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**Update on Journalism and Media
in Myanmar**

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Highlights

For the first half (Jan-Jun) of 2023, Myanmar's military junta continued the heavy restriction on media freedom by arresting journalists and revoking media licenses. Specifically, four journalists, including an editor and a news worker, were arrested, and four journalists were convicted, with prison sentences ranging from one-and-a-half years to a combined total of 13 years. In six months, sixteen journalists were released. The license of Ayeyarwady Times was revoked.

Moreover, the State Administration Council (SAC) continues to carry out the same pattern of lawsuits against journalists. A major percentage (75 % in the first six months of 2023) of arrested journalists have been charged with and convicted under Section 505A of the Penal Code which is punishable by up to three years imprisonment.

Four journalists and news workers—three male and one female—were sentenced to prison terms ranging from one-and-a-half years to ten years. A notable case was the conviction of a journalist from the Myanmar Pressphoto Agency for 13-year imprisonment, three years under section 505A of the Penal Code in 2022 and 10 years under section 50(j) of the Counter-Terrorism Law, which related to funding terrorism in May 2023.

In addition, many journalists inside the country have faced other challenges as the armed conflict escalates in some regions, including Sagaing, Karenni (Kayah), Kayin, and Chin states. For instance, journalists in the Karenni state have been facing additional difficulties in news gathering with the announcement by the local administration groups within the Karenni state that requires journalists to get permission to conduct news and wear name tags that identify them as journalists. This has been problematic, considering journalists must hide their identity for safety reasons.

One remarkable issue is that installing CCTV cameras in city streets and roads worries journalists about their security and increased risk of getting arrested using digital footage as “evidence.” On top of that, a blackout of the internet in some regions and states has also made news access difficult, and journalists and residents are experiencing a lack of information. Even though they can only report news occasionally, the news they reported reached the public late.

In brief, half of the 2023 year ended with 194 journalists arrested, 65 convicted, and 136 released since the 2021 coup. A total of 56 journalists and news professionals remained behind bars at the end of June.

Arrests and Detention

Four journalists and news workers were arrested during the first six months of 2023. Reporter Zaw Moe Htet and freelance journalist Naing Win Tun were arrested in central Mandalay in January. Kyaw Min Swe, former editor, was arrested in Yangon in April 2023, and Sai Zaw Thaïke, a Yangon-based reporter, was arrested in north-western Rakhine State in May.

Zaw Moe Htet was arrested at his home in Mandalay on 9 January 2023. Htet has been working as a freelance reporter based in Hpakant, a jade mining town in northern Kachin State. The next day after his arrest, [a local media outlet](#) reported on their social media platform that Htet was arrested upon his return to his family from his work from Hpakant. The report mentioned that the junta's security force took Htet's belongings, such as their phone and computer.

[Another local media outlet](#) reported that Zaw Moe Htet's arrest may relate to the article he published on his social media account on 8 January. According to the report, Htet's article contains two significant factors: one was revealing unidentified cases of death that occurred in Hpakant, and the other was uncovering the extensive amount of illegal mining activities and how these mining contributed to the landslide that occurred in Hpakant mining areas.

Naing Wing Tun, who was arrested in Mandalay on 25 January 2023, was also a freelance journalist with Mizzima Media. Mizzima Media is a local news media whose [license to operate in the country was revoked](#) by the junta in March 2021.

Kyaw Min Swe, the former editor, was detained in Yangon on [11 April 2023](#) and was [prosecuted](#) under section 505A of the Penal Code on 20 April 2023, along with other famous actor and singers, actor May Bachi and singer Shwe Yi Thein Tan. That arrest came after he changed his profile on Facebook to black as an expression of condolences for the dead of the junta's brutal airstrike on Pazi Gyi village located in Sagaing region, which caused [the death of 165 people](#), including women and children. Kyaw Min Swe was also [detained in 2017](#) along with British satire columnist Ko Ko Maung after the military complained about a piece they published that mocked a military propaganda film. They were charged with defamation under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law.

