

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/09/04/dispatches-burmas-political-prisoner-revolving-door>

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Burmas government has reaped kudos for its political prisoner releases in the past two years, freeing hundreds of people including some activists [held for decades](#) under the previous military junta. Yet the government is creating a new generation of political prisoners by jailing people for holding peaceful protests and other acts of free expression.

In a [July speech at Chatham House](#), President Thein Sein promised that by the end of the year there will be no prisoners of conscience in Burma. In July, 73 prisoners were released, timed for maximum political effect ahead of the presidents state visit to Europe. One [former prisoner group](#) estimates over 100 political prisoners remain behind bars. A government-backed committee [met this past Friday](#) to work on a final list.

Yet in recent weeks, arrests for political actions or protests have risen markedly and none of these new prisoners are included on the lists. Naw Ohn Hla, a former political prisoner and land rights activist was [sentenced to two years](#) on Friday for inciting unrest over a protest she led in mid-August against the controversial Letpadaung copper mine, site of numerous arrests and [violent police crackdowns](#).

In late August, [six activists were arrested](#) for allegedly staging a demonstration in violation of the [peaceful assembly law](#), which bans any procession that does not receive prior permission, punishable by a year in prison. Farmers arrested for protests over rising land grabs are also arbitrarily detained or being charged for protesting without police authorization or belonging to unauthorized groups.

Despite its public promises of reform, Burmas government is arresting people who are peacefully resisting unfair laws and arbitrary power. Concerned government should hold Thein Sein to his July promise and demand the release of all political prisoners, new as well as old.

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