

Challenges and repression undermining independent media

The threat and challenge to press freedom:
The plight of independent media

Introduction

Since seizing power in the coup of February 1, 2021, the Military Council has systematically escalated its assault on the media. The coup regime has banned independent news agencies, raided newsrooms, issued arrest warrants for journalists, violently apprehended reporters while they covered protests, rammed vehicles into them, invaded their homes to carry out arrests, and subjected detained journalists to torture during interrogations—resulting, in some cases, in death. The Military Council has further persecuted imprisoned journalists out of resentment for their profession, revoked the licenses of media organizations, and accused independent media of inciting terror. In addition, it has unilaterally amended the 2008 Constitution, altering the Printing and Publishing Law, News Media Law, Television and Radio Broadcasting Law, and related regulatory frameworks to tighten its grip on information. In addition, within the Information and Communication Technology sector, the Military Council has implemented measures such as severing internet and phone services and restricting access to social media platforms. Furthermore, the Military Council has used state-owned media outlets, including Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV), Myawaddy (MWD) Television, FM radio channels, and affiliated social media accounts, as tools for its propaganda, actively disseminating pro-Military Council disinformation, fabricated reports, and propaganda. Entities aligned with the Military Council have also conducted counter-news broadcasts aimed at weakening the reach and influence of independent media organizations.

Since the coup, over 200 journalists have been arrested, with more than 40 currently serving sentences in prisons across the country on false and unjust charges. Additionally, several journalists have lost their lives merely for carrying out their professional duties, and those responsible for their deaths remain unpunished, enjoying impunity. Furthermore, the Military Council has revoked the production licenses of 15 media agencies and has marked the homes of journalists with the intent to seize their properties.¹

¹ RFA Burmese | 30 Dec 2023 | Military Council Revokes Mekong News Agency's Publishing License <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/mekong-news-licensing-12302023005757.html>

Media repression in 2024

The repression of independent media persisted throughout 2024, continuing to present numerous challenges and hardships. In that year alone, three journalists lost their lives, and documentary filmmaker Shin Daewe, also a journalist, was sentenced to life in prison. Journalists who were imprisoned also endured torture while incarcerated. The Military Council has confiscated the homes of journalists and established the Myanmar Press Council (MPC) as a body designed to carry out its manipulations. Additionally, the Military Council's digital repression has further choked the ability of independent media to operate.

Independent media is not only grappling with the oppression of the Military Council. In liberated areas—regions no longer under the control of the coup regime—and in territories controlled by resistance forces, there have also been incidents that hamper and undermine press freedom, stemming from a lack of familiarity and understanding of press freedom. Furthermore, the ongoing policy shifts of the United States government since early 2025 have sent shockwaves, further impacting Myanmar's independent media.

In the 2024 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Myanmar ranked 171st out of 180 countries², placing it in the red zone, reserved for countries at the greatest risk, highlighting it as one of the worst countries for press freedom.³

Journalist deaths and impunity of perpetrators

Between February 2021 and December 2024, over 200 journalists were subjected to severe abuses, including arrests, physical assaults, and killings. Seven journalists lost their lives⁴ while carrying out their professional duties

² RSF | 2024 Press Freedom Index | <https://rsf.org/en/index>

³ RFA Burmese | 3 May 2024 | Myanmar Listed Among Nations with Worst Press Freedom <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/freedom-press-05032024045834.html>

⁴ CPJ | 2021-2024 | 5 Journalists Killed in Myanmar https://cpj.org/data/killed/2024/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&cc_fips%5B%5D=BM&start_year=2021&end_year=2024&group_by=location

for various reasons, with three of them dying in 2024 alone.⁵ The following table provides details of these seven journalists. It is crucial to highlight that those responsible for their deaths remain unaccountable, and justice has yet to be served.

