

JANUARY CHRONOLOGY 2016

Summary of the Current Situation:

There are **86** political prisoners incarcerated in Burma.

399 activists are currently awaiting trial for political actions.



Picture from Irrawaddy © 2016
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MONTH IN REVIEW

This month, seven political activists were arrested in total, 12 individuals were sentenced, and 69 were released. Nineteen political prisoners are reported to be in bad health.

After encountering sustained pressure from international governments and human rights groups, the Presidential Office decided to release 52 political prisoners on January 22 as part of a presidential amnesty.

However, as those released in the amnesty walked free, dozens were arrested and sentenced for their political actions this month and a plethora of lawsuits and new charges were stacked on activists- particularly the Letpadan students- for protests that occurred months ago. Despite the presidential amnesty on January 22 32 new lawsuits were filed against political activists before the end of the month. The majority of these were under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act.

On January 26 the Chan Aye Tharzan Township court decided to accept Section 18 charges against Kaung Zaw Hein and Shine Min Htet Zaw, and Ye Yint Paing Hmu for a protest they staged in March 2015 to demand the release of students and supporters involved in the National Education Bill protests. Ye Yint Paing Hmu, was also sentenced this month to six months in prison for his involvement in the infamous graffiti protest in June 2015. On the same day ten students involved in National Education Bill Protests in August 2014 were informed that new lawsuits had been filed against them under Section 18 on January 26. Similarly student activist Zayar Lwin has had at least three more lawsuits filed against him under Section 18 this month for protests that happened in 2014. Belated charges under Section 18 were also brought against jailed activists Naw Ohn Hla and Tin Htut Paing this month for their involvement in a protest on August 8, 2014 to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the 1988 uprising.

While Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act was used to prolong the jail time of those already imprisoned, two more new sentences for 'online defamation' were handed down under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. Despite multiple bail attempts being denied and his worsening health condition Kachin peace activist Patrick Kum Ja Lee received a 6 month sentence under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law for defaming the military via a Facebook post. A businessman, Zaw Myo was sentenced to one year imprisonment with hard labor under two counts of Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law and Article 505(b) of the Penal Code for a similar Facebook post.

Also of great concern this month was the re-arrest of former Saffron Revolution leader U Gambira aka Nyi Nyi

Lwin who was arrested and detained on immigration charges that many presume are politically motivated.

Of ongoing concern are the health conditions of many of Letpadan protesters detained at Tharyarwaddy Prison. A new report released this month drew attention to the failure to provide adequate treatment to detainees with potentially life-threatening medical conditions. This followed news this month that multiple students had been transferred back to prison from hospital despite requiring further treatment. Two of these protesters, however, Mya Gyi and Htein Lin Aung were eventually granted bail this month due to their worsening health condition.

DETENTIONS

Arbitrary Arrest of Eleven Villagers in Northern Shan State

Eleven villagers from Lwae Sar village, Kyaukme Township, Northern Shan State were arbitrarily arrested by Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), after clashes between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and RCSS/SSA on January 17. The villagers were arrested because they were thought to have contacted the TNLA. Some were forced to carry property as porters for the troops.

Villagers were tortured and threatened by RCSS/SSA troops during the clash. As a result, most of the villagers have decided to flee to Monglon Township and Mogoke Township.

[\(Internal Source: Ta'ang Women's Organization\)](#)

Arakanese people Arrested for Insurgent Activities

Four Arakanese men have been arrested and detained on suspicion of association with the Arakan Army. Sources say that on January 16, Hsan Win Tun and Arno alias Kyaw Soe Moe were blindfolded and taken into custody by army personnel. It has also been reported that on January 9, two other Arakanese men were arrested in Taungup on similar grounds.

[\(18 January 2016 - Narinjara/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Narinjara\)](#) [\(23 January 2016 - Narinjara/Burmese\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Narinjara\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Burma News International\)](#)

SENTENCES

Graffiti Protester Sentenced to Six Months Imprisonment

Ye Yint Paing Hmu, one of the Graffiti student protesters, was sentenced to six months imprisonment under Article 505(b) of the Penal Code, three months under Article 143 of the Penal Code and three months under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act on January 29 by Amarapura Township Court. Ye Yint Paing Hmu's sentences will be served concurrently, like his fellow Graffiti student protesters who were sentenced in October and released in December, therefore reducing his sentence to six months. The time he has already spent in prison will also be deduced from his sentence.

Ye Yint Paing Hmu is also facing another charge under Section 18 for assembly without a permit along with students Kaung Zaw Hein and Shine Min Htet Zaw, for their alleged participation in a protest at Mandalay's Chan Aye Tharzan Township demanding the release of detained students and supporters who took part in the student movement for education reform in March 2015. The case was only opened on January 26, despite the event occurring last March.

[\(28 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(2 February 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Arakan Elected Politician Sentenced to Six Months Imprisonment

Hla Aung Nyunt, of the Arakan National Party (ANP) who won a seat in the November elections was sentenced to six months in prison as he was found guilty of making death threats to a woman, who some reports say was the aide of an election rival from the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

On January 28, he received two six-month prison terms from the Mray Bon Township - to be served concurrently - for trespassing under Article 451 of the Penal Code and for criminal intimidation under Article 506 of the Penal Code. He was later transferred to Kyaukphyu Prison.

If Hla Aung Nyunt loses his appeal it is thought that his seat will go to USDP member San Shwe Aung.

Aye Nu Sein, chair of the Sittwe township ANP party branch and a lawyer in this case, insisted that the MP-elect was innocent and the party was going to take action to appeal at court and lobby the election commission over the conviction.

[\(28 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - DVB\)](#) [\(29 January](#)

[2016 - Narinjara\)](#) [\(31 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(1 February 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Businessman Sentenced for Posting a Defamatory Posts on Facebook

Only few days after the sentencing of Khum Jaa Lee, a businessman called Zaw Myo Nyunt was sentenced to one year in prison with hard labor by the Mayangon Township Court on January 28. He was charged with two counts of Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law and Article 505(b) of the Penal Code. The charges relate to an alleged defamatory Facebook post which showed the Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's portrait being stepped on. Zaw Myo Nyunt was first arrested October 6, 2015.

[\(28 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Eleven\)](#)

Patrick Kum Jaa Lee Sentenced to Six Months for "Online Defamation"

On January 22, Patrick Kum Jaa Lee was sentenced to six months in prison by Rangoon's Hlaing Township Court. Patrick Kum Jaa Lee, a Kachin peace activist, was first arrested on October 14, charged under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law for sharing a post on Facebook showing someone stepping on a portrait of Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. Despite appeals on the grounds of deteriorating health, he has repeatedly been denied bail. May Sabe Phyu, Khum Jaa Lee's wife, claims that he didn't intend to share the post and that his account was hacked days before the event.

[\(22 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Fulton County\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Frontier\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Amnesty\)](#) [\(23 January 2016 - Mizzima\)](#)

Activists Sentenced to One Month Imprisonment

Aung Tun, Than Win and Khin Soe staged a protest in January 2015 to voice their support for the amendment of Article 436 of the Constitution. They were sentenced by the Thingangyun township court on January 26 to one month imprisonment in Insein prison for violating Section 19 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act. [\(Source: Tin Maung Aye's Facebook Page/Burmese\)](#)

RELEASES

Five Activists- Two Students- Released after Completing their Sentences

After 10 months of detainment, Nyan Myint Thant, Sithu Myat, Sein Win, Kyaw Than Tun and Phyu were sentenced for their participation in protests on March 27, 2015 opposing the Letpadan crackdown. On January 28, the five activists were sentenced to nine months under 143, 145 and 505 (b) of the Penal Code. The delay in sentencing meant that these activists spent a total of 10 months and one day in prison, despite their nine-month sentence.

Thant Zin, a former chair of the Upper Burma branch of the All Burma Federation of Students' Unions, remains in detention additionally serving two one month sentences under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, one related to a protest on November 22, 2014 supporting students who opposed the National Education Bill, the other for a protest on October 29, 2014 to reveal the truth of the death of Ko Par Gyi.

[\(28 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 January 2016 - Myanmar Times/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

52 Political Prisoners Released in Presidential Amnesty

On January 22, 52 political prisoners were released from prisons in Mandalay, Tuangoo, Insein, Hpa-an, Myitkyina and Putao in a presidential amnesty that included 102 prisoners. U Zaw Htay, director of the President's office said the amnesty was in response to calls from rights groups and the international community.

