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Myanmar: junta feigns openness, tightens control of election coverage



The Myanmar military regime has announced that the media – which it continues to relentlessly stifle – will be “authorised” to cover the general elections scheduled to take place between December 2025 and January 2026. Behind this reform, allegedly a measure of openness, the junta is in fact preparing the conditions to control coverage of a vote it has already begun to lock down.

The [announcement](#) from the junta — a regime considered one of the [2025 Press Freedom Predators](#) — that both local and foreign outlets will be permitted to cover the elections comes with strict conditions, as military authorities specified that official accreditation must be obtained. Moreover, in July 2025, the junta [adopted](#) a law on election interference that provides for heavy prison sentences for anyone who disseminates information intended to “destroy a part of the electoral process” — a term deliberately left vague. The secretary of the Independent Press Council Myanmar (IPCM), Toe Zaw Latt, [denounced](#) this law as a text designed to “intimidate journalists, to make them afraid to criticise or report freely.”

Since the February 2021 coup, independent journalism has almost disappeared from Myanmar [under the regime’s violent crackdown](#). Around 60 media outlets have been forced into exile, mainly to Thailand, according to RSF figures. To date, 51 journalists remain behind bars because of their work. Most foreign media have also withdrawn from the country: *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* is now the only international news agency with a Myanmar bureau.

“By pretending to allow media coverage while having repressed journalists for more than four years, Myanmar’s junta is exposing the depth of its hypocrisy. No one is fooled: this measure is simply a tactic to legitimise new restrictions. If the junta truly wishes to show even a semblance of positive change, it must immediately release the 51 detained journalists, genuinely open the country to international media and end its policy of systematic control over the press.

Cédric Alviani
RSF Asia-Pacific Bureau Director

The junta's planned elections have been [described](#) as a "fraud" by the UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews and numerous international experts, who cite the lack of independence in the election process and the continued repression of the opposition.

Since the coup, the junta has waged an extremely brutal crackdown on the media:

- Seven journalists and press freedom defenders have been [executed](#).
- More than 200 journalists have been imprisoned, at least 51 of whom remain behind bars to this day.
- Journalists exposing the regime's repression have been systematically tortured – beaten, subjected to sexual violence and deprived of sleep and food. The licences of 15 media outlets have been arbitrarily revoked, forcing their teams to work underground due to increased security risks.
- Internet shutdowns have prevented journalists from working or communicating, creating "information black holes" in certain regions.

The RSF Myanmar Press Freedom Project

In response to this repression, RSF has provided emergency assistance to more than 350 journalists through the [Myanmar Press Freedom Project](#) – an initiative that supports both exiled Myanmar journalists (estimated at around 300 in Thailand alone) and those still working clandestinely inside the country.

Myanmar ranks 169th out of 180 countries and territories in the 2025 [RSF World Press Freedom Index](#). The country is the world's second-largest jailer of journalists, just behind China.