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Tatmadaw drops charges against journalists

THE Tatmadaw dropped charges yesterday against six journalists, one activist and one performance group facing trial on offences ranging from defamation to unlawful association, stating it wanted to work with the media in the interests of the country and its people.

The legal action had sparked fears over curbs on free speech during Myanmar's transition from decades of military rule to a democratic government.

"Recognising that working together with same intentions for the interests of the country and the people, and in order to keep on working together for the national interest of the country and the people, the Tatmadaw decided to forgive and drop charges against the personnel and media," said the statement.

The Tatmadaw took legal action because coverage by some media had "disgraced the image, the dignity and the activity of the Tatmadaw," it added.

The reporters were arrested in late June for covering an event organised by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, an ethnic militia engaged in a stand-off with government troops.

Pyae Phone Aung, Their



Journalists Pyae Phone Aung, left, and Their Zaw, centre, raise their hands after being released in Hsipaw, Shan State yesterday. **PHOTO: REUTERS**

Zaw and Aye Naing were charged under a colonial-era law against "unlawful association".

"We journalists were just doing our work, but we were charged and spent more than 60

days in jail", Pyae Phone Aung, one of the reporters arrested on 26 June in northeastern Shan state, told Reuters by telephone from the court where his trial was being held.

Pyae Phone Aung, Their Zaw and Aye Naing were released from jail yesterday in Hsipaw, Shan State.

The three other journalists against whom charges were also

dropped are U Wai Phyoo, Chief Editor of the Daily Eleven Newspaper, U Kyaw Min Swe, Chief Editor of the Voice Daily and U Ko Ko Maung, a satire writer.

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11,720 evacuated from Maungtau

MORE than 11,720 ethnic people from villages in areas affected by terrorist violence in northern Rakhine have been evacuated, according to a government information committee.

About 52 armed clashes occurred between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) extremist terrorists from 25th August to date, leaving some ter-

rorists dead and several arrested.

A total of 2,625 houses from Kotankauk, Myinlut and Kyikanpyin villages and two wards in Maungtau were burnt down by the ARSA extremist terrorists, according to the government information committee.

While fleeing from the attacks, 14 civilians, including seven Hindu people, three ethnic

people and four Rakhine people were killed by ARSA extremist terrorists. Two were injured and two are still missing, according to the information committee.

In the fighting against the terrorists from 25 to 31 August, two soldiers and 11 policemen were killed. Five soldiers and 10 policemen were injured and one soldier is missing.

About 38 clashes occurred just on Friday, the committee said.

Around 38,000 Muslims from Rakhine State have crossed into Bangladesh from Myanmar, United Nations sources said, a week after ARSA extremist terrorists attacked police posts and an army base in Rakhine State, prompting clashes and a military

counteroffensive.

"As of August 31, 38,000 people are estimated to have crossed the border into Bangladesh," the officials said yesterday.

The army says it is conducting clearance operations against ARSA extremist terrorists and security forces have been told to protect civilians.

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Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint holds talk with Mr. Hong Liang, Chinese Ambassador in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Speaker U Win Myint receives Chinese Ambassador

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U Win Myint received Mr. Hong Liang, Chinese Ambassador at the Guest room of Pyithu Hluttaw, Nay Pyi Taw, at 2:00 pm yesterday.

During the meeting, matters on bilateral friendship and

promoting cooperation were discussed.

The meeting was presented by Deputy Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat and officials from the Pyithu Hluttaw office.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Hacked government websites repaired

MYANMAR websites that were defaced in a cyber-attack have been repaired, according to an announcement by a government information committee.

Yesterday morning five government websites, www.forestdepartment.gov.mm, www.dryzonegreening.gov.mm, www.tnrpmoecaf.gov.mm, www.surveydepartment.gov.mm and www.myanmarchm.gov.mm came under cyber-attack and in some cases defaced.

As soon as it was known,

counter measures were provided by the Myanmar Computer Emergency Response Team (mmCERT) and the websites were repaired.

If other websites in Myanmar come under similar cyber-attack, technical assistance can be obtained at mmCERT, national cyber security center, Department of Information Technology and Cyber Security, phone 01-650891, 067-3422633 or e-mail: technicalteam@mmcert.org. mm—Myanmar News Agency

Donations invited for people affected by terrorist attacks in Rakhine

Authorities announced hotlines for donating aid to people affected by terrorist attacks in Rakhine State.

