

Mother of detained activist Wai Moe Naing demands her son be granted access to healthcare

The 26-year-old activist suffers from high blood pressure, and was hit by a car before he was taken into regime custody

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Monywa-based activist Wai Moe Naing (centre, holding microphone)

The mother of detained Monywa protest leader Wai Moe Naing on Saturday requested that her son be allowed access to medical treatment after he was hit by a car and arrested by the junta's armed forces on April 15.

The 26-year-old Wai activist has suffered from high blood pressure for six years, Moe Sandar Kyu, his mother, told Myanmar Now.

“I’m concerned because I don’t know how he’s living or if he’s being fed. He’s not a very healthy person but he’s very motivated. And that’s why he’s active,” she explained.

Moe Sandar Kyu believes Wai Moe Naing was likely injured after he was struck by a car on Thursday, and demanded that she be updated on his current state.

A photo of Wai Moe Naing in regime custody with a bruised eye and swollen face went viral on social media on April 16, suggesting that he may have been or is being tortured.

His mother told Myanmar Now that she had not seen the photo since she, like many people across Myanmar, does not have Internet access since all mobile data was cut off by the coup regime earlier this month.

“Since the time he was arrested, I’ve not been able to sleep well. [That day,] I couldn’t sleep for the entire night. On the 16th as well,” she said. “I am worried because I don’t know and I can’t see how he’s doing.”

Wai Moe Naing was chair of the Monywa University Student Union from 2014 to 2015, and is also a member of Monywa’s General Strike Committee and the Sagaing Regional Youth Committee.

He rose to prominence for his role organising daily anti-coup protests in Monywa, which sits on the eastern bank of the Chindwin River, since February 6.

After two police officers were killed in Monywa on March 25, the junta hit him and fellow activist Ta Yote Gyi with murder charges. There is no known evidence linking them to the crime, but the allegations were made by the regime authorities in what has been seen as retaliation after Monywa locals captured and detained a person suspected to be an informant to the junta.

He is also facing several other charges, including incitement and theft.

Wai Moe Naing is currently being detained and interrogated at the military’s Northwestern Regional Command headquarters.

“I don’t want the interrogation to go on for too long. For the protests and his involvement in the revolution, they’re definitely going to punish him like everyone else. But for these bizarre allegations of crimes he didn’t commit, we’ll resolve them as best we can,” Moe Sandar Kyu said, adding she has asked for legal assistance.

Wai Moe Naing’s father died when he was six years old, and he is Moe Sandar Kyu’s only child. She had recently retired after working for 20 years as a schoolteacher in Monywa.

“I only have one son, and he just has me. We’ve been surviving, just the two of us, without anyone’s help. I nurtured him as a struggling single mother. And now that it’s my turn to rest, he has been working hard to provide for me,” the 54-year-old mother said.

Young people across Monywa will continue to fight for the cause of Myanmar’s anti-dictatorship Spring Revolution even though Wai Moe Naing was arrested, she told Myanmar Now, adding that everyone protesting was doing so out of their own free will.

“He has said this since the beginning. This is the youth’s duty,” she said. “They have to fight the fight knowing that it is to oppose injustice.”