

President U Win Myint  
President's Office,  
Office No. 18 Nay Pyi Taw  
Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
Fax: +95 1 652 624

Dear President U Win Myint

I am writing to express my concern regarding the ongoing prosecution of members of the Peacock Generation, a Thangyat, or satirical poetry troupe, for their peaceful performances of the traditional art form.

Five members, Kay Khine Tun, Paing Pyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, Zayar Lwin, and Zaw Lin Htut, who have been detained in Insein prison since their arrest in April 2019, were convicted and sentenced to one year in prison on 30 October 2019 under Section 505 (a) of Myanmar's Penal Code. These five individuals, as well as two additional members of the troupe, Nyein Chan Soe and Su Yadanar Myint, are facing trial on the same charges at Yangon's Botahtaung Township Court.

Given that they have already been imprisoned for peacefully expressing their right to freedom of expression, it is of particular concern that additional charges, and risk of additional prison time, continue to be laid against troupe members. Similar complaints have also been filed against Peacock Generation members, including some of those already convicted, in Dedaye Township and Pyapon Township in Ayeyarwady Division.

Furthermore, four of the seven members, including three of the individuals who were convicted on 30 October, have been accused of "online defamation" under Section 66 (d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law for sharing photos and videos and livestreaming their satirical performance on Facebook.

Thangyat is a time-honoured tradition in Myanmar, and I believe that no one should face charges, let alone prison, for peacefully performing it. It is of grave concern to me that these oppressive laws continue to be used to violate freedom of expression and to target peaceful activists, critics and human rights defenders.

I am therefore writing to urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release all jailed members of the Peacock Generation, quash their convictions and drop further charges against them and other members;
- Ensure that, pending their release, members of the Peacock Generation are held in conditions which meet international standards, and that they have regular access to family, lawyers of his choosing, and any healthcare they require;
- Repeal or amend laws that arbitrarily restrict the right to freedom of expression, including Section 505(a) of the Penal Code and 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law, to bring them into line with international human rights law and standards.

Yours sincerely,