

URGENT ACTION

MEDIA WORKERS IMPRISONED IN MYANMAR

Five media workers in Myanmar have been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour in connection with their journalistic activities. All five are prisoners of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 10 July a court in Pakokku District, Magwe Region sentenced *Unity* journalists **Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe** and the newspaper's chief executive officer **Tint San** to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour under Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. They had been arrested between 31 January and 1 February 2014 after *Unity* published an article on 25 January about an alleged secret chemical weapons factory in Pauk Township, Pakokku District. According to state media, the five were charged with "disclosing State secrets, trespassing on the restricted area of the factory, taking photographs and the act of abetting" under Article 3(1) A/9 of Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. All five are reportedly planning to lodge an appeal against their conviction.

The five are currently detained at the Pakokku prison, however there are concerns they may be transferred to remote prisons, far away from their family members. The transfer of prisoners of conscience to remote prisons was a hallmark of the previous military government.

Lu Maw Naing has received some medical treatment after suffering from back and stomach pain. However, conditions in detention in Myanmar are poor, and all are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment and a lack of access to adequate medical treatment.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe and Tint San;
- Pending their unconditional release, calling on the authorities to ensure that the five men are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, that they are not transferred to remote prisons, that they have regular access to family members and lawyers of their choosing, and are provided with any medical treatment which they may require;
- Calling on them to immediately and unconditionally release all other prisoners of conscience in Myanmar, and to drop charges against all those who have been arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to repeal or else review and amend all laws which impose unlawful restrictions on the right to freedom of expression to ensure they comply with international human rights law and standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 AUGUST 2014 TO:

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| <u>President</u> | <u>Minister of Home Affairs</u> |
| Thein Sein | Lt Gen. Ko Ko |
| President's Office | Ministry of Home Affairs |
| Nay Pyi Taw | Office No. 10 |
| Republic of the Union of Myanmar | Nay Pyi Taw |
| Salutation: Your Excellency | Republic of the Union of Myanmar |
| | Salutation: Dear Minister |

And copies to:

Chairman, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
 U Win Mra
 27 Pyay Road, Hline Township
 Yangon
 Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 82/14. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA16/004/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Despite a series of reforms in the country, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of intimidation, arrests and detention of human rights defenders, including journalists, for peacefully carrying out their legitimate work.

The right to freedom of expression is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This right includes the right to “receive and impart information and ideas through any media”. Journalists and other media workers must be able to operate throughout the country and carry out investigations without fear of reprisal or arrest.

In his final report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, expressed concerns about Myanmar’s Official Secrets Act. In the report, he identified the Official Secrets Act as among a host of laws which do not comply with international standards, and reiterated calls on the Myanmar government to review and amend these laws within a clear timeframe.

Amnesty International remains concerned about trials in Myanmar, which largely fall short of international standards. Furthermore, the organization continues to receive reports about poor prison conditions in the country, including a lack of access to adequate medical treatment. Other concerns raised include lack of access to clean drinking water, nutritious food and water for bathing.

Name: Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe and Tint San

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 82/14 Index: ASA 16/013/2014 Issue Date: 15 July 2014