Some of the political prisoners included in the amnesty were:

- **Thirteen land rights activists from Michaungkan community** sentenced for their involvement in a protest camp near Sule Pagoda in Rangoon.
- Student **Naing Ye Wai** sentenced for peacefully protesting in Mandalay for the release of all detained students involved in the National Education Bill protests.
- Activist **Ba Myint** sentenced for demonstrating against the Letpadaung Copper-mine scandal and for organizing a commemoration for the 26-month anniversary of the Letpadaung crackdown in November 2012.
- Activist **Naung Naung** sentenced for declaring that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and

ethnic leaders had been elected as an interim government in July 7, 2014 and for his involvement in a candlelight demonstration, protesting electricity prices in Rangoon in 2014.

There remain 86 political prisoners behind bars and 399 more facing trial on politically motivated charges.

Among those excluded from the amnesty were **51 students and supporters** arrested for their involvement in nationwide student protests opposing the National Education Bill- only one of whom- Naing Ye Wai- was released. **Chaw Sandi Tun** and **Patrick Kum Jaa Lee**, sentenced for 'online defamation' remain detained, as do the **Unity Five**, sentenced to seven years for allegedly revealing state secrets, **Htin Lin Oo**, for speaking out against hardline Buddhist nationalism, **Tin Htut Paing**, sentenced to five years for staging a protest outside of a Chinese Embassy calling for investigation into the death of Daw Khin Win in Rangoon on December 29 and **U Gambira aka Nyi Nyi Lwin**, recently arrested for entering Burma illegally. **Htin Kyaw**, **Naw Ohn Hla** and **Nay Myo Zin** serving thirteen years and six months, six years and two months' and five years' imprisonment for their activism also remain in prison.

For a Full List of Released Activists see Appendix [\(22 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - DVB\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - HRW\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Reuters\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Myanmar Now\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - DVB\)](#)

CONDITIONS OF DETENTIONS

Report Details Medical Crisis for Student Protesters

All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), Justice Trust and the Letpadan Justice Committee released a report on January 25 that drew attention to the ailing health of 53 student demonstrators and supporters detained since the Letpadan crackdown last March.

The report states several detained students in Tharyarwaddy Prison have serious and potentially life-threatening medical conditions, including tuberculosis, severe hypertension and gastrointestinal diseases for which they are not receiving adequate treatment.

The report also stated that unsanitary conditions in Tharyarwaddy Prison had contributed to the deteriorating health of the detainees.

It goes on to say that the presiding judge and prison authorities in the Letpadan Case have restricted the students and supporters access to healthcare services for more than ten months.

The report alleges that the prison authorities sent part of the detainees to solitary confinement and denied the access of adequate food and water and that six female detainees reported sexual and verbal abuse perpetrated by the prison authorities.

It then calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all the Letpadan student protesters.

[\(25 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Fortify Rights\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Burma Partnership\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(25 January 2016 - Coconuts Yangon\)](#) [\(26 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(26 January 2016 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(26 January 2016 - VOA/Burmese\)](#)

Inmates Discharged from Hospital Despite Needing Further Treatment

Min Thway Thit, Mar Naw, Kyaw Swar Lin, Mya Gyi and Htein Lin Aung have been detained at Tharyarwaddy Prison since March 2015. On December 8, 2015, the five detainees were allowed to receive medical treatment due to their worsening health conditions.

On January 14 all of the detainees except Htein Lin Aung were arbitrarily discharged from the hospital and transferred back to the Tharyarwaddy Prison without having fully recovered.

Bo Bo Myo, another detained student in Tharyarwaddy prison, has repeatedly been transferred from prison to hospital. He was taken to Rangoon General Hospital on December 2 and later sent back to Tharyarwaddy prison on December 11. After a court hearing on January 12 he was sent to seek treatment for his colitis and prostate disease at Tharyarwaddy hospital. Despite the doctor's

recommendation that he be admitted to hospital that day he was taken back to prison. On January 14, he was finally able to receive medical treatment at Rangoon General Hospital.

Aung Mhine San, was taken to Rangoon General Hospital on January 20, to treat his Hepatitis C infection, he was sent back to Tharyarwaddy prison the same day. This is more than five weeks since his last hospital visit in December.

