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The Situation of the Freedom of Expression in Myanmar

Athan

November -2024

Censored Voices

The Situation of the Freedom of Expression in
Myanmar



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(1) Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problems

Myanmar society acknowledges Freedom of Expression as the most basic human right and a core political value for achieving an accountable and transparent democratic society.¹ *Freedom of Expression* is defined not only as beliefs and ideologies but also as the sharing and distributing of incoming news and information.² Article 19 of the ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that everyone has the right to share opinions and thoughts verbally, in writing, in any art form or media after practicing the right to freedom of expression.

How does Myanmar society and its political institutions protect this fundamental right of freedom of expression? How does it fulfill, support and promote it? Such questions are to be considered in this topic. One reason is that the Myanmar military has systematically endeavored to imply the broader oppression of the right to freedom of expression nationwide since the attempted coup in 2021 when they seized power from the elected civilian government. Moreover, it reflects whether the people in Myanmar can practice freedom of expression on a full scale.

Public participation is vital in building a democratic society, and it is essential to guarantee that people have the right to write, express, and share their opinions, beliefs, and information. One ambition of the 2021 Spring Revolution is establishing a federal democracy state. Thus, it is vital to develop and promote standard political and democratic values from now on. This is the way to achieve a democratic society, and the lives and sacrifices of the people in the Spring Revolution will not be wasted.

¹ (Athan, 2023, p. 11-16) "Myanmar & Its Vanishing Freedom of Expression"
<https://athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FOE-FNG-Nov-11.pdf>

² (Gunatilleke, 2020, p. 92) "Justifying Limitations on the Freedom of Expression" <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-020-00608-8>

This report is based on the question of how the whole Myanmar public opposed the 2021 Coup or how they are still fighting against it. It also studied why Myanmar people are still fighting against the military junta and their political ambitions.

The people of Myanmar have unequivocally rejected the 2008 Constitution, which existed before the 2021 Coup and was influenced by the military and its conglomerated partners. This rejection was a powerful catalyst for a series of nationwide protests, as the people of Myanmar yearned for the end of any form of dictatorship. They demanded the establishment of a federal democratic society that guarantees human rights, equality, and self-determination while building up the new Myanmar.

It is imperative that democratic norms such as equality, press freedom, the right to information, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly are not just promoted but protected and implemented to achieve a democratic society.

The following questions must be addressed to successfully implement a federal democratic society: Which democratic norms are flourishing, and which are being suppressed? In what ways are these norms being repressed? Who are the victims of this oppression, and who is attempting to control and limit their freedoms? This report examines the situation in Myanmar through the lens of freedom of expression, focusing on how the people of Myanmar have exercised their right to freedom of expression in response to the military coup. It explores the extent to which they have mobilized to advocate for their future nation and pursue their political goals.

1.2 Methodology

Athan monitored daily news and information from various media organizations, focusing on freedom of expression to compile this report. We systematically gathered information from local-based international media organizations, exiled Myanmar media, and local media at the provincial and township levels. Athan also connected with local reporters and partner organizations to verify and add more detailed information.

(2) Peaceful Assembly

2.1 Peaceful Assembly and its International Standards

Article 21 of the ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states, “The freedom of assembly shall be recognized.” Peaceful assembly protects non-violent gatherings, principally those that are expressive and have a specific purpose. “Peaceful Assembly” is a fundamental human right related to freedom of expression. The ICCPR and other international treaties safeguard the right to peaceful assembly as the right to freedom of expression. This fundamental right is at the core of the public administration mechanism and is undeniably essential. If a government body neglects to uphold and respect this fundamental right, it demonstrates oppression of the people, and that government can be classified as a “violator of human rights.”



Caption: Mass Protest in Downtown Yangon (Yangon, February 20, 2021)

Peaceful assembly refers to a non-violent gathering of individuals who share a common goal. These gatherings can take place in various settings, including outdoors, indoors, and online, such as on social media platforms or in public or private spaces. Peaceful assembly can take many forms, including protests, hunger strikes, rallies, marches, public meetings, strikes (like candlelight vigils, sit-ins, and marching strikes), public gatherings, online gatherings, and flash mob events. According to General Comment 37 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), if participants in such gatherings engage in extensive acts of violence, the gathering may be classified as violent.

On February 1, 2021, the military junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, arrested President U Win Myint, State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and several members of the civilian government, along with politicians and activists. The junta justified these actions with the baseless claim of "2020 Election Fraud" in an attempt to stage a coup. Millions of people across Myanmar—whether in rural areas, urban cities, border regions, or among the diaspora—expressed their objections to the coup in various ways.

2.2 Forced Crackdown on Peaceful Protests

As the very first campaign against the coup, the whole country performed the pot-banging campaign on February 2, 2021. The government staff members also performed the Red Ribbon Campaign on February 3, 2021. On February 4, 2021, an activist called Dr. Tayza San led a protest in Mandalay. Later, millions of people from Yangon, Tanintharyi, and many other places across the country protested and organized campaigns peacefully against the dictator. (RFA Burmese, 2021, February 4)³ When those public movements are escalating across the country, the military junta violently crackdown against the unarmed peaceful protestors. Following that, the military holds a saying called "(if they) want to make changes, (we shoot) at their heads" and has

³ RFA Burmese (2021, February 4) စစ်အာဏာသိမ်းပြီးနောက် မန္တလေးမြို့မှာ ပထမဆုံးအကြိမ် လမ်းပေါ်ထွက်ဆန္ဒပြ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=239829681128124>

bluntly committed a series of lethal crackdowns by using live rounds and combat weapons. (Oak Aww, 2022, July 18)⁴

The pot-banging campaign is a powerful protest against the military junta in Myanmar, where people across the country bang pots from their homes every night at 8 p.m. while vehicles on the road honk in solidarity. This campaign embodies the demands of the Myanmar people. However, it has angered the military junta, leading to the arrest and repression of participants. Individuals from Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, the Irrawaddy region, and Chin State have been imprisoned for taking part in the campaign.



Caption: A Protestor from Downtown Yangon was kept in the prison truck after the violent crackdown (March 11, 2021)

Local administrators, along with the police and military, conducted forced interrogations of those who participated, releasing them only after they promised not to join the protests again. Due to the large number of participants, it was impossible for the military to arrest everyone involved. In response, supporters of the Myanmar military have raided neighborhoods, using gunfire and verbal assaults to intimidate residents and suppress the campaign.

Mass protest campaigns began on February 6, led by many young people nationwide.

Two days later, on February 8, soldiers from the Myanmar military used water pressure pumps to disperse the peaceful crowd during the protest. Following this, the police force, under military

⁴ Oak Aww (2022, July 18) “ချန်ထားမရတဲ့ လောကီအစီအရင် အားပြိုင်မှုများ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/opinion/viewpoint/2022/07/18/253249.html>

control, fired live rounds at protesters near the Thapyay Kone Roundabout in Naypyidaw. (RFA Burmese, 2021, February 9)⁵ This incident has injured at least five people, including a journalist. Win Htet Moe, 26 years old, was shot in the hand; Ko So Wai, 23 years old, was shot in the chest; and Mya Thwet Thwet Khaing, 20 years old, was shot in the head. (Myanmar Now, 2021, February 9)⁶ Mya Thwet Thwet Khaing lost her life on February 19 due to brain death after being shot in the head. Ko Min Nyi Nyi Htun, Ko Ye Win Htun, Ko Pyae Sone Aung, and Ko Saw Oakkar Oo were arrested by the military regime for their involvement in the protest and have been charged under Article 19 and Article 25 of the Natural Disaster Act.

Over time, public outrage against the unjust actions of the oppressive military regime has grown significantly. Millions of people have taken to the streets to protest the military coup. As the anti-coup protests intensified, the army and police forces responded with violence, subjecting protesters to beatings, arrests, and the use of tear gas to disperse crowds. They also rammed military trucks and cars into protesters and fired live rounds, in addition to using rubber bullets, leading to lethal consequences. Although the movement has lost some momentum due to systematic investigations targeting activists, young people, and protest leaders—along with the use of informers to facilitate searches, arrests, and torture—protests against the military regime have continued from February 2021 to the present.

In March 2021, soldiers and police forces killed at least 520 people, marking it as the month with the highest death toll and arrests of unarmed, peaceful protesters. (Athan, 2022, October)⁷ Million people participated in mass protests and strikes against the military regime across Myanmar until early April 2021. The military junta responded with brutal crackdowns on almost every protest camp in many townships. In response, protesters became creative, implementing flash mob protests and online campaigns. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which closely monitors political and military conflicts in Myanmar, more than 60% of

⁵ RFA Burmese (2021, February 9) “နေပြည်တော်ဆန္ဒပြပွဲ ရဲကတစ်ခတ်လို့ လူငယ်နှစ်ယောက် အသက်အန္တရာယ်စိုးရိမ်ရ” <https://www.facebook.com/rfaburmese/posts/10160800900073128>

⁶ Myanmar Now (2021, February 9) “နေပြည်တော်မြို့တော်ခန်းမရှေ့တွင် အာဏာရှင်ဆန့်ကျင်ရေး ဆန္ဒပြ” <https://www.facebook.com/myanmarnownews/posts/2016313908516337>

⁷ Athan (2022 October) “ထိခိုက်ရှုံးဆုံးခဲ့ရမှုများထဲမှ အပိုင်းအစများ” <https://athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Protest-2022-Athan-Bur.pdf>

the forced crackdowns occurred globally after the coup took place in Myanmar. (ACLEDD, 2021, October)⁸

2.3 Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)

Public protests and pot-banging campaigns against the military regime have been powerful, leading to a significant disobedience movement known as the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) initiated by government staff. Employees from various government departments, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Education, municipal offices, banks, and others, defied orders from the junta. They adopted the slogan "Do not go to the office, break the chains" and actively participated in efforts to undermine the operations of the military regime. As a result, it is evident that the military regime's governing mechanism has been unable to function normally to this day.



Caption: Staff of teachers' college joined the civil disobedience movement (Yangon, February 6, 2021)

In early March 2021, government staff members from various departments actively joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. In response, the military regime oppressed these individuals

⁸ ACLEDD (2021, October 21) "Deadly Demonstrations: Fatalities from State Engagement on the Rise" <https://acleddata.com/2021/10/21/deadly-demonstrations/>

using charges such as Penal Code 505A and Article 188. They faced dismissals, arrests, and the issuance of warrants. A notable incident occurred on March 10, 2021, when several members of the police and military raided the Ma Hlwa Gone train station compound in Mingalar Taung Nyunt Township, Yangon, to arrest railway workers involved in the CDM movement.

Following the coup, the military regime armed their supporters, known as "Pyu Saw Htee." Soldiers and members of the Pyu Saw Htee were deployed in various villages and townships across the country to arrest and kill young protest leaders, participants in the protests, and individuals involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). As a result, many people were forced to flee their homes and leave behind their belongings. The military regime has placed individuals associated with the CDM on a blacklist, which has led to the suspension of their passport applications to prevent them from traveling abroad. Furthermore, the military, with assistance from the police, interrogated and arrested anyone they suspected at the passport office.

2.4 Pro-Military Protests Support the Coup

Similar to the anti-coup protests and public movements opposing the military coup, some pro-military protests and gatherings express support for the coup. These events have been organized by pro-military political activists and members of the "Ma Ba Tha" movement, also known as the "Race and Religion Protection" Movement, comprised of ultranationalist individuals. The pro-military protests have often been marked by violence and a lack of peaceful conduct among participants. On 1 February 2021, in front of Yangon City Hall, the pro-military crowd attacked two journalists who were covering the protest, resulting in one of the journalists sustaining severe injuries. (Agga Non, 2021, February 1)⁹ Many participants wielded weapons, including rods, knives, and slingshots, and frequently attacked anti-coup protesters during the

⁹ Agga Non (2021, February 1) “အာဏာသိမ်းထောက်ခံဆန္ဒပြပွဲ သတင်းယူသူ သတင်းသမားနှစ်ဦး ရိုက်နှက်ခံရ” <https://burmese.voanews.com/a/journalists-attacked-myanmar-politics/5759585.html>

gathering. (Irrawaddy, 2021, February 26)¹⁰ Members of the Myanmar Army and police did not take legal action against the supporters, and they even provided security along the way.

