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Journalist Detentions in Myanmar: Assessment from February 2021 to December 2025

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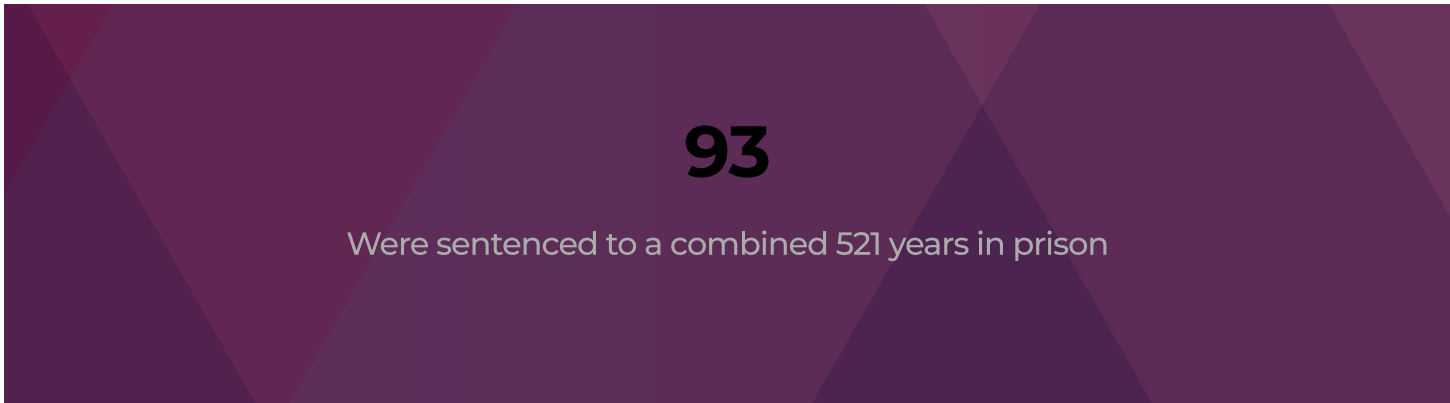
The Myanmar military launched a crackdown on media freedom as part of a coup d'état on 1 February 2021, persecuting journalists and rolling back a decade of legal reforms. ICNL has built a large case database of detained journalists, cross-corroborating multiple civil society monitoring efforts, and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

Of the 226 Journalists detained:



38

Were still imprisoned by December 2025



93

Were sentenced to a combined 521 years in prison

22%

Were given extreme sentences of 10 to 27 years in prison

188

Have been released so far, after an average of 8 months in prison each

101

Media outlets had journalists detained; 50 had journalists sentenced

Women

Faced higher charge and conviction rates

Over the past five years, the military has detained over 220 journalists from over 100 media outlets, charging 178 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 93 journalists so far to a combined total of 521 years imprisonment, with individual terms up to 27 years long. At least 38 journalists were languishing in prison by the

end of December 2025, 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.



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