

ASSESSING DETENTIONS OF JOURNALISTS IN MYANMAR

Assessment from February 2021-June 2024

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 three years, the military has detained over **200 journalists from almost 100 media outlets, charging 163 with a crime** under nine 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 **78 journalists so far to a combined total of 375 years imprisonment**, with individual terms up to 20 years long. At least 56 journalists were languishing in prison by June 2024, 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.

208

Journalists detained



56

Still imprisoned by June 2024

78

Journalists sentenced to a combined **375 years in prison**



21%

Of convicted journalists given extreme sentences of **10 to 20 years in prison**



152

Journalists released so far, after an **average of 6 months** in prison each



91

Media outlets had journalists detained; **40 of them had journalists sentenced**



Women

Faced higher charge and conviction rates