[\(12 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)

Letpadan Duo Granted Bail

Mya Gyi and Htein Lin Aung were released on bail on January 19 as the Tharyarwaddy township court granted their third request for bail on the ground of their worsening health conditions.

The pair have been denied bail twice already on November 24, 2015 and December 8, 2015. According to a relative, Htein Lin Aung was denied bail, as the court stated that it's necessary to submit the doctor's signature attesting to his need for further medical treatment. The relative claimed that the medical records signed by the medical superintendent of Rangoon Hospital had already been submitted.

During the violent police crackdown on March 10, Mya Gyi sustained injuries to his skull and jaw, and is reportedly suffering from numbness. Htein Lin Aung is suffering from an intestinal infection for which he requires continued medication.

[\(13 January 2013- Irrawaddy\)](#)

Activist Naw Ohn Hla on Hunger Strike, Protesting Against Proposed Immunity Bill

On January 5, political prisoner Naw Ohn Hla began a prison hunger strike to protest the proposed legislation that would grant wide-ranging legal immunity for ex-presidents' conduct in office. She is reportedly in good health but refusing to even drink water or shower. Min Nay Htoo, a spokesperson for the Democracy and Peace Women Network stated that they were forbidden from meeting her by prison authorities at first and had to submit a letter to be allowed to meet. The Network stated that Naw Ohn Hla was still in a good condition as of January 8. She stopped drinking water on January 5. Naw Ohn Hla has since ended her hunger strike.

Naw Ohn Hla is currently serving time for a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon on December 29, 2014, following the death of a woman in Letpadaung. She and several fellow protesters had urged the government to carry out an investigation into the killing of Khin Win who was shot dead on December 22, 2014 by the police at the

CONDITIONS OF DETENTIONS

Chinese-backed Letpadaung copper mine in Monywa Sagaing Division. She was sentenced to six years and two months' imprisonment on charges including Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act and Article 505 (b) of the Penal Code.

[\(6 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 January 2016 - Eleven\)](#) [\(6 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(6 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(8 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(8 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(11 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

DEMONSTRATIONS & RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL & CIVIL LIBERTIES

Warrant out for the Arrest of Two More Student Protesters

Kaung Zaw Hein and Shine Min Htet Zaw have been declared fugitives by Chan Aye Tharzan Township court after the court decided to accept the case against the pair on January 26. The pair have been charged with Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act for their alleged participation in a protest at Mandalay's Chan Aye Tharzan Township demanding the release of detained students and supporters who took part in the student movement for education reform in March 2015. The court issued a warrant for the arrest of the pair whose whereabouts is unknown.

[\(28 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Three Activists Face Additional Charges

On January 28, Naw Ohn Hla, Tin Htut Paing, Moethu were charged under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act from the Mingala Taunggyunt Township Court for staging a protest on August 8, 2014 to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the 1988 uprising.

Naw Ohn Hla, Tin Htut Paing are already serving six year and two month and five year sentence, respectively. Moethu is awaiting trial outside prison.

[\(28 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Eleven\)](#)

Ten Student Activists Face New Charges for 2014 Protest

On January 26, Rangoon's Thanlyin Township Police station sent a letter giving notice of fresh charges to Po Po, Min Thway Thit, Ye Min Oo, Tin Tin Khine and other six student activists for protesting against the National Education Bill at Rangoon Eastern University on August 28, 2014. The letter notified them that they lawsuits had been filed against them under Section 18 of the Peaceful Procession and Peaceful Assembly Act for protesting without permission. Most of the activists charged are already awaiting trial in detention.

[\(27 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(29 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Saffron Revolution Leader U Gambira Re-Arrested

On January 19, U Gambira, also known as Nyi Nyi Lwin, a former monk and leading figure of the 2007 Saffron

Revolution, was arrested by around 20 police at his hotel room in Mandalay and taken to the No.9 Police Station in Mandalay.

On January 20, he was taken to Maha Aung Myay Township Court and charged with entering the country illegally under Section 13(1) of Burma's 1947 Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act by. The charge carries up to five years' imprisonment.

U Gambira, who now lives in Thailand, arrived in Burma on January 15 in order to apply for a passport. He crossed the border between Thailand and Burma at an official crossing point without facing any problems with either Burma or Thai immigration officials.

U Gambira was denied bail and taken to Mandalay's Oh-Bo prison pending his next court hearing which has been set for February 3.