Sai Zaw Thyeik, a freelance photojournalist, was arrested along with other six people in Rakhine state. He was arrested while travelling to Rakhine state to support people affected by Cyclone Mocha—approximately 41 were killed and 700 were injured in May 2023.

Convictions

From January to June, four journalists and new workers—three male and one female—were convicted under section 505A of the Penal Code and Counter-Terrorism Law, with the sentence to serve in prison ranging from one year to ten years. This brings to 65 the number of journalists who have been convicted under various laws since the coup.

On 9 January 2023, Kyaw Zeya was convicted, sentencing him to serve one year in prison under Section 505A in January. However, following an appeal filed in district court by the military or prosecutor, the sentence was changed to three years in prison. Kyaw Zeya is the chief editor of Kanbawza Times, a local news agency based in Taunggyi, the capital city of Shan State. Since before his arrest on 25 December 2022, Kyaw Zeya had been running from his home and staying in a small township called Gyobingauk, located in the Bago region. Four journalists, two men and two women, from the Kanbawza Times, have been arrested by the military Junta since February 2021.

Kyaw Swar Tun, another fact checker for Mizzima Media, was working as a new worker for Mizzima Media and was also sentenced to three years in prison under the same section 505A of the Penal Code on 25 January 2023.

Among the two journalists, Yin Yin Thine (Nabar) was arrested by a group of 30 soldiers at her home in Indaw Township located in Sagaing region on 18 November 2021. However, there has been no confirmation on why she was being arrested, but she was charged under section 505A of the Penal Code. She was sentenced to one year in prison in February 2023.

Mhue Yadanar Khet Mot Mot Tun, a journalist from Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, was sentenced to 10 years under section 50 (j) of the Counter-Terrorism Act in Thingungyun District Court on 26 May 2023. She was arrested while covering an anti-coup protest and, before that, was injured by an army vehicle that drove into the protest, suffered severe injuries to her legs and head, and was described as needing crutches at Pan Pin Gyi Street in Kyimyindaing in Yangon in December

2021 and she has already been sentenced to three years in prison under section 505A of the Penal Code and a total of 13 years.

Four convictions were handed down in January, February, and May 2023 involving four journalists, one of whom had double charges and convictions. Since the coup, 65 journalists have been convicted on various charges and under various laws.

Warrant Case¹

Khine Myat Kyaw, the chief editor of Narinjara News, was warranted under section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Act on 11 March 2023 for posting that the military forced the local visitors to pay the tax at the checkpoint. He has already been charged under the 66(d) and 505A. 66(d) of the Telecommunications Act permits penalties of up to three years in prison for “extorting, coercing, restraining wrongfully, defaming, disturbing, causing undue influence or threatening any person using a telecommunications network.”

Releases and prisoner amnesty

Sixteen journalists and news workers were released during the first six months 2023. Most of them were released on two occasions—Myanmar Independence Day and Full Moon Day. Among them, nine journalists were among the 7012 prisoners released on 4 January 2023 as part of amnesty on the occasion of Myanmar Independence Day. Most released journalists were arrested and convicted under section 505A of the Penal Code.

Among these journalists, the one who had been convicted with section 50 (a) and (c) of the Counter Terrorism Law was Pyae Phyo Aung, a reporter from Zayar Times. The SAC announced the grant of amnesty, releasing more than 2,000 prisoners on 3 May for the second time in 2023 as part of a special occasion to accommodate Kason-Full Moon Day. Among these released prisoners, five journalists – two reporters, one editor, and two photojournalists –were included in the amnesty.

Yin Yin Thine (Nabar), was arrested in November 2021 and sentenced to one year and a half in prison on February 2023. Before her arrest, Yin Yin Thine (Nabar) had been working as a freelance journalist whose works had appeared in several local media, such as Monitor News Journal and

¹ Disclaimer: The warrant case described in this report is based on the available information.

Lighting Journal. The other journalist was Nyein Nyein Aye, who worked for Mizzima Media. She was prosecuted under section 505 A of the Penal Code.

