

Burma, free Phooey Phyo Aung and all student protesters

Student activists Phyo Phyo Aung and her husband Lin Htet Naing are among over a hundred people imprisoned in Burma for organising and attending education protests this year.

Phyo Phyo leads one of Burma's biggest student unions – despite the fact they're banned in Burma. She's being punished simply for exercising her right to free speech. As Burma holds a general election, ask the president to release the protesters.



Phyo Phyo: the student leader punished for protesting

Phyo Phyo Aung is the Secretary General of prominent student union the All Burma Federation Student Union. Student unions are illegal in Burma.

Imprisoned since 10 March, Phyo Phyo is awaiting trial for charges relating to the demonstrations she helped organise in February and March, on behalf of students unhappy with a new education law passed by the government the previous year. The students say the law limits free speech and democracy in the education system, and are calling for the government to amend it.

On 3 November, Phyo Phyo's husband, Lin Htet Naing, was arrested for allegedly organising the protests – after nearly eight months in hiding.

Both Phyo Phyo Aung and Lin Htet Naing are prisoners of conscience – they have peacefully exercised their human right to free speech by criticising the government and attending protests – yet they are imprisoned for it, and facing many years behind bars if found guilty of the criminal charges they've been dealt.

In the past, student-led protests have evolved into calls for wider political change. Both Phyo Phyo Aung and Lin Htet Naing were imprisoned following their part in organising the student unions to demonstrate in 2007 – protests that became the 'Saffron Revolution'. The police violently cracked down on the protesters, and Phyo Phyo served over three years in prison for her association with the demonstrations – including a month in solitary confinement.

Phyo Phyo Aung and her fellow protesters are once again paying the price for speaking out in Burma, where democracy is far from reality.

Student demonstrators beaten while handcuffed – simply for protesting

On 30 September 2014, the Burmese government adopted the National Education Law. Student unions say that under the new law, universities are not independent from the Ministry of Education. The law outlaws student and teacher unions, as well as stopping classes being taught in minority languages in higher education.

Phyoe Phyoe and other student leaders began talks with the authorities in January of this year to address the students' concerns. But the talks soon broke down, and in February the student leaders organised protests in cities across Burma. The authorities briefly listened when faced with the prospect of protests – and ordered the students to stop the demonstrations. But the talks did not progress, leading the students to once again plan protests across four Burmese cities for 10 March.

The protests took place, and police responded with force, beating protesters with batons, even when they had fallen to the ground. Phyoe Phyoe tried to negotiate a peaceful ending to the stand-off with police, but when they started using force she took refuge with others in a nearby monastery. Police surrounded the monastery; Phyoe Phyoe and a friend approached them and offered to disperse the protest if the police refrained from using violence. Instead, the students were handcuffed, sat down in rows and beaten over the heads with batons.

The students were charged with imprisoned and charged with criminal offences, including:

- Taking part in an unlawful assembly

- Rioting

- Committing offences against the state or the public tranquillity.

They face a maximum of nine and a half years in prison, if found guilty. It is unclear when the mass trials will take place.

Sign the On line Petition

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/burma-myanmar-free-phyoe-phyoe-aung-student-protesters-write-rights>

What we're calling for

We are asking President Thein Sein to:

- Free Phyoe Phyoe Aung

- Free all the other peaceful student protesters in detention

- Ensure that the student protesters are not tortured or ill-treated in detention

- Allow the protesters regular access to family members and lawyers

- Give the protesters with medical treatment as required.

Signing the petition by text

- If you would prefer to sign the petition by SMS

[Text FREE4 + YOUR NAME to 70505 to sign the petition](#)

Eg. FREE4 John Smith

We'll add your name to a petition that we'll fax to the authorities in Saudi Arabia.

Our SMS actions are only for over 14s, and you are only able to text from within the UK. Texts are charged at your standard network rate, no more than 10p. Please ask bill-payers permission. By giving us your number you agree to future communication from us by SMS. To unsubscribe, text STOP to 70505 at any time. [Full terms and conditions](#)

Aged 14-17?

- So that we can ensure you receive appropriate communications, please include your date of birth in the following format: DD/MM/YYYY (eg SIGNUP John Smith 01/01/1900).

What happens to my text?

- We will add your name - but not your phone number - to the co-signed letter below, which will be sent to President Thein Sein

The petition

I call upon you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Phyoe Phyoe Aung and all other detained peaceful student protesters
- Ensure that pending their release they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated
- Allow them access to family members and lawyers, as well as medical treatment as required

Send Phyoe Phyoe Aung a message of support

- Phyoe Phyoe is one of the people featured in our [Write for Rights](#) campaign. Every year, as well as calling for justice for people who've been denied human rights, we ask you to send messages of support to individuals in prison, or the families who have lost loved ones to human rights abuses.
- Writing a letter or card doesn't take long - and it can make the world of difference to someone like Phyoe Phyoe, in prison simply for organising protests.

What to write

- Send a message to Phyoe Phyoe and all the detained students. You are encouraged to address solidarity messages to 'all detained students', not just her.
- Write what you wish, although short message about how you are thinking her and that you are calling for the freedom of all of the students would be plenty.
- Phyoe Phyoe Aung loves animals, so you could send always send pictures or drawings of animals.

Where to post your letter

- We're collecting all letters for the students at our London International Secretariat. Our Burma team there will send them on to the students in prison.
- Please post your message to:

Phyoe Phyoe Aung
c/o Myanmar Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW

Things to note when writing your message

- You can mention Amnesty and send Amnesty-branded cards
- You may include your own name and address
- You can religious cards or messages to the students if you wish.