According to a report from Irrawaddy News, supporters of the junta condemned the National League for Democracy (NLD), the winning political party of the 2020 election, as well as the Union Election Commission. They expressed their support for the military during the gathering. Hundreds of people attended those events, waving flags of the Myanmar Army and the national flag of Myanmar. However, the atmosphere was violent as some individuals verbally abused others, damaged the rearview mirrors of vehicles, and engaged in other unruly behaviors. On 25 February 2021, during a pro-military protest in downtown Yangon, military supporters clashed with other people around, resulting in injuries to about ten people from stabbing incidents. (Irrawaddy, 2021, February 25)¹¹

The military supporters later shifted the focus of their protest movement to oppose the People's Defense Forces and Ethnic-Armed Organizations. This change seemed intentional, inciting religious and ethnic conflict among the population. As they gathered for the protests, police and soldiers loyal to the junta, armed with combat weapons, provided security along the road and at the event site. (RFA Burmese, 2024, August 6)¹²

2.5 Violence Against Women and LGBTQIA+ Protesters

It is undeniable that every citizen of Myanmar was engaged in various roles during the Spring Revolution that began after the Coup on 1 February 2021. Among these individuals, the courageous contributions of women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community stand out, as they have fought tirelessly against the military regime.

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (2021, February 26) “အကြမ်းဖက် တိုက်ခိုက်လုယက်မှု ကျူးလွန်ခဲ့တဲ့ တပ်ထောက်ခံသူတွေရဲ့ ဆန္ဒပြပွဲ”
<https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/02/26/238625.html>

¹¹ Irrawaddy (2021, February 25) “ရမ်းကားရိုင်းစိုင်းသော တပ်ထောက်ခံပွဲများ ငြီးခင်ရီ စီစဉ်”
<https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/12/22/248308.html>

¹² RFA Burmese (2024, August 6) “လားရှိုး ရမခ သိမ်းပိုက်ခံရပြီးနောက် စစ်တပ်ထောက်ခံသူတွေ MNDAA ကို ဆန္ဒပြပွဲ”
<https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/protest-against-mndaa-08062024072748.html>

The performance of the LGBTQIA+ members from the anti-coup protests gained support from the international community as those were remarkably optimistic and creative. Thus, the military regime focused on the community and oppressed more. Sue Sha Shin Thant, an LGBTQIA+ activist, was arrested in Mandalay as the soldiers rammed into her motorbike on the road. Later, she was tied to the tree of the police station in Mandalay and interrogated upside down while she was hanged. (BBC Burmese, 2021, October 30)¹³

Individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community and women who were sent to prisons and interrogation centers endured inhumane treatment, including verbal abuse, physical torture, and sexual violence, such as touching breasts and female private parts. On 19 February 2022, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) released a statement revealing that members of the Myanmar army raped a female ABFSU student in an interrogation center located within the Mandalay Royal Palace compound. (ABFSU, 2022)¹⁴ The statement also indicated that soldiers raped not only female detainees but also male detainees, and they were denied medical treatment.



Caption: A Woman Protester in Yangon (March 14, 2021)

¹³ BBC Burmese (2021, October 30) “LGBT တယောက်ရဲ့ စစ်ကြောရေးခရဲခန်း”

<https://www.bbc.com/burmese/59102742>

¹⁴ ABFSU (2022, February 19) “အဖမ်းဆီးခံ အမျိုးသမီးရဲဘော်များ၏ စစ်ကြောရေးနှင့်ထောင်တွင်း လိင်ပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာစော်ကားခံရမှုများနှင့် ပတ်သက်၍ ထုတ်ပြန်ကြေညာချက်”

https://www.facebook.com/abfsu.cec/photos/a.113631383508735/487029066168963/?_rdr

The role and bravery of women in the Spring Revolution became especially prominent during the "Sarong Strike" on International Women's Day, March 8, 2021. In this campaign, women from across Myanmar participated by hanging sarongs, a traditional women's garment, as a form of protest. (Irrawaddy, 2021, March 8)¹⁵ This movement has also reduced the perception that Sarongs, women's lower garments, are disgraceful. (Athan, 2022, October)¹⁶ Among the victims who have lost their lives due to the inhumane acts of the military, the first was a 20-year-old woman named Mya Thwet Thwet Khaing. She was shot in the head during a protest in Naypyidaw on February 9, 2021, which led to her brain death. Additionally, Ma Kyal Sin, a 19-year-old female protester from Mandalay, was also shot in the head on March 3, 2021, and died instantly.

The violations committed by the Myanmar military against the people are unimaginable. They violently suppress peaceful protests, arbitrarily arrest protesters, and send them to interrogation centers where they face severe charges. Innocent detainees endure brutal torture inflicted by police and soldiers from the junta forces. Numerous cases of sexual assault against [female political prisoners](#) and LGBTQIA+ individuals have been documented. (Moe Oo, 2022, January 16)¹⁷

Female political prisoners following the coup ranged in age from 2 to 70 years old. Like other political prisoners, they also lack access to proper healthcare. (BNI, 2024, May 31)¹⁸ Only convicted female political prisoners receive one pack of pads per person each month. According to recently released political prisoners, those who are not yet convicted do not receive pads until they have been sentenced.

¹⁵ Irrawaddy (2021, March 8) “စစ်အာဏာရှင် ဆန့်ကျင်ရေး အမျိုးသမီးတို့၏ ထာဝီအလံထူ သပိတ်တိုက်ပွဲ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/03/08/239157.html>

¹⁶ Athan (2022, October) “ထိခိုက်ရှုံးဆုံးခဲ့ရမှုများထဲမှ အပိုင်းအစများ” <https://athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Protest-2022-Athan-Bur.pdf>

¹⁷ Moe Oo (2022, January 16) “အမျိုးသမီးတိုင်း ရောက်ခဲ့ရသည့် စစ်ကြောရေးငရဲခန်း ၃၆ နာရီ” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/10110/>

¹⁸ BNI (2024, May 31) “အမျိုးသမီး နိုင်ငံကျဉ်းများ လိင်စော်ကားမှုအပါအဝင် အခွင့်အရေး ချိုးဖောက်ခံနေရ” <https://www.bnionline.net/mm/news-104806>

Over time, prison officials imposed stricter restrictions on political prisoners. In Obo prison in Mandalay, authorities used electric shock weapons and metal batons to beat female inmates. Some of these women suffered severe injuries but were subsequently denied medical treatment. Additionally, they were placed in solitary confinement without food or water.

2.6 Role of Monks and Religious Leaders in Protests

The involvement of religious leaders is crucial among the various groups and individuals protesting against the military coup. On March 8, 2021, in Myitkyina, Kachin State, police and soldiers prepared to suppress the peaceful protestors violently. However, they were confronted by [Sister Anne Rose Nu Taung](#) from Aung Nan Church, who knelt before them, begging them not to open fire on the protesters. This event went viral.

During the Spring Revolution, the military targeted not only political activists and artists but also Buddhist monks due to their significant role in the movement. Monasteries were raided, resulting in the violent arrest of monks. There have been documented cases of monks being arbitrarily detained, arrested at midnight in their monasteries, tortured, and imprisoned. (Myanmar Now, 2021, July 6)¹⁹ Prominent pro-democracy monks, such as Abbot Myawaddy (also known as Ashin Ariya Bi Wunsa), Ashin Thaw Bitu (Alinkar Kyal), and Abbot Shwe Nya War, were arrested on the very first day of the attempted coup, February 1, 2021. Despite the military regime's claims of protecting race and religion, they have ruthlessly arrested, tortured, and killed individuals without regard for age, race, or social status.

On June 19, 2024, soldiers from the Myanmar Army opened fire continuously on a vehicle carrying the Patron Abbot of Win Nimmitaryone, also known as Ashin Badanta Muninda Bi Wunsa, while he was traveling on the Ngan Zun - Myotha Road in the Mandalay Region. He was killed in the attack. Another monk in the same car, Ashin Badanta Guni Bi Wunsa, spoke out about the incident. (BBC Burmese, 2024, June 20)²⁰ However, the junta released propaganda that the incident happened due to an armed engagement between the junta's army and the People's Defense Forces (PDF), and bullets from the PDFs had killed the Abbot. This statement of hiding the truth shook the monk community. On 23 June 2024, monks from Chaung Oo Township led a general strike against the military junta that not only cheated on the news release but also

¹⁹ Myanmar Now (၂၀၂၁ ဇူလိုင် ၂၆) “အကြမ်းဖက်စစ်တပ်ပါးစပ်က ဘုရားဘုရား၊ လက်က ကားရားကားရား” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/7584/>

²⁰ ဘီဘီစီမြန်မာ (၂၀၂၄ ဇွန် ၂၀) “စစ်တပ်ရဲ့ ပစ်ခတ်မှုကြောင့်ပျံလွန်တော်မူခဲ့တဲ့ ဝင်းနီမိတ္တာရုံဆရာတော်ကြီး” <https://www.bbc.com/burmese/articles/cx99zey9jx4o>

arrested, tortured, and killed monks for no particular reason. Monks from 24 townships joined the strike on 26 July 2024. (Hmue Angel, 2024, June 24)²¹ On January 1, 2024, prominent monks launched an online campaign titled "Sons of Buddha Who Do Not Want Dictatorship and Injustice." Within five months, they organized 92 campaigns, concluding on May 11 based on data from Athan.

2.7 Family Members Taken as Hostages

The junta's forces often arrest protest leaders and activists unexpectedly without official warrants. Some activists, anticipating these arrests, have temporarily fled their homes and left their family members behind. The military junta altered its tactics in response to the increasing number of people escaping.

When the military was unable to arrest certain leaders and activists, they resorted to taking family members as hostages. In Mandalay, they failed to apprehend the protest leader Ko Soe Htay. Consequently, soldiers took his wife, their five-year-old daughter Theint Sandi Soe, and their 18-year-old daughter, Su Htet Wine, as hostages. (DVB, 2021, July 1)²² Ko Min Lwin Oo, a member of the Dawei Strike Committee, and Kyaw Ko Ko, the former president of the ABFSU, have both experienced abduction incidents in which their family members were taken hostage. A large group of soldiers arrested Ko Min Lwin Oo's father during a raid on their home. For approximately two months, he was not allowed to meet anyone. He was later charged under Section 505A for "incitement." (DVB, 2023, August 27)²³

U Kyaw Aye, a 68-year-old father of Kyaw Ko Ko, the former president of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), was accused of participating in "terrorizing campaigns."

²¹ Hmue Angel (2024, June 24) “ချောင်းဦးက သံဃာတွေနဲ့အတူ မြောင်နယ်က သံဃာတွေ သပိတ်မှာ ပူးပေါင်းပါဝင်လာ” <https://www.facebook.com/100070473873342/posts/522407500118375>

²² DVB (2021, July 1) “မိုးကုတ် သပိတ်ခေါင်းဆောင်၏ ၅ နှစ်အရွယ် သမီးလေး ပြန်လွတ်” <https://burmese.dvb.no/post/472748>

²³ DVB (2023, August 27) “ထားဝယ်သပိတ်ကော်မတီဝင် ၁ ဦး၏ ဖခင်ကို ထောင် ၂ နှစ် ချ” <https://burmese.dvb.no/post/611903>

Following the release of this [propaganda by pro-military Telegram channels](#), U Kyaw Aye was arrested at his home in Tamwe Township, Yangon. He was charged under Section 505A of the penal code. His son, Kyaw Ko Ko, a member of the General Strike Committee, has also been wanted by the junta since he escaped a violent crackdown against protests in early March 2021 in Tamwe Township, Yangon.

2.8 Crackdown on the Prison Strikes

Prison strikes organized by innocent political prisoners demonstrate that the people of Myanmar continue to resist the military regime in any way possible, regardless of their circumstances. Like many organize protests and campaigns against the junta, political prisoners are increasingly raising their voices through these strikes.