No	Name	Cause of death	Media agency
1	Ko Soe Naing	Arrested by the Military Council while covering the silent strike and died during interrogation	Freelance photojournalist
2	A Sai K (aka) Sai Win Aung	Killed by an artillery shell fired by the Military Council while covering the battle	Editor (Federal Journal)
3	Pu Tuidim	Slain in the warzone	Editor-in-Chief/ Founder (Khonumthung Media Group)
4	Ko Lin Lin Tun	Murdered solely for being a journalist	Freelance journalist
5	Pho Thiha (aka) Myat Thu Tun	Taken from prison and subsequently murdered	Freelance journalist
6	Htet Myat Thu	Fatally shot by the Military Council during a raid aimed at his arrest.	Freelance journalist
7	Win Htut Oo (aka) Fizal	Fatally shot by the Military Council during a raid aimed at his arrest.	Reporter (DVB News)

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) 2024 Global Impunity Index, Myanmar ranks 10th for the killing of journalists and the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators.⁶

⁵ UNESCO | 2021-2024 | Observatory of Killed Journalists <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/observatory/country-overview?country=b21159a5-f07f-56d1-a843-970688c53d04&hub=72609>

⁶ The Irrawaddy | 1 Nov 2024 | Myanmar Ranks 10th for Impunity in Killing Journalists <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-ranks-10th-for-impunity-in-killing-journalists.html>

Arrests and sentencing of journalists

According to a CPJ report released on January 18, 2024, Myanmar ranks second⁷ globally for the jailing of journalists, with numbers closely rivaling China, which holds the top position.⁸ Since the coup in 2021, the Military Council has been responsible for more than 200 incidents involving the arrest, issuance of arrest warrants, physical assault, prosecution, and detention of journalists, with at least 170 journalists detained in total. Some of these journalists have died while in detention. As of now, 44 of these detained journalists remain incarcerated in prisons across Myanmar. The following table outlines the figures for journalists arrested and imprisoned by the Military Council between February 2021 and December 2024.

No	Category	Total	Male	Female
1	Journalists encountered arrests	173	145	28
2	Journalists still in detention	44	37	7

The Military Council has used several legal provisions and statutes to prosecute journalists, including Sections 505(A), 505(B), and 124(A) of the Penal Code, Section 17(A) of the Unlawful Association Act, Section 66(D) of the Telecommunications Law, Section 5 of the Immigration Act, Section 5 of the Export and Import Law, Section 27 of the Natural Disaster Management Law, and the Counter-Terrorism Law. Among these, Sections 505(A), 505(B), and the Counter-Terrorism Law have been the most frequently used by the Military Council.

Courts lacking the power to defy the Military Council have used such charges against journalists, with defendants often denied access to legal counsel, the right to present a defense, and in some cases, tried and convicted in military courts.

⁷ CPJ | 18 Jan 2024 | 2023 prison census: Jailed journalist numbers near record high; Israel imprisonments spike <https://cpj.org/reports/2024/01/2023-prison-census-jailed-journalist-numbers-near-record-high-israel-imprisonments-spike/>

⁸ VOA Burmese | 19 Jan 2024 | Press Freedom under Coup Military Council <https://burmese.voanews.com/a/7446863.htm>

No	Name	Filed charges	Sentences
1	Shin Daewe	Section 52(J) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	Life Imprisonment
2	Sai Zaw Thaik (aka) Sai Zaw	Section 124, 505(A), 66(D), Section 27 of the Natural Disaster Management Law	20 years in prison
3	Aung San Oo	Section 50(A) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	20 years in prison
4	Myo Myint Oo	Section 50(J) of the Counter-Terrorism Law, 52(A), 52 (B)	Life Imprisonment
5	Ko Myo San Soe	Section 50(J) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	15 years in prison
6	Hum Yadana Khet Moh Mho Tun	Section 505(A), 50(J)	13 years in prison
7	Si Thu Aung Myint	Section 505(A), 124(A)	12 years in prison
8	Nyein Chan Wai	Section 505(A), 124(C)	11 years 3 months in prison
9	Ma Wai Wai Lwin	Section 50(J) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	10 years in prison
10	Ko Thurein Kyaw	Section 49(A) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	10 years in prison
11	Ko Khaing Myint Tun (aka) Shwe Lin Thit	Section 51(D) of the Counter-Terrorism Law	10 years in prison

