

Press freedom and reporting on the government in Myanmar

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I grew up in An Tien, a small village in the north of Vietnam. My main source of information was the loudspeaker, blasting propaganda throughout the village, and much later a black and white, 14 inch Japanese JVC television set. We only watched TV during dinner time and the 7 pm newscast was the closest thing to news and international news that I was exposed to. At that time, there was a lot of news about the war between Palestine and Israel. It was defined in my mind that Palestine was on the good side of the war and the Israelis were the bad guys, of course together with the Americans. In fact, every country which sided with the Americans were bad people, the notion faded after several years, especially after 1995 when President Bill Clinton opened a new chapter of relationship between our two countries.

I graduated from college with a degree in teaching English and I had no particular interest in any kind of job. I knew that I had no desire to teach and I knew I wanted to be on the Internet all the time. The Internet was new and exciting in 2004. My father gave me two weeks to find a job in the city, or else I would have to go back home to be a high school English teacher. I answered the first job I saw advertised and was offered the position. It was with the VnExpress website. On the first day after I graduated, I joined the International News Desk of VnExpress, today the most popular online newspaper in Vietnam.

My job then was just to translate news from international news websites to Vietnamese. Most of them were quick, breaking news stories. Sometimes my editor

would give me a good analysis piece.

One day in August 2004, my editor sat me down for a serious talk about selecting news. She could not believe I just translated an article lambasting Cuba, one of the remaining communist countries in the world. She did most of the talking during our 30 minute conversation, and I nodded understandingly. She said we should tread lightly while reporting anything about China. Stories about countries such as Cuba and Myanmar should be carefully chosen, best not to publish anything negative about them. The safest bet is to not say anything about them at all. That was my first lesson about self-censorship. I believe all of the new journalists in Vietnam had to go through that kind of talk at some point during their first days. It became common sense knowledge, which one of my foreign diplomat friend jokingly said that Vietnamese journalists knew where the lines were.

I came to the Missouri School of Journalism, wanting to learn more about a free-press, multimedia journalism, and my passion, international journalism. I worked for Global Journalists as a student writer as well as a radio producer. This helped me find my ideas for my professional project.

In the spring of 2012, my fellow student, Molly Bullock, and I did a timeline story on the changes in Myanmar with the newly elected government and the participation of The Lady Aung San Suu Kyi in the political scene. Hopes for a better press freedom were realized in August 2012 when the government announced the abolishment of the central censorship bureau, which was named the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division. Private media were allowed to publish daily newspapers while exiled media were allowed

to come back to the country and foreign media were giving access and offices in Yangon. The sudden change from a completely isolated country to an open one; from a ruthless military rule to civilian democratic government; from an oppressed press to a free to explore press surprises everyone to say the least. It did baffle me. What made the junta, military government, open up and let the international community step in.

Two years after the announcement, one year after private daily newspapers are on the newsstand and, with the 2015 elections just around the corner, it is an interesting time to do an investigation on the state of press freedom in a newly open country.

I came to Washington DC to do an internship with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, working on multimedia projects and research while researching on my subject. Thanks to a scholarship from the Lee Hills Chair in Free-Press Studies and the East-West Center in Hawaii, I was able to join a group of Missouri Journalism students covering the East-West Center conference on freedom of the press held in Yangon, Myanmar. The trip deepened my knowledge about the country and the state of press freedom in Myanmar and was a great help to my project.

I have always wanted to be a foreign correspondent and this has not changed since I started graduate school. Ideally, the next job that I have will combine my love for international news reporter and my skill as a multimedia journalist. This project has helped me grow greatly.

Chapter 2: Field Notes

Week 1 (8/19/2013 - 8/24/2013)

Dear Professors,

I hope your Monday has been great so far, and you're enjoying the campus full of students, again. I, for one, really miss Columbia's open spaces and smiling faces.

My first week went well. It was a bit of an adjustment from Columbia to Washington, D.C., but the process was not as painful as I expected.

I started working for the UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) on Wednesday by reading a lot of materials about the organizations, and the type of work that former interns used to do. They have some ongoing projects they want me to take on, including a social media campaign, which ended the week before last. Last week, they wanted me to write a report on agencies in the UN system which work on women empowerment and gender issues. They also wanted me to write a substantial report on the campaign based on the tweets with #coveringmigration hashtag. I'm going to work on that this week.

Since I'm working remotely, my supervisor, Stephanie Durand, and I agreed to have two conference calls during the week on Tuesdays and Thursdays and contact by emails in between. I soon will schedule my two trips to UNAOC office in New York, one possibly in mid September and one in early November.

I haven't done a lot of research this week. I plan on talking to a group of American journalists who went to Burma in the summer on a fellowship granted by Global Post. I'm sure their insights can be useful. In the mean time, if you have any suggestions for my proposal and people I should contact, please let me know. Professor Amy mentioned that I need to have a committee meeting when she's in Washington D.C., later September. I think it will be a great chance for me to talk things out with you.

So, that is it for now. I hope you have a nice week, and I'll talk to you soon.

Best regards,

Ninh

Week 2 (8/25/2013 - 8/31/2013)

Dear professors,

Washington D.C. was lively, and more crowded during last week due to the 50th anniversary of King's speech "I have a dream." We were lucky to have a chance to join the Kalb Report taping in the National Press Building on Tuesday. Speakers included the last living speaker at the March on Washington event 50 years ago, the communication person for the march, first female black journalist from the Washington Post among others. It was unreal to see how much change has happened in this country since then and how many things still stay the same in a way. One thing that stuck out most for me is the coverage of the march. The *Washington Post* was so fixated at violence, and they didn't have a story on the famous speech. Come think of it, it's like the coverage of minorities (i.e. Muslim) these days.

On Friday, we visited the Foreign Press Service on the 8th floor of the National Press Building. This organization belongs to the State Department, which helps foreign journalists have access to information, resources that they otherwise cannot have. My boss actually went on one media freedom trips that they organized last year.

Last week, I revised the document I prepared for UNAOC on UN agencies which work on women issues. They wanted to develop a campaign of sort on coverage of women in the media. I also wrote an analysis on their #CoveringMigration campaign. I had the chance to do some data analysis, which I was very excited about. I also set my dates to go to New York, and meet with UNAOC staff next weekend.

I haven't done a lot on the research part. I expect to do more in this coming week as I have made some contacts with the Foreign Press Office and Global Post.

So this is it for now. Thank you so much for your time.

My best,

Ninh

Week 3 (9/1/2013 - 9/7/2013)

Dear Professors,

I'm sorry for this late report. I just came back from New York last night. It was a good trip. I had a chance to sit down and talk to my supervisor, Stephanie Durand, about various projects that we are going to do in the next couple of months. I also let her know about my wish to do more multimedia work.

For last week, I continued working on the analysis of UNAOC's Twitter campaign on covering migration. I guess this is where our differences lie. I analyzed and wrote a report as it is while Stephanie wanted to highlight the success of the campaign, and mention just lightly the drawbacks. We went back and forth with this report, and continued doing so when I was in New York yesterday.

I also worked on the Global Experts site, and looking into some glitches in the website. This website was supposed to be an introduction for journalists to different experts in different field and areas in the world. UNAOC wants to revamp the website, and turn it into a database.

I made some progress with my research. A friend connected me with Martin Petty, who is now Reuter's bureau chief in Hanoi, Vietnam. Martin used to cover Myanmar for four years before moving to Vietnam. He was based in Thailand, and interviewed both Aung San Suu Kyi, and President Thein Sein. He's not particularly in favor of Aung San Suu Kyi, and used to criticize her for letting go of many earlier chances to push Myanmar to democracy. We set up an open chat on Thursday this week. He will connect me with his working journalist friends in Myanmar.

I also made a trip to Voice of America building, and tried to get some help from their Burmese service.

For the seminar, we went to the Newseum. The tour was led by Paul Sparrow, Newseum's senior vice president/broadcasting. We visited two John Kennedy's galleries, the FBI section, and the civil rights exhibit. In the end, I stopped by the Pulitzer winning

photos gallery. I wish I had more time there, but I had to depart for New York early that afternoon.

So that is it for last week. I'll send the doodle on our meeting in Washington D.C. shortly.

Regards,

Ninh

Week 4 (9/8/2013 - 9/14/2013)

Dear Professors,

Let me start this report by thanking you so much for participating in the doodle poll. As of now, both Professor McCombs and Professor Cochran can make it to the Thursday meeting while professor Smith is still deciding on his schedule. I'll get back to you as soon as I hear from all of you. I hope we can have at least 30 minutes to meet.

There was not much happening last week even though I did make some progress with my research. I talked to Martin Petty, current Reuters' bureau chief in Hanoi, who had covered Myanmar for the last four years. It was fascinating talking to someone who actually worked on the ground. He talked a lot about the immaturity of the current Burmese press. According to him, many young journalists want to do well but they lack substantial training. In the mean time, the newfound freedom leads to many rumours being spread. Petty raised a question about whether Myanmar is ready for this new freedom, which is a legitimate one to ask. He seems to be in favor of government control of the chaotic media.

Petty is a very resourceful person, however he does not want to speak on the record. I think finding someone who is willing to speak openly about Myanmar will be a challenge. Nevertheless, Petty promised to connect me with some of his colleague in Myanmar. I also intend to go to the country in March next year. An international conference will be held in Yangon at that time. I hope to get access to Myanmar's press that way.

I came back from New York on Monday, and started working on the script of the Covering Migration video. We have lots of footage from different seminar that UNAOC held on the subject. I also tweaked their Global Experts website, and edited the experts' profiles. I also finalized the report on their Twitter campaign.

So that is all for last week. Thank you so much for your time.

Ninh

Week 5 (9/15/2013 - 9/21/2013)

Dear Professors,

First of all, I would like to talk about our meeting this week. Because Professor Smith will be busy with students for this trip, I wonder if I could go ahead, and set this meeting on Thursday from 11 a.m. to noon? Please let me know what you think.

Now onto the report.

Last week was eventful. We went to Senator (R-MO) Roy Blunt's office at the Russell Senate Office Building to talk with his Deputy Chief of Staff Burson Taylor Snyder on Friday. We got to learn about how the Senator's staff work to support him.

Snyder talked a lot about representing the Senator and getting his messages out via traditional channels as well as social media networks. One lesson to learn here, again, is to trying to have good relationships with media representatives in an official's office. When there is new development, people like Snyder will contact us or at least reply our calls.

We then spent some time talking about TV's Sunday shows in Barbara's office. Barbara gave us a brief rundown on the ideas behind the one hour shows on Sunday, what kind of audience following the shows by looking at the commercials. It is interesting to know that Sunday shows are setting the agenda for Monday. Barbara also gave us an insight on how the networks select guests, and the politics behind that. She shared her experience working as Meet the Press's Executive Producer, and some exciting and historic moments then.

On Sunday, we watched Face the Nation in CBS control room. It's amazing to watch the show live. I must admit I did not follow the content of the discussion too closely as I was too busy watching CBS's staff.

Project wise, I finished the video script for the social media campaign, but have not received any feedback from my supervisor yet. I also started fixing glitches from their Global Experts website. I researched for a paper on women issues. My supervisor wanted me to write a report, detailing the challenges that UNAOC would meet if they want to create a campaign on women issues. They also want me to contribute my input on strategy for this campaign.

About my research paper, I contacted and arranged a meeting with a veteran foreign journalist working for the Myanmar Times via Martin Petty, who I interviewed last week. This interview with Geoffrey Goddard will be done via Skype while he is in Yangon tomorrow morning.

I hope you will have a great week.

Best regards,

Ninh

Week 6 (9/22/2013 - 9/28/2013)

Dear Professors,

So it's that time for another weekly report again.

Last week was great, I learned a lot. I feel like I made the right decision to be in Washington D.C.

