

URGENT ACTION

FARMERS AT RISK AFTER BEATING BY SOLDIERS

Six Chin farmers who were ill-treated – some tortured – by Myanmar Army soldiers are at risk of further human rights violations after speaking out publicly about their ordeal. All six are now in hiding. A seventh farmer who was also tortured has fled to India.

On 28 August, soldiers, understood to be under the command of Light Infantry Battalion 344, detained and beat 40-year-old farmer **U Maung Sein** from Kone Pyin village until he passed out. They had accused him of having contact with the Chin National Army (CNA), an armed group which operates in Myanmar's western Chin State. The next day, the same soldiers detained and interrogated two more farmers, **U Kyaw Aung** and **U Aye Hla** along with U Maung Sein, tied the three men up and beat them. On 31 August, soldiers beat another farmer, **U Aung Kyaw Hla**, with a wooden pole until he lost consciousness for around four hours. When he regained consciousness, he and three more farmers – **U Kyaw Myint Oo**, **U Aung So** and **U Sanay Aung** – were also detained.

The seven men were held in the same place, including in and nearby a hut used by U Kyaw Aung. They were tied up, beaten and kicked; three of the men were tied to a tree overnight. As a result of the beatings U Maung Sein and U Sanay Aung suffered swelling to their faces, to the point that they could not open their eyes, and all seven were deprived of food while they were detained. U Sanay Aung managed to escape on 1 September and fled to India; the six others were held until 5 September. On 4 September they were forced to sign a statement admitting to having contact with the CNA and promising never to contact them again. They were released the following day.

Fearing further ill-treatment, the six men fled to Paletwa town on 8 September and sent a written complaint to the Chin State government. U Aung Kyaw Hla travelled to Yangon to seek medical treatment for a suspected blood clot in his brain and a neck injury and at a 17 September press conference accused the Army of torture. Meanwhile, the five others travelled back to Kone Pyin village after a soldier showed them a letter stating that the Army acknowledged wrong-doing and would provide compensation. However, on 19 and 20 September they were interrogated again and forced to sign a statement denying they were tortured. They then fled and are now in hiding.

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

- Calling on the authorities to immediately ensure that the six farmers – U Aye Hla, U Maung Sein, U Kyaw Aung, U Aung Kyaw Hla, U Kyaw Myint Oo, and U Aung So are not subjected to further torture or other ill-treatment, and that they are allowed to return to their homes in safety and without fear of reprisal;
- Demanding that they order a prompt, impartial and effective investigation into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment by the Myanmar Army, bring suspected perpetrators, including those with command responsibility, to justice in independent, civilian courts, in fair trials and grant reparations to the victims;
- Urging Myanmar to ratify the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, incorporate its provisions in domestic law and implement it in policy and practice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 NOVEMBER 2014 TO:

President

U Thein Sein
President's Office
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Your Excellency

Commander in Chief of the Myanmar

Armed Forces
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Building 24
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

And copies to:

Chin State Chief Minister
Hung Ngai
Chin State Government
Chin State
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: 011 95 7021108

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Than Swe, Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
2300 S St. NW, Washington DC 20008
Fax: 1 202 332 4351 | Email: info@mewashingtondc.com

Please let us know if you took action so that we can track our impact. Send a short email to uan@aiusa.org with "UA 245/14" in the subject line and include in the body of the email the number of letters and/or emails you sent. Thank you for taking action! Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Network Office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The sub-village headman of Kone Pyin village, U Shwe Sein, was also arbitrarily detained by soldiers on 28 August. They accused him of allowing CNA soldiers into the area around the village. He was held at the Shinletwa military camp until 9 September, when he was released. According to credible sources, U Shwe Sein was not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while he was detained.

The CNA is the armed wing of the Chin National Front (CNF). The CNF first signed a ceasefire agreement on 6 January 2012 with the Chin State government, and signed two further agreements with the Myanmar government in May and December that year.

Amnesty International regularly receives credible reports of the police and military committing torture and other ill-treatment with impunity. In his final report to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2014, the then Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, expressed concern about the continuing practice of torture in places of detention and the lack of accountability for such acts. Torture is not specifically and explicitly prohibited in Myanmar and there are no adequate mechanisms in law or practice that allow victims of torture and other ill-treatment to complain safely about the treatment they suffer, for prompt, impartial and effective investigations into such complaints or reports, for suspected perpetrators to be held to account, or for victims and their families to receive adequate reparations.

Chin State is in a remote mountainous part of western Myanmar and is mainly populated by the ethnic Chins who are approximately 90 per cent Christian. Numerous human rights violations – largely at the hands of the Myanmar Army – such as, unlawful killings, rape and other crimes of sexual violence, and violations of the right to freedom of religion have been reported in Chin State for decades.

Names: U Aye Hla (m), U Maung Sein (m), U Kyaw Aung (m), U Aung Kyaw Hla (m), U Kyaw Myint Oo (m), U Aung So (m), U Sanay Aung (m).
Issues: Torture/ill-treatment, Fear for safety, Arbitrary detention

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