Serious concern has been raised about U Gambira's fragile mental state, he suffers from acute post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is remnants of earlier imprisonment when he was tortured. Rory Magee, a trauma specialist who treated Gambira for PTSD during 2014, suggests that spending further time in detention will have a catastrophic effect on his recovery. U Gambira was diagnosed with schizophrenia late last year, and has to take regular medication for his condition.

[\(20 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(20 January 2016 - Radio Free Asia\)](#) [\(20 January 2016 - Reuters\)](#) [\(20 January 2016 - Amnesty\)](#) [\(21 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(21 January 2016 - Eleven\)](#) [\(21 January 2016 - Narinjara\)](#) [\(21 January 2016 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Twelve Charged for Labor Protest

On January 18, twelve laborers, including Ko Sai, leader of the Laborers, were charged under Article 147 of the Penal Code by Yankin Township Court.

The charges relate to their participation in a march on March 4, 2015, from Shwepyitha Township to Insein Township to demand higher wages from their employers. The group were stopped once they arrived in Insein Township a lawsuit was filed against them under Section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act and Article 147 of the Penal Code. Ko Sai faces additional charges under Article 505(b) of the Penal Code.

[\(18 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(18 January 2016 - Eleven\)](#)

LAND ISSUES

Land Rights Activists Arrested

Maung Shwe, a Wardatkwan villager and land rights activist accused of preventing the removal of huts in Wardatkwin village on December 23 and 26, 2015, was arrested by the police on January 6 after he held a press conference at the office of the South Myanmar Journalist Network (SMJN) regarding the land issues faced by the Wardatkwin villagers.

A warrant for the arrest of Maung Shwe and two other villagers was issued by the Court of Kyaikhto Township on December 27, 2015. The trio are charged under Article 505(b) of the Penal Code.

During the removal of huts the villagers were beaten and kicked, the Theinzayat Police failed to file a lawsuit to against the perpetrators.

[\(6 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 January 2016 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#)

Police Stopped Farmers' Mine Protests- Three Protester Charged

On January 14, at 2pm, police stopped 200 Burma farmers who were marching from Mogyopyin Ale Ville to the Wanbao Mining Company's offices in the Sagaing region to protest a decision by the company not to provide compensation for crops that were destroyed by the mine operation.

While the farmers received compensation last year, they had heard nothing about payments this year despite sending multiple letters in January 2016 requesting compensation from the company. Since they had no response they decided to march to the office of WanBao Mining Company on January 14.

Further protests were held in front of the WanBao Mining Company on January 16 and January 18 without prior approval. The Sarlinngyi Police Station have filed lawsuits against 66 protesters.

[\(14 January 2016 - Radio Free Asia\)](#) [\(15 January 2016 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Radio Free Asia/ Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - VOA/ Burmese\)](#)

RELATED HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

Rights Organizations and US Government Raise Concerns Despite Presidential Amnesty

On January 22, local and international rights organizations called the government out on their contradictory actions- a presidential amnesty that saw the release of 52 political prisoners followed hours later by the sentencing of prominent rights activist Patrick Kum Jaa Lee for a Facebook post. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International released press statements questioning the sincerity of the presidential amnesty given the sentencing of a government critic only hours after the announcement of the releases. The US government, used the amnesty as an opportunity to continue demanding the release of all remaining political prisoners. "While we recognize this as an important step, we remain concerned that there are still many individuals who remain jailed or on trial for simply exercising their right to freely express themselves," said the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon.

[\(22 January 2016 - Amnesty\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - HRW\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - Reuters\)](#) [\(22 January 2016 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 January 2016 - Eleven/ Burmese\)](#) [\(23 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/ Burmese\)](#)

Fortify Rights Called for the Release of Imprisoned Letpadan Protesters

On January 25, raising concerns about the denied health care and inhumane treatment of Letpadan detainees, Fortify Rights urged the government of Burma to immediately and unconditionally release 53 political prisoners detained since March for participating in peaceful protests in Letpadan in Bago Region.

[\(25 January 2016 - Fortify Rights\)](#)

HRW Concerned about Increasing Number of Political Prisoners, Calls for Immediate Release

The watchdog organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) on January 17, expressed great concern over the rising number of political prisoners in Burma and called for their unconditional and immediate release. HRW's deputy Asia director called on the soon-to-be-ex-president to "leave a positive legacy by immediately and unconditionally freeing all of those unjustly held" and to "drop all charges".