Military Council's confiscations of journalists' homes

The Military Council's media suppression tactics include issuing seizure orders to confiscate journalists' homes. On October 25, 2024, the Military Council issued a seizure order for the home of Than Lwin Times Editor-in-Chief U Ko Ko Zaw in Mawlamyine City, Mon State.⁹ Prior to this, on June 25, 2021, the

⁹ RFA Burmese | 26 Oct 2024 | Military Council Confiscates Home of Than Lwin Times' Editor-in-Chief <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/thanlwintime-editor-house-closed-10262024125314.html>

Military Council conducted a surprise raid on the Than Lwin Times headquarters, forcing the news agency's journalists to go into hiding to avoid arrest.

In addition, the Military Council issued a seizure notice for the house of Ko Htet Myat Thu, a Kyaikto-based freelance journalist who was shot dead by Military Council soldiers in Letpya Village, Kyaikto Township.¹⁰ The notice was posted by Military Council troops, police, and local administrative officers at 1:00 pm on November 22, 2024. The Military Council also seized the house of freelance photojournalist Ko Soe Naing in Sanchaung Township, Yangon City.¹¹ Ko Soe Naing was arrested while covering the silent strike on March 3, 2022, and later died in an interrogation center. Additionally, after the Military Council arrested senior reporter Ko Nay Naw of the Karen Information Center (KIC) on March 28, 2022, his house was confiscated on June 30 of that year. During this process, the Military Council forcibly evicted Ko Nay Naw's wife, who was four months pregnant at the time, along with their child. She continues to face hardship, struggling to secure accommodation while renting a house.¹²

Ordeal of journalists in detention

Like other political prisoners, journalists imprisoned under arbitrary charges by the Military Council face harsher treatment than other inmates.¹³ Prison authorities deliberately target journalists for further oppression, subjecting them to more frequent physical assaults compared to other prisoners. Additionally, journalist prisoners are deliberately forced to perform hard labor, and it has been reported that those who wish to avoid such work are extorted for 500,000 MMK.¹⁴

Prison transfers of political prisoners often create significant difficulties for their families. Furthermore, the prisoners themselves endure various hardships in such circumstances.¹⁵ During these transfers, prisoners are frequently

¹⁰ Than Lwin Times | 24 Nov 2024 | Military Council Confiscates Home of Journalist Captured in Kyaikto Shootout <https://www.burmese.thanlwintimes.com/2024/11/24/ကိုယ်တိုင်ခံခဲ့ရတဲ့အတွက်-2/>

¹¹ RFA Burmese | 3 March 2022 | Military Council Confiscates Home of Journalist Who Died During Interrogation <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/soenaing-home-closed-03032022150559.html>

¹² Interviewing the News Agency of Jailed Journalist

¹³ Interviewing a Witness

¹⁴ Interviewing Editor-in-Chief Who is Aiding Jailed Journalist

¹⁵ Interviewing Editor-in-Chief Who Is Aiding Jailed Journalist

subjected to beatings and other forms of abuse intended to degrade them. When political prisoners are moved to distant prisons, their families face an even greater burden, with increased travel, accommodation, and food expenses for visits.¹⁶ Some journalists have also been among those who have experienced such transfers.