The two photojournalists were Zaw Tun and Zaw Lin Htut. Both of them were arrested in Yangon and have been working independently. Zaw Tun was arrested with one of his fellow photojournalists, Soe Naing, on 10 December 2021 for documenting the military regime's brutal crackdown against the protests on the streets of Yangon. Soe Naing was later reported to be killed in military custody.

The only media editor released along with these four journalists on 2 May 2023 was Kyaw Zaya, the chief reporter of Mawkun magazine. He was arrested in Hpa-An in Kayin State on 28 August 2022.

These releases are at least the 6th after the 17 November National Day in 2022 but the releases are usual things that the SAC does, but also were done in decades past by other military regimes.

Tin Shwe, a journalist from the Magway Post, was released in March 2023 after being sentenced to three years in prison on 21 January 2022. Tin Shwe was arrested on 26 March 2021 and charged with section 505A for reporting about the people protesting against the military in Minbu Township.

Zaw Moe Htet, a freelance journalist based in Hpakant, was released after a day he was detained on 11 January 2023. No information was provided by the military junta for Htet's arrest.

Since the coup, a total of 194 have been arrested, 138 have been released, and 56 are still in detention.

Revocation and cancellation of licenses

The license of Ayeyarwady Times was revoked on 10 June 2023. The Junta's Ministry of Information announced that the Ayeyarwady Times' license was revoked due to "national security concerns, restoration of the rule of law, and public safety and security," reported RFA Burmese. As of 30 June, the SAC revoked the licenses of 14 news outlets and nine publishing houses.

Monitoring of media repression in Myanmar, since the 2021 coup

(The numbers below reflect the use of figures that have been updated after the release of the 4th quarter brief and 2022 annual report. Missed cases and/or previously unreported data were added to the data previously reported. For details, please refer to the notes.)

Table 1: Monitoring of media repression in Myanmar, January to June 2023 (as of 30 June 2023)

Action against Journalists and news workers	2023			Since the 2021 coup		
	Jan – Mar	Apr - Jun	Total	Total	Women	Men
<i>Arrested</i> (please see note 1)	2	2	4	194	29	165
<i>In detention/serving jail sentences</i> (please see note 2)	1	1	56	56	6	50
<i>Released</i> (please see note 3)	10	6	16	138	23	115
<i>Died</i> (please see note 4)	0	1	1	4		4
<i>Convicted</i> (please see note 5)	3	1*	4	65	12	53
Status of News and other licenses						
<i>News licenses cancelled</i>	0	1	1	14		
<i>Printing/publishing permits revoked</i>	0	0	0	9		

Notes:

1 The number of arrested journalists since the February 2021 coup has been updated. Fifteen journalists were added to the previous list of 175 arrested persons reported as of the end of December in the 4th quarter update and 2022 annual report, bringing the updated total to 190. With

the addition of four arrests in 2023, the total number of arrested journalists and news workers is 194 as of June 2023.

2 The number of journalists who remain in detention reflects the addition of missed cases as of December 2022. Eight detained journalists were added to the 62 in the 2022 tally, bringing the updated total to 70. Sixteen more releases this year bring the number of those behind bars to 56 as of June 2023.

3 The previous total number of released journalists as of the end of 2022 has been updated from 113 to 122, after the addition of nine cases that were not in the previous data. The release of 16 more journalists as of June 2023 brings the cumulative tally to 138.

4 One journalist died in military custody in Yangon in December 2021. The other two died in incidents around armed conflict. In 2022, one was killed during a military attack in Karen state and another had been among villagers arrested and killed in Chin state. In June 2023, a fourth journalist was shot dead in Magway Region.

5 The previously reported total of 60 convicted journalists as of 2022 has been updated to 62, after the addition of two missed cases. Three other journalists were newly convicted in the first half of 2023, bringing the count thus far to 65. (One of the journalists convicted in 2023 had an earlier conviction in 2022 and was not added to the cumulative count.)

*This journalist got a second conviction in 2023, after an earlier one on a separate charge in 2022. Thus, while she is included in the number of those convicted in this 2023 table, she was not added to the cumulative number of journalists convicted since the coup. See Table 2 on convictions below for more information.