I started designing a one pager for the UNAOC, detailing, in a catchy way, the work they have done on their migration coverage campaign. I began with looking at different NGOs for ideas on how to design a one pager. This is going to be a learning experience as I have never designed anything before. I also finished the first draft of my report on how UNAOC should approach women empowerment issue, the challenges as well as ideas for a good entry point for the agency.

I sat down and talked with Professor McCombs, and Professor Cochran on the progress, and things I need help with. I'm excited to learn about the prospect of going to

Myanmar in March with a group of Missouri students to cover the press freedom conference. Professor McComb and I also decided on the logistics for the interview with Ms. Aye Aye Win, a Missouri Medal Winner, in Columbia later this October. I also will help produce a radio show on Myanmar with Ms. Aye Aye Win. I briefed Professor Smith on the meeting when he was in the office later that day.

A journalist friend of mine connected me with a Burmese journalist who used to work for the BBC in Bangkok, Thailand. I hope to have an interview with him later this week.

This week, we got to visit Charles Lewis from the Hearst Bureau. He talked about how to find a job. I learned a lot in this session, about how to make multiple impressions on your hopeful employers. Mr. Lewis' comical way of delivering his advice also did help a lot. I missed the tour to *CNN* with Professor Smith but was able to join the trip to *Politico*. He talked about their web first strategy, and how *Politico*, being a niche newspaper with niche audience, does business. I have *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Politico* on my mobile devices. More often than not, *Politico* is the first one to break any news on politics. I would say they are quite success in the mean time.

So that was my last week. Thank you so much for visiting with me in Washington D.C.

My best,

Ninh

Week 7 (9/29/2013 - 10/5/2013)

Dear Professors,

We had our best guest speaker yet in Friday seminar this last week. President Bill Clinton's former press secretary Mike McCurry had one hour with us. This meeting coincided with the government shutdown so obviously we asked him a lot about the shutdown, and how different it is with the last one when he was working for President Clinton. He said President Clinton was on a better ground than President Barack Obama on several aspects such as his better approval rate due to better performance of the economy, and Washington being less divided as now. McCurry also did President Clinton so well when he talked about the press secretary's duties, how he prepared the president for a press conference or how he prepared for it himself.

Research wise, I connected with a Burmese journalist who works for the BBC in Bangkok. We scheduled an interview for after I'm coming back from New York. For now, my research is mostly to gather as much as background knowledge as possible by interviewing professionals working on Myanmar issues or journalists covering Myanmar. I hope through Hnin I would connect me with other Burmese journalists as well.

About the professional project, this week I'm working on finishing the second draft of the report on women empowerment. I finished proofing, and fixing glitches on their global experts profile page, and drafting the first version of the flyer for their conference in November. For this small project, I will have to use InDesign which I haven't had any experience. It is going to be a bit of a learning curve.

So this is it for this week. Thank you so much.

Best regards,

Ninh

Week 8 (10/6/2013 - 10/12/2013)

Good morning Professors,

I hope you all had a wonderful Columbus Day. It finally lightened up in Washington D.C., after a series of raining days. Fall is finally here.

I was in New York last week. I've got to do a lot of things with them, and had a piece of the director's birthday cake. It was nice. I think I will arrange my last visit to the city in early November in such way too, although I would have to talk to my supervisor about that.

On Monday, I joined a meeting held by the International Peace Institute, during which UN officials/panelists discussed the role of women in peacekeeping efforts and how to increase women's participation in these missions. As you already knew, I have been working on this women empowerment report for the UNAOC. I suppose this was a typical UN meeting in which jargons like "women empowerment", "gender perspective", and "operational effectiveness" were flying in the air as if they are daily talk, I guess to UN officials there really are. I remember thinking how could journalists work with these jargon filled events like this.

During the rest of my trip, I finished some final fixes to the website on Global Experts, although there should be more fixes once I talk to their IT person. I also finished

the draft of the flyer for their conference in November. InDesign is not that hard to learn anyway.

I have not done a lot of research last week. I have an interview with Aye Hnin, a Burmese journalist, later this week. Professor McCombs told me yesterday that Aye Win, a Missouri Medal Winner, had to cancel her trip to Columbia later this month so plans I had to interview her and her husband could not be done. I still have the trip in March to Myanmar and I would like to ask for your support for that, I'll detail it in another email.

Thank you so much.

-Ninh

Week 9 (10/13/2013 - 10/19/2013)

Dear Professors,

I hope you have a great week so far.

First off, I would like to thank you so much for your support in my application for the investigation fellowship. The deadline for the application is this Friday Oct 25, so please find some time to write me a letter. I really appreciate it. I know you all are busy people.

Last week was pretty quiet work wise. I've been working on the flyer and a couple of small things for the UNAOC. We went back and forth about the design for the flyer, which has been a great learning experience. I always wanted to get into design.

Seminar wise, we toured the *NPR* building on Friday. Before coming to the U.S., I was so sure the radio was pretty much dead, given that I come from a web-based newspaper, and have a background in multimedia storytelling. *NPR* has been applied a lot of changes, as Ellen McDonnell, the editor executive said, and fitted themselves into listeners' routine. I listen to *NPR* everyday on my iPad, and so far I think they're on the right track.

Our tour guide for the morning was Keith Woods, vice president of diversity in news and operations. He obviously talked a lot about *NPR*'s approach to diversify their listeners. Statistics said that 80% of their users are white people. Lots of what they're trying to do now i.e. covering the under covered, talk with people not talk to them, and inclusion are taught in our Cross Cultural Journalism class in the journalism school. I was very happy during Woods' talk.

I interviewed Hnin last weekend. She was working for *BBC* Burmese services in Thailand and now resides in London, working for the *Radio Free Asia*. She talked a lot on the difficulties of working as an exiled journalist, how her family was abused by the government, and how different it is now. I will have another round of interview. She is a very pleasant person to talk to, and we have a lot in common.

As you already knew, Aye Aye Win, the Missouri Medal Winner will not be in Columbia this October due to her father's condition. Therefore, I will not be able to interview her. I'll try to contact her via the email that the East-West Center provided. I did contact her before, using the school's email. I think there is a chance it went to her spam box.

So this is it for last week. Thank you so much for your time.

Ninh

Week 10 + 11 (10/2013 - 11/2/2013)

Dear Professors,

I am so sorry I missed last week report. I think it's because I came back to Missouri and forgot everything about Washington D.C.. I'll include those updates in this one.

As you know, I came back to Columbia last week to meet Aye Aye Win, one of the Missouri Medal Winners. I spent the whole Tuesday following her around Journalism school. I came to her taping with *Global Journalist*, her oral history interview with one of the Global Journalist students, and her master class with Cross Cultural Journalism students. I had many private discussions with her, and her husband, who is also a foreign correspondent.

This woman is amazing. She was determined to be a journalist in a country where writers like her were traumatized by the government's supervision. She has been working for the *Associated Press* for more than 20 years. Her father, a press freedom icon in Myanmar, also had worked for the *AP* 20 years before her. Needless to say, her take on the press freedom issue in Myanmar is priceless. I have some of my questions answered about how the democratic change in the country is not actually sudden; how foreign correspondents were harassed in the old days; how she went around and did her job fairly; and how people like her see the new changes among other things.

Aye Aye Win is not fond of exiled journalists from Myanmar, which is surprising to me. According to her, the exiled journalists who once were fierce in anti-government coverage are now too close to the rulers. She promised to introduce me to other local journalists but I will probably have to find my exiled sources somewhere else.

For the seminar, we visited the *Washington Post* and a lobbyist's office for the last two weeks. The visit to the *Post* was led by Jeff Leen, a Pulitzer winner for his investigative work. We learn about their investigative work, how they go from a tip to a full blown investigation project. It's admirable for the *Post* to maintain an investigative unit, with low turnaround because they often spend months on a project. If that's what it takes to have the Pulitzers, I bet they will keep it up.

Last Friday, we visited Terry Bracy's office. As expected from a lobbyist, Terry was very persuasive. After listening to him talk about 30 minutes or so on how great it is to be a journalist and how important young journalists like us are, I just wanted to go out and do good journalism. That is not to say I did not want to do good journalism before his talk. Terry brought in one of his colleagues who has been working with the city of St Louis for 30 years. Jim is the name of the colleague. He mentioned the project to build a new runway for Lambert International Airport. It took them 10 years to get all the support needed. Terry said that their firm only handled "good projects," and turned away projects for tobacco, or games companies. This might need a double check. That said, lobbying is the business to influence influential people quietly, and behind closed doors. I do not think I'm fit for that line of work.

About work, I've been working with my supervisor on the flyer. I also updated their experts profiles, and contacted those who need changes in their profiles. My supervisor, and I decided to extend my internship for one more week to the end of November to make up for the work I missed last week.

So this is it for now. Thank you for your time.

With my best regards,

Ninh

Week 12 (11/3/2013 - 11/9/2013)

Dear Professors,

It's hard to believe this semester is almost over. I've learned a lot in the last three months, I'm really glad I decided to go to Washington D.C.. If I compiled what I have experienced here in D.C., I would be able to publish a book. A lot Vietnamese back home became published authors for a lot less.

Last week was very productive work-wise. I finally finished the flyer for the UNAOC conference in November. They are very happy with my work, and I believe the flyer was printed out and distributed to their members. I also worked on, and finished the second flyer. This one was a little bit easier because we did not have to go back and forth too much on the styling, design, etc. anymore. I also edited the High Representative biography from close to 800 words to merely 100 words. Talk about killing someone else's darling. It's not as painful as killing your own but it's still hard at the same time because every single detail on that original biography is important.

My supervisor and I talked last week, and decided what project I should be working on for the several remaining weeks I have with them. We agreed on working on the Global Experts website and the experts' list. They built the list three years ago so many of the details of their experts are out of date. So last week, I began to contact experts who need to have your information changed, look up experts that we are no longer able to contact and update their info on the website.

We had Donna Leinwand Leger, a war and disaster reporter for the *USAToday*, for the seminar on Friday. Donna was terrific. She talked about tales of going into Iraq, Haiti, and Indonesia to cover war and disaster. I can't imagine what it takes to do the work that she does. Obviously, it takes someone like Donna. Donna is a great reporter but she's also a woman. Let me clarify on that. Only a woman would ever think about going into a beauty salon to get human stories, and then got invited to a wedding in Iraq. Only a woman would know how to sneak her way into the restroom at an airport like she did. Donna also shared with us her top 10 tips for war and disaster reporting but I don't think she went through all of them. In fact, she listed only three. Nevertheless, Donna is still, hands down, my favorite for the seminar.

Research wise, I did not focus on it this last week since I am not going to defense next week. I'll continue to work on that over the break and next semester.

Thank you for reading.

With my best regards,

Ninh

Chapter 3: Evaluation

I have learned a lot during my time in Washington D.C., working on my professional project. It had its ups and downs but in the end I am grateful for the opportunity to be in Washington D.C., during the fall of 2013.

I worked remotely as a media intern for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which I have not yet mastered the ability to say in one breath without slipping somewhere in the middle. In the beginning, I was hoping to do more multimedia related tasks such as video projects. However, the professional project turned out a little bit different than I expected. I helped a lot with research for various projects that the Alliance was working on. I had a chance to work, but not too much, on my data analyzing skills. I designed two flyers for a conference that the Alliance was a part of without having any prior knowledge. Most of my time later in my professional project was dedicated to the Global Experts website (www.globalexperts.org) which needs a makeover as the Alliance decided to change the website's mission. Along the way, I was asked to do some small tasks such as writing letters telling experts that the Alliance no longer needed them in their database.

The three months working for the Alliance introduced me to a different working environment than the one that I am used to. I learned about strategic communications tactics and how to approach a campaign in the beginning from mapping to set up and

assess the plan for the campaign. I was not there long enough to actually work on a campaign.

