



**ITUC INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION CSI CONFÉDÉRATION  
SYNDICALE INTERNATIONALE  
CSI CONFEDERACIÓN SINDICAL INTERNACIONAL IGB INTERNATIONALER  
GEWERKSCHAFTSBUND**

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Development Council  
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HTUR/FW

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**Heavy prison sentences for six labour activists**

Dear General Than Shwe,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents more than 168 million members worldwide through its 305 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories, strongly protests against the very heavy prison sentences, imposed on Friday 7 September 2007, on six labour activists, after they had wanted to organise a seminar at the US Embassy's American Center in Rangoon earlier this year.

On 1 May 2007, **Thurein Aung, Kyaw Kyaw, Shwe Joe, Wai Lin, Aung Naing Tun** and **Nyi Nyi Zaw** were arrested after holding a May Day celebration and planning to discuss labour issues at the American Center. This event was immediately canceled after the arrests. Two of them, i.e. Shwe Joe and Aung Naing Tun, were released on 4 May, but on 10 May two other men, **Kyaw Win** and **Myo Min**, were arrested for going to the Thai-Burma border to inform the outside world about these May Day arrests.

The ITUC learned that during a trial held inside Rangoon's Insein prison, all six men were found guilty of "inciting hatred or contempt for the Government", and that some of them were convicted for being members of "illegal associations". Thurein Aung, Wai Lin, Myo Min and Kyaw Win were sentenced to 28 years in prison, and Nyi Nyi Zaw and Kyaw Kyaw to 20 years.

As is well known to your Government, and as has been publicly repeated on 8 September by the International Labour Organisation, detaining and sentencing workers who exercise their right to freedom of association - for instance by celebrating May Day and organising a seminar on labour issues - is a clear violation of international labour standards, including ILO Convention 87, which has been ratified by your country. In addition, however, we have also been informed that the interrogations of the six above-mentioned activists by your country's security agencies had specifically focused on finding links with the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB). The FTUB is recognised by the entire international trade union movement as a legitimate organisation, which merely tries to defend workers' rights in Burma.



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I thus urge you, General, to instruct the relevant authorities to seek an overturn of these unjustified and scandalous prison sentences and to order the immediate and unconditional release of our six colleagues. Meanwhile, the ITUC will call on its worldwide membership to support its call for their release and will refer to the matter to the competent ILO supervisory mechanisms.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary