

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Anti-journalist terror has grown in every way in two years of military rule in Myanmar



Since Myanmar's military seized power two years ago, the figures for their press freedom violations have been truly appalling, says Reporters Without Borders (RSF). To cover up their massacres of civilians and impose their authority, the military – known as the Tatmadaw – have arrested, jailed, tortured and even eliminated journalists who could undermine their control over news and information.

Since the military coup on 1 February 2021, four Burmese journalists have been [killed](#), two of them after being violently interrogated, beaten and even mutilated. No fewer than 130 journalists have been arrested and jailed, and 72 are still being held. Dozens of cases of torture have been reported. For the past two years, the unrelenting crackdown on press freedom in Myanmar has escalated steadily in every respect, including the territory covered, the methods used and the length of the sentences.

“RSF has been constantly appalled by the figures it has been compiling for the tragedy in Myanmar. The entire country has been subjected to an implacable repressive machine. The prison sentences passed on journalists keep getting longer. All this has but one goal – to prevent the world from knowing what is happening under Myanmar's generals. We call on the United Nations special rapporteur responsible for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, to put this tragedy back at the centre of the international agenda.

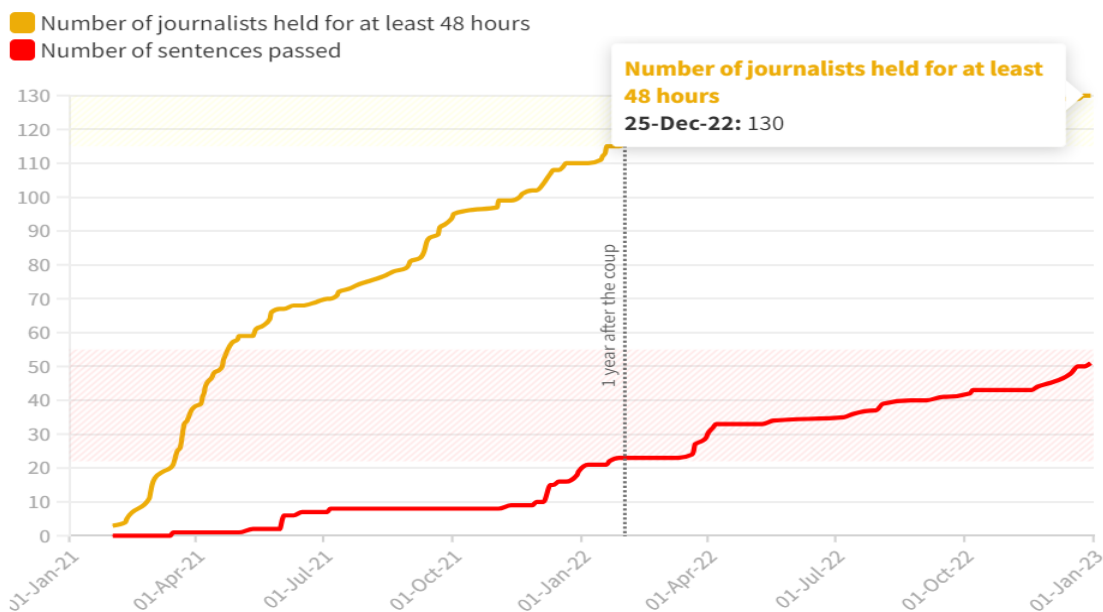
Daniel Bastard

Head of RSF's Asia-Pacific desk

Myanmar is second only to China in the number of journalists held in its prisons but, in relation to population size, it is the world's biggest jailer of media personnel. At the same time, the terror orchestrated by the military has proved to be extremely methodical, as seen in this graph showing the rate of growth in the total number of journalists held for at least 48 hours over the past two years and the growth in the total number of prison sentences passed on journalists.

Increase in **convictions** after a wave of **imprisonment**

More than a third of the journalists jailed by the junta in the past two years have been convicted



Source: RSF , [Link to share this graph](#)
Data compiled on 29-Jan-2023



Harsher methods

The number of detained journalists increased steadily during the first 12 months after the coup. A total of 115 journalists were arrested and jailed during this period, as against 15 the following year. But this fall does not indicate any let-up in the crackdown. The journalists who covered the big wave of protests after the coup are now either in prison or have fled the country or have gone into hiding. Almost all of the 15 journalists arrested and jailed in the past year were tracked down in the places where they were hiding.