Furthermore, families of journalist prisoners face numerous challenges when attempting to visit their loved ones. These challenges include paying unofficial fees for visitation, encountering various restrictions, enduring harsh checks and limitations on food deliveries. Visits are permitted only once a month and are limited to just 15 minutes. Additionally, families are required to cover the monthly expenses for prisoners in cash, with extra payments demanded if costs exceed the set amount.¹⁷

Based on the data collected and investigated to the fullest extent possible, some imprisoned journalists are suffering from skin diseases and rashes¹⁸, which, although not considered life-threatening, have arisen due to inadequate healthcare services for inmates and a lack of access to clean water. Furthermore, severe overcrowding in prisons has led to significant accommodation problems¹⁹, while the persistent risk of increased oppression against political prisoners remains a constant concern.²⁰

Media laws, interim administrations and current developments

The Printing and Publishing Law, News Media Law, and Television and Radio Broadcasting Law, enacted under the 2008 constitution, were the governing press laws when the Military Council staged the coup. However, following the coup, the Military Council amended these laws. It utilized the Printing and Publishing Law to revoke the licenses of 15 media agencies and the News

¹⁶ Interviewing Family Members of Jailed Journalists

¹⁷ Interviewing Editor-in-Chief Who Is Aiding Jailed Journalist

¹⁸ Interviewing Sources Close to Jailed Journalists

¹⁹ Interviewing Sources Close to Jailed Journalists

²⁰ MPA | 17 Nov 2022 | This Month Marks Increase in Oppression of Jailed Political Prisoners <https://mpapress.com/၁၁၀၆/56194/>

Media Law to authorize the formation of press councils. Despite this, the Military Council disregarded the law when arresting and imprisoning journalists. Additionally, the legal protections afforded to journalists failed to be effectively implemented under the oppressive rule of the Military Council.

Currently, independent media agencies are not fully operating under the laws imposed by the Military Council. Instead, they continue to adhere to journalistic ethics, press freedom standards, and self-discipline. These agencies are based in liberated areas, regions governed by interim administrations, border zones, and foreign countries, producing news about Myanmar. Some independent journalists and media organizations operate covertly within the country. In this context, some frictions and questions arise regarding independent media, including concerns about their legal status, the influence of administrative power, the potential for protection through armed forces, and the ability to guarantee press freedom.

In April 2024, the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC) issued Directive No. 08/2024, requiring media agencies to obtain prior permission for news coverage in Karenni State and to adhere to ethical reporting standards. Similarly, the Karen National Union (KNU) introduced a set of policy and ethical guidelines for external media organizations. The Independent Press Council Myanmar (IPCM) mediated these developments, reaching an agreement with the KNU on 7 August 2024 and finalizing a separate agreement with the IEC, announced on 23 October 2024.²¹

The IPCM also engaged with the Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army (PSLF/TNLA). During a meeting held on 6 September 2024, both parties discussed the recognition of the role of independent media, the importance of resolving media-related disputes, the need to uphold the right to freedom of information, and the promotion of media literacy. The meeting concluded with the signing of memorandum of understandings (MoUs) between the two sides.²²

In late September 2024, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) arrested two journalists based in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.²³ Independent media

²¹ Joint Statement of IPCM and IEC <https://ipcomm.org/လွတ်လပ်သော-မြန်မာသတင်း-2/>

²² Interviewing IPCM

²³ Kachin News Group | 2 Oct 2024 | KIA Detains Two Hpakant Journalists <https://burmese.kachinnews.com/2024/10/02/am1-186/>

agencies have faced not only the Military Council's harsh suppression of press freedom but also instances in which resistance forces and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), lacking adequate media literacy, have undermined press freedom, according to on-the-ground data. Furthermore, authorities in certain territories controlled by resistance groups or EAOs have imposed censorship²⁴ and restrictions on media operations.

