

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	706
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	Radio Free Asia (RFA)
Titel:	Over 20 face life sentences following Myanmar junta terrorism charges
Udgivet:	11. januar 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	26. januar 2024

Document #2103253

RFA – Radio Free Asia (Author)

Over 20 face life sentences following Myanmar junta terrorism charges

More than 20 people could face life in prison after junta officials charged them under Myanmar's counter-terrorism laws, residents told Radio Free Asia.

All the detained civilians are from Mon state's Thanbyuzayat township, where they were charged with allegedly supporting resistance groups, known as People's Defense Forces. Among the charged locals is Aung Ko Ko, a former Thanbyuzayat township deputy chief of a local junta-run administration department, locals said Wednesday.

More than 20 people were charged under Sections 50 and 52 of the country's counter-terrorism laws for financing terrorism and intentions to commit terrorism on Monday, residents said. The charges come with the possibility of being sentenced to life in prison. The cases were filed at Thanbyuzayat Police Station, they added.

Officials arrested Aung Ko Ko on Dec. 18 for allegedly leaking information to the country's civilian shadow National Unity Government and to People's Defense Forces. Local residents were

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Source:
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Original link:
<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-terrorism-arrests-01112024035329.html>

subsequently arrested, a Thanbyuzayat resident who wished to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals told RFA.

“Businessmen were also arrested for allegedly supporting People’s Defense Forces after Aung Ko Ko’s arrest,” he said. “I knew that they were filed under Section 50j and 52a on Jan. 8, almost three weeks after [their arrest].”

Residents have remained in police custody following their arrests on Dec. 18. Among the arrested businessmen are Than Zaw, Aung Myint, Pe Myint, Chan Mon, Mya Than, and Min Min.

In late December, junta troops arrested Saw Su Su Htwe, chairwomen of social assistance group Shin Than Chin Twel Let in Mon’s Thaton township, residents said. Family members have not been able to contact her.

RFA has not been able to independently confirm these claims or the charges she is being held on.

Calls by RFA to Mon state’s junta representative Aung Myat Kyaw Sein to confirm details about the charges went unanswered on Wednesday.

As of Wednesday, almost 900 people have been arrested in Mon state following the country’s 2021 coup, according to data from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn.

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Document type:
Media Report

Language:
English

Published:
11 January 2024

Available on ecoi.net since:
15 January 2024

Document ID:
2103253

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