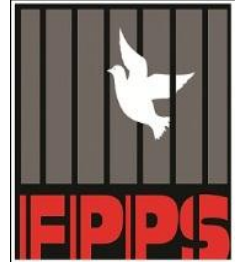




**Assistance Association for former Political Prisoners (Burma)
Former Political Prisoners Society**



The Ongoing Arrests of Political Activists in Burma

Date... 27, May 2014.

The end of 2013 saw numerous government statements that convinced much of the outside world that all political activists had been freed from Burma's jails. These statements not only served to undermine the plight of those political activists still in jail at the beginning of 2014, but also shifted focus away from the ongoing restrictions and harassments of political activists. In 2014, there have been 85 people charged under Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Law, Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code, Section 447, and a number of other laws. AAPP currently recognizes at least 59 political prisoners detained across Burma.

Press freedoms in 2014 have been repeatedly threatened, with the arrest of numerous journalists and press staff members around the country, demonstrating the plight of those fighting for freedom of speech, assembly, and expression.

The arrest of Democratic Voice of Burma journalist Zaw Pe has seen unauthorized demonstrations in Magwe Township, with supporters angry at his year long sentence for attempting to interview a Magwe education official. Many view the charges against Zaw Pe—of trespassing and disturbing a civil servant—as restricting the freedom of the press and suppressing the people's right to free speech

The ire and frustration of these protesters has been further provoked by the arrest of five Unity Weekly staff members, who are accused of breaching the Official Secrets Act and are still awaiting trial from prison. Journalists, staffers, and family members were all detained in connection with their charges of disclosing state secrets. This attitude of oppressing journalists and restricting press freedoms is evidently still prevalent in Burma, with the press hamstrung in their attempts to question the actions of government and state officials. While journalists are prevented from providing the people of Burma with information regarding the activities of their government, freedom of speech can never truly exist.

President Thein Sein promised to release all political activists by the end of 2013, a commitment he made, not only to his own country, but to the international community. AAPP and FPPS has recorded evidence that this promise was not fulfilled. The willingness of the international community to believe otherwise is as concerning as the ongoing arrests themselves. International pressure on the Burmese government to keep their promise and honor their commitment to the democratic process is essential to furthering civil liberties in Burma. The arrest and imprisonment of peaceful demonstrators under laws designed to restrict civil liberties is not unfamiliar in Burma, and continues unabated in 2014. The dangers to journalists, farmers, demonstrators, and political activists are as real as ever—a fact reflected in the number of arrests made since the start of the year. We continues to call for the release of

detained human-rights defenders who should be permitted to participate in the democratic transition in Burma, rather than face harassment, persecution, and imprisonment because of their unwavering commitment to a free Burma.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

Former Political Prisoners Society

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