

## AAPP: Supplementary information about death in Insein prison

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On Friday at around midnight, tropical cyclone Nargis started its assault on Burma. The storm also hit Insein prison in Rangoon. As a result of strong winds, many zinc roofs atop of Insein prison were torn off, one after another.

Due to the destruction in one area of the prison, over 1,500 prisoners were forced to congregate inside prison hall no. 1. No one was allowed to seek safety, and they were locked inside the hall until the next morning May 3, 2008. Prisoners were wet, cold and hungry as well as angry. Even though prisoners requested prison guards open the doors and move them to safety, the authorities ignored their request. Some prisoners started shouting demands, and some set fire to the prison hall. The fire burnt down the hall, and a riot situation ensued in the prison.

In order to control the situation, prison guards opened fire on the prisoners. In addition, soldiers and riot police were called in. They opened fire on prisoners in the area. 36 prisoners were killed instantly and around 70 were injured.

The fire gave off thick smoke which spread to the cell blocks where Min Ko Naing, Burma's most famous political prisoner and leader of the 88 Generation Student group, and other political prisoners were being held. Min Ko Naing and other political prisoners were kept locked up in their tiny cells, despite the thick smoke. They had difficulties breathing and shouted loudly to the authorities to open the doors. Finally, they were allowed out of their prison cells, just in time. One political prisoner was immediately taken to the prison hospital, because he could not breathe properly. Min Ko Naing's eye condition has now worsened due to being kept in the smoke-filled cell.

After they brought the situation under control, the prison authorities carried out an investigation. Under interrogation, another 4 prisoners were tortured to death. And 98 prisoners including 4 political prisoners who are from the National League for Democracy Party were locked in a punishment cell block.

On that day, political prisoners were not provided with food. Prison authorities have now tightened security in Insein prison.

"The authorities are to blame for this situation. As soon as the storm hit, they should have moved the prisoners to safety. Their mismanagement of the situation led to prisoners rioting," said Ko Bo Kyi, joint secretary of AAPP. "We condemn their violent response, which led to the needless deaths of 36 prisoners. We call on the regime to allow the UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur Sergio Pinheiro to conduct an immediate investigation into the whole

incident, including the cases of the four prisoners who were tortured to death," added Ko Bo Kyi.

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