It was a rather difficult situation in which to work, one that is not highly recommended for others. It requires a lot of self-discipline to maintain the momentum while working remotely. It also made the process of adapting to the Alliance way of working a bit longer than it should be. Coming from a journalism background, it is hard for me to write a report with just good points selected. My supervisor and I were in communication as frequently as possible. However, many times miscommunications occurred as it should not be since we were not in the same room.

Nevertheless, the experience in the Alliance will help me greatly once I get back to Vietnam as demand for communications-related jobs is high. Many non-profit organizations are running out of money, which leads them to focus more on advocacy. How to organize a successful campaign is one of many skills that will be greatly needed. However, I'm sure it would have been a much better experience if I was in New York and worked closely with my supervisor in the Alliance.

I had a great time learning about Washington. Seminars with Mike McCurry, former press secretary for President Bill Clinton, and Donna Leinwand, who reports crime, disaster and war for USA Today strengthened my love for politics and foreign correspondent work. The time spent in D.C. enriched my life greatly.

Chapter 4: Professional Work

Research on UN agencies working on women issues

1. UN Women

Together with UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund), promote women's leadership and participation in political process; provide training for women political candidates; educate voters on gender equality; encourage young men and women to engage in advocacy around making gender equality measures central to public policy making; advocate reform to ensure women's access to politics;

Promote women's ability to secure decent jobs, accumulate assets;

Work to eliminate discrimination against women living with or affected by HIV/AIDS; advocate their participation in decision-making process, work to safeguard their rights to services, inheritance and property.

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) / UN Trust Fund (The UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women): Advocate for ending violence against women, increase awareness on consequences of violence; offer safety, shelter, health, justice and other essential services for victims; offer data analysis and evidence-based recommendations for policy-oriented advocacy; provide training of women advocates.

2. UNDP (United Nations Development Plan)

Promote gender equality and women's empowerment; help increase women's voices in government bodies as well as private sector; help spread stories of survivors of violence against women; provide donors with efficient way to channel funds towards achieving gender equality; organize initiative to end violence against women; contribute humans security and promote conditions for recovery and development for violence against women victims; help increase number of women in leadership roles; promote women participation in labor workforce and politics; promote equal access to services; train women for leader roles; promote rural women to participate in economic and social life.

BCPR (Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery): Strengthen women's security in crisis: stop violence against women; Provide security and justice for women; promote women's participation in decision making process; Involve women in all peace process; promote gender equality in disaster risk reduction; promote women as leaders of recovery; Include women's issues on the national agenda; develop capacities for social change.

UNV (United Nations Volunteer): Volunteers from UNV take part in projects to train women capacity, prevent gender-based violence, create understanding about gender issues, women trafficking, provide health education, healthcare and financial help.

3. UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

Promote reproductive health, stewardship of natural resources, economic, political and educational empowerment; provide resources for sexual assault victims, prevent violence against women, help government of receivers and senders of human trafficking;

assist women in case of emergencies, offer services and counselling for human trafficking victims.

4. UNICEF (The United Nations Children's Fund)

Promote gender equality; support women's participation in the political, social and economic in their communities; narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education through a UN Girls' education initiative (UNGEI).

5. UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund)

Promote, increase women's participation in political process, governance and democratic dialogue, educate women voters, provide women with access to information, capacity building for women and women's organizations, enhance and encourage potential women leaders;

Help female victims of domestic violence to get access to justice system, provide free legal consultancy and lawyers, prevent discrimination against women socially, economically and politically.

6. FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)

Improve (rural) women's access to resources, training and other services; promote gender mainstreaming in agriculture through socio-economic and gender analysis training courses; promote gender sensitive policies/initiatives; increase women's participation in training in management, production and entrepreneurship;

7. WFP (United Nations World Food Programme)

Improve women's access to food and sustainable livelihoods through Food for Work and Food for Training Programme.

8. UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification)

Grooming the new generation of women leaders by offering fellowship for female students from Sub-Saharan Africa or Least Developed Countries to pursue postgraduate training.

9. UNCDF (United Nations Capital Development Fund)

Promote gender equality and help to empower women through its several programs. *Financial Services for the Poor* provides women with access to financial services to start business, plan for events such as weddings, funerals, and sudden illness of family members. Public Finance for Local Development builds new wells, new clinics for maternal and child health services, water and toilet infrastructure, and offer investment in women businesses.

10. UN-HABITAT (United Nations Human Settlements Programme)

Address gender gap in urban development and housing (women earn less, more difficult to find jobs, access to housing from women related to their relationships with men) → promote equal access to resources and services, equality in cities, capacity building for women in grassroots organisations and NGOs; promote women's right to land; develop women-led sanitation and microfinance programs; help low income women to secure homes.

11. UNODC (United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime)

Enhance life of female prisoners;

Helps countries to prevent human/women trafficking.

12. ITC (International Trade Center)

The Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors initiative help bring economic benefits to women and their communities; Woman in Coffee in Africa initiative supports the establishment of women in the coffee industry through a national and international network of peers; Access for African businesswomen in international trade initiative help women to realize their potential and improve their standards of living.

#CoveringMigration campaign

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations started the Covering Migration campaign on Twitter on May 14, which lasted until August 27. Over the course of three months, participants discussed issues related to coverage of migration in the media via hashtag #coveringmigration.

During the course of the campaign, UNAOC raised a series of topics related to media's migration coverage.

The campaign looked at how the media picked which stories on migrants and migration to cover. Participants agreed that most of the coverage lean on the negative sides of the issue. Publications still use the word “illegal” as in “illegal immigrants”, even though many others have dropped it, following AP Style.

The most common theme when it comes to stories about immigrants and migration is violence and terrorism. Positive stories are hard to sell to editors, therefore most of them are tragedies. One reporter said that her publication would use the word “illegal” when the news is bad (i.e. regarding Muslim). During the campaign, UNAOC and other participants also picked on the media by citing links showing coverage of migration and hardly came across a positive story.

Gender issues were touched upon briefly during the discussion with UNAOC cited a report on this subject.

Participants then suggested best practices for journalists when covering migration. Giving voices to different stakeholders in the stories, especially the immigrants themselves is one of them. Participants also called on journalists to understand the context behind any stories. Migrants should be fairly represented in stories and there should be more positive stories about them. Journalists were reminded that migration is a series of stories, not just one single human interest story.

Also on recommendations, Newsrooms should educate their reporters on cultural, ethnic and religious sensitivities. Publications should also have a clear policy and guidelines on covering migration issues such as how to define migrant, if “illegal” should be used. There should be a clear glossary of migration related terms to use consistently in the newsroom. UNAOC mentioned two guidelines from the NYT and the Knight Foundation on how to better cover migration issue. Later in the campaign, UNAOC revealed its own guidelines as well.

Training journalists on migration issue is also one important topic during the discussion. Participants agreed that training is important and it can be done via social media and web. One participant urged the use of blogs and multimedia to train journalists various aspects of migration. Creating a special migration model in journalism school was also mentioned as one recommendation.

In total, about 1,000 tweets and retweets were sent by 290 accounts, 69 of which have more than 1,000 followers while 226 of which have at least 100 followers. The biggest account that participated in the conversation was United Nations (@UN), which has almost 1.7 millions followers. The UN tweeted/retweeted twice during the campaign. A dozen of participants have more than 10,000 followers. With contribution from these big accounts, tweets and retweets from the campaign potentially have been seen by more than 2.2 million Twitter users.

One third of the tweets comes from UNAOC official accounts (@UNAOC and @UNAOCMigration) and UNAOC staff. Among the top 10 twitter users who participated are organizations working with migration such as Cities Migration (@CitiesMigration), Matree Foundation (@maytree_canada) in Canada and Migrant Voices (@MigrantVoiceUK) in London, UK. One active twitter user is Amy Selwyn, from a branding company in New Hampshire called Storytegit, who tweeted and retweeted the campaign's messages 63 times.

Another user that actively participated was Yaser Alzayat (@yaseralzayat), a journalist in Cairo, Egypt. His tweets are read by more than 100,000 people, the fact

might be factored by recent developments in Egypt. International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) also actively participated in the conversation.

The campaign reached its peak in June 7 and lasted until July 9. More than half of the campaign tweets and retweets came were sent from this peaked month. Most of peaked days fell on weekends with the exception of July 9, which was a Tuesday. The peaked week when many people participated in conversation was from June 7 to Jun 13.

#CoveringMigration campaign - revised

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations started the Covering Migration campaign on Twitter on May 14, which lasted until August 27. Over the course of three months, participants discussed issues related to coverage of migration in the media via hashtag #coveringmigration.

290 participants, including big organizations such as UN and international organizations on migration, joined the campaign, which reached more than 2 million people. Tweets and retweets sent during the period have touched upon various aspects of migration coverage such as how the journalists choose to cover migration or terms used to identify immigrants. Participants also suggested some better practice for migration coverage.

Topics addressed in the campaign

- How the media picked which stories to cover.
- Common theme: Violence and terrorism

- Negative stories: Most stories about immigrants and migrations are tragedies. Positive stories are hard to sell to editors.
- Use of the word “illegal”: Many publications still use the word illegal in illegal immigrants. AP and some other publications have dropped that word.
- Best practices for journalists when covering migration
 - Giving voices: Different stakeholders in the stories such as immigrants, NGOs, etc should be fairly represented
 - Understanding the context behind any stories
 - There should be more positive stories about immigrants
 - Journalists should be reminded that migration is a series of stories not just not single story
- Recommendations for journalists and newsrooms to better address migration
 - Journalists training: Newsrooms should educate reporters on cultural, ethnical and religious sensitivities
 - Policy and guidelines: Newsrooms should have a clear policy and guidelines in covering migration
 - Clear migration terms: There should be a glossary of terms addressing immigrants and migration issues that are used consistently by reporters
- Training journalists on migration issues

- Online: Training can be done via social media networks and websites
- Use of multimedia: Take advantage of blogs and multimedia tools to train journalists remotely
- In school: Journalism schools should create a special migration model

Campaign by the numbers

- Campaign reach
 - A total of 1,000 tweets and retweets from May 14 to August 27
 - 290 accounts participated in the campaign

A dozen accounts have more than 10,000 followers

- 69 accounts have more than 1,000 followers
- 226 accounts have at least 100 followers
- biggest account was United Nations (@UN), which has 1.7 million followers
- Potentially, the campaign has reached 2.2 million Twitter users
- Participants profiles
 - One third of the tweets came from UNAOC official accounts (@UNAOC and @UNAOCMigration) and staff
 - Top 10 users include

- Organizations working on migration issues such as Cities Migration (@CitiesMigration), Matree Foundation (@maytree_canada) in Canada and Migrant Voices (@MigrantVoiceUK) in London, UK
- Top contributors include Amy Selwyn, from a branding company in New Hampshire called Storytegric, who tweeted and retweeted the campaign's messages 63 times; Yaser Alzayat (@yaseralzayat), a journalist in Cairo, Egypt.
- International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) also actively participated in the conversation.
- Campaign peak
 - The campaign reached its peak in June 7 and lasted until June 9
 - More than half of the tweets/retweets were sent during this period
 - Most of peaked days fell on later in the week
 - Peaked week was from June 7 to Jun 13.

Suggestions for future campaigns

- Maintain the momentum of the campaign: It appears that the period with most participation and lively discussion was at the few first weeks of the campaign. Asking more questions, increasing interaction with participants and encourage interaction between participants throughout the course of the campaign would likely result in better conversations.
- Include mainstream media in the conversation: There were some journalists joining the campaign, and even that their contribution was minimal. One way to do better in

campaigns like this is to encourage targeted group, in this case the media, voice their opinions.

- Promote the campaign through other UN agencies, especially the ones dealing with migration: With the exception of UN, no other UN agencies actively participated in the campaign.

Glitches on Global Experts website

Most of the glitches in the website are the results of inconsistent of format and style.

