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Myanmar’s junta courts crack down on student activists

By RFA Burmese

Myanmar’s junta continues to impose harsh prison sentences on student activists, sentencing seven of them to prison terms of between two and 25 years over the past seven days.

The longest sentence was handed down by Yangon’s Insein Prison Court on Tuesday to Kaung Sat, from the city’s Myanmar Maritime University, according to his students’ union.

He was arrested in November 2021 and charged with four counts of sedition, possessing arms, possessing explosives with intent to attack junta forces and buildings, and attempted murder. The court found him guilty of all the charges and sentenced him to a total of 25 years in prison with hard labor.

Also Tuesday, Myo Thura Aung from Mawlamyine University in Mon State was sentenced to 13 years in prison by Hpa-An District Prison Court, according to the president of his students’ union, who did not specify the charges.

A total of 78 students from Mawlamyine University and eight students from Myanmar Maritime University have received prison sentences from junta courts since the military seized power in a February 2021 coup, according to their students’ unions.

“The fascist army is building a system of repression to maintain its power,” an official of the All Burma Federation of Students’ Unions (ABFSU) told RFA, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

“We believe that there will be no justice under unjust laws. These are the actions of the fascist army to arrest and imprison the people and students unjustly and violently.”

Federation members have also been targeted by the junta. Hpa-An District Prison Court sentenced its finance officer, Kaung Htet Oo, to 15 years in prison under the Counter Terrorism Act on Dec. 23. Aung Kyaw Khant a Federation member from Mandalay region also received a 15-year prison term. Obo Prison Court handed down the sentence for alleged terrorism on Tuesday.

The other students’ union members sentenced over the past week were Nyan Win Htet from Mandalay region who received a 15-year prison term; Win Htet Mar from Yangon’s University of Information Technology, who was sentenced to 10 years; and Yangon Eastern University Students’ Union President Su Yi Lin, who was sentenced to two years in prison on fraud charges.

Su Yi Lin was arrested on the way to an anti-regime protest on Dec. 19, 2021, and has already received a three-year sentence for alleged incitement.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Written in English by Mike Firm.

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Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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