Statement 105 (11/98)

1. The National League for Democracy was formed to create a genuine democratic system within which it can operate legally. Working for democracy includes working for human rights.

2. As a legally registered organisation, its activities for obtaining democracy and human rights are legitimate. First, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and now the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) usurped state power and have been making flimsy excuses and taking illegal action against the NLD as if it was not a legitimate organisation. The NLD parliamentarians-elect, members of NLD organisational committees at every level and ordinary NLD members have not only been subjected to illegal restraint, illegal arrest, held in unlawful custody, tortured and persecuted but have been falsely charged with offences and sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment in jails.

3. Those NLD parliamentarians-elect who are being held in unlawful custody by the military intelligence units are being treated in a deliberately offensive and derogatory manner as below:-

(1) They are returned to their homes for short periods under guard and without the consent of the individuals, their every movement, their conversation with members of the family, their eating of meals with the family are recorded by video cameras. This is an invasion of privacy which every human being has a right to.

(2) Permitting only short periods of stay at one's home has no meaning or significance. It only causes anguish and is another form of persecution and torture to the individual and his family and is an indication of the lack of compassion for a fellow human being.

(3) One extremely degrading treatment is the placing of sumptuous food in front of the individuals held in unlawful custody and taking pictures with video cameras as if they were being offered this banquet. Our information is that they are fed with filthy, sordid videos.

(4) The truth is that the food given to them is of a very poor quality-tasteless vegetables without salt or oil. U Than Win, parliamentarian-elect of Constituency (2), Tharbaung township, Irrawaddy Division was one of those who received such treatment. (see our Statement 99 (11/98) dated 5 November 1998). We have been informed that in some cases, the SPDC orders the private food stall owners to supply food for them.

(5) There have been cases where individuals held in unlawful custody have been allowed medical attention but there is no genuine compassion
or concern. The required medicines are not administered nor are they given treatment to restore them to health. Fear of death in custody has induced them to set some free. Video cameras are always there to record any medical treatment given.

(6) We hear that these pictures depicting medical attention have been transmitted on the internet by the Military Intelligence to make it appear that these individuals are being well treated.

(7) Though the Military Intelligence have deliberately lied and said that the individuals held by them are lodged in the government guest houses for purpose of discussion and consultation, the actual fact is that they have been given written questionnaires to which they are made to respond in writing. There is no consultation whatsoever. There isn't even an appearance of consultation. A consultation is a conference at which advice is taken or views are exchanged. There is no representative of the authorities who is capable of exchanging views. In addition there should not even be any custodial appearance leave alone being held by the scruff of the neck. If a genuine consultation is being held why don't the authorities have a live radio broadcast session and why is not publicised in the international news media.

(8) Our information is that those persons whose written answers are favourable to the military intelligence authorities are given their freedom while the others are being persecuted more severely. Some have been sent to the Insein Jail. These innocent people who have violated no law nor committed any offence are being confined and fed like criminals.

4. Not content with arresting and holding in unlawful custody the NLD parliamentarians-elect, NLD members of organising committees and ordinary members they are now extending their unlawful activities forcing the closure of branches by intimidation and other illegal tactics.

5. The reasons given for closure of the branches are in a stereotyped form. Set forms are issued by the higher authorities with blank spaces for details regarding address, department and population which have to be filled in by the persons in charge. This action by the authorities is overwhelming evidence of the fact that they are themselves abolishing the provision of law they have promulgated. The allegation against the NLD is that it is engaged in party-politics. This is an outrageous lie to undermine and ridicule the organisation which is operating within the law for a genuine democratic system. Striving for democracy is an honourable cause for the good of the country.

6. The illegal constraints engaged in by the authorities to abolish the NLD branches in the township is becoming increasingly obvious from day to day. They have set free the organising committee members of ThaYet township in Magwe Division but they are still illegally holding the owner of the house where the NLD signboard has been hung for no justifiable reason. Similarly, the owner of the house where the NLD signboard is hung in Henzada township, Irrwaddy Division, has not been freed though the NLD members have been freed. It is so obvious that because of pressure and intimidation, NLD signboards have had to be removed but the authorities have made it appear that the signboard have been voluntarily removed by
the members. Their actions are so unjust and illegal. The house owners should be immediately and unconditionally released.

7. The authorities are even using obstructive tactics in matters that have to be attended to where death occurs. The aunt of one Daw Kyu Kyu San, a member of the women's wing of the NLD, Rangoon Division died on 31-10-98. The funeral was arranged for 2nd November 1998 and buses were hired to transport the relatives and friends to the cemetery. The drivers of the buses had been intimidated by the chairman of the local SPDC Mone-lat-saung-gone ward, Sanchaung Township, Rangoon Division and the members of the USDA (the group formed by the SPDC), so they failed to turn up as arranged.

8. This interference by the USDA group and the chairman of the local SPDC is entirely opposed to Buddhist teaching and Burmese culture. It has nothing to do with law and order. This is a direct contravention of the accepted Buddhist maxim "one trip to a funeral equates to ten trips to a monastery".

9. (a) The NLD strongly deplores the above illegal and extreme methods of exercising authority that is being practiced. We ask that for the reasons set below all persons that are being held in unlawful custody for no offence whatsoever be released forthwith and unconditionally:

(1) The inability of the authorities to supply and give adequate and suitable food commensurate with the dignity and standing of the persons they are holding.

(2) The inability to provide adequate and necessary medical treatment in time of illness.

(b) Should the lives of the NLD members held in unlawful custody be endangered because of the food and drinking water they are given or viruses, bacteria or dangerous animals like poisonous snakes they may be exposed to while in custody, the authorities holding them will be held entirely responsible.

(c) The authorities are instrumental in making this darkest of dark spots in the annals of Burma's history and the fight for democracy. It is time to retreat.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
11 November 1998.