- Bylines
 - Too repetitive: We have two bylines in one article, both at the top of the page. One is enough.
 - Inconsistent
 - Sometimes byline is linked to the article itself, sometimes it's linked to the author/expert's profile, which it should be
 - We have Farish A. Noor, Farish Noor and Dr. A. Noor; Charles Kupchan or Charles A. Kupchan.
 - Sometimes byline number 2 is replaced with a line like this: View Abdallah Schleifer's Global Expert profile [here](#).
- Pictures:

- Inconsistent picture size: Sometimes there would be mixed up between picture for profile page and article. One example: <http://www.theglobalexperts.org/expert-updates/news-articles/mubarak-lies-coma-egyptians-warily-await-election-results>
- Position (and size) of the expert's photos seems off in articles, especially when the article has an accompanying picture or video.
- Expert pictures should show his/her full face
- Expert's profile page
- Do not have the expert's name to know who were are talking about
- Some experts do not a title line. For example:
<http://www.theglobalexperts.org/experts/area-of-expertise/business-and-globalization/tariq-saeedi> vs <http://www.theglobalexperts.org/experts/area-of-expertise/religion/gunther-dietz>
- Sometimes expert profile is named "Array" instead of his/her name. For example, this one: <http://www.theglobalexperts.org/experts/expertise-region/north-america-expertise-region/ali-mazrui>
- Multimedia page
- There are two same article on the podcast page and the article is without a headline:
<http://www.theglobalexperts.org/podcasts/guitton-christians-massacres-iraq-matter-humanity-community>
- Video page:

- Alignment of each block of video set is off
- There are three articles, one has an accompanying video on the home page, while the other two do not.
- Articles
 - Headlines sometimes are placed in the middle, sometimes on the left side
 - Sometimes the article has place where it was written, sometimes not
 - Sometimes it is accompanied by dates, sometimes not
 - Articles sometime do not have headlines
 - Sometimes this below does not appear in an article:
[Read Charles Kupchan's article in its entirety in the Global Times.](#)
[View Charles Kupchan's Global Expert profile.](#)
- Expert column on the right side
 - Inconsistent: One expert would be identified by his area of expertise, one is identified by his title
- Miscellaneous
 - Some articles do not have the accompanying related articles
 - Many links/articles do not have content. Examples:
<http://www.theglobalexperts.org/expert-updates/news-articles/lean-years-peacemaking>
<http://www.theglobalexperts.org/expert-updates/news-articles/obscure-movie-raise-ire-muslim-world>

<http://www.theglobalexperts.org/expert-updates/news-articles/islam-free-speech>

- How is this (expert updates) different from this (nominate an expert)
- What does this mean? There is a “Users” at the footer of the page and then a list of agencies / news publications. Does that mean those publications are the website's main users or are they sponsors?
- Partners' page: “IRIS” should not be abbreviated on first mention

Video Script: For a better coverage of immigration

Length: 2 minutes

VO: From January 2013, the UNOAC kicked off a series of efforts to promote better coverage of migration in the media.

First it was the seminar in Paris, France.

B-Roll: A slide with the words “Paris seminar Jan 25-26 2013” on screen.

B-Roll: Images of Paris seminar

VO: 35 editors in chief and migration experts from 27 countries in Europe and the Mediterranean worked together in a two day high level seminar on migration coverage. They came up with a list of 17 recommendations for more responsible media practice on migration.

B-Roll: Scrolling down the list of 17 recommendations

B-Roll: Images of Paris seminar

VO: The media represented in this seminar includes BBC from the UK, El Mundo from Spain, Corriere della sera from Italy, NZZ from Switzerland, derStandard.de from Austria, Komsomolskaya Pravda from Russia, Maariv from Israel, and Al Ahram from Egypt.

VO: To continue the momentum, the UNAOC organized another seminar in Berne, Switzerland to look at media coverage of migration in Switzerland.

B-roll: A slide with the words “Berne seminar May 2013” on screen

B-roll: Images of Berne seminar

VO: The one day seminar touched upon different aspects of migration coverage including challenges, guidelines as well as how migration communities are portrayed in the media.

30 journalists and experts in the field convened for one day in May 2013 and developed a list of recommendations to be disseminated through different channels.

After Berne seminar wrapped up, the UNAOC kicked off a social media campaign on Twitter to continue the conversation among interested parties about coverage of migration.

B-roll: A slide with the words “#CoveringMigration May - August 2013” on screen

VO: During the course of three months, starting mid-May to mid August, a thousand tweets and retweets were sent.

B-roll: Tweets during the campaign

VO: 290 Twitter users reflected on how the media cover migration issues and suggested best practices for journalists to report on this very issue. The campaign proved to be a success with almost 6 million Twitter impressions and has reached more than 2.2 millions Twitter users.

B-roll: A slide with the words “Data journalism project” on screen

VO: The Data journalism project is another effort that the UNAOC hope to help better cover migration issues. This project is a results of the cooperation between UNOAC and five different academic institutions in the world, including Missouri School of Journalism, DW Akademie and three more others.

Finally, the UNAOC is working towards creating a helpful glossary of migration terms that journalists can use. This was mentioned multiple times during different discussions that the UNAOC was leading on migration coverage.

Report: Women Empowerment

September 2013

Women Empowerment is an important issue, which has been covered endlessly by many agencies in the UN systems as well as other non profit organizations. For the UNAOC to start working on this issues, we are faced with a couple of challenges.

Challenges

- Hard to change the systems: Culture and tradition are deep-rooted and therefore hard to change.
- Hard to change woman's thinking: In some culture, women accept their less than desired positions in the society as a fact.

- In so many cultures, women are held responsible for keeping the traditions; culture sometimes is used as a veil to disguise many ongoing problems such as violence, abuse, etc.
- Cultures are different from each one of the places
- Other agencies either inside the UN system or outside have done endless job on this particular issues; hard to bring something new to the table
- Limited resource

Questions we should ask ourselves

- What has not done before?
- What can we do differently?
- How can we move forward with the discussion on women without being abrasive and disrespectful of said culture or society?
- How to facilitate the talk on women issues between societies and cultures

In each specific issue, we should also ask questions such as:

- What is the most pressing issues against women in that particular country or society?
- Are there any signs those issues are going in to change for the better/worse? What are they? Are there any movements in said culture / country that call for the change of treatment of women?

- How does the society as a whole react to interference from outsiders?
- How receptive of women and men in said culture/country on changes?
- What has been done in said culture/country on women development?

What can we do?

Intercultural and cross-cultural dialogues should be done by people who help facilitate those dialogues. They are decision makers and members of the press.

- Capacity building for women leaders: In order for women to take part in the decision making process, hence increase the presence of women in the governing bodies, they should be well trained for the job. Knowledge is power.
- Training women journalists:
 - General capacity building for women journalists, such as how to best do journalism, etc.
 - Training women journalists on women issues, how to best cover women issues, how to make the problem be known journalistically, etc.
- Training men journalists on how to fairly cover women's issues as well as giving them knowledge on the problems of women issues in the society
- Giving access for women journalists by creating an online pool of knowledge as well as networks of women journalists from different countries and societies. This is to share knowledge as well as experience between journalists.

- Organizing seminars in targeted society/country on women issues. Participants include women leaders, women/men journalists; progressive members of the public
- Organizing regional talk on women issues: For example, what is happening in Bangladesh may be relevant to people in Pakistan and India so it makes sense to get representatives from these countries together and share experiences as well as learn from each other.
- Organizing culture tours for women participants: Getting women leaders experience different kind of culture, hence creating understanding between cultures.
- Online training for women
- Help women get access to different kinds of information
- Training on family values and new women's roles in societies
- Promote discussion on women issues through a network of journalists

Notes from IPI conference

Speakers

1. Adam Smith, Research Fellow and Manager of Peace Operations Program
2. Sahana Dharmapuri, Non-Resident Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government.
3. Hester Paneras, UNAMID Police Commissioner, South Africa
4. Jayne Lawlor, Gender Advisor for the Irish Defense Forces

5. Izumi Nakamitsu, Director of the Asia and Middle East Division in the UN
Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Comdt

Panel discussion

Sahana Dharmapuri

- Results of interviews with more than 40 UN officials, member state representatives and civil sites representatives and extensive research
- It's not about the number of women in peacekeeping forces but it's about integrating a gender perspective into the work of peacekeeping mission in order to increase the operational effectiveness of those missions.
 - Requires both men and women
 - Policy: two prong approach
- Increase women's representation - number of women remain low, female officers account for 4% overall
- Lack of understanding about policies and guidelines
- Gap of data between number of women in national forces globally and in peacekeeping in particular
- Social prejudices that perpetuate gender inequality
- Integrate a gender perspective into the work of the mission in order to increase the operational effectiveness

- Gender perspective: taking into account the differences, the needs, roles, status, experiences, etc of men and women and how these differences affect the work of the mission
- Literary shows when gender perspective is applied, it increases operational effectiveness
 - Enhance situational awareness
 - Help target physical defensive measures: Having women conduct patrol of other women
 - Increase credibility and confidence in the mission
- Best way to start is to use “lowest hanging fruit”, using the people, policy framework, tools that are already available
- Need to engage men/male leadership, within the UN, and member states
- Gender advisors need to be appointed to the mission, can be male or female
- Establishing a gender coaching program

Izumi Nakamitsu

- Latest statistics
 - National female staff: 17,2%, never higher than 19.5% in the past 5 years
 - International female staff working in UN field missions as of June 2013: 28.5%, a slight decrease compared to October 2011 which was 29.2%
 - Women in senior leadership level as of end of September 2013: 17% in field locations, 12% are in deputy head of mission

- The only level with great gender parity is P2 level - lowest civilian structure
- Women in police: 16% of individual police commission and 10% overall
- In the military as of end of August: 2.8% in troops and military experts
- Why so important?
 - Tend to look at the representation issue and number issue and forget why it's important:
Advocates often make easy argument that we do not have enough women; those hesitates say, it's just the number issue
 - We need to go down to next level of strategy, have distinct strategy for different categories of personnel; strategies need to go beyond UN secretariat, and to reach member states level; need to work together
 - Police has reasonable success; the establishment of International Network of Female Police Peacekeeping
 - Military: still male dominated; we need to ask ourselves if the increase of representation here will have overall effectiveness or if we should look at certain mandate related areas where we could find more female representatives; how to motivate member states to nominate women leaders
 - Civilian sector: breaching the civilian gender gaps in peace operations; Findings: if we have gender parity, the productivity goes up.
 - Overall role modelling: counselling junior staff, discussing career development

- Have comprehensive approach, cooperating between the UN secretariat and member states
- Gender mainstreaming issue: Gender issue should not be only addressed and understood by gender advisors but all personnel, especially at senior levels in the mission

Jayne Lawlor: a gender advisor and a mother

- In Irish Defense Forces:
 - Ensure the standard is there for all, same for everyone, and that's one reason that makes it hard for recruitment
 - Using Facebook and Twitter to try to find people
 - Try to share ideas how to recruit females
 - Irish Defense Forces, 6.2% at home and 4.8% serving overseas (those deployed overseas mostly against their wills)
 - Need to understand that there are certain periods that women will not be able to be deployed or to be volunteered
 - Giving equal opportunities to females, to allow them to gain the same overseas operational experience as their male counterparts
 - Try to implement 1325 (send her to different courses overseas)
 - Think about the action plan
- Introducing gender perspective at all level, but importantly at the most tactical level

- Gender briefing at various level throughout their career
- Pre-deployment training: make sure UN code of conducts is implemented
- How to get the gender message across
 - Gender advisor at headquarter level, and tactical level
 - Training personnel to be a gender focal points in each unit
- Why don't the UN have an action plan?

