



Republic of the Union of Myanmar

National Unity Government

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“Press Statement on World Press Freedom Day”

2022 May 3

Today, the 3rd of May 2022, is World Press Freedom day. On this day we would like to honour all professional and citizen journalists, and all the people who work in media, at home and abroad, for their tireless efforts not only in preserving the freedom of the press, and freedom of expression in Myanmar during the Spring Revolution, but indeed for the world they do around the world, ensuring the free flow of information – one of the cornerstones of human rights. For a society which values freedom and justice, freedom of information is a vital pillar. We have seen waves of hatred and oppression radiating from groups who oppose freedom, peace, and justice. Currently it is groups such as these which threaten not only the freedom of the press, but those who work to bring information to the people. Many brave reporters and journalists have been slain, imprisoned, tortured, or forced to flee, their families targeted and their homes and properties seized. It is tragic to see that incidents such as these are on the rise globally.

In Myanmar alone, since the coup in 2021, a total of 166 journalists have been arrested by the terrorist military council, according to statistics from the Myanmar Press Freedom In-Depth Group. Charges range

from the infamous section 505 (a) of the criminal code (sedition against the military, state, and hate speech), to sections 114, 118, 436, and 332 of the criminal code, section 66 (d) of the communications act (misinformation), violations of various customs and immigration acts, and sections 124 (a) and (c) of the colonial era penal code (sedition against the government). Some of the unjustly detained journalists have since been released, but more than 50 remain in detention. Three journalists, Ko Soe Naing, A Sai K (aka Sai Win Aung), and Pu Tuidim died as a result of interrogation. In addition to the arrests, licenses have been revoked from 11 media outlets, and 3 have been suspended entirely.

Not only does the junta try to cut information off at the source, but they have also limited the spread of information by periodically cutting off the internet, reducing internet speed and bandwidth, limited internet access, and raising data fees. This is in addition to new laws and rules imposed by the military regarding the lawful use of the internet. As it stands, any criticism of the military or their puppet government constitutes a criminal act, and may even be considered treasonous. On the 1st of February 2021 when the terrorist cabal staged their coup, they cut off the internet from 3am to 1pm. That same week they cut the internet again on the 6th and 7th. Internet and phone lines continue to be cut off in many townships in Sagaing Region, Kachin State, Rakhine State, Mandalay Region, Magway Region, Chin State and Kayah(Karenni)State as well as areas which have seen fighting between the junta and democratic forces.

Paragraph 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and freedom of expression." We strongly urge the international community to support the Myanmar people and to hold the military terrorists accountable for their unjust arrests, persecution, killings, and war crimes. We also would like to encourage a full review and analysis of the strict rules and regulations on freedom of information and the press in ASEAN countries, and to establish a standard policy among the ASEAN community.

Heroically, despite the intense pressure and persecution from the military, professional and citizen journalists and media organizations have stood fast to preserve media freedom and the free flow of information, even at risk of their own lives. It is due to such brave work that the SAC is losing the media war. Truth will out, and the courageous men and women of Myanmar's media community are pushing back against the military propaganda and lies. A situation which has clearly frustrated the military as evidenced by their spokesmen's increasingly aggressive attitude towards journalists and media in general.

The National Unity Government is committed to providing justice to the media, informants, and professional and citizen journalists for all the injustices done them by the terrorist military. Efforts will be made in accordance with established media ethics and the lessons learned during this horrific chapter of our nation's history to establish strong safeguards to protect the freedom of the press and the people who work within it.

So on this day we rise to honour all media, journalists, and citizen journalists at home and abroad who have given their all, and continue to risk their lives for the freedom of the press, freedom of expression in Myanmar's spring revolution, and in struggles for justice around the world. In our future democratic federal union, we will fight for the rights of journalists, as journalists today are fighting for freedom and democracy. We will promote the principles of freedom of information and of the press, to unshackle truth and discourse, and take full advantage of the power of a free and liberated press.