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<http://www.rsf.org/burma-win-tin-s-fight-for-press-freedom-23-04-2014,46188.html>

Asia - Burma

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Win Tin's fight for press freedom and democracy goes on

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Reporters Without Borders is deeply saddened to learn of the death of the dissident journalist **Win Tin** in Rangoon on 21 April. Burma has lost one of its staunchest defenders of democracy and freedom of information.

"His fight and his progressive ideas on basic freedoms will continue to inspire journalists, writers and intellectuals of all kinds in Burma and elsewhere in the world," said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire.

"Like Gandhi in India or Mandela in South Africa, Win Tin stands among the giants that remain models for the generations that follow."

Win Tin, editor of the daily *Hanthawathi* until it was banned in 1978, was arrested and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in 1989, on charges including providing the UN special rapporteur for Burma with information about the jail conditions and ill-treatment of detainees in the notorious Insein prison.

It is 25 years since he was imprisoned and the issues are still the same. In a report last month, the current UN rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, again highlighted the dangers facing journalists who publish news that is in the public interest. Four journalists from the *Unity Weekly* and its chief executive are currently detained and face charges of disclosing state secrets after they exposed the existence of a secret chemical weapons plant.

Two other journalists have been convicted for looking too closely into corruption cases. Last December, a journalist from the newspaper *Daily Eleven* was [sentenced to three months' imprisonment](#), while a reporter from the *Democratic Voice of Burma*, **Zaw Phay**, was [jailed for a year](#) for investigating the local government's management of a scholarship program in Magwe province.

At the start of Win Tin's 18th and penultimate year in prison, Reporters Without Borders noted the journalist's stance in support of freedom of expression and democracy "cannot allow us to forget the criminal attitude of the military junta".

The organization, while acknowledging the huge progress in freedom of information, made a [new appeal to President Thein Sein](#) for an investigation into the systematic and unpunished crimes and abuses endured by journalists and bloggers under the military junta.

"So far no one has been convicted of the murders of Burmese and foreign journalists by the military, especially during the saffron revolution," said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

Since the "[Burmese spring](#)", reforms have opened the country up to the world and set the government on the path to democracy, but there is still a long way to go before Win Tin's ideals become a reality. Burma is ranked 145th of 180 countries in the [«World Press Freedom Index](#) published by Reporters Without Borders in February this year.

"Recent legal proceedings against journalists who were merely doing their job lawfully, the approval of media laws that do not meet international standards and self-censorship which, where some sensitive subjects are concerned, now replaces the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division, better known as the "censorship office", these are all challenges that the heirs to the fight for freedom of information, for which Win Tin gave his life, must tackle. The country's democratic transition is far from over. We should not forget that freedom of the press is its cornerstone."

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