

URGENT ACTION

15 PROTESTERS CHARGED AND STILL DETAINED

15 factory workers and student union members are detained in Myanmar and face a range of criminal charges for their peaceful protest to demand better working conditions. They are prisoners of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 18 May, police in Tatkon Township, close to Myanmar's capital Naypyitaw, arrested more than 70 wood factory workers and members of the All Burma Federation of Students Union (ABFSU). They were peacefully marching against the dismissal of workers from the Myanmar Veneer Plywood Private Ltd factory, which they claim is a result of the workers' demand for overtime pay and improved working conditions. The protesters began their peaceful march in Sagaing Region in late April and were on their way to Napyitaw to bring their concerns to the union level government when they were arrested.

On 19 May, 20 protesters were released without charge, and further 36 people were released on 1 June after charges against them were dropped. However, **15 peaceful protesters** remain in detention charged with a range of Penal Code offences: 'being a member of an unlawful assembly' (Section 143), 'joining or continuing an unlawful assembly after it has been told to disperse' (Section 145), 'rioting' (Section 147), and 'incitement' (Section 505 (b)). They each face a total of up to six years and six months' imprisonment.

In protest against the charges and convinced they won't receive a fair trial, the protesters have decided to 'boycott' their trial by refusing to hire a lawyer and disrupting their hearings, including by singing. On 13 July, they were each found guilty of contempt of court under Section 480 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and sentenced to either one month in prison or a fine of 5,000 kyats (around 4\$USD). Some of the protesters have said they will not pay the fine and will serve the prison sentence instead.

All 15 peaceful protesters are currently detained in Yamethin Prison in Mandalay Region in central Myanmar. Some of them have complained of poor hygiene and lack of medical care.

Please write immediately in Burmese, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the 15 peaceful protesters;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that pending their release, they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, nor transferred to remote prisons, and that they have regular access to family members and a lawyer of their choice and are provided with any medical treatment that they may require; and
- Calling on them to repeal or else amend all laws which unlawfully restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, to comply with international human rights law and standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 AUGUST 2016 TO:

President

U Htin Kyaw
President's Office
Office No.18
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 1 652 624

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Home Affairs

Lt. Gen. Kyaw Swe
Ministry of Home Affairs
Office No. 10, Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 67 412 439
Email: mohamyanmar@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Chairman, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
U Win Mra
27 Pyay Road, Hlaing Township, Yangon
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: + 95 1 659 668
Email: chmyanmarnhrc@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY KYAW ZWAR MINN , Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 19A Charles Street, London W1J 5DX, General Office 020 7148 0740 / 020 7499 4340, Ambassador's Office 020 7148 0749, ambassadoroffice@myanmarembassylondon.com, political@myanmarembassylondon.com, generalenquiries@myanmarembassylondon.com, salutation: Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 15 peaceful protesters currently in detention in Yamethin prison are: Thein Oo, Win Min, Saw Kai Htoo, Khaing Min, Khin San Wai, Yan Naing Htwe, Sein Lae Khaing, Kyaw Kyaw Myo, Naing Naing Aung, Yu Thandar Aung, Hnin Aung, Kaung Zaw Hein, Than Htike, Ye Yint Paing Hmu, and Victor.

In February and early April 2016, more than 160 wood workers from Myanmar Veneer Plywood Private Ltd. factory were dismissed. Workers believe it was because of their demands for better working conditions, including overtime pay. On 16 April, a group of workers from the factory travelled to the capital Naypyitaw to raise their concerns with the union level government. They turned back after hearing that the Sagaing Region authorities had agreed to help negotiate between the workers and the factory. The workers were told they would be able to meet with local authorities on 27 or 28 of April to discuss their concerns. However, according to the protesters no meeting took place, and they decided to resume their protest and march from Sagaing Region to Naypyitaw. A Ministry of Labour official was quoted by local media warning the protesters to end the protest or else face action. The protesters were then stopped by police when they reached the town of Tatkon, close to Naypyitaw, on 18 May, and despite their attempts to meet with the Chairman of the Naypyitaw Council to discuss the situation, dozens were arrested and taken in to custody.

On 24 March Amnesty International published a report on political imprisonment in Myanmar which highlighted the erosion of newly found freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in the country since the start of 2014. The report includes a number of recommendations to the new government aimed at ending the cycle of political arrest and detention in Myanmar. See: *New expression meets old repression: Ending the cycle of political arrests and imprisonment in Myanmar*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/3430/2016/en/>.

On 7 April Myanmar's National League for Democracy (NLD) led government announced that it would work to release all prisoners of conscience and political prisoners as soon as possible. Since then, scores of prisoners of conscience have been released, however arrests on politically motivated grounds have also continued. Amnesty International is continuing to call for the release of all remaining prisoners of conscience and others who have been arbitrarily detained in Myanmar.

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