

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FACES 3 YEARS IN PRISON

Prominent human rights defender, Thin Thin Aung is facing three years in prison over materials published and broadcast by the media outlet she co-founded. She is among hundreds facing similar charges and thousands arbitrarily detained since the 1 February coup simply for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. The Myanmar military must immediately and unconditionally release Thin Thin Aung and all others in arbitrary detention and drop all charges against them.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Dr Thida Oo
Union Attorney General Office
No. 25 Nay Pyi Taw,
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
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Dear Union Attorney General Dr Thida Oo,

I am writing to express my grave concern about the prosecution of **Thin Thin Aung**, who has been targeted simply for her connection to news outlet Mizzima, which has reported on the Myanmar coup and subsequent human rights violations by security forces. She is among the more than 5,200 individuals who are in detention simply for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. I urge you to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of her and thousands of others who remain arbitrarily detained across Myanmar.

Thin Thin Aung was arrested in Yangon on 8 April 2021 and is facing up to three years in prison under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code. She was accused of “inciting public unrest” and “causing fear” with materials Mizzima has published since its license was revoked on 8 March, even though she had resigned from her role as Director of Mizzima on 4 February.

I am alarmed that media workers, as well as peaceful activists, human rights defenders, medical workers, political opponents, and critics of the military, continue to be targeted for arrest, detention, prosecution and imprisonment on politically-motivated grounds. It is imperative that Myanmar respects and protects the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly along with other human rights, in line with its obligations under international law.

While I appreciate that over 2,300 prisoners were released on 30 June, Thin Thin Aung and thousands of others remain in arbitrary detention. It is distressing to learn that reports of enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment and deaths in custody continue to emerge.

I am further worried about Thin Thin Aung’s health in detention. Already suffering from a chronic condition of asthma, she is at heightened risk in a crowded prison, which presents prime conditions for a Covid-19 outbreak.

Therefore, I call on you to:

- **Immediately and unconditionally release and drop charges against Thin Thin Aung and all individuals in detention simply for peacefully exercising their rights, including over 5,200 individuals who remain detained since 1 February;**
- **Pending her unconditional release, ensure that Thin Thin Aung has full and regular access to the specialized medical treatment she may require and grant her bail on humanitarian grounds;**
- **Stop using repressive laws, including Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code, to arrest, prosecute, or imprison people simply for peacefully exercising their rights.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thin Thin Aung is a prominent woman human rights defender who has advocated for peace, equality, and human rights in Myanmar. In addition to her role as a co-founder and director of Mizzima Media, she has been a champion of women's rights and intersectional feminist movement in Myanmar working with various local and international women's rights organizations. Prior to 1 February 2021, she was involved in work aimed at reforming the police, working with the media and civil society.

On 27 March 2021, Deputy Police Chief Kyaw Sein Tun from the Thanlyin Township Police Station filed complaints against the management of Mizzima, a prominent Myanmar news outlet, at the Thanlyin Township Court. He alleged that Mizzima did not follow the notice issued on 8 March, which revoked the outlet's licence (along with four other media outlets') to publish and broadcast. He accused Mizzima's management of publishing and broadcasting materials that are exaggerated and false to incite more public unrest, to make protesters confront and target security personnel on duty, and to cause fear among the public.

On the morning of 8 April, Thin Thin Aung and another Mizzima staff member were arrested outside her house in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital. Both were taken to the Mingalardon interrogation centre (Yay Kyi Aing) on the same day. After being tortured for two weeks, they were transferred to Yangon's Insein prison on 21 April.

Thin Thin Aung appeared in court in prison court for the first time on 22 April. A few subsequent court hearings were cancelled due to the absence of a senior judge and a surge in Covid-19 cases in Myanmar. Her lawyer was able to meet with her on 30 May for the first time. Her next court hearing is scheduled on 28 July.

She has been charged under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code, which criminalizes anyone who "causes fear, spreads false news, agitates directly or indirectly criminal offense against a Government employee" and carries up to three years in prison and/or a fine.

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military staged a coup and began to arrest scores of people including the de facto head of state, Aung San Suu Kyi, the President, Win Myint, and many other senior elected officials and other representatives from their political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD).

The military continues to kill protesters, bystanders and other civilians, and arrest, detain, prosecute and imprison activists, human rights defenders, media workers, medical workers, artists, political opponents, and critics of the military for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma (AAPPB), as of 19 July, the military has killed over 900 people and arrested more than 6,600 people, including at least 88 journalists. More than 5,200 people remain in arbitrary detention.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Burmese/Myanmar

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 22 September 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Thin Thin Aung (She/her)