



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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AAPP condemns today's sentencing of two Reuter's journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo for 7 seven years in jail under Act 3.1 of the Official Secrets Act. The two men have been in jail since December 2017, separated from their families for over 8 months, for simply doing their jobs as journalists and for exercising their democratic rights.

They were arrested on the 12 December under Act 3 of the Official Secrets Act for allegedly possessing classified documents. They have not received a fair trial and the case has been fraught with legal malpractice. On July 9th, they both plead not guilty to charges of violating the official secrets act. They said they were following "journalistic ethics".

They have been repeatedly harassed, kept in stress positions and denied sleep while in interrogation. Their trial has been unnecessarily delayed and drawn out. Just last week their hearing was delayed for another week with only a minute's notice, with the judge citing ill health. Since their imprisonment Wa Lone's wife has given birth.

The case raises real concerns regarding the impartiality of the judicial system in Burma. Both parliaments must review the Official Secrets Act, and make sure that the law should not be applied to journalists. The application of such law to journalists should be condemned and action taken to ensure what happened with Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo cannot happen again.

Journalism is not a crime. This case is another worrying back step for freedom of expression and press freedoms in Burma. There is a need for fair and free reporting, such reporting has become incredibly dangerous in the shrinking space available for freedom of expression within Burma. The government must protect such kind of investigative journalism and ensure journalists do not get arrested for doing their jobs.

Burma needs a free and fair media. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo need to be released and return to their families. Today is a dark day for freedom of expression in Burma.

In Solidarity.