



ကို အေး အောင်
အမှန်တရားအတွက်အပြစ်ဒဏ်
ခံရသောအကျဉ်းသား

Than Shwe,
Chairman SPDC
Naypyitaw,
Union of Myanmar

September 2010

Dear Chairman Than Shwe,

Congratulations on the decision to step aside from your military rank - hopefully you will now be better able to see your responsibilities from a civilian perspective. I see that you and your fellow (former) generals in the SPDC still retain control of the legal system of Myanmar. You are, I am sure, aware that the world's eyes are on you as Myanmar prepares for the elections due in November. In this context I am sure that you are very concerned about the damning report of the Asian Legal Resource Centre which was recently presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The report shows Myanmar to be a country with scant regard for human rights and a complete absence of an independent and impartial judiciary. This is very worrying and I urge you to address the concerns of the report without delay.

You will, no doubt, be aware that at present there are estimated to be around 2,000 political prisoners in Myanmar's jails and I seeking information about one in particular: **Ko Aye Aung**, a Prisoner of Conscience who was last heard of in Kalay Prison. I trust that you have accurate and up to date information on his condition and full knowledge of the legal circumstances of his case.

Ko Aye Aung is a student of physics who was arrested in Yangon in September 1998. You will know that he has committed no crime by international standards, nor has he ever threatened violence against anyone. He is reported to have been tortured, contrary to Articles 330 and 331 of the Penal Code of Myanmar. For over eleven years now he has been in Kale prison in Sagaing Division, nearly six hundred miles away from his family and friends. I understand that he is suffering from malaria and typhoid and is in need of medical attention. I have also heard that he has been denied access to religious books. These conditions amount to a severe restriction of his human rights and are in conflict with Myanmar's own codes for the treatment of prisoners, and contrary to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Myanmar is, of course, one of the first signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - so it is highly relevant to Myanmar).

If you were truly to live by the principles of international law, and the Buddhist principles of peace and justice, then you would ensure that **Ko Aye Aung** receives the medical treatment he urgently needs. Please will you also ensure that he has access to appropriate legal advice and is allowed visits from family and friends. He should, of course, be moved from Kalay to Yangon to be close to family and friends. I am sure that, once you have reviewed his case, you will see that he should not be in prison at all and should be allowed to return to his studies at university.

I look forward to your response to this long-standing and distressing case of unjustified imprisonment, and your commitment to uphold the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially as Myanmar was one of the first countries in the world to sign the Declaration in 1947.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,