Date : 10 June 2018

PRESS RELEASE: CHARGES AGAINST REUTERS JOURNALISTS APPALLING SHAM OF JUSTICE

10 July, 2018, London U.K. - Burma Human Rights Network strongly condemns the Burmese court's decision to charge Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo with violating 3.1(c) of the archaic Official Secrets Act and calls for their immediate release. The court's decision demonstrates clearly that Burma is nowhere near the reformed country the international community had longed hoped it was becoming. The charges against the reporters are not only based on an outdated and anti-democratic law, but there is no evidence the law was even violated. If found guilty Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo may face up to 14 years in prison. The men were arrested while they were investigating mass killings of Rohingya Muslims by Burma's security forces.

Kyaw Win, Executive Director of BHRN said, "The court's decision to charge Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo for doing their jobs is a clear indication that Burma remains an oppressive and undemocratic country even under Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's authority. This is sending a signal to other journalists that doing their jobs honestly and with integrity will be punished severely. It is an absolute travesty of justice. These men should be released immediately"

Burma has a long history of arresting reporters and controlling the press. While some believed reforms would change this, recent years have shown Burma to be increasingly repressive and threatening against the media. Burma has at least 11 specific laws utilized to hinder speech and media, most of which are ambiguously worded and designed to protect the Government and Military from criticism. These laws include the Official Secrets act, criminal defamation, sedition, the Telecommunications Act, the Contempt of Courts act and several others, all of which have been used by the government to limit press and free speech.

Burma must immediately and unconditionally release Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. Any further time spent on this case will continue to stain Burma's image in the world and solidify them as an oppressive and anti-democratic state that invests in the protection of war criminals instead of the honest work of those who would expose them. The International Community must take action to pressure Burma to release these journalists immediately to reverse the message that is being sent both to the people of Burma, the press and the world.

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Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

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