Table 2: Breakdown of convictions of journalists by law (2023)

Laws used in convictions	Jan - Mar 2023	Apr - Jun 2023	Total convictions for 2023 (as of 30 June 2023)
Counter-Terrorism Law		1*	1
Pénal Code- Section 505A (incitement)	3		3
Total	3	1	4

*This conviction of a female journalist was her second, the first one having been for incitement under Section 505A of the Penal Code.

Table 3: Combined prison sentences of journalists (2023)

Length of sentences	Number of convicted journalists
0-3 years	3
4-10 years	-
11-15 years	1*

*This refers to a female journalist who has a combined sentence of 13 years, consisting of a conviction handed down in May 2023 (under the Counter-Terrorism Law) in addition to a three-year sentence for incitement in 2022.

The Challenges Journalists Face

Overall nationwide, including the lowland regions and ethnic areas, the situation has been worse as fighting between the military and people defence forces, local defence forces or ethnic revolutionary organisations (EROs) has been intense, which has caused collecting information on the ground to be complicated.

This situation worsened when martial law was declared (as there were gates and guards everywhere). Martial law has been imposed in 37 townships in eight states and regions - Sagaing, Chin, Magway, Bago, Mon, Karen, Taninthayi, and Kayah. Under this situation, most local journalists cannot get information from the field and have to work mainly by phone. Due to the instability of the ground conditions, all residents are unsafe and may face life-threatening situations at any time, and journalists are in a more worrying position. As a result, they have relied mainly on citizen journalists' reporting. It has been reported (by ground sources) that journalists have been threatened with arrest if they are seen on the street. The recent installation of many CCTV cameras on the cities' streets and roads has become more worrying for journalists regarding their security and increased the risk of getting arrested for digital footage.

In Rakhine State, the situation is different compared to other regions in terms of confrontation between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military. Nevertheless, recently, journalists have been investigated for their addresses and personal information. For the time being, journalists in Rakhine state rely on only going to the relevant departments to ask questions or make phone calls to get information. Currently, there is a cease-fire between the military and the Arakan Army (AA),

but there are situations where journalists can be arrested at any time due to checks and inquiries for personal information when their identities are found out as journalists. Rakhine State was hit by a severe storm called Mocha that caused damage to the homes of some journalists. According to local sources, the cyclone has caused livelihood problems for at least 27 journalists in Rakhine. About 5.4 million people have been affected by the cyclone, among them 3.2 million who need humanitarian assistance in Chin, Magway, Rakhine, and Sagaing states. Approximately 700 people were injured, and 41 people died. The cyclone has badly affected Western Rakhine, with numerous Rohingya IDP camps damaged.

Before the cyclone, the affected areas suffered from heavy humanitarian needs due to years of conflict, displacements, statelessness, and an economic crisis. As a result of this latest disaster, the humanitarian situation in the western part of the country has taken on a devastating new dimension.

On top of that, a blackout of the internet has also made news access difficult, and journalists and residents are experiencing a lack of information. Even though they can only report news occasionally, the news they reported reached the public late, according to respondents from Kayah.

There are cases where journalists have to change their career because they cannot do journalistic work anymore, while some journalists have to do other jobs as their income is insufficient to provide for their families. In the case of the female journalists who were arrested, imprisoned, and now released, some of them happened to stop doing journalistic work.

In contrast, news agencies affiliated with the military council can collect data on events organised by the military council. News outlets that are getting news on the ground are the New Light of Myanmar, the Mirror, the Department of Information and Broadcasting, and Sky Net. Moreover, many media channels supported by the military regime have taken a particular space on Telegram by creating counter-messages and spreading war-prone and violent propaganda. For example, a channel such as Han Nyein Oo channel and its affiliated groups are doing doxing, publicly identifying or publishing private information about (someone), especially as a form of punishment or revenge, particularly on Facebook, and posting to arrest them on their channels. Their targeted people and organisations include publishers, editors, former journalists, journalists, and others working in the media industry. Among the respondents, one had been victimised by Facebook doxing, which can be seen as a significant challenge for journalists today.