Hester Paneras: Only female police commissioner

- Women networking: informal structure of the mission to get women out in the field, give support/emotional support, capacity building
- Look at our structure: where does the gender advisor fit in?
- Socialization: addressing both women and men the perceptions, stereotypes
- Getting females in senior positions in order to get the message out
- Military observers, there are few females being military observers, who are the one who really interact with the society
- Partner with certain organizations

Suggestions for Global Experts website

From: Ninh Pham <nhp2m9@mail.missouri.edu>

Subject: Global Experts - ideas for redesigning the website

Date: November 6, 2013 9:04:28 AM CST

To: Stéphanie Durand <stephanied@unops.org>

Hi Stephanie,

Below is some of my thoughts on the website.

I think as a database webpage, the simple the better. I would keep just the Expert Database tab and lose everything else.

The issue now is how to deal with those tabs that are essential but does not need to have their own tabs.

- The feature experts column should be hidden, we don't need it. Instead, we have a sidebar, featuring "about us" and a small lot for "get involved"
- The partners tab is going to be gone but we have the footer with logo of partners, when an user click on those logos, they're taken to the partners page.
- There is no need for the search bar at the top because our main page acts as a search tool already
- In the Expert Database tab, now is going to be our homepage, there should be function for user to search for experts just by keywords. This way, we can lose the search bar from the top of the page.

Let me know what you think.

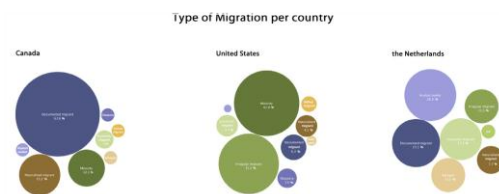
Thank you.



Seminars of editors in chief and experts

seminar in Bern

#CoveringMigration



Data Journalism Project:

Do One Thing for Diversity and Inclusion



Coming up:



**Interview with Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz
Al-Nasser, United Nations High
Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations**



Q: His Excellency, you and your organization are vocal and active in the need to strengthen partnerships and cooperation on international migration. Recent events, including but not limited to the tragic events of the drownings off the Italian coast, underscore the need for this crucial work.

What do you believe is the role of the media in helping people to understand the issues? And how well or how poorly do you feel the media is doing in that regard?

A:

Q: This year News Xchange brings almost 500 news professionals, including a large delegation from the UN and its agencies, together to discuss the new realities facing the industry. The BBC is producing a key session on media coverage of migrants and migration-related issues. What do you believe is critical for our delegates to know and to understand as a result of these conversations?

A:

Q: You recently stated the following: " The process of globalization is transforming societies, making them increasingly diverse and interconnected. This is a time of unprecedented mobility. Presently, there are currently 232 million international migrants.

That number is expected to grow. How this dynamic is portrayed in the media, discussed by political and cultural leaders, and managed by governments will determine whether populations view increased diversity as a source of strength or as a threat.

A look at the headlines in the news shows how migration is shaping our world. By focusing on migration and how news stories about migrants are covered in the media, the UNAOC addresses a critical and timely issue."

How is the UNAOC currently partnering with media? How could see this effort growing and expanding in the coming year?

A:

Q: Do you believe audiences truly understand what is meant by the term "migrant"? Do you believe that audiences understand that ours is a mobile population and that migrant does not necessarily mean refugee? How might media help clarify this distinction?

A:

Q: Several very large news organizations, including The Associated Press, have recently announced that they are no longer going to use the term "illegal immigrant". Others, however, continue to use that phrasing or something similar. Do you feel this is an important step or more a matter of semantics?

A:

Q: Your organization has recently compiled a series of recommendations for more objective and more effective media coverage of migrants and migration-related issues, and you have also completed a very successful social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter, reaching more than 5 million people. How can media organizations access this information? And, equally, will there more opportunities for News Xchange delegates, for example, to add to this very important conversation?

A:

Transition document

The Global Experts website is set up as a hub for users to consult different experts on different areas of interest, which go along with the UNAOC's mission: to promote cross cultural understanding and dialogue. This website is currently going through a revitalization / revamp, mostly behind the scene with irrelevant experts being withdrawn from the database, rethinking of the design of the page, etc.

The UNAOC's staff decided to change this website to become a mere database site. For this to be done, it is recommended to strip down most of the tabs from the website, and only keep relevant ones. There are many glitches to the website but if it's going to be rebuilt as new, there is probably nothing one should worry about.

Each expert has a profile and a couple of links to articles they wrote elsewhere. These articles either were also posted in this original form on the Global Experts website or as an excerpt with the link to the original article. Some experts will have many links to articles under their profile page, others not so many, some do not have any. Those articles are under Comment and Analysis tab, which will be remained active. The articles were all tagged with the experts' names. That way, their links will appear under experts' profile page. Most of the articles are checked for tags. For the experts that do not have links under their profile, you could do by finding his/her articles elsewhere and post on the website, with the permission from the supervisor, of course.

Some experts will have longer/more detailed profiles than others and most of them were updated years ago. Many of them are no longer with the same institutions, many have different titles. Some sent their updates recently but most of them need

updated version of their profile. Along with this is the master-list excel file which contains contact information of the experts, which also in need of an update.

This website was built on a wordpress platform, with a customized theme. One (intern) needs to have an administrator (not just a simple “user”) account to change anything in the theme or interfere with the codes and the add-on features. As you may see, there are many experts profiles which do not have a light red/brown title head, which summarizes who the expert is. This should be easily fixed if you have the admin account and fix/add the title add-on.

The sidebar with highlight of experts are checked for missing pictures. Some of them will still don’t have pictures and they are the ones who do not have a photo on their profiles. What we can do is we contact the experts and ask for their photos and make it as a “feature image”. It is an add-on feature you can see at the bottom right of the edit page in Wordpress.

Experts profile pictures seem to be taken off elsewhere online, hence their quality are not great. It is recommended to contact the experts for their high quality pictures.

Chapter 5: Press freedom and reporting on the government in Myanmar

Myanmar used to be one of the most secluded and isolated places in the world. Human rights watchdog organizations each year released reports with countless incidents proving Myanmar to be one of the worst states when it came to dealing with its people. Press freedom was seriously violated with many media laws in place.

Starting in March 2011, things began to change when a newly elected civilian government came to power. To much global rejoicing, the country began to open up and began to allow much more freedom for both local and international media. This is an unique opportunity for journalists to speak candidly and openly for the first time about the state of the press in Myanmar.

This change raised two questions. Is this freedom real and will it last? How do these changes affect the way journalists work in Myanmar? To answer these, I explored two research questions:

RQ1: How did journalists in Myanmar and outside of the country report on the government before the political reform?

RQ2: How do the recent change in policies affect reporting in Myanmar?

I conducted 11 in-depth interviews. One group included those who worked for local media and foreign press inside Myanmar. The other group consisted of those who worked for exiled media and international press outside of the country.

The framework for this analysis is the gatekeeping theory as defined by Shoemaker and Voss (2009). It is “the process of culling and crafting countless bits of

information to the unlimited number of messages that reach people everyday and it is the center of the media's role in the modern day.”

For 50 years before the recent positive developments, journalists in Myanmar had been operating under strict censorship from the government with a series of media laws to follow. The recent changes in the Burmese media landscape, though positive, are still in an early phase. What these journalists consider as newsworthy and their decision process might be influenced by governmental censorship or self-censorship. To this end, gatekeeping theory which addresses the media's decision in disseminating and withholding information from the public offers an insight into this process.

Background: Suppression of the media under the military rule

Aung Zaw reported in the Nieman Reports (2002) that the media in Myanmar was in a “deep coma.” The Committee to Protect Journalists in 1998 listed this Southeast Asian country as one of 10 enemies of the press together with China and Cuba. Since 2002, Myanmar was among the bottom 15 countries where freedom of expression was seriously violated (Reporters Without Borders, 2013).

The media was under tight control from the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), which is an agency of the Ministry of Information (Naing, 2010). The military government of Myanmar passed several acts prohibiting the country's press from publishing any content that reflect badly on the government as well as undermining the country's peace and stability. Violations of this principle would bring a sentence of up to 20 years (Committee to Protect Journalists, 1997). Taboo topics included natural disasters, plane crashes, regional conflicts as well as activities on the opposition party and

coups to overthrow the military government (Zaw, 2002; Piddhanida, 2013). Journalists' phones were tapped (Zaw, 2002) and licensing was a must for anyone who wanted to practice journalism (Reporters Without Borders, 2005).

Every week we would have to submit our pages on Thursday and Friday then on Saturday night late in the evening, we'd get our pages back from the ministry and we would put the corrections in and cut what they told us to cut and then run the paper. (Gabrielle Paluch, former editor of Myanmar Times)

Print media was strictly censored with pre-publication rule with every article having to be submitted for approval before publishing. 450 non-government newspapers, journals and magazines had to suffer from this process which could take several months (Tun, 2013; Pidd, 2013; Phanida, 2013; Naing, 2010).

While foreign correspondents did not have to go through censorship, they had to send copies of their stories to the censorship bureau. They practiced what was called self-restraint to protect themselves from the government action.

Self-restraint in the sense that for example if we want to write anything about military, I would guess and gauge is this worth the risk, how can I verify this information, what sort of proof. I have to double check and recheck before I write a story so I have a little bit of restraint because of what I wrote, I might land into trouble, I want to stay out of trouble so that I can report. We have to be very careful of what we write. (Aye Win, AP foreign correspondent)

The military regime also controlled the airwaves and used broadcasting as a propaganda tool. According to the CIA (2013), the Burmese government owned one state radio station and controlled the content of nine joint state and private radio stations. The government has ownership of two TV stations, one of which belongs to the armed forces, which also has partnerships in two other pay TV stations.

Access to the Internet was also limited with many websites being banned, including YouTube, *BBC*, *Reuters*, *The Bangkok Post*, *Straits Times*, *Radio Free Asia*, *Irrawaddy*, *Democratic Voice of Burma*. The government censored the Internet by asking service providers to install censorship equipment manufactured from China. Anti-government content was firewalled while netizens were considered “enemies of the state” (Reporters Without Borders, 2011). According to the law, no citizen was allowed to possess a fax machines or computers (Burma Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933), posting on the Internet is regulated (Computer Science Development Law, 1996). Violations of any of those laws would result in either fines or up to 15 years in prison. Many said that the law left many doors open for interpretation and the main goal was to keep government critics from speaking up (Pidd, 2013).

Burmese journalists were never under the threat of a death penalty, however many journalists who violated the strict media law were jailed in insanity prisons with lengthy sentences (Zaw, 2002; Reporters Without Borders, 2005). In 2008, 10 journalists were put in jailed, including one who received a sentence of 19 years (Naing, 2010).

Aye Win, and her husband, Min Zaw, a foreign correspondent for the *Tokyo Shimbun*, were harassed and threatened constantly by the government. They were arrested from home at midnight for questioning. Aye Win described one event during the Saffron Revolution of the Buddhist Monks in 2007 when she heard that traumatizing knock on their home’s gate.

The roads were quiet, it’s eerie, it’s so silent, nothing, you can even hear the pen drop. And then about midnight, I shouldn’t be awake because I had been running and walking all day, I should be sleeping like a log, but I could hear a car

*on the street. “What is this car doing?” And then it clicked.
“Are they coming for us?” Normal person wouldn’t think like
that. (Aye Win, AP foreign correspondent)*

Min Zaw was arrested that day for covering the monks’ protests. He was sent to solitary confinement and was released 7 days after due to his health conditions.

Publishing articles that went against the government’s instructions would lead to warnings, suspension or even worse, shutdown. Private newspapers were shut down because of being pro-America or reporting on events that were deemed inappropriate by the PSRD (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). This led many newspapers into carefully coding secret messages calling for freedom and overthrowing the current government into their articles. Journalists in Myanmar called this practice “sandwich reporting” (Naing, 2010).

Chit Win Maung, an editor and founder of two magazines, said that one of his magazines was banned three times for publishing articles criticizing the military government. *Ya Nan Thit*, an international affairs magazine, twice was out of circulation for six months and then again three months.

