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PUBLIC STATEMENT

LATEST DEVELOPMENT
May 7, 2019

Myanmar must stop using secrecy laws against public-interest reporting

The prosecution of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo shows how secrecy laws can be used to obstruct reporting on grave human rights abuses.

What we know

Reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were arrested on December 12, 2017, while investigating the killing of ten Rohingya men and boys in Inn Din. A police witness testified that officers had been instructed to arrange the encounter leading to their arrest. On September 3, 2018, both journalists were convicted under the Official Secrets Act and sentenced to seven years. After their appeals were rejected, they were released on May 7, 2019, under a presidential pardon. [1–5]

Our position

Journalists who document serious abuses are performing a public service and should not be punished for it. A pardon ends a sentence but does not answer the question of whether the prosecution was fair. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information. [6–7]

Our calls

Amnesty Freedom calls on the authorities to:

1. Remove laws and practices that punish journalists for documenting abuses.
2. Release anyone held solely for reporting, and protect sources and witnesses.
3. Allow independent investigators to examine violations against Rohingya communities.
4. Review the prosecution and adopt safeguards against repetition, because a pardon cannot substitute for them.

Supporting information

1. Pulitzer Prize-winning Reuters Journalists' Prison Sentence Upheld | The Pulitzer Prizes
2. Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo freed by pardon in Myanmar - Committee to Protect Journalists
3. Special Report: Dangerous News - How two young reporters shook Myanmar By Reuters
4. 2019 Pulitzer Prize-winning Reuters Journalists Freed by Presidential Pardon in Myanmar | The Pulitzer Prizes
5. Wa Lone - PEN America
6. UNESCO, UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity
7. United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Media contact: Ignatius Gomes, Director, Amnesty Freedom — ignatiusGomes@amnestyfreedom.org

Note to editors: *This statement is based on the public sources listed above. The date shown is that of the most recent development recorded in those sources; later developments may not be reflected.*