



Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
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cc. Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Opposition spokesperson for Foreign Affairs
Parliament House
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senator.wong@aph.gov.au

cc: Mr Allan McKinnon
Australian Ambassador to Thailand
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Thailand
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cc: Ms Andrea Faulkner
Australian Ambassador to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Vantage Tower, 623 Pyay Road,
Yangon,
Myanmar
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cc: The Hon Barry O'Farrell AO
Australian High Commissioner to India
Australian Compound
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21 June 2021

Dear Minister,

Re: plight of Myanmar's journalists in exile in Thailand

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, the union and professional association for Australia's journalists, is deeply concerned for our colleagues in Myanmar (Burma) as the crackdown by the military junta that began in February has all but completely silenced independent media in the country.

Journalists have been beaten and shot. You would know that at least 85 journalists in Myanmar have been arrested and more than 40 continue to be detained. Some have been jailed for three years for spreading "misinformation" under section 505A of Myanmar's Penal Code. Independent media outlets have been stripped of their licences to operate, and dozens of warrants have been issued for the arrest of other journalists.

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Despite this harassment and persecution, Burmese journalists courageously continue to work underground at great personal risk, informing the rest of the world about the crimes of the junta.

Burmese journalists are in hiding not only in Myanmar but elsewhere in the region, seeking safety from persecution and violence. However, Thailand has just sentenced three Burmese journalists to seven months jail and fined them for entering the country.

Minister, we urge you to take action on behalf of our persecuted colleagues who are in danger in their own country as well as abroad. We ask you to:

- Issue a statement urging Thailand to provide stronger condemnations of the attacks on freedom of expression in Myanmar and support the safe relocation of journalists under threat in their territory.
- Hold private demarches and otherwise engage with local authorities to underscore their obligation to human rights standards and encourage protective action.
- Provide safe haven, security and support for journalists facing immediate threats in Thailand, including facilitating their relocation to Australia if sought.
- Identify and send case referrals to emergency assistance programs (e.g. the Journalists in Distress Network).
- Work with and support local and regional civil society organisations located in India and Thailand in aiding journalists facing threatening situations or otherwise struggling to conduct their work, including funding, technical and material assistance, and by fostering effective support networks.

We would welcome the opportunity to further talk about this issue with you as the need is particularly urgent.

Yours sincerely,



Marcus Strom
Federal President
MEAA Media section



Paul Murphy
Chief Executive
MEAA