

URGENT ACTION

KACHIN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE FREED

Kachin prisoner of conscience Lahpai Gam has been released from prison following a Presidential amnesty on 17 April 2018. Detained since June 2012, he was tortured during interrogation and falsely accused of being a member of an “unlawful” association. Lahpai Gam suffers from ill-health, which further deteriorated while he was in detention.

Lahpai Gam was unconditionally released from Myitkyina prison in Myanmar’s Kachin State on 17 April 2018 as part of a Presidential amnesty which saw the release of 8,490 prisoners, including prisoners of conscience and arbitrarily detained individuals.

Lahpai Gam was arrested in June 2012 in Kachin State in northern Myanmar. He was held incommunicado for almost a month before being transferred to Myitkyina prison, and was tortured by the military during interrogation. Falsely accused of being a member of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), an ethnic armed group in Myanmar, and of involvement in the bombing of a bridge in Kachin State, he was sentenced to a total of twenty years’ imprisonment. However, due to insufficient evidence, the Supreme Court overturned the convictions under the Unlawful Association Act and two of the four counts under the Explosive Substances Act. The two remaining charges were upheld based on a confession letter dated from the time he was tortured and held incommunicado.

Throughout his incarceration, Lahpai Gam maintained his innocence, and Amnesty International believes the case against him was politically motivated. In November 2013, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) declared Lahpai Gam’s arrest and detention to be arbitrary on the grounds that it restricted his rights to freedom of movement and residence, to freedom of thought and conscience, to freedom of expression and opinion, and violated the principle of non-discrimination.

While Amnesty International welcomes the release of Lahpai Gam, the fact remains that he should never have been arrested and imprisoned in the first place.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 83/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/6169/2017/en/>

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