

URGENT ACTION

SATIRE PERFORMERS SENTENCED TO FURTHER PRISON TIME

Three members of the Peacock Generation, a satirical performance group in Myanmar, have been sentenced to six additional months in prison for “online defamation” after sharing their performances critical of the military online. Six members of the group are now serving prison sentences of between two and three years in connection with their peaceful activities; at least three are facing further charges before different courts. All six are prisoners of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President U Win Myint
President’s Office, Office No. 18
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Fax: +95 1 652 624

Dear President U Win Myint,

I am writing to express my grave concern about the continuing criminal prosecution of **members of the Peacock Generation**, who have been targeted for their satirical Thangyat performances. Six young performers are imprisoned for nothing other than peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. They are prisoners of conscience, and I urge you to ensure their immediate and unconditional release.

I am disappointed to learn that three members of the group were convicted on 17 February 2020 of “online defamation” under Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act and each sentenced to six months in prison. These convictions are the latest in a series of jail terms handed down to members of the group for their peaceful performances, some of which were shared on social media. It is highly concerning that six members are now serving between two and three years’ imprisonment, and that some of them face further politically-motivated charges for their peaceful Thangyat performances.

I am also deeply concerned that peaceful activists and human rights defenders in Myanmar continue to be targeted by a range repressive laws, including of Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Act and Section 505(a) of the Penal Code, which arbitrarily restrict the right to freedom of expression. It is essential that the Myanmar authorities respect and protect the right to freedom of expression, along with other human rights, as Myanmar prepares for elections in late 2020.

As the six imprisoned members of Peacock Generation are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their human right to freedom of expression, I call on you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release all jailed members of the Peacock Generation and quash their convictions;**
- **Drop further charges against them and all others who are facing imprisonment solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;**
- **Repeal or amend laws that arbitrarily restrict the right to freedom of expression, including Section 505(a) of the Penal Code and 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act, to bring them in line with international human rights law and standards.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Seven members of the Peacock Generation – Paing Phyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, Kay Khine Tun, Su Yadanar Myint, Zayar Lwin, Zaw Lin Htut, and Nyein Chan Soe – were arrested in April and May 2019 after they performed Thangyat, a traditional performance art akin to slam poetry. They were wearing military uniforms and criticized the military, also known as the Tatmadaw.

Most recently, on 17 February 2020, three members of the group – Paing Phyo Min, Kay Khine Tun, and Su Yadanar Myint – were convicted of “online defamation” by Yangon’s Botahtaung Township Court and sentenced to six months in prison under Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act for posting photos and videos and livestreaming performances online around Myanmar’s water festival in April 2019. The four other members were acquitted. Section 66(d) carries a maximum two-year prison sentence.

This is the group’s fourth conviction in recent months:

On 30 October 2019, five members of the group – Paing Phyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, Zayar Lwin, Zaw Lin Htut, and Kay Khine Tun – were each sentenced to one year in prison by the Mayangon Township Court, Yangon, after being convicted of violating Section 505(a) of the Penal Code, which prohibits the circulation of statements and reports with the intent to cause officers or soldiers in the Myanmar Armed Forces “to mutiny or otherwise disregard or fail in their duties” and carries up to two years in prison.

On 18 November 2019, six members of the group were convicted and sentenced to one year in prison under Section 505(a), this time at the Botahtaung Township Court. Nyein Chan Soe was acquitted of the charge.

On 11 December 2019, four members of the group – Paing Phyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, Zayar Lwin, and Su Yadanar Myint – were given additional six-month jail terms after being found guilty of “online defamation” under Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act at the Mayangon Township Court.

Members of the Peacock Generation, including Paing Phyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, and Zayar Lwin, are facing further charges in a number of other townships outside Yangon where they have performed Thangyat.

Thangyat is a popular Myanmar traditional art form which fuses poetry, comedy, and music, and is usually performed during Myanmar’s New Year water festival in April and other festive occasions. Public performances of Thangyat were banned in 1989 by the military and were only allowed again in 2013.

Amnesty International is concerned about the ongoing arrest and detention of activists and human rights defenders in Myanmar, merely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, a right enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Myanmar authorities must ensure respect for, and protection of, the right to freedom of expression, in particular as the country prepares to head to the polls in elections in late 2020.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Burmese/Myanmar
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 April 2020
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Members of the Peacock Generation (they/them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/1575/2019/en/>