Existing alongside the repressed media in the country is the exiled media which located in the neighboring countries of Thailand, India and Bangladesh. These publications were reporting in English, Burmese and various languages. They also relied heavily on contributions from donors, mostly from Europe and America (Zaw, 2006). Three of the most prominent ones are *Irrawaddy* in Thailand, *Mizzima* in India, and the *Democratic Voice of Burma* in Norway. These outlets were not allowed to distribute their work in Myanmar and were seen by the government as “enemies” (Bottollier-Depois,

2012).

Reporting on the government as well as getting any information at all was hard work and often unrewarded. For exiled publications, it was harder for them to report on the government issues. Calls were unanswered and were required to quote from government owned media. During Nargis Cyclone in 2008, VOA Burmese service was trying to get information about the devastation that the cyclone caused to the country. However, communications were completely cut off.

Zaw (2006) highlighted that exiled media enjoyed much more freedom than their counterparts inside the country. They often published articles that were very critical of the regime with the help of reporters inside the country (Zaw, 2006). These publications attracted international attention and were also popular in Myanmar. In many cases, Burmese audience had to rely on outside news to get information on the development inside their country on certain topics. (Reporters Without Borders, 2005).

The exiled media were operating under pressure from their political associations, donors, and the country where they headquartered. According to Zaw (2006), Thailand many times asked *Irrawaddy* to change its location or shut down the office as it wanted to keep a good relationship with Myanmar. Many exiled publications were associated with opposition parties and were not critical of the opposition parties' weaknesses as well as flaws in strategies. *Irrawaddy* once was told by the party that they should wait until the "revolution is over" to publish articles that put the party under a bad light. Donors never forgot to remind them that they help fund the newspaper. *Mizzima* once was told to retract an article that was not in line with the views from its donors (Zaw, 2006).

Under the previous military regime, it was extremely difficult for foreign media to get news from inside Myanmar as well as distributing news within the country.

According to a report from Reporters Without Borders in 2005, foreign journalists from *Agence France-Presse*, *British Broadcasting Company*, and *Voice of America* were denied visas to entry the country. Journalists who gave those media interviews were harassed and their phone lines were disrupted for weeks. Foreign media were told to leave the country after the military came to power in 1964. Only two Chinese news outlets were allowed to have permanent staff working in Myanmar (AP, 2013). Foreign reporters often had to travel to the Thai or Chinese borders to get information about this isolated country (BNI, 2013).

Thiha Thwe, *NHK*'s cameraman, said on the day before Saffron Revolution in 2007, both of his phones stopped working. The same thing happened to many other journalists who worked for foreign media, which made it hard for them to communicate with their bureaus in Bangkok and elsewhere.

The government authorized which newspapers and periodicals were allowed to appear on the newsstands and often times their content was heavily guarded. Anyone found with possession of an unauthorized publications could be put in prison (Brooten, 2008). *VOA*, *BBC* and some other radio stations had to transmit signals through satellite or shortwave to reach audience in Myanmar (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Myanmar today: Positive changes and unknown future

In a dramatic move in August 2012, Myanmar's Ministry of Information's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division announced its decision to abolish its 50 year

practice of pre-publication censorship for print media. This means journalists will no longer have to submit their work for approval before publication. This is the most dramatic change in a series of reforms that shows the government's ease on controlling press freedom during the last year since the political reform (Tun, 2013; Pidd, 2013; Phanida, 2013).

Things in Myanmar are the best they've been in years.

(Geoffrey Goddard, former *Myanmar Times* editor)

Myanmar removed 2,082 names from a list of banned organizations and individuals, many of whom were journalists. This allowed the return of exiled media organizations as well as the release of journalists and cyber dissidents (Reporters Without Borders, 2013).

In late 2012, the exiled media organizations set up their offices in Yangon. It took *Voice of America Burmese service* a year and a half to come back to the country. It now has a staff of six people, including a bureau chief, rotating every two years. *Radio Free Asia* has staff in Yangon, the business capital of Myanmar, and Mandalay, the second biggest city in the country. Reporters from publications such as *Mizzima*, *Irrawaddy* and *DVB* are now back, working in the country. *Mizzima*, a publication banned by the junta for publishing critical stories about the government, has offices in three most important cities in Myanmar, which are Na Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay. Their reporters and support group has grown to 190 people.

Many newspapers did something they never imagined to do before such as putting pictures of Aung San Suu Kyi on front pages or quote critics of the government (Tun,

2013). Before this, local newspapers were not allowed to publish anything about Aung San Suu Kyi or her pictures (Phanida, 2013).

We now have so many newspapers. Most of the journalists can write nearly everything, no more censorship department (sic). Our press movement (sic) is more free compared to previous years. (Chit Win Maung, chief editor of Tha Ma Ga News Journal and Tet Lann Sports Journal)

The return of the private media is also a positive sign which ended the monopoly on daily news by the government newspapers (Win & Naing, 2013). Starting April 2013, daily private newspapers re-appeared in the newsstands. This was a novelty in Myanmar because many people are not old enough to know private media even existed (Win, 2013). As many as 16 private newspapers have permissions to publish daily. Four of them released their first daily on April 1, 2013 (Win & Naing, 2013).

There's been a remarkable transformation as the domestic media as the onerous censorship is not there as it was. You have a boom in the number of newspapers being published. There are probably too many newspapers right now. (Steve Herman, VOA's Southeast Asia Bureau Chief)

Also in April 2013, *NHK*, a Japan-based media group, and the *Associated Press* of the U.S. were allowed to have permanent staff working in Yangon.

There has been a huge influx of foreign reporters. There are a lot more than there used to be due to ease of restrictions and people are a lot more open to the press than they used to be. (Gabrielle Paluch, freelance reporter)

These changes together with the release of political prisoners helped Myanmar jump 18 places in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. For the last decade, Myanmar was always placed in the bottom 15 every year together with countries which had the worst press freedom index. In the 2013 report, Myanmar was ranked 151st,

its best position on the list ever (Reporters without Borders, 2013).

Despite the progress, lack of access and lack of transparency are still big problems under a newly open government. Stories about former generals are still hard to access, while investigation stories are mostly impossible to execute. This is particularly true for foreign media and once exiled media. Many parts of the country are still closed off to foreign media and government officials are reluctant to talk to the press. Getting a comment from government sources is still fundamentally difficult. Investigation on corruption is difficult to work on because of the lack of transparency.

Lack of transparency and of course we can't say that foreign correspondents are free to travel anywhere in the country. Much of the country is restricted and literally as recently as a few week ago foreign correspondents have been chased out of Rakhine state. The situation is better than it was a few years ago but by no means is it comparable to many other countries in the regions. (Steve Herman, VOA's Southeast Asia Bureau Chief)

A few politicians or officers, they talk to us but people in the bureaucratic chain still are not willing to talk to us. They're afraid of their status. They would lose their job or something like that. (Htun, VOA Burmese service bureau chief)

Foreign press express a sense of confusion and frustration toward the government's treatment of them.

There is tremendous frustration, puzzlement, and consternation among the foreign media especially the major news organizations based there about lack of access to government officials... Much of the country is restricted and literally as recently as a few weeks ago foreign correspondents have been chased out of Rakhine state. (Steve Herman, VOA's Southeast Asia Bureau Chief)

The recent arrests of three journalists who broke the news about a chemical

weapons factory, and one journalist who went into the Education Ministry to get information have taken a toll on local journalists as well. Most journalists now will think twice before breaking investigative or enterprise stories.

The freedom is like a kind of fruity fruit, it has been delicious but the taste has been disappearing. (Thiha Thwe, NHK's cameraman)

The arrival of more private daily newspapers was greeted with great joy, however a price war has already started. Many journalists blame cronies, financial groups who are friends of the government, for waging this war. Those financial groups are selling newspapers at half or one third the average price. Private media do not have the resources to sustain their business.

The government controls the distribution, the government has established the printing press, they have many printing press all over the country... In terms of distribution, they're [private media] far behind because they don't really have this strong network. And they don't have printing machines all over the country, and when the transportation not efficient, how can you send the daily newspapers, you know to the district that will, you know the reader can read early in the morning. By noon, the newspapers are useless. (Aye Win, AP foreign correspondent)

Over the last year, three newspapers went bankrupt, one of which is *Mizzima*, one of the exiled media organizations who just got back to the country. *Mizzima* has since partnered with a company owned by Surge Pun, a banking and real estate tycoon. With the financial support, *Mizzima* aspires to become one of the top media house in multimedia production according to its editor-in-chief Soe Myint. From an exiled newspaper which was banned and critical of the junta, *Mizzima* now has 190 staff, working in Yangon, the capital city Na Pyi Taw, and Mandalay. Aye Win expressed

concerns about the newspaper's direction.

Since it was bought by a tycoon, the business will be financially strong but we have to carefully observe that these media remain independent. (Aye Win, AP's foreign correspondent)

While *Mizzima* found a strong financial support, *Myanmar Freedom* is trying to negotiate its existence. One of Myanmar's first private daily English newspapers, *Myanmar Freedom* had to suspend publications recently. Thiha Saw, the editor in chief, has been negotiating for a strong financial partner in the price war with cronies.

Our initial business plan was to reach the 'sustainable point' in a year or so. Our initial projection for the capital we need was one million dollars in a year. I've spent almost \$850,000 in the last 10 months. At this point when the price war started and the big companies coming in, I have not any choice but to team up with a stronger company to engage in this 'cruel newspaper war'. The challenge is to get a strong partner and maintain our independent editorial policy. (Thiha Saw, Myanmar Freedom's chief editor)

One challenge for a new freedom of press is that young journalists who grew up during the military rule were not exposed to professional journalism. While college educated, they have recently graduated and do not have any professional journalism training. These budding journalists are also underexposed to the international community and norms. They often confused with appropriately challenging politicians and feeling they are disrespecting these politicians. Lacking background and context is also one challenge for these journalists. Consequently, they do not know which questions to ask to gain the proper information or to get to the heart of the matter.

Conclusion: Skepticism about the future

While the changes, recent openness, and relaxation of the government towards the media are seen as positive, skepticism is still high among journalists and media experts in Myanmar and outside.

I've never really bought into the type of "everything is fine in Burma" because, well, that's not realistic. Nowhere else in the world has a country that has been so closed off and oppressive suddenly become a beacon of democracy without a lot of heartache. (Thin Leiwin)

Veteran journalists who covered Myanmar for the last couple of decades are convinced that the government will not backtrack on the change. “They must be stupid to reverse to the old time,” said Than Lwin Htun, VOA Burmese service bureau chief.

Journalists agreed that the reason that the junta military government decided to open up the country was not that surprising. That was a “clever exit strategy” and a means to keep the families wealth permanent. There are about 100 families that control Myanmar politically and economically. The way the government was structured made it hard for those generals to transfer their wealth to their families.

I think most would agree that we are seeing a period of economic liberalization, not massive political reform. I think how the election is handled next year will be a major limitus test for what happens. (Steve Herman, VOA Southeast Asia bureau chief)

Reversing to the past is not expected, but journalists are not convinced that this government is willing to give the media full access to press freedom.

This regime still wants to control everything. There's one step forward but there's always two steps backwards... They're not reluctant to break their promises and they step on their own

words. So for me, I've watched them for four, five decades and I have very little faith in them. I don't see them as very trustworthy establishment. (Aye Win, AP foreign correspondent)

Case in point, the existence of the Press Council. The Press Council was created after the government relaxed media regulations. Initially, the government appointed the majority of its member. After criticism, the government allowed the media to select its members from media organizations across the country. Many journalists now feel the organization has no authority or influence to guarantee a free-press. The government asked the council to come up with its own new media law, while at the same time announced a printing and publishing law.

