



FREEDOM NOW

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PRESS RELEASE

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AMERICAN NYI NYI AUNG RELEASED FROM PRISON IN BURMA Returning Shortly to the United States

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The Burmese junta released prisoner of conscience Nyi Nyi Aung from prison on Thursday, March 18, 2010; he will be arriving in the United States late Friday afternoon.

In response to his release, Freedom Now President Jared Genser said, “We’re thrilled that Nyi Nyi is returning to the United States and will be reunited with his fiancé shortly. While we are pleased the junta has released him, he never should have been imprisoned in the first place. On this day of thanksgiving for one family, it must not be forgotten there are 2,100 other Burmese political prisoners including National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.”

Nyi Nyi Aung is a Burmese-born American democracy activist who was arrested September 3, 2009, at the Rangoon airport. Nyi Nyi was convicted on sham charges and sentenced to three years in prison and hard labor. His trial process failed to meet Burmese and international legal standards for a fair trial. While in prison, Nyi Nyi was repeatedly tortured, denied consular access, and denied access to his lawyers.

Nyi Nyi’s fiancé, Wa Wa Kyaw commented: “I’d like to express my gratitude to the State Department and especially Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell and U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN Scot Marciel who worked intensively to secure Nyi Nyi’s release. U.S. Charge d’Affairs Larry Dinger and Consul Colin Furst also worked tirelessly on his behalf in Rangoon. I am also particularly grateful to the many Members of Congress who advocated for Nyi Nyi’s freedom. Beginning with our own Congressman Chris Van Hollen and House Foreign Affairs Chairman Howard Berman, other key members especially engaged in securing Nyi Nyi’s release included Senators Barbara Mikulski, Richard Durbin, John Kerry, Richard Lugar, Mitch McConnell, John McCain, and Benjamin Cardin, and Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Jim McGovern, and Frank Wolf, among others.

Freedom Now, an advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C., represented Nyi Nyi Aung as his international pro bono counsel. Working with Freedom Now, on December 17, 2009, a bipartisan group of 53 Members of Congress sent a letter, initiated by Reps. Howard Berman and Frank Wolf, to junta leader Than Shwe urging Nyi Nyi’s release. Freedom Now also submitted an urgent appeal to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture as well as a petition to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on Nyi Nyi’s behalf.

For further information and to access the primary documents about his case referenced above, please see: <http://www.freedom-now.org/NYINYI.php>

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