

In 2015 UPR, Myanmar supported eight recommendations regarding the freedom of expression and calling for the legal reform. However, Myanmar has not seen any amendment of problematic legal provisions of the laws is in line with international human rights standards.

During the four years, journalists have not been granted full access to armed conflict areas. 67 journalists were charged while some other counterparts faced extortion, reprisal, death threat for their critical reporting. Murder cases of some critical journalists have not been effectively and adequately investigated.

Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law is still problematic to the industry. The superficial amendment of Broadcasting Law still ensures the government's control on broadcasting sector with the delay of the establishment of Broadcasting Council due to the government's failure to adopt by-laws.

National Record and Archive Law that was enacted in 2019, empowers the government to classify the information for up to 30 years and more.

Myanmar government also usually attempted to hinder information on atrocities and human rights abuses in armed conflict areas. In 2020, it has blocked the access to hundreds of news websites.

Meanwhile, Telecommunications Law was increasingly used. Electronic Transactions Law and Computer Science Development Law have not even been promised to amend. The amended Law Protecting the Privacy Security of Citizens, still lacks of enough definition of "privacy". Besides, Myanmar has no lawful interception framework and no legislation protecting personal data. But the government introduced the mandatory SIM registration in early 2020.

The internet shutdown in Rakhine and Chin States was ceased on August 2, 2020 but only 2G internet connection was restored, rendering it still difficult to even send an email.

Myanmar is now suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic which has gigantic negative impact on situation of public health especially in those States where people mainly rely on the social media to gather health information to protect themselves from coronavirus.

Therefore, I would like to state these important recommendations to Myanmar government.

1. Immediately end prosecutions against journalists
2. Immediately restore the 4G internet connection in Rakhine and Chin State
3. Amend the laws that cannot fully protect and that violate the media freedom and digital rights including Telecommunications Law, News Media Law and Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law
4. Grant the full access to journalists to armed conflict areas.
5. Enact a lawful interception framework and data protection law in line with the international standards.

Aung Khant

Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization