

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: ASA 16/003/2014

14 March 2014

Myanmar: Success of transition requires Special Rapporteur's mandate to be extended

Ahead of the UN Human Rights Council's Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar on 17 March 2014, Amnesty International joins human rights defenders and civil society organizations in the country to urge the Council's members to keep the human rights situation in Myanmar under review and extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

Recent reforms in Myanmar should not be seen as a sign that UN engagement on human rights is no longer needed. On the contrary, the situation in the country remains disturbing, with a wide range of ongoing human rights violations.

Freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are still heavily restricted, and despite a Presidential pledge in July 2013 to release all prisoners of conscience by the end of year, many are believed to remain behind bars. Amnesty International continues to receive reports of the harassment, arrest and imprisonment of human rights defenders – including lawyers, journalists and land rights activists.

So far this year, at least 33 people have been arrested and charged in connection with their peaceful activities, including human rights work, and exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Eight have already been sentenced to terms of imprisonment under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law, which has been used in the past to jail scores of human rights defenders.

Amnesty International also continues to receive reports of abuses within the criminal justice system, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials.

The situation of ethnic and religious minorities remains very concerning, and minorities continue to be subjected to pervasive discrimination in law and practice. Largely anti-Muslim violence has continued in several parts of the country, resulting in deaths, destruction of property, and displacement. Violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law continue to be reported in various parts of the country, such as Kachin and Shan states.

Further, impunity persists for past human rights violations and abuses, including crimes under international law committed by the Myanmar authorities and in particular by the security forces. Amnesty International supports the Special Rapporteur's call for the Myanmar authorities to provide truth, justice, and full and effective reparation for past violations.

Given the ongoing serious human rights situation in Myanmar, the role of the Special Rapporteur remains crucial to Myanmar's transition. Amnesty International emphasises also the importance of the early establishment in Myanmar of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a full promotion and protection mandate and access throughout the country. The organization calls on the government also to co-operate fully with other UN human rights Special Procedures mandate holders.