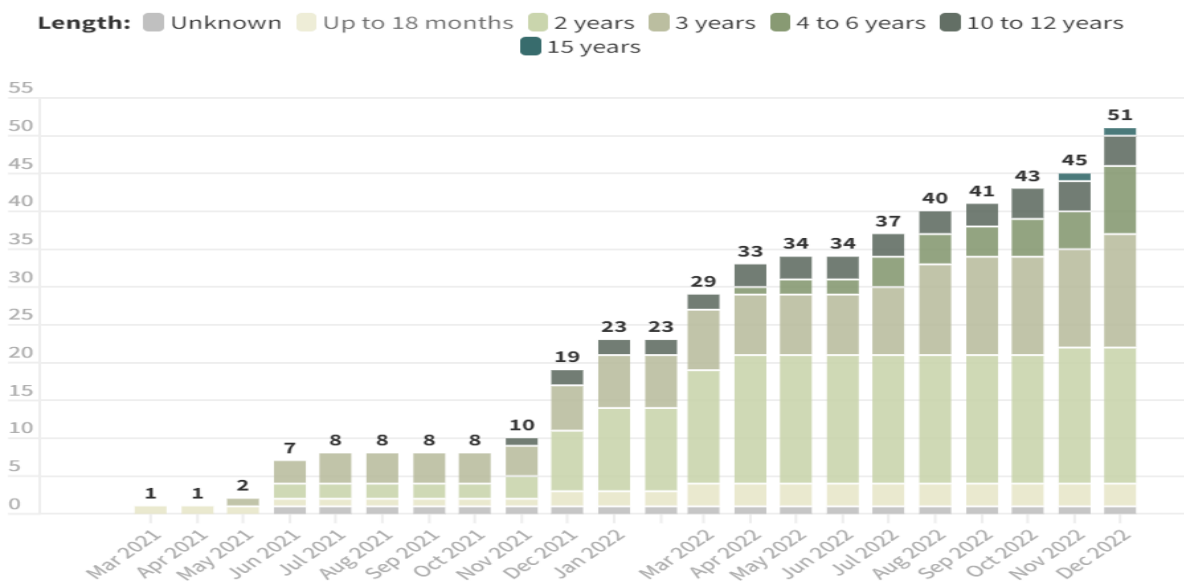
The slowdown in the growth of the number of arrests has been accompanied by an equally disturbing increase in the number of journalists receiving prison sentences. Ten journalists had received prison sentences in December 2021. Five times as many have received prison sentences

now. Military courts have clearly replaced soldiers in the field as the main tool for crushing any hope of a victory for journalistic freedom in Myanmar.

Longer sentences

At the same time, the jail sentences being imposed by the military courts have been getting steadily longer, reaching a [record 15 years](#) in prison in the case of freelance reporter **Myo San Soe** in late 2022. The combined number of years in prison to which Burmese journalists have been sentenced rose from 58 at the end of 2021 to 189 at the end of 2022.

The combined number of years in prison to which journalists have been sentenced tripled in a year



Source: RSF, [Link to this graph](#); • Data compiled on 29-Jan-2023
*More than 70% of convicted journalists are still in prison



Immediately after the coup, the military junta gave itself a new repressive tool in the form of Section 505 (a) of the penal code, under which spreading “false news” about the military government’s representatives is punishable by three years in prison. But, over the months, the courts set up inside the prisons have started to sentence journalists to much longer prison terms under such new charges as “terrorism,” “espionage” or just “acts prejudicial to the security of the state.” They seem ready to use any grounds for increasing sentences and intimidating the media.

More territory covered

Finally, an analysis of the places where journalists are detained shows the degree to which the junta has succeeded in deploying its repressive machinery throughout the territory it controls. Some 30 journalists are held in Yangon’s notorious Insein prison, but RSF has been able to identify no fewer than 26 other detention centres.

Journalists detained in Burmese prisons by the junta since 1 February 2021

Search for places of detention or click on circles for more detail.



Source: [Reporters without Borders](#), [Link to share this map](#) •

*4 journalists were imprisoned twice and were therefore counted twice.

Data compiled on 29/01/2023



A few border regions are nonetheless beyond this relentless machinery's reach, namely Chin State in the west, Kachin State in the north, and Shan State in the east. These three regions are traditionally dominated and run autonomously by rebel groups that are hostile to the Tatmadaw. In other words, the junta wields no direct authority there and journalists are relatively free to work.

A sign of hope should therefore be seen in this part of the grim overall picture. In part of the country, civil society still manages to escape the junta's grip and demonstrates an unquenchable thirst for news and information. It shows, clearer than ever, the importance of press freedom in the fight for democracy in Myanmar

ASIA - PACIFIC

Myanmar



173 / 180
Score : 28.26

Découvrir le pays

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