People who want to donate aid for Rakhine people who fled from extremist terrorist attacks can make a contact to the following hotline numbers, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement: the director (Finance), the Relief and Resettlement department (Head Office), Nay Pyi Taw, 067-404316;

U Kyaw Myo Nyunt, deputy director, department of Social Welfare (Head Office), Nay Pyi Taw, 067-404222; U Aye Min Nyunt, deputy director, department of Social Welfare (Head Office), Nay Pyi Taw, 067-404999; the director, Yangon Region Staff officer's office, 01-522726/01-661812/01-651080/09-49266048; and the director, Mandalay Region Staff officer's office, 02-39457/09-43120867.—Myanmar News Agency

Interview with Mro IDPs from KhaingGyi, Rakhine

On 3 August, armed terrorists entered KhaingGyi (Mro village) in Maungtaw Township and attacked the local Mro ethnic farmers, killing 7 and one person is currently missing.

The Myanmar News Agency interviewed the remaining family of the deceased who fled to KhaingGyi (Natala village) and IDPs in Maungtaw (4mile) basic education high school.—Myanmar News Agency

U San Htun from KhaingGyi (Mro Village)

“My youngest brother, Linn Kyat, and my eldest son, Kone Paing, were killed in those attacks. Our Mro people have been working happily in the woods for generations. We have never experienced anything like this before. The attacks started around 8 in the morning on the hillside farms where we work.”

“There’s a hut near the farms where we sharpen our mattocks and machetes. There were three men and three women in the hut when the attacks happened. We rushed to the hut when we heard gunshots and we found some bodies lying there.”

“When security forces arrived we tried to recover the bodies but two were missing. We



searched the area three times and we managed to recover one body but we suspect the terrorists threw the other body into the river to erase their traces.”

“We say it was a terrorist attack based on the evidence we found there. There is a terrorist camp in the Mayu Mountains

and we heard it has tunnels. We heard the military destroyed their camp. Our village is the only village around here so they may have tried to kill us thinking we can point out their locations. We don’t know if the terrorists are still here on the Mayu Mountains.”

“We want to report this to the higher ups because we want to live peacefully near the Rakhine villages. We have about 4 to 5 acres of hillside farms and the crops are ripe and will probably be eaten by the wild animals and other creatures to come. We want to be relocated near KhaingGyi (Rakhine village) or the Zawmathet group and we would like three acres of farmland each.”

U Mahn Mine (Mro ethnic)

“I am from KhaingGyi (Mro village). I lost a son and a daughter-in-law during the attack on 3 August. They left behind a one year old child. The hut and farms are a mile away from our village. We fled to Maungtaw because we feared for our lives and we’re taking shelter at the (4mile) school here.”

“We couldn’t bring anything with us. Some of us moved to

KhaingGyi from Chaungphyar two years ago. We were farmers but now we don’t know what to do. About 25 families from my village fled to Maungtaw while the rest fled to KhaingGyi (Rakhine village). We told the Chief Minister when he arrived here that we want to move to somewhere that is safe and secure. We had a primary school built by ourselves back in our village”



U Zaw Naing Oo (KhaingGyi Mro village, primary school teacher)



“Since KhaingGyi is located in the woods we only had farming to do. The terrorist attacks killed five Mro ethnic women and three men. We heard the terrorists later attacked police outposts so we were too scared to continue staying there. It’s been three days since we got here. We had a primary school with 42 students in our village. It was self-made, not

opened by the government.”

“The attacks happened in the farms far away from the village. The government has provided us with provisions and cash donations. The Mro people mostly live in the northern parts of Maungtaw Township and also in the southern parts in Seinpan Myaing, Shwe Baho and KhaingGyi (Mro village).”

Tatmadaw drops charges against journalists, activists

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They were charged with defamation for their articles critical of the military on the basis of several laws, including a broadly worded telecoms law that critics say restricts free speech.

Charges were also dropped against two other civilians, U Htin Kyaw, also known as Kyaw Htin, and a performance group known as “Kaytu Oh-Wai” led by Wai Yan Thein, who is also known as Victor.

In the statement sent to the

Myanmar Press Council, the military also asked the council to help in strengthening mutual understanding and trust between the Tatmadaw and the media, expressing hopes to see unbiased media coverage in the future. — MNA, Reuters