

Assessing Detentions of Journalists in Myanmar

Assessment from February 2021 to August 2026

The Myanmar military launched a crackdown on media freedom as part of a *coup d'état* on 1 February 2021, persecuting journalists and rolling back a decade of legal reforms. ICNL has built a large case database of detained journalists, cross-corroborating multiple civil society monitoring efforts, and complementing them with an analysis of the legal status of cases.

Over the past five years, including after the military's flawed 2025 elections, the military has detained **over 220 journalists from over 100 media outlets, charging 181 with a crime under 10 separate laws**, mainly incitement, "false news", and weaponized counter-terrorism provisions.

The military's sham courts have ignored domestic and international law and disregarded due process, **sentencing 100 journalists** so far to a **combined total of 549 years imprisonment**, with individual terms **up to 27 years long**. At least **20 journalists were languishing in prison** by the end of August 2026, causing a chilling effect across the media and presenting severe challenges to media outlets' resources, capacity, and morale.

Despite all of this, Myanmar's journalists and media outlets remain bravely committed to building a robust information ecosystem for a public desperately seeking to know the truth about military oppression.

Stakeholders, including the United Nations internationally and within Myanmar, should strengthen the support for detained journalists and the media, ensuring it adequately reflects their role as the oxygen of the ongoing movement for a return to democratization. Now is also the time for the development of reform proposals for a legitimate government to roll back the military's attacks on the rights to freedom of expression and association.

227

Journalists detained



20

Still imprisoned by August 2026



100

Journalists sentenced to a combined **549 years in prison**



23%

Of convicted journalists given extreme sentences of **10 to 27 years in prison**



207

Journalists released so far, after an **average of 10 months** in prison each



101

Media outlets had journalists detained; **54 of them had journalists sentenced**



Women

Faced higher charge and conviction rates