

RAN Appeal #20:

Myanmar

September 5, 2008

NOTE: September marks the return of the RANs, but to start with, for staffing reasons, we cannot do one every week. Expect several this fall on Myanmar/Burma, and others on Zimbabwe, Turkey, possibly Mexico. Our honorary member Hu Shigen was released several days after the end of the Olympics. He served 16 years of a 20-year sentence, but he is still deprived of his political rights.

MYANMAR: Honorary member/journalist Win Tin's health worsens



BACKGROUND: Veteran journalist and prodemocracy activist Win Tin has been imprisoned for more than 19 years. Reports suggest that his already poor health condition has worsened in the past few weeks. Win Tin, aged 78, is suffering acute asthma which prevents him from sleeping and eating properly. On January 22, 2008, Win Tin had a hernia operation at Rangoon General Hospital. In late June 2008 a relative visited him in prison and found him thin and weak. Win Tin is the former editor-in-chief of *Hanthawati*, and was Vice President of the Journalists and Writers Association of Burma. He is a close confidante of the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, accused of encouraging her to enter politics. Aung San Suu Kyi, herself under house arrest for much of the past 20 years, has on many occasions appealed for Win Tin's release. Win Tin is said to have consistently refused to sign a document disassociating himself from the NLD which would have secured his release. Win Tin was arrested in July 1989 and originally sentenced to three years for harbouring an "offender for whom a warrant had been issued"—charges that were apparently fabricated. In 1992 he was sentenced to an additional 11 years in prison for offences linked to his opposition activities. In March 1996 he was among 21 Insein Prison detainees tried for having published a clandestine magazine inside the prison and possessing radio sets. For this he received another seven years, bringing the total sentence to 20 years. He is not due to be freed until July 2009. Win Tin was awarded UNESCO's World Press Freedom Award in 2000 and the World Association of Newspaper's Golden Pen of Freedom Award in 2001.

To review RAN FAQs: www.pencanada.ca/media/RAN_FAQS.pdf

NOTE: While the situation in Burma is still critical, letters sent to the country may not be received or taken as a priority. Appeals should be sent to the diplomatic representative of Myanmar (Burma) in Canada and at the UN. As the anniversary of the protests of last autumn draws near, another idea to consider is a letter to the editor of newspapers, or mention in online sites and blogs.

Appeal Letter

U Nyunt Tin
Ambassador
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
85 Range Road, Suite 902-903
Sandringham Building
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J6
Fax: (613) 232 6435
Email: meott@rogers.com

Dear Sir:

As a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of International PEN, the writers' organization with 145 centres in more than 100 countries worldwide, I am writing to express serious concern about the health of PEN Canada honorary member, Win Tin.

International PEN considers the cumulative sentences of over 20 years against Win Tin to be in violation of his right to freedom of expression and association as protected in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights and is calling the authorities to provide him with medical treatment and demands his immediate release on humanitarian grounds.

I join my colleagues in seeking assurance from you of his well-being and I ask that the government of Myanmar press for his release.

Sincerely,

[your name and address here]

Please send copies of your appeal to the following:

U Ye Gyaw Mra
First Secretary
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
85 Range Road, Suite 902-903
Sandringham Building
Ottawa, ON K1N 8J6
Fax: (613) 232 6435
Email: meott@rogers.com

Kyaw Tint Swe
Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations
10 East 77th Street
New York, NY 10021, U.S.A.
Fax: (212) 737 2421
Email: myanmar@un.int

COPIES TO:

The Hon. David Emerson
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building, Room A-10, 125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2
Fax: (613) 996 3443
Email: david.emerson@international.gc.ca