The earliest prison strike following the 2021 attempted coup occurred in Insein Prison on June 23, 2021. This strike was prompted by a lack of healthcare for political prisoners, and it was fueled by the exclusion of political prisoners from the amnesty release on June 30, 2021. During the strike, prisoners united in singing "Thway Thitsar," a revolutionary song, while demanding the unconditional release of all political prisoners, improved medical treatment within the prison, and a reduction of restrictions on prison life. In response to the strike, police and soldiers violently intervened. Twenty political prisoners who led the strike, including Ko Zaw Htet Naing (also known as Sitt Naing), a member of the central committee of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), were placed in solitary confinement. (Irrawaddy, 2021, July 26)²⁴

"Hunger strikes" represent the highest level of demand regarding the rights of political prisoners. Following the coup, there has been an increase in hunger strikes within prisons. Between February 1 and February 6, 2022, around 200 political prisoners engaged in hunger strikes, refusing food supplies provided by the prison. On February 12, 2022, political prisoners in Dawei Prison initiated a second hunger strike. On June 8, 2022, [prisoners from Yangon's Insein](#)

²⁴ Irrawaddy (2021, July 26) “အကျဉ်းထောင်များ အတွင်း ကိုဗစ်ကြောင့် သေဆုံးသူ ၉ ဦး ရှိလာ”
<https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2021/07/26/244527>

[Prison organized another hunger strike](#). However, on June 13, they were violently beaten by prison authorities and placed in solitary confinement. Two of the hunger strikers who sustained severe injuries were denied medical treatment. (Irrawaddy, 2022, June 13)²⁵

On January 28th, soldiers from the Myanmar military conducted a large-scale search operation against political prisoners at Kyaikmaraw Central Prison. They accused two prisoners of possessing mobile phones, leading to their arrest and torture. Subsequently, these prisoners were placed in solitary confinement starting on February 4th. This event sparked a hunger strike of fifty political prisoners, among six prisoners who are now in critical condition due to malnutrition and have been transferred to the emergency unit of the prison hospital. (Salween Times, 2024, February 11)²⁶ The other notable case involves Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, the minister of the Mandalay region, who was imprisoned in Obo prison in Mandalay on baseless charges and ultimately died in custody. (BBC Burmese, 2024, October 7)²⁷ He had been battling cancer for a long time and was only allowed to be transferred to the Intensive Care Unit of Mandalay Hospital two days before his death on 5 October 2024. While he was on his deathbed at the hospital, military representatives came and announced that "he was pardoned," according to reports from Radio Free Asia. (RFA Burmese, 2024, October 6)²⁸

Activists focused on the rights of former political prisoners report that prison officials intentionally carried out violent crackdowns and oppressive measures against strikes in the prison. In Pathein Prison, located in the Irrawaddy region, five political prisoners were tortured and placed in solitary confinement for their participation in the strike known as "Reunite for

²⁵ ဧရာဝတီ (၂၀၂၂၊ ဇွန် ၁၃) “အင်းစိန်ထောင်တွင် နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများ ညှဉ်းပန်းနှိပ်စက်ခံနေရ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2022/06/13/252517.html>

²⁶ သံလွင်တိုင်းမ် (၂၀၂၄၊ ဖေဖော်ဝါရီ ၁၁) “ကျိုက်မရောထောင်မှာ အစာငတ်ခံဆန္ဒပြနေတဲ့ နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသား ၂၃ ဦး ထပ်မံတိုက်ပိတ်ခံရ” <https://www.facebook.com/100077424451291/posts/439908991933246>

²⁷ ဘီဘီစီမြန်မာ (၂၀၂၄၊ အောက်တိုဘာ ၇) “ဒေါက်တာဇော်မြင့်မောင်ရဲ့ စူပာကို အောက်တိုဘာ ၈ ရက် မှာ ပြုလုပ်မယ်” <https://www.bbc.com/burmese/articles/cn5z63pp401o>

²⁸ RFA Burmese (2024, October 6) “မန္တလေးတိုင်းဝန်ကြီးချုပ် ဒေါက်တာဇော်မြင့်မောင် ကွယ်လွန်” <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/nld-dr-zaw-myint-maung-10062024180603.html>

Six-Twos Day." (Khin Nyein Chan, 2022, February 23)²⁹ On April 3, 2022, political prisoners in Monywa prison chanting anti-military slogans were violently suppressed by soldiers and prison officials. As a result, one prisoner died, and five others were injured. (DVB, 2023, April 3)³⁰ On April 7, 2022, political prisoners from the same Monywa prison were transferred to Myin Gyan and Myitkyina prisons. The prison authorities intended to separate them to prevent further movement. (RFA Burmese, 2022, April 8)³¹ Seventeen political prisoners from Hpa An prison in Karen State were placed in solitary confinement for protesting against the forced transfer of sixty political prisoners from Hpa An prison to Hanthawaddy Prison on May 8, 2022. Four other political prisoners at Hpa An prison were severely injured during the strike.(Myae Latt Athan, 2022, July 10)³² (Irrawaddy, 2022, May 11)³³

The military junta sentenced 63 political prisoners to an additional three years of imprisonment due to their involvement in a prison strike at Patheingyi Prison. This strike resulted in the death of Wai Yan Phyto, also known as Yarsu, and left 70 other political prisoners injured. The junta accused these prisoners of destroying public property and harming duty officers during the incident. (Irrawaddy, 2023, September 27)³⁴ Sixteen out of 63 prisoners received three additional years of imprisonment under penal code section 333, resulting in a total sentence of six more years.

²⁹ Khin Nyein Chan (2022, February 23) “ပုသိမ်ထောင်တွင် ၂ ခြောက်လုံးနေ့ ဆန္ဒပြသူ ၅ ဦး တိုက်ပိတ်ခံရ” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/10550/>

³⁰ DVB (2023, April 3) “မုံရွာအကျဉ်းထောင်တွင်း ပစ်ခတ်မှုကြောင့် ၁ ဦး သေဆုံး၊ ၅ ဦးဒဏ်ရာရ” <https://burmese.dvb.no/post/525709>

³¹ RFA Burmese (2022, April 8) “ပစ်ခတ်မှုဖြစ်ခဲ့တဲ့ မုံရွာထောင်က အကျဉ်းသားအချို့ကို ရွှေ့ပြောင်း” <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/monya-prisoners-move-04082022060748.html>

³² Myae Latt Athan (2022, July 10) “ဘားအံထောင်က နိုင်ကျဉ်း ၅၀ကျော်နဲ့ တိုက်ပိတ်ခံရသူ ၈ဦးကို သာယာဝတီထောင်ကိုပြောင်းရွှေ့” <https://www.myaelattathan.org>

³³ Irrawaddy (2022, May 11) “ဘားအံထောင်ဆူမှု အကျဉ်းသား ၄ ဦး ဒဏ်ရာပြင်းထန်၊ ၁၇ ဦး တိုက်ပိတ်ခံရ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2022/05/11/251799.html>

³⁴ Irrawaddy (2023, September 27) “ပုသိမ်ထောင်ဆူမှု၌ ပါဝင်သူ ၆၃ ဦးကို ပြစ်ဒဏ်များထပ်တိုးချ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2023/09/27/374769.html>

2.9 People's Response to Violent Oppression

The ongoing unsilent protest movements demonstrate that the desire of the people of Myanmar for democracy and freedom remains strong despite the military's brutal efforts to oppress, arrest, and torture them. In urban areas, the number of peaceful mass protests declined by April 2021 due to the lawless lethal crackdown. The military not only violated fundamental human rights but also terrorized people, exercising their right to peaceful assembly. For instance, incidents such as the burning of [Thantalang Township](#), mass killings in [Hpruso Township](#), an airstrike on [Anantpa village](#) in Kachin State, an airstrike on [Pazigy village](#) in the Sagaing region, and arbitrary killings in [Sipa village](#) in the Sagaing region highlight the brutal terror campaigns carried out by the Myanmar military.

The people of Myanmar sought assistance from the United Nations, international organizations, and neighboring countries within the ASEAN, but they received no impactful support. Despite this, citizens and strike committees have continued to carry out anti-military protests to this day. However, in response to the military's evolving crackdown methods in junta-controlled urban areas like Yangon and Mandalay, protest tactics have shifted to flash mob demonstrations. The junta's actions have included arresting, torturing, and killing participants in the public movement. They have also resorted to using military weapons and ramming both domestic and military vehicles into protesters. Similar tactics were observed during the "Six-Two Day Campaign" in Monywa on February 22, 2022, as well as during the crackdown on Panpingyi Road in Yangon and in numerous other incidents.

The military consistently violated rights by ramming vehicles into flash mob protesters. They utilized CCTV footage, traffic police, and informants to identify the cars used during the protests, tracking the drivers to their homes. In this process, they tortured and arrested individuals under the pretense of nightly registration checks. Furthermore, the military intentionally inflicted torture, arrested innocent people, and vandalized properties and shops in

the surrounding area to provoke clashes between the flash mob protesters and local residents.

(Esther J, 2022, July 1)³⁵

People participated in anti-coup campaigns in two ways: support and participation. Although public support has remained strong, participation has declined due to the military's terror campaigns over the past four years of the revolution. Initially, people welcomed, helped, and supported the flash mob protests, but participation diminished as the intimidation continued.

The people of Myanmar had relied on international human rights organizations to take action against the military, which was unlawfully violating fundamental human rights. However, their pleas went largely ignored. Over time, the people of Myanmar came to the realization that non-violent protests were ineffective against the dictatorship. As a result, they began to join nearby ethnic armed organizations that had been battling the dictators for over seventy years. In February 2024, the military enforced a Conscription Law, leaving young people with no viable options. This forced them to join the fight against the military junta until the very end.

2.10 Protest in the Liberated Areas

In liberated areas, the administration can be categorized into two types: (1) areas controlled by Ethnic Revolution Organizations and (2) areas under the Defense Forces under the National Unity Government (NUG). The areas [governed by ethnic groups](#) have established their own regulatory and administrative mechanisms. In contrast, the areas controlled by the NUG's defense forces utilize a structure that includes the People's Defense, People's Administration, and People's Security. Political analysts have noted that this administrative framework is unclear and complicated. BBC Burmese featured a brief explanation titled "Three Years of NUG's Military, Finance, and Control Areas with Three Ps Problems."

U Yee Mon, the National Unity Government (NUG) defense minister, announced that revolutionary coordination forces had occupied 75 townships and surrounded 105 others. The military now controls only 28% of the national territory. The areas liberated by ethnic

³⁵ Esther J (2022, July 1) “စစ်တပ်က မီးရှို့ဖျက်ဆီးပြီးနောက် လှည်းတန်းဈေးတွင် လူအသွားအလာနည်းပါး”
<https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/11825/>

revolutionary groups and the People's Defense Forces under the NUG have expanded as more townships are gradually conquered. It is noteworthy that public services such as healthcare, education, transportation systems, and administration are being implemented in regions where the military junta's administration has wholly ceased functioning. Monitoring human rights and freedom of expression in these areas is essential. Revolutionary groups in these liberated areas have sometimes violated human rights and freedom of expression while prioritizing their goal of revolution.

Residents from five villages in [the Salingyi township of the Sagaing](#) region recently protested, demanding the reappointment of the local People's Security Group on March 8, 2024. The villagers are struggling for daily survival after the military destroyed their homes and properties. In an effort to make ends meet, they went to a factory that had previously been occupied by military junta forces to collect scrap metal and machinery for resale. However, the People's Security Group arrested them during this endeavor. When the local villagers demanded the release of those detained, the security group refused their requests. Instead, they forced the villagers to dig holes and beat anyone who sang while they worked. Among the detainees were a four-month-old infant and parents. The security group imposed a fine of 300,000 MMK for their release. Local community members have been [calling for the reappointment of this security group](#) since late 2023, but no action has been taken.