Skepticism aside, many journalists express optimism for the future of Myanmar in terms of press freedom. All of them admitted that the country is in transition and it needs time to change. Journalists agreed that the presidential elections next year will show more clearly if these changes are real and if it will last.

Limitations and Suggestions

For this analysis, I conducted 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow the discussions to flow as a conversation (Harrell and Bradley, 2009) while still covering planned areas and topics. This kind of interview can produce in-depth information (Newton, 2010), but it has certain weaknesses. My sample size was small and not inclusive. I was able to interview 12 journalists who spoke English. While these journalist have years of experience with deep understanding of Myanmar, they lack the understanding of the ethnic regions that journalists from other regions have. The ethnic journalists I met did not speak English.

Communication complications is another factor that prevented me from having the most satisfactory results. Some local journalists struggled with expressing themselves in English. I was fortunate to be in Myanmar for a week for a conference held by the East-West Center and made the connections with local journalists. However, when it was time for a formal interview, it was difficult to arrange due to their schedule and the time difference.

This research was done mainly focused on the technical side of reporting in Myanmar while it was under oppression and after the country was open to the world. There is so much about Myanmar and the country as well as the reporting culture that needs to be explored.

Ethnic tension and how journalists in Myanmar cover the clashes between Buddhist monks and Muslim minority people in the northern state of Kachine is also a worthy topic to examine. The dynamics between the majority of the Buddhists and the minority Muslims in this country is interesting. Many people in Myanmar, however educated they are, have biases against Muslims. The role of the press in conflict should be examined.

The changing role of exiled media, now that there is no exiled media anymore is another topic worth looking at. In order to come back to the country, many newspapers had to water down their coverage of the issues. Will exiled media become obsolete or not and how they can stay true to their colors are questions that future researchers may want to pursue. The international media may have their own challenges as they balance

expanded coverage and the need to be able to operate within the country. Monitoring this in Myanmar may provide good information and research topics.

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Interviews

1. Aye Aye Win and Min Zaw, Foreign Correspondent, 10/29/2014, In person, Columbia, MO, USA.
2. Than Lwin Htun, VOA Burmese service bureau chief, 4/7/2014, Skype Interview, Washington D.C., USA.
3. Steve Herman, VOA Southeast Asia bureau chief, 4/4/2014, Skype Interview, Bangkok, Thailand.
4. Aye Hnin, RFA editor, 10/19/2013, Skype, London, UK.
5. Geoffrey Goddard, Myanmar Times former editor, 9/23/2013, Skype Interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
6. Gabrielle Paluch, freelance reporter, 4/3/2014, Phone interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
7. Chit Win Maung, , 4/7/2014, Phone Interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
8. Thiha Thwe, NHK correspondent and cameraman, 4/4/2014, Phone interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
9. Thiha Saw, Myanmar Freedom chief editor, 4/8/2014, Email Interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
10. Soe Myint, Mizzima editor in chief, 4/19/2014, Email Interview, Yangon, Myanmar.
11. Thin Leiwin, Reuters correspondent, 4/11/2014, Email Interview, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Appendix

Original proposal

Introduction

In August 2004, my editor sat me down for a serious talk on how to select news. She could not believe I just filed an article lambasting Cuba. She did most of the talking during our 30-minute conversation while I nodded understandingly. Almost eight years after the talk when I decided to go to Mizzou for my graduate degree, the talk still makes sense and it sure still has its merits until now. We should tread lightly while reporting anything about China. Stories about allied countries such as Cuba and Myanmar should be carefully chosen, best not to publish anything negative about them; the safest bet is to not report about them.

I always wanted to become a foreign correspondent. I wanted to become one when I watched countless of broadcast pieces on the war between Israel and Palestine which we advocated for the independence for Palestine.

I came to Professor Amy McCombs to talk about my professional project. She suggests Burma and their interesting revolution that open up the media.

Theory: Gatekeeping

Shoemaker and Voss (2009) defined gatekeeping as “the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information to the unlimited number of messages that reach people everyday and it is the center of the media’s role in the modern day.” (p.3)

Lewin (1947) first coined the term “gatekeeping” with his study on the food chain. He found that housewives were the primary gatekeepers to what food would be served to the rest of the family. Lewin also introduced a concept of forces that determine what kind of information to be allowed to pass through a gate. White (1950) was the first to study gatekeeping theory in journalism with his research on how a wire service editor called Mr. Gates choose which news to disseminate. White discovered that Mr. Gates’ decision on news was highly subjective and based on his personal beliefs and knowledge of news routines. McQuail (2010) defined gatekeeping as the process that “selection are made in media work, especially decisions whether or not to admit a particular news story to pass through the 'gates' of a news medium into the news channels.” (p. 213) According to McQuail, this is a descriptive theory, without any predictive effects.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) introduced a model, which recognized forces on news selection from the individual to the organization to the institution to society. The levels of gatekeeping according to Shoemaker and Reese are individual, routines of communication work, organizational characteristics, extra-media, and societal.

Many studies have revealed the levels of the gatekeeping process. Kim’s study examined how Iraqi journalists in post Saddam Hussein era perceived physical threats and if such factors as individual, journalistic routines, organizational and societal variables (Kim, 2010). Kim found that a journalist’s perception of physical harm was

largely shaped by his or her years of working in the field, perception of the future of media, and gender (individual level). Also greatly influencing an individual's perception of a physical threat was if he or she works for a big or small organization (organization level) in a big or small city (societal level). Journalists who work for private media are seen more dangerous than those who work for partisan and state-run media (organizational level). The study did not focus on the institutional level and did not find any significant result at the routines of work level.

Cuillier (2012) studied gatekeeping at individual level and called it conscious gatekeeping. He proposed that a journalist might inject their own biases when writing stories about a fatal accident; cancer or terrorist attacks against the out-groups. Cuillier's study suggested that gatekeeping at individual level in this case has trumped over journalistic values and routines to become the primary one in the process.

For 50 years before the recent positive developments, journalists in Burma had been operating under strict censorship from the government with a series of media laws to follow. Failure to follow these rules would result in suspension of the newspaper or lengthy imprisonment for the journalists. Exiled media were restricted and suffered from pressure from different stakeholders including the donors and the political parties that they were affiliated with.

The recent changes in the Burmese media landscape, though positive, are still in the premature phase. What these journalists consider as newsworthy and the process resulted in their decision might depend on the level of censorship and self-censorship and many other social factors at play. To this end, gatekeeping theory, which addresses the media's decision in disseminating and withholding information from the public, offers an

insight to this process.

Literature Review

Myanmar/Burma has gone through an interesting path during the last two years. The country in Southeast Asia used to be one of the most secluded and isolated places in the world. Human rights watchdog organizations each year released reports with countless incidents, which proved Myanmar/Burma to be one of the worst states when it came to dealing with its people. Press freedom were seriously violated with many media laws in place.

Things started to change since March 2011 when a civil newly elected government came to power. To the world's much rejoice, the country began to open up and allowed much better freedom for its own media and international presence.

In August 2012, several months after the democratic reform that had Burma's name mentioned across the world, the country's The Ministry of Information's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division announced its plan to remove pre-published censorship for print media. Many restrictions still remain but this helped the country in Southeast Asia jump several places in the press freedom index, which was surveyed by Reporters Without Borders. This could be one of the most drastic steps that the country has ever taken since Burma became an independent country.

Suppression of the media under military rule

Aung Zaw in 2002 that the media in Myanmar was in a "deep coma". The Committee to Protect Journalists in 1998 listed this Southeast Asian country as one of 10 enemies of the press together with China and Cuba. Since 2002, this country was among the bottom 15 countries where freedom of expression was seriously violated (Reporters

Without Borders, 2013).

The media was put under tight control from the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), which is an agency from the Ministry of Information (Naing, 2010). The military government of Myanmar passed several acts to prohibit the country's press from publishing any content that reflect badly on the government as well as undermine the country's peace and stability. Violations of this principle would bring a sentence of up to 20 years (Committee to Protect Journalists, 1997). Taboo topics included natural disasters, plane crashes, regional conflicts as well as activities on the opposition party and coups to overthrow the military government (Zaw, 2002; Piddhanida, 2013). Journalists' phones were tapped (Zaw, 2002) and licensing was a must for anyone who wanted to practice journalism (Reporters Without Borders, 2005).

Print media was strictly censored with pre-publication rule with every article having to be submitted for approval before publishing according to the Printers and Publishers Registration Law, 1962 - this has changed since April 2013. 450 non-government newspapers, journals and magazines had to suffer from this process, which could last several months (Tun, 2013; Pidd, 2013; Phanida, 2013; Naing, 2010). The military regime also controlled the airwave. According to the CIA (2013), Burmese government owns one state radio station and controls the content of nine joint state radio stations and turns them into a propaganda tool. Burma has ownership of two TV stations, one of which belongs to the armed forces and has partnership in two other pay TV station.

Access to the Internet was also limited with many websites being banned, including YouTube, *BBC*, *Reuters*, *The Bangkok Post*, *Straits Times*, *Radio Free Asia*,

Irrawaddy, Democratic Voice of Burma. Only more than 100 IP addresses in Burma had full access to the World Wide Web. The government censored the Internet also by asking service providers to install censorship equipment bought from China. Anti-government content was firewalled while netizens were considered “enemies of the state” (Reporters Without Borders, 2011). According to the law, no citizen is allowed to possess a fax machines or computers (Burma Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933), posting on the Internet is regulated (Computer Science Development Law, 1996). Violations of any of those laws will result in either fines or up to 15 years in prison. Many said that the law left many doors open for interpretation and the main goal is to keep government critics from speaking up (Pidd, 2013).

Burmese journalists were never under murderous threat however many of whom violated the strict media law was jailed in insanity prisons with lengthy sentences (Zaw, 2002; Reporters Without Borders, 2005). In 2008, 10 journalists were put in jailed, including one that received a sentence of 19 years (Naing, 2010). Publishing articles that went against the government’s instructions would lead into warnings, suspension or even worse, shutdown. Private newspapers were shut down because of being pro-America or reporting on events that were deemed inappropriate by the PSRD (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). This led many newspapers into carefully coding secret messages calling for freedom and overthrowing the current government into their articles. Journalists in Burma called this practice “sandwich reporting” (Naing, 2010).

Existing alongside with repressed media in the country is the exiled media, which mostly locate in neighboring countries such as Thailand, India and Bangladesh. These publications were reporting in English, Burmese and various languages. They also relied

heavily on contributions from donors, mostly from Europe and America (Zaw, 2006).

Three of the most prominent ones are Irrawaddy in Thailand and Mizzima in India and the Democratic Voice of Burma in Norway. These outlets were not allowed to distribute their work in Myanmar and were seen by the government as “enemies” (Bottollier-Depois, 2012).

Zaw (2006) highlighted that exiled media enjoyed much more freedom than their counterparts inside the country. They often published articles that were very critical of the regime with the help of reporters inside the country (Zaw, 2006). These publications attracted international attention and were also popular in Myanmar. In many cases, Burmese audience had to rely on outside news to get information on the development inside their country on certain topics. (Reporters Without Borders, 2005). In 2011, Irrawaddy’s Burmese audience is the second largest behind Singapore while Democratic Voice of Myanmar also enjoyed similar popularity (Jackson, 2012).

However, the exiled media also were operating under pressure from their political associations, donors and the country where they headquartered. According to Zaw (2006), Thailand many times asked Irrawaddy to changed their location or shut down the office, as they wanted to keep a good relationship with Burma. Many exiled publications were associated with opposition parties and were not critical of the opposition parties’ weaknesses as well as flaws in strategies. Irrawaddy once was told by the party that they should wait until “revolution is over” to publish articles that put the party under bad light. Donors never forgot to remind them where the newspapers got money from and Mizzima once was told to retract an article that was not in light with the views from its donors (Zaw, 2006).