Internet outages, information blackouts, and countermeasures

In 2024, 24 townships endured over 130 internet outages imposed by the Military Council. Both Kachin State and Arakan (Rakhine) State experienced complete internet blackouts at the state-wide level. In Chin State, the entire state except for the capital, Hakha, was likewise cut off from internet access.²⁵

Between the 2021 coup and the end of December 2024, the Military Council imposed 324 internet cut-offs across Myanmar, six of which led to complete nationwide blackouts.²⁶ According to the Myanmar Internet Project (MIP), the Military Council-imposed internet cut-offs 91 times in Sagaing Region and 34 times in Kachin State during that period. Even Yangon and Ayeyarwady regions, which saw the fewest deliberate outages, each experienced six internet blackouts. All other regions and states suffered at least ten or more shutdowns.²⁷ These measures clearly reflect the Military Council's intent to suppress the flow of information. The Military Council-imposed internet outages have significantly disrupted news production, flow of information, and hindered public access to accurate and reliable information, resulting in information blackouts.

²⁴ VOA Burmese | 3 Nov 2024 | Federal Radio: Standing Tall for Media Freedom <https://burmese.voanews.com/a/burma-democracy-forum-conversation-with-myanmar-federal-fm-founder/7849756.html>

²⁵ Myanmar Internet Project | 7 January 2024 | Digital Repression in Myanmar during 2024 Part 1 https://www.myanmarinternet.info/my/post/yearly_report_2024_part_1

²⁶ Myanmar Internet Project | 2 July 2024 | Analyzing Internet Shutdown and Damage to Digital Infrastructure https://www.myanmarinternet.info/my/post/blog_17_internet_infrastructure_shutdown

²⁷ Myanmar Internet Project | 2021-2024 | Internet Shutdown <https://www.myanmarinternet.info/my/internet-shutdown>

In response to these circumstances and in defiance of the Military Council's internet blackouts, independent media agencies have initiated alternative methods such as broadcasting FM radio and publishing printed journals. However, these efforts come with significant challenges, including infrastructure demands, increased operational costs, and heightened security risks. Additionally, ambiguous or inconsistent press freedom policies under interim administrative arrangements have resulted in censorship and other operational constraints.

Challenges to the sustainability of independent media

Independent media agencies organizations have adopted methods such as radio broadcasting^{28 29} and the publication of printed journals³⁰ to overcome information blackouts resulting from the Military Council's phone and internet shutdowns in territories under interim administrations and liberated areas. However, in pursuing these efforts, infrastructure requirements and the need for adjustments to media policies emerge.

The primary sources of revenue for media agencies organizations include funding, social media monetization, public service announcements (PSAs), advertising, membership and subscription sales, and content sales.³¹ Among these, most independent media agencies organizations rely heavily on funding to sustain their operations. Despite utilizing platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to disseminate news, independent media agencies generate limited revenue from monetization on these platforms.³² While PSAs³³ and advertising

²⁸ VOA Burmese | 3 Nov 2024 | Federal Radio: Standing Tall for Media Freedom <https://burmese.voanews.com/a/burma-democracy-forum-conversation-with-myanmar-federal-fm-founder/7849756.html>

²⁹ KT FM | Kantarawaddy Times Website <https://www.kantarawaddytimes.org/category/kt-fm/>

³⁰ DMG | Free Journal Published to Provide Truth to Information-Blackout Arakan People <https://www.dmgburmese.com/၁၁၁၁၁/trtgo.html>

³¹ Media Development Investment Fund | 13 Sep 2024 | The Business of Independent Myanmar Media Post-coup <https://www.mdif.org/news/the-business-of-independent-myanmar-media-post-coup/#t-u>

³² Myanmar Internet Project | 1 Oct 2024 | (Social) Media in Crisis <https://www.myanmarinternet.info/post/social-media-in-crisis>

³³ Media Development Investment Fund | 18 July 2022 | Independent Media's Struggle to Survive in Myanmar <https://www.mdif.org/news/independent-medias-struggle-to-survive-in-myanmar/>

serve as additional income sources, they do not provide enough financial support to effectively sustain media operations. Furthermore, not all revenue options are equally accessible or advantageous for all news agencies.

