the legislation used to detain her, her detention should end on 27 May 2009. The United Nations has declared that her imprisonment is not only illegal under international law, but also illegal under the Burmese military government's own deplorable legal code, which only allows for a maximum of five-years in detention.

*"The Burmese military government is blaming a prisoner for somebody breaking into a prison,"* comments Dr Agnes Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *"This would be laughable if it was not so unbelievably sad."*

*“Every month that passes, we think that repression in Burma cannot get worse but it always does. The treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi by the authorities, in full sight of the country’s neighbours and various economic backers, is just sickening. Worse still are the excuses and diplomatic games played by India, China and the ASEAN. By their silence and inaction, they are condoning the behaviour of the Burmese military junta. They are the walls and bars of Suu Kyi’s prison,”* she adds.

Yettaw was arrested whilst swimming back across the lake and remains in Burmese prison, charged with entering a restricted area and contravening immigration regulations. His motives remain unclear, although there are reports that he is a Mormon who is writing a book about heroism and who intended to come into Suu Kyi’s house to pray with her. He is apparently not a Burma campaigner, as was originally described.

Suu Kyi is in poor health and has recently been on an intravenous drip. Her doctors have repeatedly been prevented from giving her the care she requires and her personal physician was arrested a few weeks ago.

ARTICLE 19 is also concerned about the seeming disappearance of John William Yettaw and calls upon the Burmese authorities to ensure that he is afforded access to proper legal representation and a fair trial.

**ARTICLE 19 is urging interested stakeholders and anybody committed to the protection of human rights to write to one of the following India newspapers asking the editor to call attention to their government’s role in propping up the illegitimate Burmese regime:**

- **Mr Jaideep Bose, Executive Editor, *Times of India*:**  
[mytimesmyvoice@timesgroup.com](mailto:mytimesmyvoice@timesgroup.com)
- **Mr M.J. Akbar, Editor in Chief and Managing Director, *The Asian Age*:**  
[editoped@asianage.com](mailto:editoped@asianage.com)
- **Mr N. Ram, Editor, *The Hindu*:** [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in)
- **Mr Sanjoy Narayan, Editor, *Hindustan Times*:**  
[feedback@hindustantimes.com](mailto:feedback@hindustantimes.com)

Please inform ARTICLE 19 of any actions that you may take.

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- For more information: please contact Oliver Spencer, [oliver@article19.org](mailto:oliver@article19.org) +44 20 7278 9292
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.