Accessing information

Getting interviews and news sources for exiled journalists across Thailand and Australia for their news and stories is not easy. Even though they are not in a situation where they can get arrested like journalists who are inside Myanmar, the consideration of the security of the interviewees in the country has put them into difficulty in news reporting. They must be careful not to leak their information, including the news sources. Furthermore, it is also not easy to contact the people and sources on the ground from abroad.

“One of the most challenging difficulties for journalists in Myanmar at the moment is having enormous restrictions on moving around to conduct and investigate news.”

Journalists in Myanmar face three main barriers in the aftermath of the coup — (1) accessing information, (2) measuring digital security risks, and (3) social wellbeing and support. One of the significant barriers for journalists to conduct news is the restriction the regime imposes on travelling and moving freely, as it limits the capacity of journalists to travel and investigate the cases.

"One of the most challenging difficulties for journalists in Myanmar at the moment is having enormous restrictions on moving around to conduct and investigate news," said a journalist interviewed for this report.

Travel restrictions like having many checkpoints where they check travellers' phones and belongings on journalists is a challenging situation to conduct news on the ground and at grassroots levels. Not only can the journalists be arrested for doing their jobs, but in the worst case, military intelligence may kill them at interrogation centres. A journalist expressed that they have been physically and emotionally disturbed because they fear being arrested while investigating news. One more difficulty for journalists in conducting news was that people who had been providing information from their work or government offices could no longer do so as the junta and some other militia groups threatened them. Like the challenge and threat journalists face, people who have contact with journalists can also be arrested and killed. It is not hard for the junta to trace whether people kept contact with journalists as communication channels in the county, such as mobile operators, were under their direct control. "The situation puts us in a challenging position to conduct news on the ground and grassroots levels. We also face a situation in which our

communication through phone, text messages, and internet chatrooms was secretly surveilled, interfered with, and read by the junta's intelligence,” said a journalist.

“Because most news agencies in Myanmar are now facing such great difficulty in running their offices, many journalists in the country struggle to send their news to be published. Whatsoever amount of money they receive, they are still doing their jobs because they understand how important it is for a journalist to investigate the news. But we risk producing news under the darkness.”

Moreover, lacking logistical and financial support is another major challenge for journalists and new agencies in Myanmar. Despite the effort to investigate news in such hazardous situations and places, only a few journalists

in Myanmar receive decent payment for their news to survive professionally. For example, most exiled journalists in Thailand receive less than 10,000 baht per month even though the minimum wage is, on average, 353 baht/day or 10590 baht/month. Meanwhile, Myanmar media organisations have been facing less funding availability since around the end of 2022.

A journalist said, “Because most news agencies in Myanmar are now facing such great difficulty in running their offices, many journalists in the country struggle to send their news to be published. Whatsoever amount of money they receive, they are still doing their jobs because they understand how important it is for a journalist to investigate the news. But we risk producing news under the darkness.”

This quote above outlines two difficulties for journalists in Myanmar: one is not having enough financial support, and the other is not having proper space to present their news, as most news agencies face a survival problem. According to data collected by Athan, the military regime revoked the license of 12 news media outlets/houses within two years of the coup.

An additional challenge, along with the lack of financial support faced by journalists, is the problem of Internet access and the shutdown of the Internet by the regime. Since the coup, access to the internet in some regions of the country has been shut down by the regime to prevent the flow of information from being released from inside. Therefore, many journalists working in these internet-shutdown areas have to wait to send their most updated news to news agencies. A journalist interviewed for this report mentioned that he faced a similar situation during his

investigation on the news related to the military junta in *Bayingyi* village in the Shwebo district of the Sagaing region.

The flow of information always was delayed due to the internet shutdown. I have encountered a situation where I have to wait more than a month to get some news. The case of mass killing of genocide (originally used this word) in Bayingyi village from Shwebo is an example. I could only report the news after one month of the case. As a result, this news did not receive as much attention from people as it should because of being late to report.

