



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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AAPP-B'S VIEW ON PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN'S AMNESTY ANNOUNCEMENT

Statement

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President U Thein Sein's administration declared an amnesty on the 12th of January, 2012 regarding the release of 651 male and female prisoners on the 13th of January, 2012 under article 401 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Act. According to the data that AAPP-B has collected and verified up to the morning of the 14th of January 2012, the number of political prisoners among those released under the amnesty announcement is 272.

We, members of AAPP-B, welcome the action of President U Thein Sein's administration given that 88 generation student leaders, ethnic leaders and prominent political prisoners were among those released. We feel unhappy, however, as under article 401 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code, the release is not without conditions, the number of political prisoners released is limited, and the demands of the opposition, the Burmese people and the international community were not met. Considering that article 401 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code states that released political prisoners would have to serve the remainder of their sentences if needed, this greatly harms the human rights of released political prisoners and their ability to engage in activities openly.

The discrimination and limitations of the release seriously damages the physical and mental well-being of around 1,000 political prisoners who remain locked up in Burma's prisons. We consider that leaving the remaining political prisoners behind bars is a way of torture. At the same time, by leaving the political prisoners from ethnic armed groups in prison hugely damages the prospect of national reconciliation in Burma.

Lieutenant-General, Ko Ko, the Minister of Home Affairs, articulated this morning that the number of political prisoners remaining was 430, and they released 302 political prisoners in this amnesty. They are unable to release the remaining 128 prisoners, however, since they were arrested and sentenced under explosive acts. The number that Lieutenant-General, Ko Ko expressed is unacceptable. In accordance with AAPP-B's current data, the number of the remaining political prisoners is more than 1,000, and we are able to verify the location of more than 600. Our verification process is ongoing. Regarding the dispute of the number of political prisoners, an independent investigation body, led by the UN for example, should be allowed to investigate Burma's prisons. We express our view yet again that AAPP-B is ready to work in cooperation with anyone or any organization.

For these reasons, AAPP-B strongly urges President U Thein Sein's administration to release, immediately and unconditionally, the remaining political prisoners and erase their criminal records. Thus, creating a political landscape whereby released political prisoners can be involved in democracy, the national reconciliation process and the state's development.

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