Caption: Local people of Salingyi township during the protest (March 2024)

Additionally, [the People's Defense Forces \(PDFs\) from Yay Oo township](#) have arrested village leaders. In a separate incident, Battalion No. 33 of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) [apprehended 25 local women protesting against rare earth mines](#) in the Panwa region of KIA's Brigade 7 area. In Tigyaing township, the [local population protested against the People's Administration Group](#) for constructing new roads that threatened their farmland. Numerous similar cases of human rights violations in liberated areas have been documented, though they remain underreported in the media. It makes difficult for political and military analysts to understand the situation unless they are part of the local community. It is clear that revolutionary groups must prioritize and respect human rights, including freedom of expression. In the course of their struggle, they should focus on more than just opposing the military junta; they need to protect and uphold the fundamental rights of the people and allow them to practice their freedom of expression.

(3) Establishing Surveillance Mechanism

3.1 Surveillance Strategies

Myanmar military has systematically prepared to wildly violate the fundamental rights of their opposers without caring for anyone. Surveillance strategies established by the military junta have limited the freedom of ordinary people, activists, civil society, and political groups working on federal democracy causes. It interfered with their actions of speech, statements, and interconnections, and they faced challenges and difficulties in organizing anti-junta movements.

Since early February 2021, the junta has implemented comprehensive surveillance measures to closely monitor individuals opposing the regime. They have revived tactics used by previous dictators, such as conducting nightly registration checks. During these checks, police and soldiers go door to door in neighborhoods to verify the identities of household members. As a result, the junta can locate activists who are hiding and subsequently arrest and torture them.

The junta established checkpoints at the entrances and exits of towns to inspect travelers' mobile phones, identification, and other personal information. They arrested activists on their wanted list, and travelers found with revolution-related content on their devices. Additionally, the military utilized Telegram Channels, which serve as one of their critical social media-based

information tools, to monitor the social media profiles, posts, and comments of both public figures and ordinary citizens concerning politics and revolution. This interference aims to restrict the freedom of expression among citizens.

The military junta has implemented an effective strategy involving the installation of AI technology-enabled CCTV cameras with facial recognition capabilities at junctions and crowded places. Since early 2021, they have gradually expanded the use of this technology across the country. They can monitor the overall movement of the people through those CCTVs and organize the violent crackdown systematically. They utilized the data from those CCTVs to track down the leaders, participants, cars, and other evidence, then arrested, tortured, and even killed those in the protests. (Athán, 2023, November)³⁶ Members of the strike committees asserted that CCTV cameras are unavoidable when organizing flash mob protests.

The other strategy for effective surveillance involves monitoring through mobile phone operators. The military junta and its associated conglomerates acquired mobile phone operators who were planning to exit the country due to the declining telecommunications economy following the coup. Subsequently, they amended regulations and laws to consolidate their control. As a result, all mobile phone operators in Myanmar are gradually coming under military control.

On September 19, 2022, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, operating under the military junta, issued a directive stating that all mobile SIM card users must register their cards. Failure to register within the specified time frame will result in the deactivation of the SIM cards. Additionally, the junta has been intercepting mobile phone conversations and SMS messages in order to identify and expose networks involved in the revolution and to locate individuals for arrest.

³⁶ Athán (2023, November) “တိမ်ကောပျောက်ကွယ်နေဆဲဖြစ်သော လွတ်လပ်စွာထုတ်ဖော်ပြောဆိုခွင့်နှင့် မြန်မာပြည်အာဏာသိမ်းမှုအပြီး (၂) နှစ်ကျော်ကာလ အတွင်းမှ လွတ်လပ်စွာထုတ်ဖော်ပြောဆိုခွင့် အခြေအနေ”
<https://athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FOE-MYN-Nov-14.pdf>

3.3 Conscription Law and Freedom of Expression

On February 10, 2024, news outlets controlled by the military junta announced the activation of Provision 27/2010, which is [the Conscription Law](#) enacted by the State Peace and Development Council in 2010. This law mandates that men aged 18 to 35 and women aged 18 to 27 are eligible for conscription. In response, many young people have joined armed revolutionary groups to avoid serving in the junta's forces. Additionally, some have fled the country. As of May 1, 2024, the junta suspended travel for men leaving the country, according to the junta-appointed Ministry of Labor, and imposed restrictions on border crossings. Young people feel lost and insecure. (Aung Naing, Sa Htun Aung, 2024, May 2)³⁷

Following the activation of the Conscription Law, various groups, including revolutionary organizations, anti-junta strike committees, civil society organizations³⁸, and ethnic armed groups³⁹ expressed their dissent through protests and movements. Conversely, the Pyu Saw Htee group and pro-military factions held events in support of the Conscription Law in cities such as Mandalay, which are under the control of the junta and protected by the junta's army. (Pyar Gyi, 2024, February 13)⁴⁰ People and strike leaders opposing the conscription law were arrested in different ways. [Ma Khin Lay May](#), from Athoke township, Irrawaddy region, was charged with section 505A as she criticized the conscription law on social media on 28 April 2024. [Four strike leaders](#) from Yangon holding the banner "Oppose against the unfair conscription law" were arrested in September. [Ko Aung Thura Oo](#) from Kan Gye Htaunt township, Irrawaddy region, committed suicide by poisoning himself as he was randomly selected to serve for the junta. The military junta conducted six batches of military training. Administrators under the junta's administration threatened to charge cash fines to young people who did not want to be conscripted and arrested them. Those who do not want

³⁷ Aung Naing, Sa Htun Aung (2024, May 2) “အမျိုးသားများ ပြည်ပထွက်အလုပ်လုပ်ခွင့် စစ်ကောင်စီပိတ်ပင်” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/51821/>

³⁸ (2024, February 22) “မြန်မာစစ်တပ်မှ ပြည်သူ့စစ်မှုထမ်းဥပဒေ အသက်သွင်းခြင်းအပေါ် သဘောထားထုတ်ပြန်ချက်-၁/၂၀၂၄” <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/2024/02/20/conscriptionlawnewmyanmar/>

³⁹ RFA Burmese (2024, February 19) “စစ်ကောင်စီရဲ့ ပြည်သူ့စစ်မှုထမ်းဥပဒေကို KNU ကန့်ကွက်” <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/knu-opposes-militia-law-02192024032638.html>

⁴⁰ Pyar Gyi (2024, February 13) “မန္တလေးမှာ စစ်မှုထမ်းဥပဒေ ထောက်ခံပွဲထဲ လိုက်ပါဖို့ ကိုယ်ဝန်ဆောင် အမျိုးသမီးတွေကိုပါ ခြိမ်းခြောက်ကာ လိုက်ပါခိုင်းနေ” <https://www.facebook.com/shwepheemyaynews/posts/pfbid022fSTXDrLQoXfv9H4j8WGTkw2hJv8QkgoxkhEuPdDzmmSWFYThYZZr3E1R3PtEVYof?rdid=hFyeguxGxuLd26pW>

to be conscripted must pay 8 million kyats per person in [Pyinoolwin](#), Mandalay region, while the recruitment process was ongoing till 28 October 2024.

On the other hand, [ethnic armed organizations](#) have been recruiting new soldiers alongside the junta's recruitment efforts. For instance, the [Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army \(MNDAA\)](#) has compelled villages populated by the ethnic Ta'ang to provide two new soldiers each. If a village cannot provide soldiers, they must pay 7,000 Chinese Yuan (equivalent to 5 million MMK) per person. The age range of recruits for the MNDAA is between 12 and 45 years old, which also includes underage children being forced into service as child soldiers.

(4) Interview - Voices from the Ground

The following interview was conducted with Ko Yaw, a Yaw People Strike Committee member from the Yaw ethnic group in Central Myanmar, regarding the public movement.

Question: How did you initiate the Yaw People Strike Committee?

Answer: We organized a series of protests in the Gangaw township after the coup, which started on February 8. We could not do many protests after the military violently crackdown protests. At the end of 2021, we established the Yaw People Strike Committee. We represented three townships: Gangaw, Hteelin, and Saw townships. Before the establishment, we cooperated with other groups to protest and strike. We also organized some campaigns on our own. It was not a complete representation. We aimed to represent Gangaw, Hteelin, and Saw townships. We have organized protests in those three townships in 2021 and 2022.

We have organized online strikes and participated in various campaigns organized by GSC and GSCB, including the Silent Strike, Candle Strike, Thingyan Strike, and Flower Strike. Whenever these events occur, we mobilize people from Gangaw, Htilin, and Saw townships to join the campaigns. We have also done the same for the Sagaing region.

In 2024, we are becoming stronger. We have reconnected with our former partners to launch effective public awareness campaigns focused on Federalism. Additionally, we have organized more events to advocate for this cause. We distributed literature on Federalism, including pamphlets and journals, in various locations.

Question: How did you engage the representatives from Gangaw, Htilin, and Saw Townships?

Answer: We began conversing with like-minded young people in Gangaw, Htilin, and Saw townships and started collaborating.

Question: How did leadership work in campaigns, raising awareness, and organizing strikes?

Answer: Our Yaw People Committee started taking training. We learned about Federalism from an organization. Then, we shared it with our local people. It took around two hours in the morning to share with them. We also shared the pamphlets and literature on Federalism in print copies. Members of our organization did that.

Question: What goal do you aim to achieve by implementing these strike campaigns?

Answer: Our main goal is to express that no one in the public accepts the terrorist army and that we do not recognize them completely. We performed strike campaigns so that the terrorist army could not operate its mechanism. We collaborated with GSC and GSCP to make flower strikes and silent strikes. We refused to follow the orders of the military regime and did not go anywhere. Our ambition was to express that we never accept them.

Question: How did the public participate in the campaigns? How did they respond?

Answer: It depends on the kind of campaign. During the silent strikes, we would demand that they "Only stay inside," and then they participated by not going to the street. We do not have an

accurate indicator, but it was a complete success. When we do flower strikes, it is more evident with the young people who can use social media. They participated in flower and candle strikes and then sent us photos.

Question: What are the challenges in implementation?

Answer: When we implemented (those campaigns), it must be challenging for people in urban areas. However, people in rural villages do not face many challenges. Because (armed) revolution organizations ruled the villages in our area, except the urban areas. We announced on social media when we would start the flower strike. We mainly mobilized online. We do not have many challenges.

Question: How can campaigns, strikes, and flash mob protests benefit the people's revolution, and on what scale?

Answer: Revolution groups take many places in our region, except in urban areas. People in our area do not recognize them (the military); they oppose them entirely. In other areas like Mandalay, there are flash mob protests. Due to those flash mob protests, people paid attention to the revolution again. It motivates people. We do not need such mobilization in our area because the whole region is a conflict zone where people suffer.

Question: In some areas in Central Myanmar, some local people protest against the PDFs, not the military. We have read such stories in the news. What is your experience?

Answer: There are such events in our area. Among the Public Administration Groups of Gangaw, Htilin, and Saw townships, people protested against the two townships. Residents of Gangaw protested because they didn't like them. People in Htilin also expressed their discontent through protests like this. We could say that Gangaw was the first place to start such a protest in the country. It was a protest against the member of parliament because he organized a meeting with the villagers on a holy day. Villagers criticized him for recruiting one person per house in

the village on such a day at the monastery. He should not have done that. I think it was not the only reason. There might have been other problems before. Recruiting people on a holy day would not be the only reason to protest.

Question: How did they respond to those protests?

Answer: There was no response. People protest against them. Moreover, some villages that have supported them are also now protesting against them.

Question: Is there anything you want to add?

Answer: There are also such protests in Gangaw, and Htilin. In Htilin, they protested against U Myat Lin Oo. There was another protest against another member of parliament like him. I think they are part of the administration groups. Daw Yamin Naing was also part of the administration, but she is no longer with the administration. U Myat Linn Oo, whom the people protested, is a Public Administration Group member of Gangaw Township. That is his position, as far as I know. I think they are part of the Public Administration Group of the National Unity Government.

(5) Press Freedom

5.1 Situation of Press Freedom in Myanmar

The role of the media is crucial in building democracy and during a country's transition stage. It is considered the fourth pillar of the nation. The media provides the public with information about various issues, including economics, social matters, healthcare, and political events, in accordance with the right to receive and disseminate news. Timely and accurate delivery of news and information is beneficial for the public. However, the military junta treats journalists and media workers as enemies as it seeks to conceal the war crimes and atrocities it has committed. As a result, the junta continues to arrest, torture, and kill journalists to this day.