Additionally, under President Donald Trump's administration, the United States government eliminated many projects and funding initiatives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), leading to the suspension of \$1 million³⁴ in funding for two media development programs in Myanmar for the next three years. As a result, media professionals who depended on this funding for their salaries have abruptly lost their income. In response, the Independent Press Council Myanmar (IPCM) has offered emergency support to journalists from media organizations that have suspended operations for various reasons³⁵, receiving nearly 200 applications for the program. IPCM is currently working to help approximately 80 journalists who have been laid off.

Operational challenges and press freedom issues facing ethnic media

To assess the on-the-ground situation of press freedom, survey questions were distributed to member news organizations of Burma News International (BNI). The data gathered from their responses has been categorized under the following titles.

1 - Censorship

When surveyed about their experiences with censorship, the majority of BNI member news organizations indicated that they had not encountered direct censorship. However, some reported experiencing limited forms of censorship imposed by government bodies or other entities. Censorship was noted to exist in various forms, including external pressures from authorities or organizations and internal practices of self-censorship. Respondents acknowledged that they were not entirely free from all forms of censorship, with media organizations engaging in preemptive self-censorship to avoid potential repercussions. Some also noted that sources occasionally requested

³⁴ Irrawaddy Burmese | 7 February 2025 | Over 39 Million USD in Aid to Myanmar, Including for Media Sector, Suspended <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2025/02/07/396837.html>

³⁵ IPCM | 3 March 2025 | Announcement of Emergency Support Plans for Journalists <https://ipcomm.org/ကြေညာချက်အမှတ်-၄-၂၀၂၅-၁၁၁/>

to review news content prior to publication. Therefore, while overt censorship may not be widespread, news organizations cannot be considered entirely free from censorship.

2 - Threats and intimidations

When asked whether the news organizations had faced threats, more than half of the respondents reported experiencing threats one or more times in connection with stories they had published. These threats were commonly conveyed through messengers, emails, and phone calls. The reported threats included warnings of abduction, legal action, and death, as well as a specific threat of sexual violence against a female news anchor. One news outlet recounted a threat allegedly from subordinates of an ethnic leader, who expressed anger over a particular report. The threat included claims of knowing the outlet's location, plans to burn it down, knowledge of the anchor's home address, intentions to abduct and rape her, and a plan to murder the editor. Some responses also revealed incidents where threats extended beyond the news agencies to their sources, including warnings of harm to their families and destruction of their property.

3 - Security risks

Journalists working in highly volatile conflict zones are consistently exposed to the risks of airstrikes by the Military Council and landmines. According to media agencies that responded to the BNI survey, the need to work among various armed groups and endure rigorous checkpoint inspections further exacerbates these dangers. Additionally, the escalating costs of goods and transportation pose significant challenges, complicating their work even further.³⁶

Most news organizations are based in border areas and foreign countries.³⁷ One news organization that responded to the survey highlighted that being based in a foreign country makes the security of the newsroom a constant concern. Another response noted that, whether operating within the country, in liberated areas, on the border, or in neighboring Thailand, news agencies are continuously striving to deliver reliable, accurate, and truthful news to the public, despite ongoing concerns regarding security and legal status.

³⁶ Member Media Organizations of Burma News International (BNI)

³⁷ Survey Results from Members of Burma News International (BNI)

Journalists are often required to conceal their true identity when questioned at checkpoints during travel. The carrying of cameras and other news-related equipment also presents significant challenges. Additionally, when meeting with sources, journalists frequently face uncertainty regarding the reliability of those sources, especially from a security perspective.

4 - Challenges in accessing information

BNI surveyed member news organizations to evaluate the ease of accessing information from the National Unity Government (NUG), interim administration entities, armed organizations, and the Military Council. Respondents rated the most convenient source as 5 points. The average ratings were 2.5 for the NUG, 2.8 for interim administration entities, 2.6 for armed organizations, and 1.5 for the Military Council. When asked about the convenience of reporting in liberated areas, the average score was 3 out of 5. Overall, the landscape of information access across all sectors was rated at 2.3 points.