[\(17 January 2016 - HRW\)](#) [\(18 January 2016 - VOA/Burmese\)](#)

US Envoy Demands Immediate Release of Remaining Political Prisoners

After having finished his first visit to Naypyidaw in May 2015, US Deputy Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken started his second diplomatic visit on January 18, which is the first time for a senior US official to visit the country since the November election. During his meeting with senior government representatives, he urged President

Thein Sein to release all remaining political prisoners before the new government takes power in the beginning of February. The US Envoy met with President Thein Sein, Aung San Suu Kyi and army top brass and congratulated them on holding a "peaceful" and successful poll. Blinken called for an equal application of the rule of law to everyone in order to grant an equal chance for everyone to participate in the democratic life of the country.

[\(18 January 2016 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(18 January 2016 - Bangkok Post\)](#) [\(18 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(18 January 2016 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Radio Free Asia\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Frontier Myanmar\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 January 2016 - Myanmar Times/Burmese\)](#) [\(20 January 2016 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

NLD Pushes for Definition of Political Prisoners and Pledges No More Political Prisoners

On January 5, U Tun Tun Hein a spokesman of the NLD assured his party's pledge for an official definition of the term 'political prisoner' and the NLD's plan to refrain from arresting anyone for political activities once it came into power. However, this intention could become a challenge to be implemented in practice, as the 2008 Constitution allows the military to choose the minister for home affairs, which controls the country's police force. The police force holds power over which criminal complaints are to be investigated, decides whether they should proceed to court and determines which protest applications get approved.

[\(6 January 2016 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

CONCLUSION

AAPP remain unconvinced that the current government have any genuine intention of leaving a legacy of commitment to addressing human rights before the end of their term in government. This month 52 political prisoners were released under Presidential amnesty, in what was ostensibly a show of good faith by the outgoing government. However, whilst these activists walked free, many more were charged, arrested and sentenced revealing that the recent amnesty was little more than a superficial gesture to appease the demands of the international community.

This month 27 new charges for political actions were accepted by the courts many for protests that happened over a year ago. Additional charges have also been piled on student activists, already serving time for peaceful protests they were involved in over a year ago. Despite the presidential amnesty on January 22 32 new lawsuits were filed against political activists before the end of the month. The addition of charges and lawsuits over a year since the protests demonstrates that the government's true intention is to prolong the protesters stays in detention and to ensure that they remain in jail long after their term in government has ended.



“AAPP remain unconvinced that the current government have any genuine intention of leaving a legacy of commitment to addressing human rights before the end of their term in government.”

The piling of additional charges and possibility of longer sentences is only one of the issues faced by the student protesters. Many still suffer from serious health conditions, some life-threatening. Despite this, they continue to be denied adequate medical treatment. Pleas from rights organizations and the international community to immediately and unconditionally release these students continue to be ignored by the government, and the situation of these students continues to deteriorate.

This month two additional individuals were sentenced under 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. Patrick Kum Jaa Lee and Zaw Myo accused of online defamation regarding Facebook posts were charged to 6 months and 1 year with hard labor, respectively. There have now been three sentences under this law in the last two months. These cases highlight the government's persisting resentment toward those who oppose them. Worryingly, the use of this law to detain activists indicates a step toward greater suppression in the digital sphere. Serving months in prison for criticizing the government on Facebook is an outrageous misuse of this law and must be immediately stopped.

The re-arrest of U Gambira, sentencing of Patrick Kum Jaa Lee and mounting legal pressure placed on student activists this month show that the current government still harbors resentment and animosity toward dissidents. These events shatter any hope that the presidential amnesty this month was a genuine attempt by the government to impart a positive legacy of commitment to address human rights issues before the end of their term. AAPP welcomes the adoption of a formal definition of political prisoner and hopes that the plight of those arrested for their political activism will finally be recognized.

REFERENCES

January 6

[Land Rights Activists Arrested \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

[Land Rights Activists Arrested \(Eleven/Burmese\)](#)

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[Activist Naw Ohn Hla on Hunger Strike, Protesting Against Proposed Immunity Bill \(RFA/Burmese\)](#)

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