

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/burma-journalist-gets-three-month-jail-23-12-2013,45663.html>

Asia - Burma

Dangerous conviction

Journalist gets three-month jail sentence for her reporting

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Reporters Without Borders is outraged by the three-month jail sentence that **Ma Khine**, a woman reporter with the *Eleven Media Group*, received last week from a court in Loikaw, 500 km north of Rangoon.

Ma Khine was convicted of defaming a lawyer, trespassing on the lawyer's property while interviewing her, and "using abusive language." Reporters Without Borders expresses its full support for Ma Khine and all the other employees of Eleven Media.

"This sentence was passed two weeks after *Eleven Media's* daily newspaper ran a story headlined 'When bags of money replace judges in court' about endemic corruption in the judicial system," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We urge Loikaw's judges to reexamine the facts of this case when it comes up for appeal and to reach a decision that respects the rights of journalists. A news organization should not have to incur the risk of criminal proceedings and, in this case, the conviction of one of its reporters, because of its news coverage. Freedom of information is at stake."

Ma Khine was convicted in connection with her reporting on 27 October, when she was doing a story on the illegal renting of movies and went with Than Zaw Win, the owner of a movie rental store who had been fined 100,000 kyats, to the home of the lawyer Aye Aye Phyo.

The lawyer agreed to be interviewed but, when Ma Khine asked her how much she charged for handling a case, she got angry, ordered Ma Khine and Than Zaw Win to leave, and summoned her father, who is president of the National League for Democracy in Loikaw.

Aye Aye Phyo accused Ma Khine of forcing her way into their home and of insulting and defaming her as she left. Ma Khine said she left because she was being threatened.

After Ma Khine was sentenced on 17 December, *Eleven Media* issued a statement and wrote to the president, the justice minister and parliament calling for an investigation into judicial corruption and bias in the trial and its outcome. The United Nations, embassies and media rights groups were also alerted.

According to *Eleven Media*, Ma Khine's conviction constitutes a denial of justice and a direct threat to journalists and to freedom of information, and violates article 354 of the constitution guaranteeing freedom of expression and opinion for all citizens.

Eleven Media insists that Ma Khine did not enter Aye Aye Phyo's home until invited to do so and after clearly identifying herself as a journalist, and left when asked. The group has also announced its intention to file a complaint anyone threatening *Eleven Media* and its journalists.

Burma is ranked 151st out of 179 countries in the 2013 [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#), 18 places higher than its 2012 position.

Credit photo : Eleven
