

## The Japan Foundation will invite Dr. Ma Thida, Burmese human rights activist, writer and surgeon, and hold a lecture

The Japan Foundation Asia Center will invite human rights activist, writer and surgeon Dr. Ma Thida under the Invitation Program for Cultural Leaders Program from November 30 to December 9, 2017. Dr. Ma Thida will give an open lecture at Sophia University on Monday, December 4, 2017.

This program aims to provide prominent persons in various cultural and social fields and leaders of special importance in Asia who have had little exposure to Japanese culture and people with a firsthand introduction to Japan to enhance their awareness and understanding of the country.



During Dr. Ma Thida's stay, she will give a lecture on Sophia University and visit Yamanashi Prefectural Museum of Literature, and have dialogues with Japanese writers. We at the Foundation hope this project will help cultural exchanges between Japan and Myanmar to develop and flourish further.

### Outline of the Invitation Program for Cultural Leaders Program

- Duration Thursday, November 30 to Saturday, December 9, 2017
- Open Lecture
  - [Title] Prisoner of Conscience: Finding and Practicing Freedom in Prison Cell
  - [Time and Date] Monday, December 4, 2017 15:15-17:00 (Doors Open 14:45),
  - [Venue] Room 2-1702 Bldg. No 2 (17th Floor), Sophia University (Yotsuya Campus)
  - [Summary] This talk will reveal firsthand experience of a political prisoner of the 1990s in Myanmar. How she tried to find and practice freedom and justice to herself and to fellow prisoners in the infamous Insein Prison during her six-year-imprisonment. She was critically ill and people thought she might die in prison. But knowledge and insight gained through books and practice of meditation helped her to overcome not only physical illness but also psychological trauma. She believes that freedom is from within, not from outside.

### Profile of Dr. Ma Thida (Burmese human rights activist, writer and surgeon)

In 1993 Ma Thida was sentenced to prison for 20 years for "endangering public peace, having contact with illegal organizations, and distributing unlawful literature." She served nearly six years, most of which was in solitary confinement. Ma Thida's first book was *The Sunflower*, which was only released in Burma in 1999, as it was banned upon international release in the early 1990s. *The Roadmap* (2012) is a fictional story based on events in Burmese politics from 1988 to 2009. The Myanmar-language book *Sanchaung, Insein, Harvard* is a memoir, as the title suggests, about her early life in Sanchaung, imprisonment in Insein, and time in the United States. It is now translated and published as *Prisoner of Conscience: My Steps through Insein*. She is the very first elected president of PEN Myanmar from 2013 to 2016 and now serving as board member of PEN International since 2016.