Regarding the rights of journalists, Paragraph 7, Chapter 3 of the Media Law enacted on 14 March 2014 during the U Thein Sein Administration stated, *"While a news media worker is trying to get news in compliance with regulations specified by relevant and responsible organizations, in the areas where wars break out, and where conflicts or riots and demonstrations take place, (a) he/she shall be exempt from being detained by a certain security-related authority or his/her equipment being confiscated or destroyed. (b) he/she shall be entitled to ask for their safety and protective measures from the security-related organizations."*

Because of the current situation, journalists are unable to report the news safely, and many have been imprisoned. As of today, 215 journalists across the country have been arrested since the attempted coup due to their reporting. Those who are arrested face abuse during detention, torture during interrogation, and severe penalties under penal codes. They can be charged with offenses related to communication with blacklisted organizations, violations of Counter-Terrorism laws, and even face the risk of torture that could potentially lead to death.

5.1 - a: Arrest Based on Gender

Between February 1, 2021, and October 31, 2024, 215 journalists and media workers were arrested, including 189 males and 26 females.

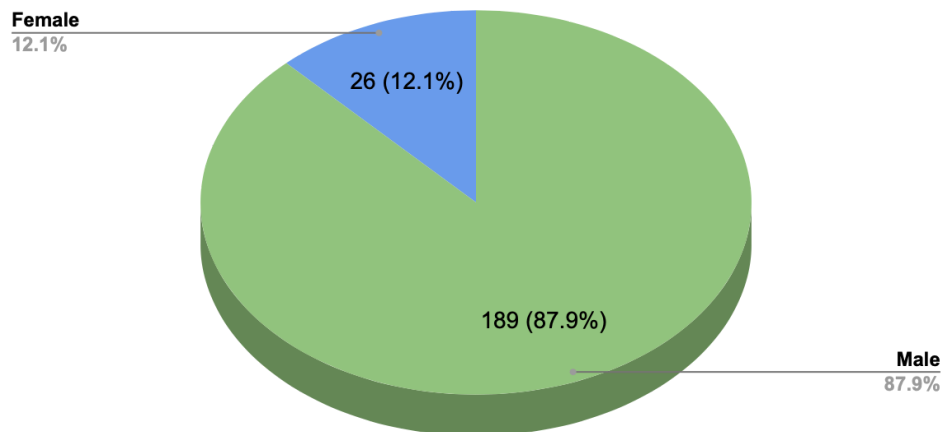


Fig 1 shows the number of journalists arrested based on gender.

5.1 - b: Journalists Arrested by the Years

Press freedom and journalists faced severe oppression under the military junta for more than three years. In 2021, 148 individuals from the media industry were arrested, followed by 47 arrests in 2022, 17 in 2023, and 5 as of October 2024. This totals 215 individuals who have been arrested in connection with the media sector. However, the accompanying figure shows a total of 217 arrests. This discrepancy occurs because there were two cases in which the same individuals were arrested in different years.

For instance, Soe Yarzar Htun, a freelance journalist, was arrested in both 2021 and 2022. Similarly, journalist Sithu from the CJ platform was arrested in 2022 and again in 2024.

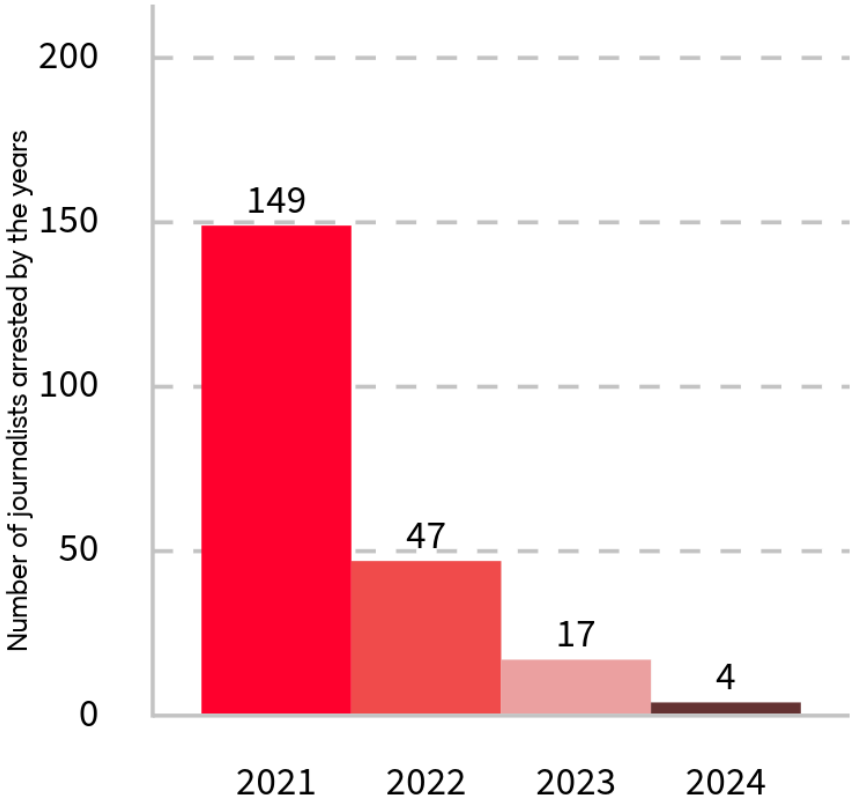


Figure (2) shows the journalists arrested over the years

5.1 - c: Number of Journalists Released as of September 2024

Only 155 of the 215 journalists arrested since the 2021 Attempted Coup were released, including 133 men and 22 women, as of September 2024.

5.1 - d: Number of Journalists Arrested Based on Region

Figure 1 below shows the number of journalists and media workers arrested based on regions across Myanmar since the 2021 Attempted Coup.



Figure (3) shows the journalists arrested based on each region across Myanmar.

5.1 - e: Number of Journalists Still in Detention Based on Region

Figure 3 below illustrates the number of journalists and media workers still detained by the region since the 2021 attempted coup.

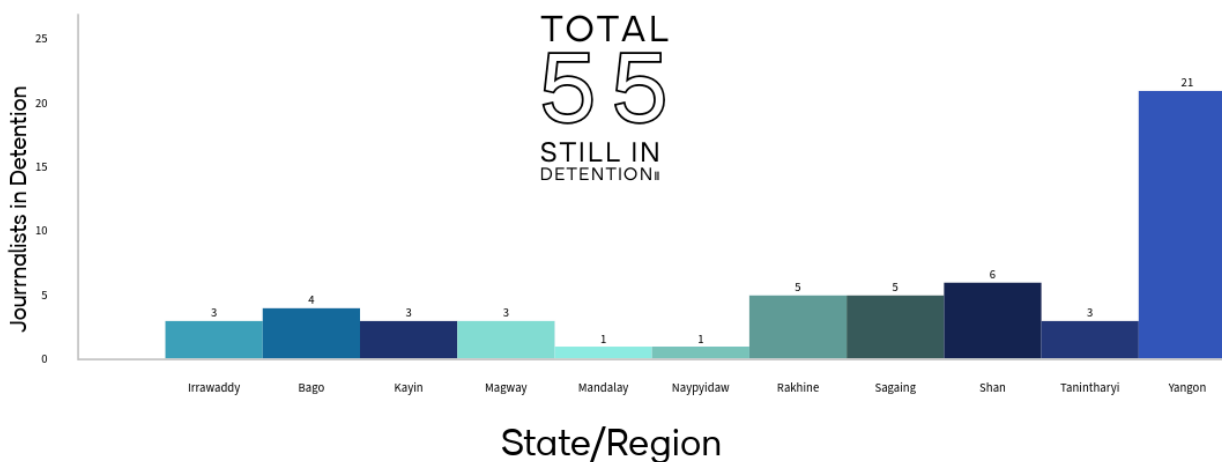


Figure (4) shows the journalists still in detention based in each region across Myanmar

5.1 - f: Number of Journalists Convicted Over the Years

Figure 5 below shows the number of cases that utilized one or more legal charges when journalists and media workers across Myanmar were arrested since the Attempted Coup in 2021.

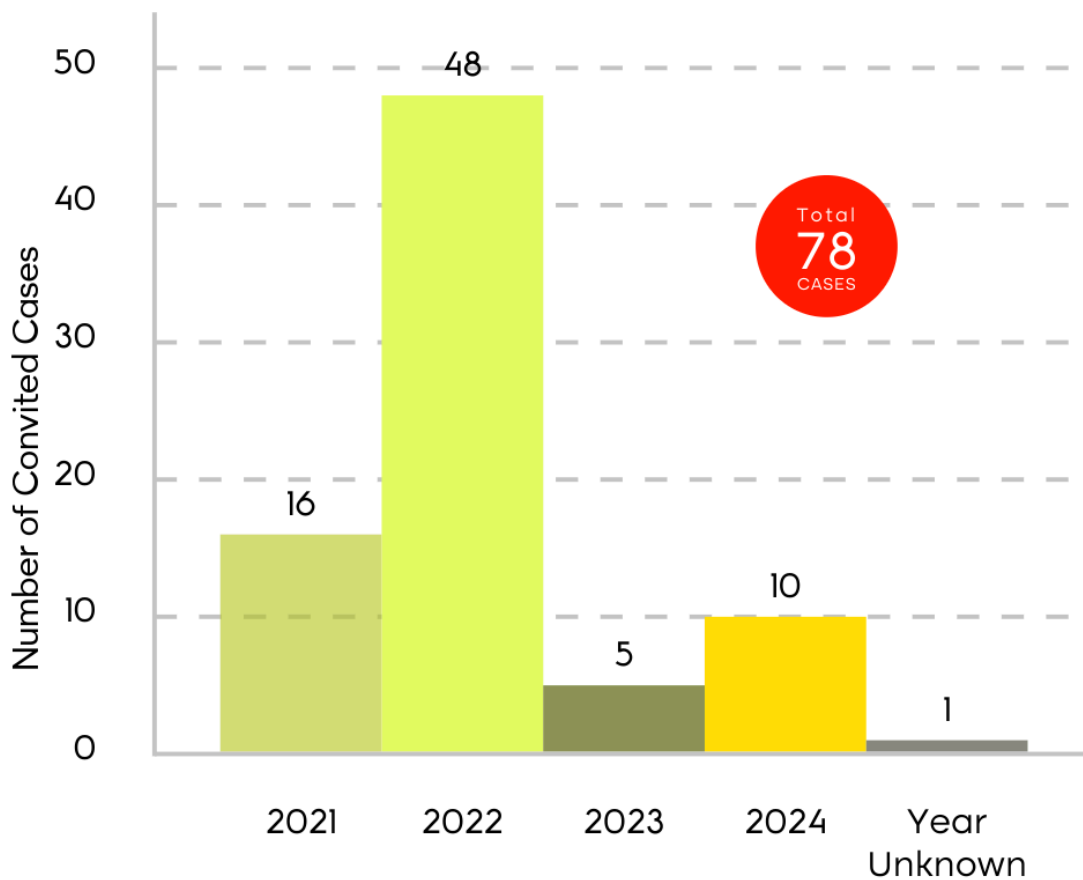


Figure (5) shows the number of convicted cases over the years

5.1 - g: Number of Journalists Subjected to Warrants

Forty-six male and eight female journalists are currently under warrant, with five in detention.

