Global Alert
Free Hkun Htun Oo
and all political prisoners in Burma

“We didn’t commit any crime. We reaffirm our aim to empower our people to bring peace, justice and equality to the people.” Hkun Htun Oo

Prisons where Shan State leaders are detained
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Three years ago, on 8-9 February 2005, 30 political leaders from Shan State who were peacefully advocating for political reform were arrested by the Burmese military regime. Nine were tried and given absurdly long prison sentences, including Hkun Htun Oo, leader of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), which won the majority of seats in Shan State in the 1990 election. He was sentenced to 93 years in prison. Others received sentences of between 75 and 106 years.

These Shan State leaders were sent to different prisons in remote areas of Burma, hundreds of miles from their hometowns. Hkun Htun Oo was sent to Putao, in northernmost Kachin State, where temperatures fall below zero in the winter. Hkun Htun Oo, now 64 years old, is suffering from prostate problems, diabetes and high blood pressure. His health has worsened in recent months, but he continues to be denied outside medical assistance.

The health of the other detainees, most of whom are elderly, is also a source of serious concern. One of the detainees is in urgent need of surgery; another is suffering mental illness. 56-year-old U Myint Than, who had been in perfect health before his imprisonment, died in prison in Arakan State in May 2006 under suspicious circumstances.

As the number of political detainees in Burma continues to grow, particularly in the wake of last year’s “Saffron Revolution,” when tens of thousands of monks took to the streets nationwide demanding political reform, international pressure is urgently needed on the regime for their immediate release.

On the occasion of Burma’s upcoming Union Day, February 12, we wish to highlight Hkun Htun Oo’s brave words from prison: that he remains committed to bringing “peace, justice and equality to the people.” These are the principles that should form the basis of a genuine federal union. Yet the regime, by imprisoning elected ethnic leaders and proceeding with its own coercive constitution-drafting process, has shown its complete contempt for these principles.

We denounce the regime’s sham National Convention, and urge governments around the world to pressure Burma’s military regime

- to immediately release Hkun Htun Oo, other Shan State leaders, and all political prisoners in Burma, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
- to immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite dialogue with the National League for Democracy and genuine representatives of the ethnic nationalities to begin a meaningful process of political reform

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