

**MYANMAR: Comedian and poet Zargana arrested.**

**BACKGROUND: Poet and comedian Zargana, was arrested on June 4, 2008 after leading a private effort to deliver aid to cyclone victims. International PEN seeks urgent information about Zargana's whereabouts and details of any charges against him.**

According to PEN's information, Maung Thura, best known by his stage name, "Zargana" (also transcribed as "Zarganar"), a leading comedian, poet and opposition activist, was arrested on the evening of June 4, 2008 after police raided his home in Yangon. The Asian Human Rights Commission has the following information:

*Zarganar has been working constantly on cyclone relief since May 7, and has given interviews to overseas-based radio stations and other media about his work and the needs of the people. He had also ridiculed state media reports about the cyclone aftermath. According to his sister, he used all his own money for the cyclone victims and sold his and his wife's mobile phones (which are expensive in Burma) to fund the work. He organized over 400 volunteers to work in some 42 villages that had been neglected since the cyclone struck. The district official who led the group to the house said that Zarganar being taken away does not have anything to do with his relief work but his family does not accept this.*

There have been many efforts by the authorities in Burma to block not only international relief from reaching cyclone victims but also the domestic donors who stepped in to assist. Zargana is the first leader of local relief efforts to be detained, although there have been reports that local journalists trying to cover the issue have been briefly detained or threatened.

Zargana was most recently detained on September 25, 2007 for his support to the monks demonstrating in the capital, Rangoon. He was released on October 18, 2007.

For more information about Zargana: [www.pencanada.ca/programs/prison/campaigns.php](http://www.pencanada.ca/programs/prison/campaigns.php)

To review RAN FAQs: [www.pencanada.ca/media/RAN\\_FAQS.pdf](http://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.*

**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 6f435  
Email: [meott@rogers.com](mailto: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 detention of writer, comedian and pro-democracy activist Maung Thura (Zargana).

According to PEN's information, Maung Thura, best known by his stage name, "Zargana" (also transcribed as "Zarganar"), a leading comedian, poet and opposition activist, was arrested on the evening of June 4, 2008 after police raided his home in Yangon. He had been engaged in the relief of cyclone victims.

Zargana has been an honorary member of PEN Canada since the 1990s and we are greatly distressed to hear that he has been arrested again.

I join my colleagues in seeking assurance from you of his well-being and 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 6f435  
Email: [meott@rogers.com](mailto:meott@rogers.com)

Kyaw Tint Swe  
Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations  
10 East 77<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York NUY 10021  
Fax: (212) 737 2421  
Email: [myanmar@un.int](mailto: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](mailto:david.emerson@international.gc.ca)