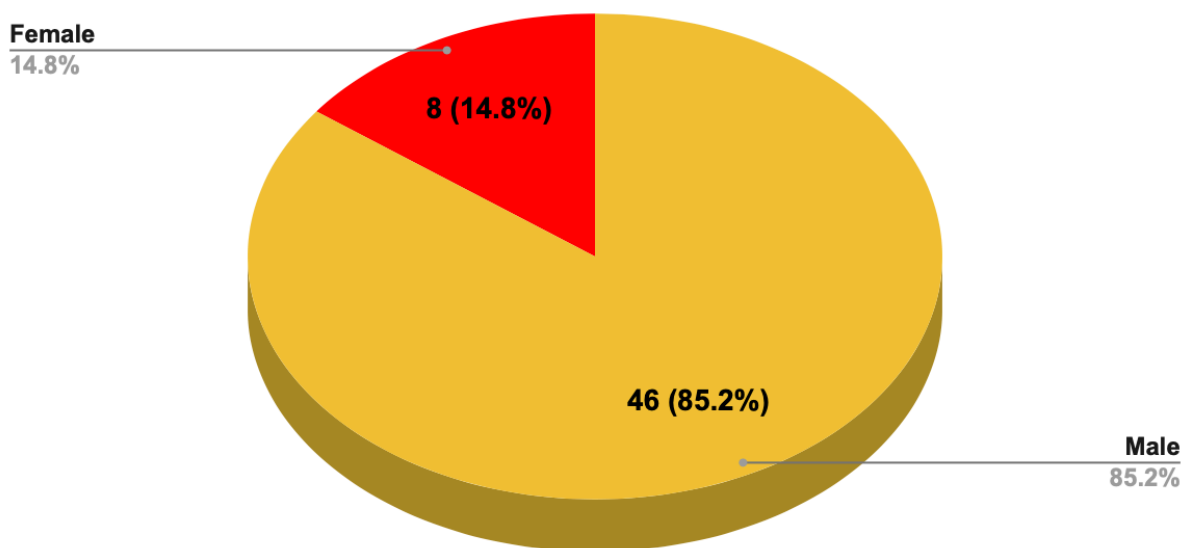


Figure (6) shows the number of journalists subjected to warrants

5.1 - h: Number of Journalists being Killed

From February 2021 to October 2024; within almost four years, 11 people, including journalists and documentary filmmakers, were killed by the junta. 2024 is the year with the highest number of journalists and media workers being killed. In 2021, two journalists were killed, one in 2022, three in 2023, and five in 2024, which sums up 11 people.

Number of Journalists Killed (2021-2024)

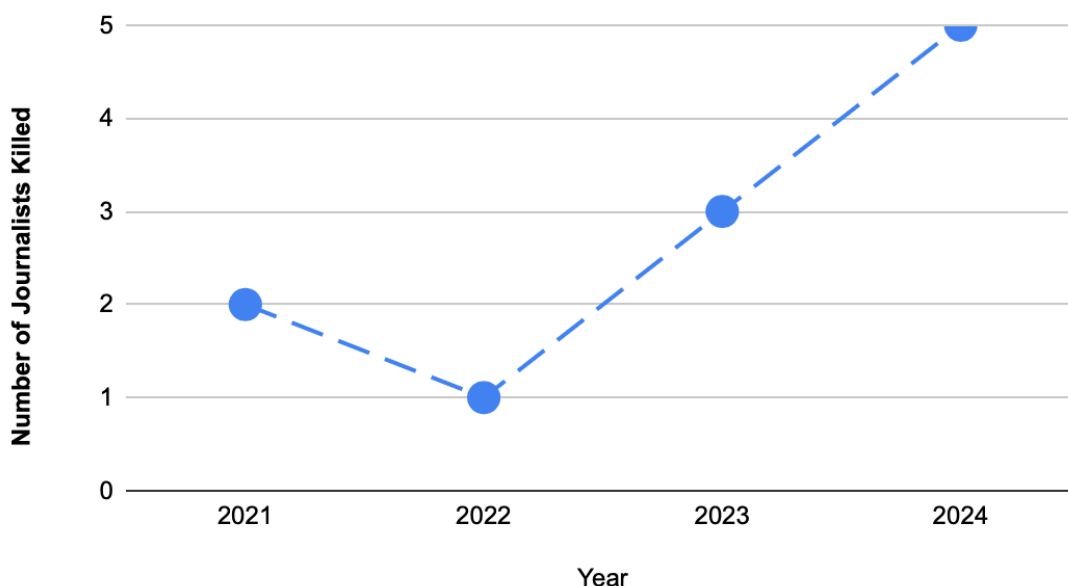


Figure (7) shows the number of journalists killed over the years

5.2 Laws Violating Press Freedom

The military junta monitored social media content, focusing on political expression, criticism of the military, and revolutionary themes. They tracked digital footprints to identify, arrest, and charge individuals, aiming to suppress further criticism. Various legal codes were used, including Criminal Code sections 505A, 505B, 124 (a), 124 (d), the Counter Terrorism Act sections 50 (j), 52 (a), 52 (b), the Telecommunication Act section 66 (d), the Act on Communication with Blacklisted Organizations section 17 (a), the Electronic Communication Act section 33 (a), and the Peaceful Assembly Act section 19, along with other criminal codes that had been in effect since the previous civilian administration.

The figure (8) below indicates that some individuals have faced multiple charges. The statistics provided pertain only to cases already sentenced; some additional cases and charges are still pending.

5.2 - a: Charges Used Against Journalists

| No. | Charges | Male | Female | Total |
|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. | Penal Code 505A | 43 | 10 | 53 |
| 2. | Penal Code 505B | 1 | - | 1 |
| 3. | Penal Code 505C | 1 | - | 1 |
| 4. | Penal Code 124 (a) | 3 | - | 3 |
| 5. | Penal Code 124 (c) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 6. | Penal Code 188 | - | 1 | 1 |
| 7. | Counter-Terrorism Act 50 (j) | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| 8. | Counter-Terrorism Act 52 (a) | 13 | - | 13 |
| 9. | Counter-Terrorism Act 50 (a) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 10. | Counter-Terrorism Act 51 (a) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 11. | Counter-Terrorism Act 51 (b) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 12. | Counter-Terrorism Act 51 (c) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 13. | Counter-Terrorism Act 52 (b) | 2 | - | 2 |
| 14. | Counter-Terrorism Act 54 (d) | - | 1 | 1 |
| 15. | Counter-Terrorism Act 54 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 16. | Electronic Communication Act 33 (a) | 2 | - | 2 |
| 17. | Immigration Act 13 (a) | 2 | - | 2 |
| 18. | The Act of Explosive Materials (5) | 1 | 1 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|
| 20 | Export/Import Act (8) | 2 | - | 2 |
| 20. | Natural Disaster Act (27) | 2 | - | 2 |
| 21. | Telecommunication Act 66 (d) | 1 | - | 1 |
| 22. | The Act of Communication with Black-listed Organizations | 3- | - | 3 |

Figure (8) shows the charges used to imprison journalists

5.2 - b: Military Revoked Licenses of the Following Media Outlets

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| DVB News | Myanmar Now | Khit Thit Media | Mizzima News | 7 Day |
| Tachileik News | Myitkyina Journal | 74 Media | Zeyar Times | Kantarawaddy Times |
| Delta News Agency | Irrawaddy | Ayerwaddy Times | Mekong News | Development Media Group |

Figure (9): Name of Media Outlets that the junta revoked their licenses

5.2 - c: Military Revoked Licenses of the Following Publishing Houses

| | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Yan Aung Publishing | Win Toe Aung | Pi Ti | Clover Book House |
| Lwin Oo | Shwe Larb | Toe Myit | La Pyae Linn |
| Shwe Naing Ngan | The Destiny Book House | Right | |

Figure (10): Name of Publishing Houses that the junta revoked their licenses

5.3 Utilizing the Counter-Terrorism Act

The military junta has frequently employed the Counter-Terrorism Act to arrest journalists and documentary filmmakers. They have specifically used sections 52 (a), 50 (j), and 54 (d) of this

act, which carry more severe penalties than the usual charges of 505A and 505B. These serious charges do not allow for bail, resulting in defendants remaining in detention while awaiting trial. A female filmmaker and three male journalists have been imprisoned for life from the day of the coup until October 2024.

Kyaw Aung, also known as Min Min, is a journalist from DVB News who was arrested alongside twelve other suspects. They were accused of attacking the Zahar Police outpost at Mile Post Number 100 on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway, an incident in which five policemen were killed on December 28, 2022. Min Min and the other suspects were charged with attacking and supporting the assault on the police post. They were charged under Section 54 of the Counter-Terrorism Act and received life imprisonment as punishment. (RFA Burmese, 2022, December 30)⁴¹

Filmmaker Shin Daewe was arrested on October 15, 2023, in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon, after she purchased a drone online. Military intelligence personnel subjected her to torture for over a week at an interrogation center in Yangon. Following this, she was transferred to the military court in North Okkalapa Township, where she was charged under sections 50 (j) and 54 (d) of the Counter-Terrorism Act. (Han Thit, 2024, January 10)⁴² North Okkalapa township, where she was arrested, is ruled by Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, commonly referred to as martial law. As a result, she was transferred to a military court rather than facing trial in a civilian court. On January 10, 2024, she was charged with life imprisonment, which included the two charges mentioned earlier. According to Section 50(j) of the Counter-Terrorism Act, sentences can range from a minimum of 10 years to life imprisonment.

On December 11, 2023, the military arrived at the home of Myo Myint Oo, a journalist from Dawei Watch, and arrested him along with Aung Sann Oo. For a period of time, no one was able to contact them. Myo Myint Oo was later charged under the Counter-Terrorism act, specifically

⁴¹ RFA Burmese (2022, December 30) “တောင်ငူမှာ DVB အလွတ်သတင်းထောက် အပါအဝင် ၁၃ ဦး ထောင်တစ်သက်ချခံရ” <https://www.facebook.com/39218993127/posts/10162335258333128>

⁴² Han Thit (2024, January 10) “မှတ်တမ်းရုပ်ရှင်ဒါရိုက်တာ ရှင်ဒေဝီကို စစ်ကောင်စီ ထောင်တစ်သက်တစ်ကျွန်းချ” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/48046/>

sections 50 (j) and 52 (a) and (b), and he was sentenced to life in prison. Aung Sann Oo had already been charged under section 50 (a), receiving a twenty-year prison sentence.

Maung Phyu Taung (*name changed*) is a freelance journalist working for local media outlets. In May 2024, military officials checked his national ID card at Dala Ferry Gate in Yangon and took him after saying, "have to check something." No one knew where he was taken or detained until May 31, 2024, after he was transferred to Hlaing Thayar police station as a local police officer informed the family.

Military officers arrested two "suspects," including his younger brother, based on information gathered during an interrogation. The brother was later released after being found unrelated to the case. He endured torture at the interrogation center for more than four months and was charged under section 50(j) on October 2, 2024, with the allegation of "providing financial assistance to a terrorist organization." He was sentenced to life in prison. Although the arrest did not occur in an area under martial law, the prosecutor transferred him to Hlaing Thayar township, where martial law (section 144) was in effect. The military disregarded the defendant's judicial rights and regulations. They misused legal charges and regulations to press charges against journalists, leading to a significant decline in the flow of information and freedom of expression.

5.4 Documentary Filmmaker Pe Maung Sein Died of Wounds from Torture

Documentary filmmaker Pe Maung Sein was arrested at a checkpoint in Loikaw township, Kayah State, on March 28, 2022. He was accused of being a filmmaker for the Karenni National Defense Forces (KNDF). Subsequently, he was sentenced to three years in prison and charged under Section 17(a) for communicating with blacklisted organizations. During the interrogation, he was subjected to torture, which resulted in severe back pain and broken ribs. This trauma led to him developing "bone tuberculosis," ultimately causing paralysis, according to Irrawaddy News. (Mon Mon Myat, 2024, August 24)⁴³

The military recognized that his health was deteriorating and subsequently transferred him to Insein Prison in Yangon. He was released on August 16, 2024. However, three days later, on August 19, Pe

⁴³ Mon Mon Myat (2024, August 24) “ဒါရိုက်တာ ဇေမောင်စိမ်းရဲ့ အမြဲစိမ်းလန်းနေမယ့် ရုပ်ရှင်များ” <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/article/2024/08/24/389439.html>

Maung Sein died at Sakura Hospital in Yangon as a result of the torture he had endured during his detention. The primary cause of his death was the denial of timely and adequate healthcare. (Aung Kham, 2024, August 21)⁴⁴

5.5 House Raid to Murder

On August 21, 2024, thirty soldiers from the junta raided the house of freelance journalist Htet Myat Thu in Latt Pya village, located in Kyaikhto Township, Mon State. They were informed that members of a resistance group known as the Kyaikhto Revolution Force (KRF) were hiding there. (RFA Burmese, 2024, August 22)⁴⁵ During the raid, the military killed four people, including journalists Win Htut Oo and Htet Myat Thu. According to an announcement from DVB News, Htet Myat Thu had previously been imprisoned after being charged under Section 505(a) while covering a protest in 2021 when he worked for a local publication called Thanbyuzayat Times. In that same incident in 2021, he was also shot in the leg.