Internet shutdown in some areas has worsened, making it impossible to connect directly to news sources in the main battlegrounds via the Internet. Some of the news stories depend only on reports from local citizen journalists. Having internet difficulties is more challenging because of things like being unable to make phone calls due to the security of news sources. Before the coup, it was easy to go on-site to get the sources, but now, it highly depends on the accessibility of the Internet to get the sources, which makes verification of the news more difficult and time-consuming. Next, building trust with on-the-ground sources seems less intense, and they must put in more effort. However, fortunately, if the journalists let people on the phone know that "I am a reporter calling from Thailand," they answer seriously as if they seem to understand exiled journalists' difficulties. According to one journalist:

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Another journalist explained that all flow of news and information can stop and collapse due to the internet shutdown. Two separate investigative reports regarding the case of internet shutdown in May 2022 and May 2023 have been published. Findings from these reports suggest several strategies and reasons why the military junta shut down internet access: One is initiating a nationwide internet blackout to stop the flow of information and communications among the

revolutionary groups. Another is blocking internet access to specific regions to prevent meetings, conferences, or online activities. The report in May 2022 also revealed that the regime's decision to shut down the Internet is not only because they want to prevent the flow of information and communications among the revolutionary group, but also, in most cases, because of their specific military missions. For example, access to both Internet and mobile signals was blocked entirely when the military sent their troops and military equipment to the battlefield. Six states and regions including Chin, Kachin, Karenni, Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing have been cut off from mobile data and networks since 2021.

Digital Security Risks

Digital security risks have affected the work of media workers, whether inside Myanmar or in exile status. Almost all the news and information are transferred through the Internet via email, signal, or other platforms believed to be safe for journalists and news agencies. However, data security concerns have been raised urgently among journalists along with the use of the Internet. Despite the specific software and applications used by journalists to send and share their news and reports, this does not a hundred percent safeguard them from the risks of interference from the potential threat. Most journalists interviewed for the report stated they suspected several occasions when their phone calls were traced and listened to secretly.

Moreover, one participant expressed that his/her social media account, such as Facebook, has been hacked several times and received many phone calls without saying anything. This form of digital attack is a common one that happens to journalists. One journalist expressed her high-security concerns about appearing on screen as part of her work. Also, surveillance of personal data like SIM card registration endangers those who use Myanmar SIM cards; especially local journalists, it would be a clue for them to be caught.

One more difficulty faced by a journalist in this report is that he/she was manipulated by one of his/her friends who was forced to do so by the junta's security forces. As his/her identity was revealed, his/her movements were being watched closely, which made her and her colleague journalists unable to conduct news freely. Most journalists believe they have been placed under junta surveillance, specifically through CCTV and civilian informers. A journalist expressed his/her concerns that "The Junta's surveillance systems greatly affect our work investigating cases. All of our movements, such as where we go, what we do, and who we meet and ask, are being

watched and can be known through surveillance CCTV. As there is CCTV at every corner in my region, I am quite concerned about it, which puts me in a difficult situation to do my work." Another journalist also discussed his/her concern over the junta's surveillance CCTV as one of the most effective tools to trace and arrest young people in Yangon who have been involved in the resistance movement. He/she said in his/her interview that most young people in Yangon were arrested under CCTV surveillance.

Moreover, there are also some concerns for the safety of family members who remain in Myanmar, even if they are in secure areas or abroad. Inside the country, the security situation makes it difficult for those who would like to give an interview or broadcast. Therefore, several family members, friends, new sources, and journalists could be arrested within the country, as well as their property could be confiscated. To cover the news and ask questions of news sources, journalists are required to reveal their identities, such as pen names or media house names. It is difficult for locals and rural people to request better communication channels and end-to-end encryption apps like signals and wire as they do not have any experience using them.

Social Wellbeing and Support

As briefly mentioned above, the current political crisis has also negatively affected the social well-being of individuals. Notably, most journalists who participated in the report expressed that they were depressed most of the time as they could not investigate the case as they wanted. Most of them responded to the interview questions that they felt unsatisfied with themselves for being unable to conduct news, which depressed them. On the one hand, they have fewer alternative job opportunities besides journalistic work. One journalist said, "For having fewer job opportunities as well as being unable to investigate news and reports, I have been very depressed recently, and it has had a huge effect on my mental well-being."

