

Media Release



Australia Myanmar Institute



Call for the immediate release of Sean Turnell

To: Australian media (for immediate release)

Date: Friday 5th November 2021

Nine long months have now passed since Australian economist, Associate Professor Sean Turnell was unlawfully detained and imprisoned in Myanmar by the military junta (Tatmadaw), four days after their coup on 5 February 2021.

Australia Myanmar Institute (AMI) calls for Sean Turnell's immediate release from prison. Being detained for nine months is an unacceptable abuse of Sean's human rights as he faces trial on trumped up charges.

The Australian Government has called for Sean Turnell's immediate release, and for his rights and welfare to be upheld, yet the Tatmadaw continues to ignore this diplomatic request issued directly by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator [Marise Payne](#). Australian embassy officials have been denied access to attend his court hearings in Naypyitaw.

Turnell has a long and distinguished career as an applied economic expert and advisor on the Burmese economy, having worked and researched Myanmar since the 1990's and having established the Burma Economic Watch in 2001, providing reliable and valuable data and commentary on Myanmar's economy.

Turnell is being held as a pawn in the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi. It is incumbent upon the Australian Government to negotiate the terms for his release, even if that occurs after Aung San Suu Kyi and his own trial and sentencing have concluded. **Sanctions should immediately be the consequence of a failure to release this innocent Australian academic.**

Commenting on Professor Turnell's imprisonment, AMI's Director Professor Monique Skidmore said, *"Sean is one of the most determined and honorable people I've ever met. The military junta is no match for his unbridled optimism, and I doubt any length of time in a Burmese prison will allow that spirit. However, nine months is a very long time to be imprisoned without conviction. Sean does not speak Burmese and is denied a translator, to speak to his lawyer, to proper consular access, or to have contact with his family. The Australian Government simply has to do more. Sean's release must be made a higher priority by the Foreign Minister."*

For media comment, please contact:

Christopher Lamb, AMI President (m) 0423 099 121 (e) christopher.lamb17@gmail.com

Prof Monique Skidmore, Director (m) 0458457424 (e) monique.skidmore@deakin.edu.au