Khin Yupar, who is in charge of CJ Network at DVB News, shared the following remarks regarding Win Htut Oo, who was shot and killed by the military junta:

"Ko Win Htut Oo worked only as a journalist since he accomplished the (journalism) training. He is a very dedicated journalist. He sought advice as he wanted to be unbiased even when hiding in an area controlled by armed organizations. He has the potential to grow as a young man. He wanted to write news impartially, so he went back to town, and this (incident) happened." (DVB, 2024, August 22)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Aung Kham (2024, August 21) “နိရိုက်ကျိုးသည်အထိ နှိပ်စက်ခံခဲ့ရသော မှတ်တမ်းရှုပ်ရှင် ဒါရိုက်တာ ဖေမောင်စိမ်း ကွယ်လွန်” <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/56687/>

⁴⁵ RFA Burmese (2024, August 2) “ကျိုက်ထိုမှာ သတင်းသမားနှစ်ဦးအပါအဝင် လေးဦး သတ်ဖြတ်ခံရ” <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=926413966186673&set=a.583637430464330>

⁴⁶ DVB (2024, August 22) “ကျိုက်ထို၌ စစ်ကောင်စီတပ် စီးနင်းပစ်ခတ်မှုကြောင့် DVB CJ အပါအဝင် သတင်းထောက် ၂ ဦး သေဆုံး” <https://burmese.dvb.no/post/665803>

5.6 Announcement in Regards to Media

Statement from Karenni's Interim Executive Council on Journalists and Media

The Karenni State Interim Executive Council issued an eight-point directive (No. 08/2024)⁴⁷ on April 16, 2024, aimed at local and international media outlets and freelancers. The third and fourth points of the directive emphasize seeking permission before covering any events. Additionally, the fifth point states that the Karenni IEC will extend an invitation for negotiations if any coverage affects military, administrative, or revolutionary matters related to the Karenni State.

Restrictions imposed on media outlets and journalists are reminiscent of those enforced by previous governments at various times, which limited press freedom in the name of national security, sovereignty, and military concerns. Revolutionary groups should prioritize the support of press freedom rather than attempt to control it. On April 26, 2024, just ten days after this directive was issued, the Independence Press Council of Myanmar (IPCM) [expressed concern](#) for the safety of journalists and the state of press freedom. They announced plans to release a code of conduct for journalists on World Press Freedom Day.

5.7 Kachin Independence Army Arrested Two Journalists

Kachin Independence Army (KIA) arrested Tar Linn Maung, a journalist with the Red News Agency, in Sai Taung village, Hpakant Township, in Kachin State on September 29, 2024. According to [RFA Burmese](#), Tar Linn Maung was arrested for writing news on social media about "the KIO's township in charge saved staff of Jade Garden Restaurant and Pool per the directive from KIO's officer Lion, instead of informing local PDFs between Sai Taung village and Hpakant township. Naung Yoe, a freelance journalist covering the Hpakant township, followed after Tar Linn Maung was also arrested.

⁴⁷ (2024, April 16) “ကရင်နီပြည် ကြားကာလ အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးကောင်စီ ညွှန်ကြားချက်အမှတ် (၀၈/၂၀၂၄) မီဒီယာကျင့်ဝတ်ဆိုင်ရာညွှန်ကြားချက်” <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/GM6wVvX9tKApzrT8/?mibextid=xfxF2i>

Tar Linn Maung is a former government employee who worked in the Public Relations Department. He joined the Civil Disobedience Movement and was issued a warrant under Penal Code 505A. On September 8, 2023, he was struck by a car driven by an unknown group after reporting on villagers who were forced to relocate due to a jade mining project. Naung Yoe, a journalist, was arrested by the military junta in April 2022 and imprisoned for one year and seven months. He faced charges under section 505A and section 8 of the Export/Import Act. Naung Yoe was punished by both the military junta and an ethnic armed group for his work as a reporter. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) released him and another detainee on October 27, 2024. (RFA Burmese, 2024, October 3)⁴⁸

The safety of journalists and their reporting is increasingly under threat, as the rights to press freedom and freedom of expression are consistently being violated. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) must uphold the right to cover and distribute news and should refrain from taking action against journalists for their reporting. Protecting press freedom is essential for democracy and federalism. This action constitutes a clear violation of press freedom.

(6) Interview with a Journalist

The following interview is conducted with Ko Zet, an investigative reporter on local issues.

Question: *What do you think about the current state of press freedom? How much freedom it has?*

Answer: *I want to say that there is no freedom of the press in Myanmar. Not all media organizations can write news freely. They have to be low-profile. Many outlets and news agencies are based in foreign countries. There are no official news outlets that can write freely in*

⁴⁸ RFA Burmese (၂၀၂၄၊ အောက်တိုဘာ ၃) “KIA ဖမ်းဆီးထားတဲ့ အလွတ်သတင်းသမားနှစ်ဦး ပြန်လွတ်လာ”
<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Vd8VJXzV2cYBCngN/>

Myanmar. Journalists went to the ground and reported from there. There is no freedom of expression or freedom of the press in Myanmar.

Question: *What are the challenges of a citizen journalist? How do you do your job?*

Answer: *Let's say I've got a tip on a prison story. An organization like AAPP is working on releasing information about prisons, or there is a strike committee in the Sagaing region. I have to be in touch with them. Sometimes, I call them to ask about the situation of the fight. Sometimes, I use Telegram or Signal. The internet is cut off in the Sagaing region. So, I would have to wait until they are online. Sometimes, I cannot reach out to them.*

Question: *Where did you send your stories to? What kind of outlets? How would you do that story?*

Answer: *I worked as a CJ (citizen journalist). I wrote stories for the CJ Platform. I sent my stories to my editor or a college of mine. Then, they would ask me whatever they needed to know more. Then, I would look for more sources to confirm and rewrite the story. Then, I would send it to the Signal group if they have one. Sometimes, I send them via Telegram or Messenger.*

Question: *We have seen some reports of journalists being exploited by some media outlets. Have you noticed any similar events?*

Answer: *I have heard and experienced such things. We have also talked about this with other colleges. Some publications paid for accommodation and food allowances. But they don't pay any salary. And some payments were exploited. It was acceptable for food and accommodation. I have always seen such kinds of exploitations. I have many experiences of not being paid as the agreed amount of a story.*

Question: *Can you complain about such things? What do the outlets do?*

Answer: *Some of my friends have experienced similar things, but it was not too problematic. They negotiated, and it went well. My friend did not know that he was being exploited. He might have wanted to leave his job, but he has to continue doing it for survival. There was no big*

problem to complain. I used to know someone whose photos were used without his knowledge. He complained, but nothing happened. He owns the copyright. (That publication) made a profit out of those photos. We do not have anywhere to complain.

Question: *Do you think what you do and what you get is fair? What do you think?*

Answer: *I think it is unfair because the effort I put into writing a story is too much compared to what I get back. I have to spend a lot of time writing a story. Let's say we will write a story about something from the Sagaing region. I would need a phone number from there to talk to the person. But he has no connection, so I have to wait too long to get a reply. We cannot use only one source. We might need one more eyewitness, a civilian or someone who heard about this. Then we have to confirm again. It took a lot of work to have a story. We have to give time. Sometimes, we do not get a story after the whole morning or evening.*

Moreover, we have to be careful wherever we go. We have to sacrifice our lives. It is unfair compared to what we get back. There are so many challenges. They were scared when I asked for sources and told them it was for a new story. No one wants to talk to us. They are scared of journalists. There might be significant impacts on them as well. That is the biggest challenge.

Question: *How did the military surveil journalists? What tactics do they use? Who else monitors journalists?*

Answer: *They have tried to control social media since the beginning of the revolution. We have to use VPN networks, which is also a challenge inside Myanmar. I think the military might continuously monitor social media. If I have to talk to a high-profile figure in the revolution, I avoid using (Facebook) Messenger. I would use Signal to contact. It is not safe to call them as well. I think the military used multiple surveillance tactics.*

Question: *What other groups oppressed journalists, including citizen journalists? What is your experience?*

Answer: *I do not have any experience like that, and I do not know about the other regions. I have heard that some EROs have implied restrictions on media freedom. That is all I know.*

(7) Free Speech

7.1 Limitation on Free Speech During the NLD Administration

The people of Myanmar have endured a long history of military rule, during which their fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, have been systematically violated for decades. The 2010 General Election marked the first election in two decades, following the last one in 1990. The Union Solidarity and Development Party⁴⁹, [formed](#) by former military generals, won the 2010 election. Subsequently, an ex-general named U Thein Sein took leadership, overseeing a transition from military rule to a quasi-civilian government characterized as "disciplined democracy" while still under significant military influence.

The administration of U Thein Sein eased many of the severe restrictions imposed by previous military regimes. Analysts noted that Myanmar's transformation improved compared to the time under the State Peace and Development Council, which was led by the dictator Than Shwe. In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, won the general election, paving the way for a civilian-led democratic system approach to national reconciliation.

Many people expected the National League for Democracy (NLD) administration to prioritize improving fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, as the foundation of people's democracy. However, during the four years of its administration from 2015 to 2019, at least 1,051 individuals were affected by 539 cases of lawsuits related to freedom of expression, according to a report by Athan titled "Time to Fix: An Analysis of Freedom of Expression during the Four Years of Administration."⁵⁰ These lawsuits included issues related to political expression, reporting, peaceful assembly, demands for land and labor rights, criticism of the military's role in politics and human rights, as well as criticism of individuals and groups. The

⁴⁹ Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was established in 1993. It is a transformation of the Union Solidarity and Development Association that controls politics, social, and economic affairs.

⁵⁰ Athan (July, 2020) “အချိန်မီပြင်ဆင်ခွင့် အစိုးရသက်တမ်းလေးနှစ်အတွင်း လွတ်လပ်စွာထုတ်ဖော်ပြောဆိုခွင့်ကို ဆန်းစစ်ခြင်း” အသံ — Athan (athanmyanmar.org)

government, military, and other subjects of criticism initiated indirect lawsuits to infringe upon the people's rights to freedom of expression.⁵¹

On June 21, 2019, internet and communication services were cut off in most townships of Rakhine State and Paletwa Township of Chin State. This action was taken under the Communication Act (77), citing reasons for preventing "illegal activities and threats to state security through the use of the internet." These measures violated international human rights and digital rights, significantly infringing upon the digital rights and right to information for the people in these areas. In addition to the internet shutdown, over 4,000 websites, including news outlets, pornography, and COVID-19 information, were blocked in a manner that did not adhere to international standards. As a result, residents in the affected areas lacked access to vital information about healthcare and primary online education during the COVID-19 pandemic, adversely impacting their socio-economic conditions.

The civilian administration in Myanmar has denied citizens their right to internet freedom, even as many around the world recognize it as a fundamental human right.⁵² Additionally, the right to freedom of expression has been violated through defamation charges, such as the law protecting the privacy and security of citizens and other penal codes under the 2008 Constitution to imprison people.⁵³ These factors demonstrate that the NLD's civilian administration has limited, violated, and suppressed freedom of expression.

