



MEDIA RELEASE

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Burmese journalists need our support: MEAA

Australia must do more to support Burmese journalists who have been forced to flee Myanmar following the military coup in February.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance has urged Foreign Minister Marise Payne to issue a stronger condemnation of the military junta's attacks on freedom of expression, and to provide safe haven to journalists fearing persecution.

Since the junta seized power journalists have been beaten and shot, at least 85 have been arrested, more than 40 detained and several jailed for up to three years. Independent media outlets have been stripped of their licences to operate, and dozens of warrants have been issued for the arrest of other journalists.

Burmese journalists are in hiding not only in Myanmar but elsewhere in the region, seeking safety from persecution and violence. However, Thailand has just sentenced three Burmese journalists to seven months jail and fined them for entering the country.

"The situation for Burmese journalists is desperate," said MEAA Media Federal President Marcus Strom. "They face daily risks of arrest or worse both in Myanmar and Thailand, yet they continue to bravely do their work so the rest of the world knows the situation following the coup.

"Australia must use its moral authority to condemn the junta's attacks on press freedom, and our government should be supporting and protecting Burmese journalists where it is needed."

MEAA has asked the Australian Government to:

- Issue a statement urging Thailand to provide stronger condemnations of the attacks on freedom of expression in Myanmar and support the safe relocation of journalists under threat in their territory.
- Hold private demarches and otherwise engage with local authorities to underscore their obligation to human rights standards and encourage protective action.
- Provide safe haven, security and support for journalists facing immediate threats in Thailand, including facilitating their relocation to Australia if sought.
- Identify and send case referrals to emergency assistance programs.
- Work with and support local and regional civil society organisations located in India and Thailand in aiding journalists facing threatening situations or otherwise struggling to conduct their work, including funding, technical and material assistance, and by fostering effective support networks.

MEAA is encouraging donations to the Media Safety and Solidarity Fund which will organise for emergency assistance to be distributed to Burmese journalists in Thailand through the Foreign Correspondents Club there.

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