The figures clearly indicated that media access to information remains significantly constrained. Identified obstacles include the absence of designated personnel to respond to inquiries, delayed responses, and a lack of dedicated press channels such as official phone lines or email addresses for media enquiries. Journalists also face difficulties in safely identifying themselves as members of the press and in obtaining information without security-related concerns. Furthermore, media organizations reported additional challenges, such as bureaucratic procedures for requesting access to information and observable tendencies by some entities to control or influence media content.

Regarding press freedom, respondents indicated that the situation has significantly deteriorated since the military coup. Even the revolutionary government and resistance forces frequently express dissatisfaction with critical coverage directed at them, a concern regarded as requiring urgent attention, it was noted. Additionally, access to information from certain civil society organizations has become increasingly difficult, as some entities deliberately avoid or withhold engagement with media inquiries.

One response emphasized the importance of adhering to journalistic ethics in the pursuit of press freedom, noting that this period calls for careful consideration of the potential impact, reactions, and criticisms each report may generate—both in the process of news gathering and before and after publication.

Conclusion

The challenges facing the media have intensified each year since the coup. Myanmar has become one of the countries with the worst press freedoms, the highest number of journalists arrested, and the highest number of criminal charges levied against journalists. It is also one of the countries where most perpetrators of journalist deaths enjoy impunity. Additionally, the country is grappling with numerous setbacks, including severe violations of the rights of inmates imprisoned for their beliefs or political stances.

Moreover, due to a lack of media literacy and limited understanding of press freedom among relevant stakeholders, media agencies have been deprived of fair and just legal protections and guarantees. Access to essential infrastructure for media operations—such as internet connectivity, broadcasting capabilities, publishing platforms, and digital revenue channels—has also been obstructed, placing them in a precarious position marked by heightened vulnerability and dire hardships.

Independent media grapple with numerous challenges to their long-term sustainability and security, while also being forced to continually counter the deliberate spread of fake news, disinformation, and propaganda disseminated by supporters of the Min Aung Hlaing-led Military Council.

Despite operating under extremely harsh and unforgiving conditions, independent media remain committed to defending and upholding press freedom. It is therefore imperative that those who genuinely value press freedom take meaningful steps to support its survival and growth.

Recommendations of Burma News Agency (BNI)

As an organization that consistently advocates for press freedom, the development of ethnic and local media, their long-term sustainability, and the enhancement of their ability to produce quality news for the public, BNI recommends the following measures:

- (a) To immediately cease the arrest of media personnel and expedite the release of those currently detained or sentenced to long-term prison terms.
- (b) To prevent mental, physical, and sexual violence and abuse against all detained media personnel in prisons and interrogation centers.
- (c) To revoke unjust charges and verdicts against media personnel, as well as any orders or laws aimed at oppressing them.
- (d) To halt the suppression of press freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information through violent methods.
- (e) To call on neighboring countries such as Thailand, India, China, and Bangladesh to refrain from arresting media personnel fleeing Myanmar, and to allow their media operations to continue, upholding the principles of press freedom.
- (f) To acknowledge the critical importance of independent media, and for organizations that support the media to find new ways to nurture press freedom and ensure its long-term survival.
- (g) To strongly condemn and oppose the Military Council's actions of disrupting internet and phone lines and causing electricity outages with the intent of enforcing media blackouts.
- (h) To urge the National Unity Government (NUG), ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and resistance forces to respect and uphold press freedom, fostering an open and transparent media sector both now and in the future when the federal democratic union is established, and to promote the values and roles of ethnic and local media.
- (i) To assist the media in achieving independence and sustainability by securing income through ethical and appropriate methods, while also encouraging relevant media development organizations to contribute to these efforts.
- (j) To explore broader efforts in broadcasting news via airwaves and to actively support and promote the establishment of local radio and television broadcasting services.