

Press Release

Burma: Time has come to release all political prisoners

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International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Paris, 29 September 2008: The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) welcomes the recent release of a few political prisoners by the military regime. On 23 September 2008, about 9,000 prisoners were granted an amnesty and subsequently released from various prisons in Burma, among which a handful of political prisoners. Among them was Win Tin, a major political opponent to the Burmese regime, jailed since 19 years.

However, many more political prisoners are still behind the bars. In May 2008, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar/Burma reported that 1 900 prisoners of opinion were still being detained.

FIDH expresses in particular its deepest concern about the continuing detention of the "88 Generation Student Group". In August 2007, several members of the 88 Generation Student Group and its leader Min Ko Naung peacefully protested against the increase in the price of the general commodities, connected with the military's government's increase in fuel prices. Min Ko Naing and other prominent leaders have been subsequently arrested on 21 August 2007.

The trials of the 35 members of the 88 Generation Students Group, led by Min Ko Naing, started on August 27 and continued on September 9. They were produced for trial on September 9 to different courts for various charges. Among them, Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Pyone Cho, Jimmy, Htay Kywe, Mya Aye, Pannait Tun, Kyaw Kyaw Htwe, and Min Zeya.

FIDH considers the detention of those peaceful protesters and leaders of the 1988 democratic movement as arbitrary, since it exclusively aims at sanctioning the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. In addition, information sent to FIDH by Burma Lawyers Council (BLC), a local human rights group, clearly shows that the right to a fair trial and domestic provisions of criminal procedure have been largely violated.

We urge the government to release immediately and unconditionally all the leaders of the "88 Generation Student Group" . More generally, time has come to release all political prisoners, as repeatedly requested by

various UN bodies – notably the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar/Burma. This is a necessary step for any credible and peaceful transition in Burma.

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