
Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
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May 2013

Individuals At Risk

Solidarity action for Burmese prisoner Dr Tun Aung



Dr. Tun Aung, a Burmese doctor, has been held incommunicado since his arrest on 11 June 2012. He has been charged with inciting violence around the time that riots broke out in Maungdaw, Rakhine State, western Burma. However, independent eyewitnesses have stated that Dr Tun Aung actively tried to calm the crowd on the day that riots broke out. Amnesty International considers Dr Tun Aung a prisoner of conscience, targeted because he is a Muslim community leader.

June 2013 will mark a year since he was arrested. It is not normally possible for us to send solidarity messages of support to his family; however we have a rare opportunity, over a short period of time around the anniversary of his arrest, to send messages to Dr Tun Aung's adult children, who are currently based in the region but outside of Burma.

They have indicated that they would welcome solidarity cards and letters from Amnesty members. They and other family members who are still in Burma are feeling increasingly demoralised about Dr Tun Aung's situation, particularly because it has been reported that Dr Tun Aung's prison sentence was increased from 11 years to 17 years in April. This was following an apparently successful appeal from the prosecution on the grounds that his sentence was 'too lenient'.

CONTENTS

- The guidance sheet
- Case background info
- Solidarity message

GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?

For any queries about this action and for updates, please contact iar@amnesty.org.uk
Download this mailing at www.amnesty.org.uk/groups

MONTHLY ACTION

Background information

Solidarity action for Burmese prisoner Dr Tun Aung

To mark the anniversary of his arrest we would like groups to join this global action and send messages of support to Dr Aung's family from Amnesty UK.

Case Background:

Dr. Tun Aung is a family man, a medical doctor and was the Chairman of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council in Maungdaw at the time of his arrest in June 2012. He was appointed to this position due to the high level of respect in which he is held by many in his community.

When a riot broke out between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims on 8 June 2012 in Maungdaw, western Myanmar, Dr Tun Aung agreed to help police defuse tensions. Relations between the two communities had deteriorated after 10 Muslims were killed as revenge for the rape and murder of a Buddhist Rakhine woman in May 2012.

Amnesty International has received independent eyewitness accounts of Dr. Tun Aung's conduct on that day. He is reported to have been actively trying to calm agitated people, but many were not prepared to listen to him.

That evening, thousands of people, mainly Rohingya Muslims, were still rioting in Maungdaw. Dr. Tun Aung and members of his family feared for their safety and took refuge in the local Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Due to the security situation, the UNHCR staff were evacuated and Dr. Tun Aung and several of his family members were left alone. Feeling nervous after verbal threats were shouted at them by Rakhine Buddhists, the family accepted an offer of a lift back to their home from an Immigration Officer on 11 June. Instead the officer took them to the Border Immigration Headquarters in Kyi Kan Pyin Township. All were released later that day apart from Dr. Tun Aung. His whereabouts were unknown for several weeks and then information emerged that he was being held in Sittwe prison, Rakhine state, some 170km by road from his hometown Maungdaw.

Dr Tun Aung has mainly been held incommunicado since his arrest on 11 June. He was arrested for 'inciting communal violence', even though all the reports that Amnesty has read suggest that he tried to defuse the tension and did not play any role in the violence and did not incite violence

Dr Tun Aung also suffers from a pituitary tumour and requires medication to manage this condition. There is a concern that the prison authorities may not be providing him with the medication he requires.

It is believed that Dr. Tun Aung was detained in the aftermath of the communal violence in Maungdaw because the authorities were looking for individuals to blame, and that Dr. Tun Aung was singled out because he is a Muslim community leader.

Amnesty International believes that Dr Tun Aung is a prisoner of conscience who should never have been arrested as he did not incite or take part in the violence on 8 June.

MONTHLY ACTION

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WHAT WE'D LIKE YOU TO DO:

Send a solidarity message to Dr Tun Aung's family.

You could send individual cards from each member of your local group, or why not choose a postcard of your local area and ask all members of your group to sign it with their own message?

If you are feeling creative, you may wish to take a photo of your local group and send this along with messages of solidarity.

What sort of messages would the family appreciate?

Messages offering encouragement to the family will be welcomed and also if you have taken action or plan to take action shortly calling for Dr Tun Aung's release please do share that information with the family too.

Who should the cards or letters or materials be addressed to?

Dr Tun Aung's family.

What languages can be used?

The family members speak fluent English. Please write your messages in English, Burmese, or in your own language.

Are there any limitations on what you can send?

Please **do not** send religious cards.

All regular sized letters, cards and small, light items are welcome. Small posters are fine up to A2 size (A2 = 4 x A4) But please do not send any heavy or bulky items or items which may cause problems at customs.

What is the timeline for this action?

This action is running over the anniversary of Dr Aung's arrest; please make sure your solidarity messages arrives at the address below by **July 12th 2013**.

Where do you send your solidarity messages?

Please send your messages by July 12th 2013 to the International Secretariat using the following address.

Dr Tun Aung's Family,
c/o Myanmar Team, International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton Street, London, WC1X 0DW,

Your messages will then be shared with Dr Aung's family as soon as is possible. Please do not try to send messages or cards directly with the family members who are still in Burma as it will put them at risk.

Want to do more?

If your group would like to work on Dr Aung's case on a long term basis or you would like more information on Burma please contact the Country Coordinator Tony Fairman (tony.fairman@amnesty.org.uk)