

URGENT ACTION

UNION LEADER SENTENCED TO SEVEN YEARS IN PRISON

Thet Hnin Aung, a prominent trade union leader, was sentenced to seven years in prison with hard labor following a secret trial and after five months of being forcibly disappeared. His arrest occurred the same day he was released from prison, after serving a two-year sentence (2021-2023) for his activism in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In addition to ongoing health concerns that require daily medication, there are grave fears for Thet Hnin Aung's wellbeing as he has already endured torture and other ill-treatment during his prior imprisonment. The Myanmar military must immediately and unconditionally release Thet Hnin Aung.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 38.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Head of the Myanmar Military, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Defense Services Commander-in-Chief's Office
Ministry of Defense Tatmadaw,
Information Technology Department, Office No.3
15015, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Email: modmyanmar.gov@gmail.com

Embassy of Myanmar in the United States
His Excellency Ambassador Aung Lynn
2300 S Street,
NW, Washington DC 20008
Email: washington-embassy@mofa.gov.mm OR
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To the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Head of the Myanmar Military,

I am gravely concerned about the re-arrest of **Thet Hnin Aung** on June 26, 2023, the same day as his release from Zaymathwe Prison, after serving two years for his active participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Thet Hnin Aung was subjected to a secret military trial, where he was not present, nor was he allowed to be legally represented. In addition to receiving the maximum punishment available, this is the first time that a labor activist has not only forcibly been disappeared, but also charged with such a severe sentence.

Of further concern, Thet Hnin Aung's family are particularly worried for his health. Suffering from hearing loss and a troublesome digestive system, he requires daily medication. These health problems are direct results of the torture and other ill-treatment he endured during his prior imprisonment.

Peaceful dissent is a human right. Therefore, I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Thet Hnin Aung from arbitrary detention and guarantee his immediate access to necessary medical care.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thet Hnin Aung is a union leader of the registered labor organization known as MICS TUsF (Myanmar Industries, Crafts and Services Trade Unions Federation), where he worked to improve the working conditions for workers in Myanmar. In 2021, he was charged with violation of Article 17/1 of the local “Unlawful Association Law” for his active participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was sentenced to two years in prison, which he served in Insein Prison in Yangon and Zaymathwe Prison in Mon State. After his two-year sentence, he was released on June 26, 2023.

However, his family was informed by a witness that on this same day of release, Thet Hnin Aung and two prisoners were taken away by soldiers. Following these events, Thet Hnin Aung’s family inquired to the chief of police who stated that this was likely a military operation. On June 28, Thet Hnin Aung’s family decided to go to the military basecamp in Paung, Mon State to inquire about his whereabouts. Some soldiers stopped them in front of the gate and threatened them not to step further. After five months of no news, in November 2023, Thet Hnin Aung finally contacted his family and they saw him in person after he was transferred to Insein Prison in Yangon. They could not determine where he was held prior to his current location, but he presented visible signs of torture and other ill-treatment.

During his enforced disappearance, Thet Hnin Aung was subjected to a military trial where he was not present, nor legally represented. Nonetheless, he was charged with Article 52a, a Myanmar counter terrorism charge, and given the maximum sentence of seven years with hard labor. This is the first time a labor activist has been given this sentence. The conviction and sentence are most likely linked to his activism work and his involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

Following the military coup on February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military seized control and declared a state of emergency, leading to the formation of the State Administration Council also known as SAC. Since then, more than 26,242 individuals have been arrested, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). Myanmar military authorities have executed at least four people and sentenced at least 123 people to death. Additionally, sixteen labor organizations were publicly declared illegal by the Myanmar military on March 2, 2021.

Since the coup, the junta has committed widespread and systematic abuses against the people that may constitute [crimes against humanity](#). Thousands have been jailed, tortured, and killed, with brutal tactics employed, including airstrikes, burning of villages, antipersonnel mines, torture, arbitrary detention, and unlawful killings. The situation has become more dire in 2024 with an enforced conscription law, which has increased instability in Myanmar and across the region. This has led to an increase in the numbers of internally displaced people and refugees to neighboring countries.

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the coup, people across Myanmar have shown remarkable courage and solidarity in demanding respect for their rights. Civil society actors, like Thet Hnin Aung, have braved enormous risks to document the military’s crimes and to deliver essential assistance to conflict-affected communities. It is time for the world to support them.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: June 24, 2024

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Thet Hnin Aung (he/him)