7.2 Freedom of Expression after the 2021 Attempted Coup

Freedom of expression has significantly declined due to the military regime's oppression, political instability, economic recession, and widespread crises. The military has abused its control of arms and power to dismantle both underground and mainstream movements

⁵¹ Athan (9 September, 2019) “၂၀၁၉ ခုနှစ် ပထမနှစ်ဝက်အတွင်း လွတ်လပ်စွာထုတ်ဖော်ပြောဆိုခွင့် အခြေအနေ အစီရင်ခံစာ” အသံ — Athan (athanmyanmar.org)

⁵² Athan (December, 2020) “မြန်မာနိုင်ငံရှိ ပဋိပက္ခဖြစ်ပွားနေသော ဒေသများနှင့် ပဋိပက္ခမဖြစ်ပွားသော ဒေသများရှိ သတင်းအချက် အလက်ရရှိခွင့်နှင့် ဒီဂျစ်တယ်အခွင့်အရေးတို့အပေါ် လေ့လာဆန်းစစ်ခြင်း”

⁵³ Athan (27, February 2020) “၂၀၁၉ ခုနှစ် လွတ်လပ်စွာထုတ်ဖော်ပြောဆိုခွင့် အခြေအနေ” athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2019FOEreport.pdf

systematically. The junta has also established firm mechanisms to block any politically outspoken content. Within three years after the coup, they advanced their use of digital technology for effective monitoring, set up a network of civilian informers, and implemented census and nightly registration of households to control urban population data.

The military interfered with the documentation of human rights violations and undermined unity among the people by tightly controlling communication channels, including the Internet. For over three years, they implemented various strategies to gradually eliminate all aspects of freedom of expression.

Since the attempted coup in 2021, the military has gradually exerted control over digital society. They have cut off internet connections and issued directives to block access to the internet. Additionally, they have attempted to take control of international telecom companies such as Telenor and Ooredoo, aiming to transfer them to entities under military control. The military closely monitors online bank transfer records and has implemented a biometric online registration system for the public.

The military in Myanmar operates propaganda Telegram channels, such as Han Nyein Oo, Ba Nyunt, and Thazin Oo, to closely monitor and track digital footage of critical expressions. They target political and human rights activists in an effort to imprison them. Despite this oppressive environment, the people of Myanmar refuse to remain silent; they continuously voice their criticism of the junta's terror campaigns and other human rights violations. The most significant content shared on media platforms focuses on politics, expressing discontent with the military and armed organizations, providing commentary on political situations, and voicing dissatisfaction with issues such as inflation and public services.

7.3 Significant Cases

7.3 - a: Former Minister Imprisoned for Mocking the Junta

U Ye Htut, a former spokesperson and minister of information during U Thein Sein's administration, was arrested at his home in Ahlone Township, Yangon, for mocking the military

junta. He had continuously criticized the military's mismanagement. A pro-military Telegram channel called Han Nyein Oo mobilized the military to apprehend him. He was charged at the Ahlone police station under section 505A for "writing and distributing fake news." His punishment sentenced by the court in Ahlone was further extended with section 124 (d), leading to a combined sentence of [ten years in prison](#) for the two charges.

Section 124 (d) criminalizes actions that disrupt or hinder the performance of duties by Defense Services personnel or government employees. Section 505A penalizes various expressions that threaten state stability or government employees, with a minimum sentence of three years and a maximum of ten years in prison, along with potential fines.

7.3 - b: Incitement to Arrest People Criticizing Abbot Sitagu

On June 19, 2024, military forces opened fire on the vehicle carrying Abbot Win Nimeittar Yone and Abbot Kan Thone Sint, resulting in the death of Abbot Win Nimeittar Yone. Following this incident, Abbot Sitagu preached a message of "tolerance, forgiveness, and forgetfulness" to the Win Nimeittar Yone monastery monks. His sermon quickly gained traction on social media. A Facebook user with the username "I want to go mom's village" criticized Abbot Sitagu, saying, "Gugu! You should not regret it when your turn comes. Although you are a monk, you cannot distinguish right from wrong. You only seek money, and now you are a puppet of the dwarf (a reference to Min Aung Hlaing)."

The Han Nyein Oo Telegram Channel mobilized to identify and arrest the user of this account. Soldiers from the Myanmar Army visited his village and identified him as "[Kyaw Zeyar Htun](#)." He was subsequently arrested at the police station in Zayar Thiri township at 10:10 PM.

A Facebook user named "[Min Shwe Khit](#)," who owns a religious goods store in Mandalay, commented under a news article, "I did not like this monk since I was young because he liked money." Pro-military Telegram channels alleged that this comment was an intentional "insult" to Abbot Sitagu. The military responded quickly, arriving at his shop within a few hours, but Min Shwe Khit had already fled. As a result, the military sealed off the shop.

7.3 - c: Charged Under 505A for Criticizing a Movie

Director Ko Zaw (Ah Yone Oo) is set to release a movie titled "Jarr Kip Sar Phoo Thalar" during the Deepavali Festival in November 2024. An individual named Shine Htet Aung publicly condemned the film on his Facebook page, stating, "I condemn this movie as it mocks and downplays Indian traditional dresses and culture." Following his post, Shine Htet Aung went missing for five days, until October 24. Unaware of his arrest, his family reported him as a "missing person" at the Hlaing and Mayangone Township police stations.

In reality, Shine Htet Aung had been arrested by the military and taken to the Shwe Pyithar Interrogation Center. He faced charges at the Hlaing Police Station for "threatening the state's stability and distributing propaganda" under section 505A, according to [DVB News](#).

7.3 - d: Arrest of the Rakhine Politician and Activist from Arakan League for Democracy

U Htun Lwin, a social activist and economist from the Kyauk Phyu Special Economic Zone, [was arrested by the military](#) at his home in Kyauk Phyu township, Rakhine State, on April 14, 2024. He is currently being held at the military compound of the Light Infantry Battalion (34). His family has been unable to contact him, and he remains in detention without any information regarding the charges he will face. U Htun Lwin is a member of the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) and has been actively monitoring the situation in the Kyauk Phyu Special Economic Zone. He has openly criticized the current political landscape, rising prices, daily hardships, and the military's administration, which likely contributed to his arrest.

7.3 - e: Military Arrests Underaged Individuals for Criticizing

The military has arrested not only ordinary citizens who criticize the coup, torture, killings, and human rights violations but also children under the age of 18. Four minors were arrested on September 22, 2023, and October 23. One of them, a child from Thathon Township in Mon State named Than Than Aye (also known as Aye Chan May), shared content related to the People's Defense Forces on her Facebook page. She was arrested at the Thathon police station and [charged under Penal Code Section 505A](#).

On October 23, a special court in Monywa charged three other underaged individuals—Sai Thiha Htun, Pyae Phyo Aung, and Zin Nyi Nyi Htun. They were charged under Section 89(e) of the Children Act and [sentenced](#) to detention until they turned 18 at a correctional facility in Mandalay. Their arrests were due to their criticism of the military and their participation in anti-coup protests.

7.4 Three Brotherhood Alliances Referenced Electronic **Transaction** Act to Response a Fake News

Three Brotherhood Alliances, which include the MNTJP/MNDAA, PSLF/TNLA, and AA/ULA, stated in response to fake news about a "Partition from the State." The [statement](#) referred to the controversial electronic **transaction** act and asserted that anyone spreading this false information would be identified through their IP address and face serious consequences. Ma Wai Phyo Myint, an Asia-Pacific Policy Analyst at Access Now, stated, "They should release accurate information immediately to inform the public; however, threatening to reveal IP addresses to take action is concerning for the people."

The most significant risk associated with this statement is invoking the notorious electronic act for enforcement. Many individuals have faced lawsuits and charges under this act during previous military regimes in Myanmar. While distributing false information is detrimental to society, it resides on a precarious line that separates it from the principle of freedom of expression. The aggressive tone of the statement raises questions about the political maturity and the value of free expression upheld by previous administrations and the future government, which need to be clarified.

(8) Conclusion

8.1 Discussions and Recommendations to Consider

Since the attempted coup, various movements have emerged across Myanmar, including non-violent strikes, protests, political campaigns, and the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), all sharing three common political goals:

1. The ongoing protests aim to delegitimize the role of the military junta, which forcibly overthrew the elected civilian administration.
2. There is a commitment to support the actions of revolutionary groups resisting the military junta.
3. The ultimate objective is to establish a fully realized democracy in the future federal democratic nation built during and after the revolution.

The delegitimization of the military junta refers to the national, international, and regional levels. The people of Myanmar consistently express that the military does not represent them and that they reject the junta's violent takeover of the civilian government. Despite facing numerous restrictions, they continue to protest. Their acts of resilience include defying orders, voicing their disagreements, and refusing to cooperate with the military authorities.

They refused to serve under the Conscription Law and expressed their objections. The ongoing protests demand that relevant organizations take immediate action against the military junta, which is committing numerous inhumane acts, including human rights violations, theft, looting, arson, and killings, as if the people of Myanmar were enemies of the army. The general public still expresses objections when the military junta receives a meeting invitation or a delegation at the regional or international level, as these events may suggest recognition of the junta's legitimacy.

Since the first day of the attempted coup, the military junta has systematically dismantled all communication channels and campaigning tactics that allowed revolutionary groups to connect with the people. It was evident that the military implemented a plan to have complete control over the internet and communication. They implied an internet shutdown as a strategy in politics and military affairs.

Moreover, the military continues attacking press freedom, limiting information flow, revoking the media license, and arresting media professionals to protect themselves from international media and journalists that would reveal their war crimes, grave violations of human rights, and international law. In the four years following the attempted coup, at least 215 media professionals have been arrested. Tragically, 11 journalists have lost their lives, including five who were killed this year in 2024, marking it as one of the most dangerous years for journalists.

On the other hand, people raised criticism concerning some revolutionary forces' actions regarding freedom of expression and the right to information. Some public protest movements in central Myanmar demand proper stewardship of the People's Defense Forces, People's Administration Groups, and People's Security Groups in Central Myanmar under the National Unity Government's (NUG) control. (BBC Burmese, 2024, September 26)⁵⁴ Concerns have been raised about press freedom and the flow of information among independent media and journalists due to the directive on the Media Code of Conduct issued by the Interim Executive Council of Karenni State, as well as a statement on Media Policy and Code of Conduct issued by the Karen National Union (KNU). (Athan, 2024, April - July)⁵⁵ Although the statements cited "due to security reasons," questions arise regarding the revolution forces' stance on freedom of expression and press freedom, which are fundamental values of democracy. It is crucial to reexamine the actions of the People's Groups operating under the National Unity Government in central Myanmar.

⁵⁴ BBC Burmese (2024, September 26) “NUG ဖြေရှင်းရမယ့် 'ပသုံးလုံး' အာဏာစက်”
<https://www.bbc.com/burmese/articles/cnvd3n4qne7o>

⁵⁵ Athan (2024, April-July) “မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၏ သတင်းသမားများနှင့် သတင်းမီဒီယာလွတ်လပ်မှုအခြေအနေ”
https://athanmyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Apr-Jun-24_M-J-MMs-1.pdf

8.2 Recommendations for Implementation

The National Unity Government (NUG) and armed revolution groups should

1. National Unity Government (NUG), including People's Defense Forces (PDF), People's Security Forces, People's Administration Groups, and other armed revolution groups, should respect, protect, and promote freedom of expression, a fundamental human right. Moreover, it is essential to bring practical solutions and reform positively on the "People's Groups" and power abuses among the groups.
2. Immediately implement an accessible complaint mechanism that allows people to complain freely about human rights violations by powerful individuals and armed organizations.
3. Implement policies that ensure freedom of expression and press freedom. Legislation drafted or enacted by local governments in areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations should protect freedom of expression and press freedom.

Civil society organizations should

4. extend the awareness-raising campaigns and mobilization campaigns so that the people have easy access to freedom of expression for easier understanding
5. Monitor and document systematically the human rights violations the people face, including limitations on press freedom and freedom of expression.
6. Provide sufficient mental and physical support to activists and journalists who have been arrested and are still in detention.

7. Make an effort to document and bring justice on violations, including sexual abuses and labor exploitations among the media organizations.



This report is based on the question of how the whole Myanmar public opposed the 2021 Coup or how they are still fighting against it. It also studied why Myanmar people are still fighting against the military junta and their political ambitions.