

Summary

Two years since the NLD-led government took power, there are still political prisoners in jail and people are still being arrested because of their political activities or ethnicity. Repressive laws which are being used to intimidate, arrest and jail political activists remain in place and more laws have been introduced.

On the fourth anniversary of the death of U Win Tin, approximately 90 political prisoners remain in jail, most are awaiting trial. Aung San Suu Kyi does not control the military but it is within her power to order the release of all political prisoners, and she does have the parliamentary majority needed to repeal repressive laws used to jail political prisoners.

U Win Tin



U Win Tin, a journalist and founding member of the National League for Democracy, was one of Burma's longest serving political prisoners, describing his time in jail from 1989 until 2008 as living in hell. U Win Tin famously pledged to wear a blue shirt, the same colour shirt he had to wear

Blue Shirt Day

Please join **Blue Shirt Day on Saturday 21st April**.

Wear blue, post pictures on social media, and remind the world that there are still political prisoners in Burma's jails, and they must be freed.

Post a picture of yourself on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag:

#blueshirt4burma

in prison, until all political prisoners in Burma were released. He died on 21st April 2014 without seeing an end to the jailing of political prisoners.

On 21st April, people around the world will be wearing a blue shirt or blue clothing in memory of U Win Tin, who served nearly 20 years in jail as a political prisoner.

Declining freedom of expression

Under the NLD-led government, there have been more restrictions on press freedom and many journalists face harassment for reporting on current affairs.

For example, two Reuters journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, were arrested in Rangoon after being invited to meet police officials over dinner on 12th December 2017. They were working on a report which describes how security forces and local Rakhine Buddhists were involved in the killing of

10 Rohingya Muslim men buried in a mass grave in Rakhine State. The NLD-led government says that the journalists face charges under the colonial-era Official Secrets Act, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 14 years. They are currently on trial.

Some ethnic people were arrested, tortured horrifically and forced to make a false confession about having connections with ethnic armed groups.

For example, a 14 year old child, Mai Cho Min Htwe, was tortured and convicted without a trial on 30th October 2017 for allegedly being involved with an ethnic armed group, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

The TNLA is an ethnic armed group based in northern Shan State that is engaged in armed conflict with the Burmese Army. He was sentenced to two years in prison. He is a victim of human rights violations twice over. First if he was used as a child soldier, and second for being jailed for it.

On 17 April 2018, 36 political prisoners were released. This is of course wonderful news for those political prisoners and their families, but also represents a decision not to free around 90 other political prisoners currently in jail. Most of those kept in jail are being held awaiting trial so have not even been convicted.

Most worryingly, it also appears to be a return to the military era approach of using the selective release of political prisoners on key dates for public relations purposes, rather than the NLD-led government making serious attempts to end once and for all the decades' long problem of political prisoners in Burma.

Please join Blue Shirt Day on Saturday 21st April. Wear blue, post pictures on social media, and remind the world that there are still political prisoners in Burma's jails, and that they must be freed.

Post a picture of yourself on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag:

#blueshirt4burma

Conclusion

Aung San Suu Kyi has the power to drop charges, repeal repressive laws and release all remaining political prisoners in the country. However, she has decided to not only keep repressive laws in place and allow the military to use them, but also to keep innocent people in jail.

Some repressive laws were introduced during colonial times and are still being used today to oppress freedom of expression or intimidate political activists. By keeping such repressive laws in place, Aung San Suu Kyi is allowing unlawful arrests to continue. It's time for Aung San Suu Kyi to get on with repealing repressive laws and releasing all political prisoners from jail.

Both Aung San Suu Kyi's government and the military are showing increasing willingness to use repressive laws to intimidate and silence critics and the media.

The release of all political prisoners and repeal of repressive laws is possible if Aung San Suu Kyi decides to do it.



**Published by Burma Campaign UK,
28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT
www.burmacampaign.org.uk
info@burmacampaign.org.uk
tel: 020 7324 4710**