

## Dr. Than Nyein: Prisoner of Conscience in Union of Myanmar

### Background

In 1962, a military coup in Burma led to the imposition of a dictatorship. A country-wide people's uprising in 1988 was met by a brutal crackdown (during which time the junta renamed the country Myanmar). To this day, under a succession of military leaders, there is ongoing repression and violence including arrests, torture, imprisonment, forced labor, forced evacuations, and other extreme human rights violations.

Many have suffered and continue to suffer under the brutal regime. One of them is Dr. Than Nyein, a medical doctor who was elected to Parliament in legitimate elections in 1990. The junta prevented all the electees from taking office. In 1997, the doctor was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for arranging a party meeting with National League for Democracy leader Aung SanSuu Kyi. (ASSK has been kept under house arrest for many years. In 1991 she received the Nobel Peace Prize for her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.)

Although Dr. Than Nyein completed his sentence in 2004, the authorities have repeatedly extended his sentence, without having charged him or brought him to trial. Dr. Than Nyein's health has deteriorated alarmingly. He has been repeatedly hospitalized during his imprisonment, and although prison doctors have recommended he receive specialist treatment, he has not received it. Prisons conditions are known to be brutal. Many prisoners are suffering from illnesses exacerbated by their treatment; food and medical treatment are cruelly inadequate and conditions in many cases amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

### Letter-Writing Action

On the next page is a letter asking for the release of Dr. Than Nyein. Please print it, add the date at the top, then sign your name at the bottom, and print your name and address. Don't expect to receive a reply from the authorities in Myanmar. If you are writing from the U.S., when you address *the envelope only*, be sure to add (Burma) after Myanmar, just like this:

Senior General Than Shwe  
Chairman, State Peace and Development Council  
c/o Ministry of Defence  
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar (Burma)

Do not write (Burma) on the letter itself; this is to be written only on the envelope. U.S. airmail postage is 90 cents. Be sure to write Air Mail on the envelope. The letter is on next page. If you have any questions, feel free to email me.

Thank you,  
Andrea

Senior General Than Shwe  
Chairman, State Peace and Development Council  
c/o Ministry of Defence  
Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Dear General,

I urge you to release Dr. Than Nyein, whose completed prison term has been extended more than once. Dr. Than Nyein is considered a prisoner of conscience, detained since 1997 solely for his legitimate, non-violent political activities.

I am extremely concerned that he has been denied necessary medical treatment for life-threatening health problems, and that his condition has become so critical that he has been hospitalized. This is a matter of extreme urgency. I understand that a number of prisoners have died from medical conditions that were not adequately treated, and I fear a similar fate will befall Dr. Than Nyein.

I respectfully remind you again that Dr. Than Nyein's sentence was served in full, and I ask you to release him without delay so that he can receive needed medical care and recover in appropriate surroundings. Thank you for your attention. I would be grateful to receive your reply.

Sincerely,