



Journalists imprisoned in Myanmar for exposing Rohingya Massacre

February 2019

Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

John 3:20

Two Reuters journalists have been imprisoned for seven years in Myanmar for reporting on the massacre of the members of the Rohingya ethnic group.

The journalists, Wa Lone (aged 32) and Kyaw Soe Oo (aged 28) were investigating the massacre of 10 Rohingya in Inn Dinn village in Rakhine State by members of the military and some local people. They uncovered photos of the 10 victims tied up and kneeling before they were murdered. On 10 April 2018, the military announced that seven soldiers had been sentenced to 10 years in prison and were dismissed from the army for their part in the massacre.



The journalists were charged under the *Official Secrets Act* and were held in prison for nine months before being sentenced on 3 September 2018.

Reuters has said that the two were innocent and were simply doing their job by reporting on a massacre of Rohingya, and urged the court to dismiss the case.

The journalists have appealed their sentence, with the first hearing of the appeal having taken place on 24 December 2018. The appeal case is on-going. On 10 December 2018, Time Magazine named the two journalists among four people, as their Persons of the Year for 2018.

A police captain, Moe Yan Naing, testified at their trial that the police were ordered to set up the journalists by planting “secret papers” on them. He was subsequently sentenced to a year in prison in a secret trial after revealing the journalists had been set up. Non-governmental organisation PEN Myanmar gave Moe Yan Naing the “Outstanding Protector of Freedom of Expression” award on 22 December 2018 in recognition of his staunch defence of the truth despite the consequences.

Wa Lone’s wife, Pan Ei Mon, gave birth in a Yangon hospital early on Friday 10 August 2018 to a girl, named Thet Htar Angel. She is the couple’s first child.

“I’ve wished Wa Lone could be free since before I knew I was pregnant, and now I want him to be free even more,” Pan Ei Mon, 35, said as she cradled the baby.

Kyaw Soe Oo has also been parted with his daughter, three-year-old Moe Thin Wai Zan.

The Australian ambassador to Myanmar, Nicholas Coppel, told the media “Australia has watched this case very closely. Embassy staff have attended all the hearings and heard the evidence, including conflicting evidence presented by prosecution witnesses. We were therefore disappointed to hear that the journalists were found guilty.”

Wa Lone’s first job in journalism was with the *People’s Age* journal. In 2014, he joined the English-language *Myanmar Times*, covering the 2015 election that swept Nobel peace prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to power. Wa Lone wrote a children’s book and co-founded a charity that promotes tolerance between different ethnic groups and helps orphans. Wa Lone joined Reuters in 2016. His work on the crisis that erupted in Rakhine State in October 2016 won him a joint honorable mention from the Society of Publishers in Asia in its annual awards.

Kyaw Soe Oo is an ethnic Rakhine Buddhist who grew up in the state capital, Sittwe. He started his reporting career with the online *Rakhine Development News* and later worked at the Root Investigative Agency. He has been with Reuters since September 2017.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to (a letter to Myanmar will cost \$2.30 in postage):

U Win Myint

President
President's Office, Office No. 18
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Your Excellency

Lt. Gen. Kyaw Swe

Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
Office No. 10
Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

E-mail: mohamyanmar@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mr **Tha Aung NYUN**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
Myanmar
Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
22 Arkana Street
Yarralumla, ACT 2600

E-mail: mecanberra@gmail.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern at the imprisonment of journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo for exposing the massacre of ten people in Inn Dinn village.
- Ask that the case against them be dropped or that the President provide a pardon to provide for their immediate release.

Also write to:

Senator The Hon. Marise Payne

Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Thank the Australian Government for speaking publicly against the imprisonment of journalists Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in Myanmar for exposing the massacre of ten Rohingya in Inn Dinn village.
- Ask that the Australian Government continue to advocate for their release.