

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/burma-japanese-photographer-s-murder-27-09-2013,45245.html>

Asia - Burma

Duty to remember

Japanese photographer's murder still unpunished six years later

27 September 2013

Today is the sixth anniversary of Japanese photographer **Kenji Nagai's** [fatal shooting by a soldier in Rangoon](#) during the military dictatorship. Since Nagai's death, the military have relinquished power and many reforms have got under way, but his murder is still unpunished.

Reporters Without Borders has not forgotten this tragedy and reiterates the [appeal it made to President Thein Sein](#) in July.

"When the Burmese president visited France in July, we urged him to create a commission of enquiry dedicated to combatting impunity for crimes against news providers since 1962," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We call now for an investigation into Kenji Nagai's murder as a first step towards recognition of the many crimes against journalists and we appeal to the authorities to do everything possible to ensure that the camera that soldiers took from his body is returned to his family.

"When deputy information minister Ye Htut visited Reporters Without Borders headquarters in Paris in July, he said the time had not yet come for the government to examine Burma's painful past.

"Nonetheless, the appeal by the 88 generation students – during an event on 8 August marking the military government's bloody crackdown 25 years ago – for recognition of the blood crimes against more than 3,000 Burmese citizens showed the urgency of the population's need for the past to be remembered.

"We hail the progress that the government has made in the past two years but a clear determination to solve past crimes against journalists is needed in order to ensure that its efforts to improve freedom of information are credible."

Nagai, who was working for the Japanese news agency *APF*, was shot dead by a soldier at close range while in a crowd of demonstrators on a Rangoon street with his camera in his hand on 27 September 2007, during the Saffron Revolution.

A Japanese embassy physician later confirmed that the bullet that killed him penetrated his heart after entering through the chest, proving that he had been shot head on. Fellow journalist **Tsutomu Haringey**, a colleague of Nagai's, told Reporters Without Borders that he and other journalists tried to recover Nagai's video camera "in order to pay a last tribute to his courageous work." A video, shot by Burmese journalists and broadcast by the Japanese media in 2007, showed that a soldier took Nagai's Sony camera from his body.

President Thein Sein likes to proclaim that military rule is over, that his country is opening up and that information is flowing more freely. But many serious problems still need to be addressed, including impunity for Nagai's murder and the failure to return his camera.

Nagai's death is not isolated. **Ne Win**, a correspondent for the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* who was arrested in October 1990, died in hospital while still in detention in May 1991. The official cause of death was cirrhosis of the liver.

Ba Thaw, a newspaper cartoonist also known as **Maung Thaw Ka, Saw Win**, the editor of the daily *Botahtaung*, and **Thar Win**, a photographer with the government newspaper *Kyemon*, all died in Burmese detention centres between June 1991 and September 1999.

Tin Maung Oo, a photographer who often worked for the National League for Democracy (NLD), died as a result of being beaten over the head by the junta's civilian auxiliaries as he was trying to photograph an attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade in Depayin in May 2003.

Burma rose 18 places in the [2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) and is now ranked 151st out of 179 countries.

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