

URGENT ACTION

FORMER PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ARRESTED

Former Buddhist monk, activist and prisoner of conscience U Gambira has been arrested during his visit to Myanmar from Thailand. His arrest is believed to be as a result of his previous work as a human rights activist, which was always peaceful, and he must be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 19 January at 11pm **U Gambira**, aka Nyi Nyi Lwin, was arrested without a warrant by around 20 police officers at his hotel room in Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, and taken to Mandalay's police station No. 9. On 20 January, he was brought in front of Maha Aung Myay Township Court and charged with entering the country illegally under Section 13(1) of Myanmar's 1947 Immigration (Emergency Provisions) Act. The charge carries up to five years' imprisonment. Following his hearing U Gambira was then transferred to Mandalay's Oh-Bo prison. His next court hearing will take place on 3 February.

U Gambira is a former prisoner of conscience, arrested in 2007 for his role leading mass anti-government protests in August and September of that year. He has been suffering from serious physical and mental health issues, including schizophrenia for which he must take medicine three times a day. It is unclear whether he is being given his medicine while in prison.

U Gambira, who now lives in Thailand, arrived in Myanmar on 15 January in order to apply for a passport. He crossed the border between Thailand and Myanmar at an official crossing point without facing any problems with either Myanmar or Thai immigration officials. According to a source close to him, U Gambira had been followed and monitored by officers from the Special Branch state security agency since arriving in Myanmar. Amnesty International believes the charges pressed against him are contrived, arbitrary and politically motivated.

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

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release U Gambira;
- Urging them to ensure that, pending his release, he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated; is provided with any medical care, including medicines, which he requires; is not transferred to a remote prison; and has regular access to family members and lawyers of his choosing;
- Demanding that they immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar, and drop charges against all those who have been arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 MARCH TO:

President

Thein Sein

President's Office

Office No.18

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 1 652 624

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Home Affairs

Lt Gen. Ko Ko

Ministry of Home Affairs

Office No. 10

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 67 412 439

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Chairman, Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

U Win Mra

27 Pyay Road, Hline Township

Yangon

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: + 95 1 659 668

Email: chmyanmarnhrc@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

U Gambira was previously arrested on 4 November 2007 for his role as one of the founding member of the All Burma Monks Alliance (ABMA) – the main organizer of the major anti-government demonstrations that began in August 2007, also known as the “Saffron Revolution”. The authorities brought the protests to an end with a violent crackdown in late September 2007. U Gambira was sentenced in November 2008 to a 68-year sentence under several different laws.

U Gambira was released in a presidential amnesty on 13 January 2012. On his release, he continued his activism and was twice detained for short periods by Myanmar police. In April 2012, U Gambira decided to disrobe and return to layman status and he later moved to Thailand to receive specialist medical treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder following his years in prison.

The Myanmar authorities continue to arrest and imprison activists and human rights defenders on politically motivated charges, part of an ongoing clampdown on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly which are enshrined in Articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Name: U Gambira, aka Nyi Nyi Lwin
Gender m/f: male

UA: 14/16 Index: ASA 16/3244/2016 Issue Date: 20 January 2016