There are several factors that make Myanmar migrant workers, as well as exiled journalists, vulnerable as they have experienced physical harassment, exploitation, and psychological trauma. A lot of anxiety and mental health challenges from doing news work in the Myanmar situation are usually caused by the nature of journalistic work, which includes monitoring and conducting news

“For having fewer job opportunities as well as being unable to investigate news and reports, I have been very depressed recently, and it has had a huge effect on my mental well-being.”

reports, due to the various events happening on the ground, such as the army arresting and killing people and villages being burned. Although a few organisations are working on mental-health-related activities, no significant attention has been given to the case of mental health in Myanmar, and no concrete solution has yet been developed. Some organisations are working on mental health support for media workers, especially for exiled journalists; however, more coordination bodies will be needed to work efficiently.

Concerning support and assistance from local or international media freedom organisations, many organisations provide assistance to journalists. Many NGOs and donors have supported journalists and media workers since the military coup, but it is insufficient. One journalist described that "there is a substantial difference between the emergency support provided to journalists in countries such as Belarus, Ukraine, and Afghanistan".

Financial sustainability and funding for exile media outlets are other difficulties media organisations have encountered during this time. A majority of exiled journalists face financial challenges that include having no income, low income, and job insecurity. There is a direct connection between this and legal safety, as many of them cannot afford to get different types of documents or ID cards that the Thai government issue migrants to live legally in Thailand, or some journalists face financial problem with visa extension. The rent fees on houses increased nearly double within a year due to high demand from people in Myanmar who had relocated to Thailand after the coup, adding to their financial burden. One more difficulty for most media house owners is that they have to spend almost all their time hunting for funds for their organisations, which has prevented them from putting much effort into creating content.

About this Brief

This is an update on the challenges and threats to press freedom and media independence in Myanmar, safety issues around journalists and individuals in the news profession, and relevant events and issues in the country's news and information environment since the February 1, 2021, military coup. This brief is produced using verified information, including the tracking of incidents and discussions with journalists and media professionals, to document and provide context for a better understanding of the country's news and information situation.

Some definitions

In the monitoring work for this series of updates, an incident is a verified event that involves action against a journalist due to his or her journalistic activities or background, such as arrest, detention, prosecution, death, torture and acts of violence, surveillance, harassment and/or threats.

Incidents include similar actions against other individuals working in independent newsrooms and news-related operations, such as news management and other administrative, creative, and support personnel who are part of the production and distribution of journalistic products. They are called “news workers” in these monitoring updates.

Also included in incidents are actions taken against newsrooms, news organizations and their websites and online spaces, independent associations of professional journalists, and press clubs. These include the cancellation of publishing licenses, raids on news outlets' premises and their prosecution, and the blocking of websites.

In this series of updates, a journalist is an individual who is engaged in gathering and reporting, taking photographs or video footage, editing or publishing and presenting news that has been produced using professional and independent journalistic standards and methods.

A journalist may be in news work as a livelihood, whether paid or not, in different types of media and platforms, and have different types of professional arrangements, such as being full-time staff, freelance, a stringer, or occasional contributor.

Included in the journalists covered by the monitoring work are individuals who have been described as being former journalists or who have left their news organizations. This is for two reasons: first, being or having been a journalist in Myanmar by itself is a risk, and persons have

been targeted or arrested because of a past affiliation with a news outlet; second, safety considerations can require an individual's description as a former journalist.

“Journalist” in this monitoring work likewise includes citizen journalists, given that many news organizations in Myanmar work with them regularly. In the Myanmar context, the term “citizen journalist” typically refers to a person who contributes news – whether in the form of raw content, including photographs, videos, or full stories. He or she may or may not be paid for contributions and may or may not have had some news training.

After the 2021 coup, news outlets began using material sent voluntarily by citizen journalists after restrictions and arrests made news-related activities dangerous for professional journalists.