

January Chronology 2020

Summary of the Current Situation:

There are **647** individuals oppressed in Burma due to political activity.

73 are currently serving prison sentences,

141 are awaiting trial inside prison,

433 are awaiting trial outside prison.

Lawyer Kyi Myint and Poet Saw Wai held a press conference regarding their arrest warrant



Photo Credit: Myanmar Times



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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January in Review

January in Numbers

- Sentenced: 37
- Arrests: 2
- Charged: 8
- Released: 35

Freedom of Speech

It has been almost five years since the current government took over the power; however, the freedom of expression in Burma is still under threat. In addition, there has not been amendments to the laws that continue to oppress the freedom of speech of activists and civilians. In January, seven members of the Peacock Generation Thangyat Troupe were prosecuted and Wai Wan Phyo Moe, vice chairman of ABFSU, Ye Yint Kyaw, former executive ABFSU member, Thint Shein Soe, secretary of Myanmar Industries Craft and Services Trade Unions Federation, Zop Dot Sawm Naw, Kachin Literature and Culture Association chair, and writer Marn a.k.a Taung Lone Pyan, were sentenced for exercising their freedom of speech.

The continued presence of political prisoners is a sign of the loss of basic rights, including freedom of speech, in Burma. National reconciliation cannot be achieved as long as there are political prisoners. Accordingly, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) urges the government to build a free and fair society by amending the oppressive laws that are used to suppress the freedom of speech, releasing the remaining political prisoners who have been unfairly sentenced, discharging the case of those facing trial and respect and following the international standards of the freedom of speech.

Prison Reform

The prison reform process must also be a priority, in order to improve the human rights situation in Burma. A positive step in January is that a vocational school in Obo Prison in Mandalay has been constructed, the training will be provided from February and prisoners who are due to be released soon will be given priority for training in technical and electrical skills. Furthermore, more than 170 inmates across the country will take the matriculation exam this year. Although we welcome these steps, all inmates should also be provided with the opportunity for vocational training throughout the country. This will support the rehabilitation process after their release. In addition, the various issues including prison overcrowding still need to be addressed.

Land Issues

Land confiscation and disputes in Burma continue unabated and farmers continue to face oppression. In January, farmers' leader Nyein Maung, who lives in Palaung Village, Maubin Township, Ayeyarwaddy Division, had been sentenced to two years imprisonment under Section 10 of the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens. Moreover, more than 100 farmers from Ayeyarwaddy Division, 100 farmers from Saw and Pauk Townships in Magway Division, more than 30 farmers from Ottarathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw, farmers from Kyaukse Township in Mandalay Division, Gangaw Township in Magway Division, Hpa-an Township in Karen State and Sintgaing Township in Kyaukse District held a press conference and demonstrations.

As Burma is a country based on agriculture, it must protect and promote the interests of farmers. However, farmers struggle as they face land confiscation and disputes for many years. At the end of January, there are 15 farmers serving prison sentences, a total of 123 farmers are facing trial outside prison and 21 farmers are facing trial inside prison in relation to land confiscation and disputes. For this reason, AAPP urges the government to release the farmers who have been sentenced and discharge the cases of the farmers who are facing trial. Besides, we urge the government to enhance the farmers rights by following and respecting the [Law of Protection of the Farmer Rights and Enhancement of Their Benefits](#) and [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#) that was ratified by Burma.



Consequences of Conflict in Ethnic Areas

The indigenous people have long been targeted by the both ethnic armed groups and the Burma Army due to the unresolved armed conflicts in Burma and continue to face threats. With the serious fighting that has continued between the Burma Arma and the Arakan Army (AA) in January, human rights violations have continued to occur.

Arrests

- 16 villagers from Mae Lamong village under Ann Township in Arakan State were forced to work as guides in frontline areas by the security force as a column of army marched towards the military station located in the jungle. 14 of 16 villagers were released later and two are still in detention.
- According to Saw Mya, coordinator of the Khumi Affairs Coordination Council, Arakan Army (AA) arrested more than 130 residents in Kyi Lay Village, Paletwa Township, Chin State. The villagers were taken to carry rice for AA. In addition, the office of the Commander in chief released that the Arakan Army (AA) set fire to a Hyundai vehicle and abducted the driver, Wai Paing Moe from Shwe Kant Kaw bus line, near Mae Let Maung village along the Ann-Sittwe road. But, A) has denied the accusation.

Tortures

- A woman, identified as Ma Hla, from Kha MOUNG Taw village in Ann Township in Arakan State has been hospitalized after allegedly being tortured by the army. Burma army soldiers poured scalding water on her body and cut her legs with a knife. (Colonel Win Zaw Oo, a spokesperson for the Tatmadaw's Western Command, denied the allegations)
- Ko Gyi from Kam Hton Gyi sub-town under Meabon township was hospitalized with injuries after the security forces released him. Ko Gyi was tortured during the interrogation.
- Arakan Army (AA) fighter reportedly beat community elders after attempted rape an ethnic Khumi woman, in Chin State's Paletwa Township and tied youths under the sun and told them to bring rice and rations according to the Khumi Affairs Coordination Council (KACC).

Murders

- A school principal and two villagers who had gone missing in southern Chin State's Paletwa Township were found dead. (the Khumi Affairs Coordination Committee (KACC) said that the three men are believed to have been arrested by the Arakan Army (AA))
- Military accused Arakan Army (AA) of torturing and killing three vendors, Myo Htike Win, Yarzar Tun and Soe Naing a.k.a Ko Yin Gyi from Ponnakar village, Ye-U Township, ShweBo District, Sagaing Region. However, AA denied that they did not kill the vendors.

Releases

- A total of 30 civilians, living in Mrauk-U, Minbya, Rathedaung, Kyauktaw Townships in Arakan State and Paletwa Township in Chin State, who were arrested and faced trial, were released by the respective courts because there was no substantial evidence that proved their linkage to Arakan Army
- The Arakan Army (AA) released 16 Transport Ministry staff, Chin state lawmaker Whei Tin, Mytel deputy managing director, Zaw Tun Aung, and his driver, Soe Thein Maung

Throughout the country indigenous peoples are affected due to a lack of peace. Moreover, armed groups have continued to avoid accountability and responsibility for these human rights abuses. The Burma Army released a statement on the final report of the Independent Commission of Enquiry-ICOE on 21 January, according to the Burma Army True News Information Team. [The statement](#) stated that the court of inquiry will continue investigations regarding any wrongdoings by those within the chain of command and the Office of the Judge Advocate General will take action in conformity with military justice procedures if there is credible evidence of any commission of offence by members of the Burma Army. In addition, the president office published a press release stating that [the President concurs with the recommendations of the Commission, that there needs to be further criminal investigations and, where the evidence is compelling, prosecutions.](#)

[On January 23, the International Court of Justice ruled to impose provisional measures on Burma and decided four points including Burma take steps to prevent further acts of genocide.](#)

We welcome investigations into human rights abuses and urge the government to provide justice for those indigenous peoples who have suffered. In addition, we urge the government to sign and ratify the [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(UNCAT\)](#) and [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) in order to protect against human rights abuses and to respect civil and political rights.



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