

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/birmanie-zarganar-freed-but-dvb-video-12-10-2011,41178.html>

Asia - Burma

Incomplete amnesty

## Zarganar freed, but DVB video journalists still held

12 October 2011

Reporters Without Borders hails today's release of the blogger and comedian **Zarganar** from Myitkyina prison, in the northern state of Kachin, under a "general amnesty" affecting dozens of political prisoners, but urges the government to pursue this conciliatory policy by freeing all detained bloggers and journalists including [17 Democratic Voice of Burma video journalists](#).

"We are happy that Zarganar will finally be reunited with his family," Reporters Without Borders said. "This wave of releases is an initial gesture, an important one whose scope we fully appreciate. But it must be followed by other gestures that will steer the country towards more freedom and democracy.

"We hope the government will quickly free all the prisoners of conscience, including the many journalists and netizens who are unjustly imprisoned, and that it will quash their convictions and drop all outstanding charges. Bloggers, journalists and all other media workers must eventually be allowed to operate freely in Burma. This will require major reforms, including repeal of the Electronics Act, which has so often been used to censor all forms of expression in Burma."

The Burmese exile media reported Zarganar's release from Myitkyina prison at around 11 a.m. today. He was able to talk to his family and give an interview in which he said he wanted to go back to work. The comedian, whose real name is Ko Thura, turned 50 on 12 January while still in prison. He is suffering from jaundice and hypertension and needs medical care.

Arrested on 4 June 2008 after talking to the *BBC World Service* and other foreign news media about the military's mismanagement of relief operations after Cyclone Nargis and its guilty silence on the subject, Zarganar was sentenced to 35 years in prison under the Electronics Act. He and fellow blogger **Nay Phone Latt** were awarded the Reporters Without Borders press freedom prize in the "Cyber-dissident" category in 2008.

Seventeen video journalists employed by *Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB)*, a radio and TV station run by Burmese exiles, are still being held after receiving long jail sentences. See [DVB's "Free Burma VJ" campaign](#)

The detained *DVB* journalists include **Hla Hla Win**, who is serving a 27-year sentence, and **Sithu Zeya**, 21, who was [sentenced](#) to eight years in prison last December for photographing the damage caused by a grenade explosion in Rangoon in April 2010, and was given an additional 10-year sentence in September.

His father, **Maung Maung Zeya**, is serving a 13-year sentence for supervising *DVB's* team of video journalists, **Ngwe Soe Lin**, is serving a 13-year sentence for helping to make a *DVB* documentary about children orphaned by Cyclone Nargis (which received a Channel 4 award), and **Win Maw** is serving a 17-year sentence.

Nay Phone Latt (<http://www.nayphonelatt.net/>) is one of several bloggers still being held. The owner of three Rangoon Internet cafés, he was sentenced on 10 November 2008 to 20 years and six months in prison for posting blog entries about the difficulties that young Burmese encounter in expressing themselves freely.

Fellow blogger **Kaung Myat Hlaing** was sentenced to 10 years in prison on 2 February for his

alleged role in a poster campaign calling for the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners. Arrested in April 2010, he had had previously been given a two-year jail sentence.

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