Under the previous military regime, it was extremely difficult for foreign media to get news from inside Burma as well as distributing news to Burma. According to a report from Reporters Without Borders in 2005, foreign journalists from AFP, BBC and VOA were denied visas to entry Burma. Journalists who gave those media interviews were harassed and their phone lines were disrupted for weeks. Foreign media was told to leave the country after the military came to power in 1964. Only two Chinese news outlets were allowed to have permanent staff working in Myanmar (Win, 2013). Foreign reporters often had to travel to the Thai or Chinese borders to get information about this isolated country (BNI, 2013).

The government authorized which newspaper and periodicals are allowed to appear on the newsstands and often times their content are guarded heavily. Anyone found with possession of unauthorized publications could be put to prison (Brooten, 2008). VOA, BBC and some other radio stations have to transmit signals through satellite or shortwave to reach Burmese audience (Central Intelligence Agency, 2013).

Positive changes, unknown future

In a drastic move in August 2012, Burma's Ministry of Information's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division announced its decision to abolish pre-publication censorship for print media, which had lasted over 50 years. What this means is journalists will no longer have to submit their works before publication for approval. This is the most dramatic change in a series of reforms that shows the government's ease on controlling press freedom during the last year since the political reform (Tun, 2013; Pidd, 2013; Phanida, 2013).

Burma also removed 2,082 names from a list of organizations and individuals,

many of whom are journalists, banned from the country. This allowed the comeback of exiled media organizations to come back to the country as well as release journalists or cyber dissidents (Reporters Without Borders, 2013). In late 2012, the exiled media organizations set up their offices in Yangon. Many newspapers did something they never imagined to do before such as putting pictures of Aung San Suu Kyi on front pages or critics of the government (Tun, 2013). Before this, local newspapers were not allowed to publish anything about Aung San Suu Kyi or her pictures (Phanida, 2013).

The return of the private media is also a positive sign which ended the monopoly on daily news by the government newspapers (Win & Naing, 2013). Starting April 2013, daily private newspapers re-appeared in the newsstands. This was a novelty in Burma because many people are not old enough to know private media even existed (Win, 2013). As many as 16 private newspapers have permissions to publish daily with four of them released their first daily prints on April 1 (Win & Naing, 2013).

Also in April 2013, NHK, a Japan-based media group, and the Associated Press of the U.S. are allowed to have permanent staff working in Yangon. International radio stations like the Voice of America, British Broadcasting Company and Radio Free Asia opened their bureaus in Myanmar's capital city in mid-2012 (BNI Online, 2013).

These changes together with the release of political prisoners helped Burma jump 18 places in the press freedom index, ranked by Reporters Without Borders every year. For the last decade, Burma was always placed in the bottom 15 every year together with countries, which had the worst press freedom index. In the 2013 report, Burma was ranked 151st, its best position on the list ever (Reporters without Borders, 2013).

The members of the media cautiously welcomed this change as it does not mean

the complete abolishment of censorship. Many journalists inside the country still practice self-censorship when journalists have to take extra care on what they write (Tun, 2013). After publication, journalists still have to submit their work to the supervision committee. The Printing and Registration Act of 1962 is still very much alive which means newspapers can get their licenses revoked if they violate any of the many media laws. It is unclear how much self-censorship journalists still have to do. This new change also proves to be challenging, as many journalists also are unsure and unfamiliar with the idea of free press (Jackson, 2013).

This raises some question: how do these change affect the way journalists work in Myanmar. How do they use their newfound freedom? Will they be able to hold the government accountable? Will they face any repercussion when publishing any article that could have been considered out of line during the military regime? Is this reform real?

Methodology

With this project, I am trying trying to answer two research questions.

RQ1: How did journalists in Burma and outside of the country report on the government before the political reform?

RQ2: How do the recent change in policies affect reporting in Myanmar?

To answer the above two research questions, I will be conducting in-depth interviews. According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured and the purpose is to collect data on either the participants' opinions or beliefs, background, practices or past/present experiences.

For this project I will be conducting semi-structured interviews. According to

Harrell and Bradley (2009), semi-structured interviews allow the discussions between the researchers and the informants flow like a conversation. The researchers however can still cover certain list of areas, which are on the agenda. This type of interview will let the researcher get deeper into a topic and understand thoroughly the answers provided.

Bryman (2004) said that the interviewers might have a list of questions to go through with the interviewees however the interviewees have lots of leeway in how to reply. Same questions can be used with different interviewees and they may not remain in the same order. Different questions also can be asked during the course of the interview.

This kind of interviews has certain strengths and weaknesses. Semi-structured interviews can produce the depth of the information (Newton, 2010). The respondents can influence the topic therefore unexpected issues/topics might emerge. Researchers can probe to understand perspectives and experiences. The flow of the interview is natural because the list of questions and order are not fixed.

There are also some weaknesses, as the researchers are needed to be probe without being directive or judgemental. The analysis would be difficult and cannot outsource. The researchers also have to avoid bias while analyzing. The researchers also have to understand the local culture to capture the interviewees real meaning. Analysis can be time consuming and it can be hard to generalize findings.

For the first group, my sources will include journalists who work for the government owned newspapers and those who work for private newspaper. The second group will include both journalists from foreign newspapers and regional journalists from neighbouring countries such as Thailand and India who understand Burmese language and the country well. The second group also includes Burmese exiled journalists, who

had to leave the country and raise their voice as well as global awareness by their work.

Two groups of journalists will offer different perspectives on government reporting in Burma. The first group will be able to tell the difference between censorship before and after the democratic reform, especially after the latest development concerning the abolishment of submission before publishing policy. How they manage to report news on the government when there was tight control in the old military regime and now if they have complete freedom or still have to self-censor when it comes to the government.

The second group of journalists will be able to share their experience as well as difficulty in gathering news on Burmese government when access to the country is limited, if they use fixers, how they protect the fixers as well as how they decide on the authenticity of information coming out of Burma. The changes in Myanmar definitely affect this group, especially the used to be exiled media. They now face with a problem of having a distinct voice in Myanmar. Will they still do what they used to do? How far will they go in holding the government accountable without possible consequences?

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Interviews

Transcribed as spoken; All questions asked by Ninh Pham unless noted

I. Aye Aye Win: AP, Foreign Correspondent

Min Zaw: Tokyo Shimbun, Foreign Correspondent

10/29/2013

Columbia, MO, USA

In person

Q: Why do you call it Myanmar or Burma?

Aye Win: That's very interesting, you know. We grew up calling the country Burma, in Burmese it's Myanmar all the time. In English it's called Burma and that's we grew up calling the country Burma. We have no problem with that. But in 1989, the government said we have to call Myanmar as the official language of the country. The country is Myanmar, the people is Myanmar, we speak Myanmar, it's rather confusing as many people resist calling the country Myanmar because I think mainly it's politics. The government is a military regime. All of a sudden, it decided OK we're going to change the name, we started calling the country Myanmar. A lot of democratic thinking people think that this is undemocratic. You changed the name of the country without consulting its people. So a lot of people resist, even Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. You know I would call Burma but when we're speaking in Burmese, among Myanmar people, we call our country Myanmar, even before. The only problem is when we write in English, it's Burma, when we speak however, it became not Burma anymore because anybody who is calling the country Burma is seen as very unpatriotic. So, even at the press conference, we really are careful to refer to the country as Myanmar rather than Burma. It's just being

out of politeness we call but we are so much used to calling the country Burma, you know when we speak with English, British, foreigners, Myanmar is not the word that we use but among Burmese, yes, we call Myanmar Myanmar. It's no problem. But this thing about Myanmar, Burma being changed to Myanmar in 1989, many people see it as a political statement. You can't just change the name because you want to change it, you have to consult with the people. You have to listen to the heart of the people, and since the government didn't do so, a lot of people think we would not change it, but when we write of course when we write any official letter in Myanmar.

Q: So for you, what do you call?

Aye Win: For me, I refer to it as Myanmar but when I speak to foreigner friends, I often blurt out Burma all the time and I don't make myself unhappy and so constraint trying to think of Myanmar all the time. If I'm used to calling it Burma, I don't really care. The government will see this as a very unpatriotic attitude. I said I don't care. You can't just measure patriotism just by this. So I don't really care. I call it whatever I feel like and with the foreigners, they're used to hearing Burma, I don't mind calling my country Burma. It doesn't really change much, but it's the government, especially authoritarian regime. They want to force a lot of things on their own people. This is something that I always resisted. And I always said that I'm anti authoritarian maybe. There is a little trick inside me that makes me a little rebellious.

Min Zaw: And another reason is that, this is what I think, I'm not sure if that's right or wrong. Since the military is a big bully in our country, for nearly five decades, people hate them so much that whatever they do, whether it's good or not, people want to go a

different way. So when they wanted to call it Myanmar, people would say no, we will still call Burma. I think it's the anti military sentiment.

Q: So how much of the society are anti the military?

Min Zaw: The majority

Q: So how could they remain control for that long time?

Min Zaw: The guns.

Aye Win: The military holds the gun.

Min Zaw: I think you must have heard the chairman Mohe set the power from the barrel of the gun.

Q: You two have been working for foreign media for so long. How were you treated by the government and the local media in Burma?

Aye Win: I think compared to Vietnam, what I understand is we're lucky because the people see us very positively. People see us are really journalists who want to share the information to the people. That's how the people see us. But for the government, the government see people like us as very unpatriotic, as traitors working for foreign governments and countries. For me, AP is an American news agency, and from 1988 to 2011, the relationship with the United State was so bad. So anyone who worked for the AP was seen as a CIA agent. That is the attitude from the government and that is not healthy. But among the people, like people in Vietnam, people in Vietnam don't see foreign journalists, I mean Vietnamese reporters working for foreign agencies positively. I think that's the difference. But in Burma, people don't view us as unpatriotic. But the

government of course they see us as unpatriotic, as traitors, working for foreign countries so that is dangerous.

Min Zaw: Actually, in our country people even supported us. They even gave us some information about the government. “Please write about this, write about this”.

Aye Win: People see us as savior that makes our life very rewarding, giving people much needed information. That’s why we’re very happy and very proud to be journalists because it’s the people that matter to us. Whatever the government think, that’s not important. Because we always think government come, government go, people will be there forever. What we need is to make people happy, to give them information they need, so they treated us like their saviors, you know. So I think it’s very rewarding.

Q: So how do the people view the government now?

Aye Win: This is very important for you, especially when you come in March. People from outside of the country view the transformation more positively than us actually living in the country. We see there is change, there are changes that there is some transformation politically, economically and the media landscape has changed. But for us, we’re watching it with a lot of skepticism. We don’t believe 100% of what they’re all doing. Because these are former generals, they just changed their uniforms into civilian clothes. So their mindset is still the same. To change the mindset is not easy. They can change on the paper but implementation of the mindset change takes time. So, sometimes I see them take some steps forward and a few steps backward.

It’s the same with the media landscape.

By the way going back to foreign correspondents, we're lucky because we never had to go through censorship. That is every important. Right from the beginning we didn't have to go through censorship. The only thing is they had copies of our stories. And then if they're not happy, they would summon us.

Min Zaw: They would come and get us.

Aye Win: ... for interrogation. We called it "call in for questioning". That's the words they used. Actually, that's interrogation. We are often guests of the government and what is bad about this regime, authoritarian regime, they picked us at midnight and after night, so these midnight knocks are something very traumatizing for us. Very traumatizing. When you hear a knock at midnight, my mother is a doctor, sometimes the patients would knock on the gate, and you know I was already wide awake in bed because I was so nervous. My father had been arrested three times, all three times that's after midnight. We were picked up only after midnight. That's for us was very unhealthy. So they didn't censor our stories but if they're not happy with us, which means they're monitoring our stories, they can always come and pick us up anytime day or night. (Always after midnight, never in the day time.)

Q: How many times were you picked up like that?

Aye Win: For me, I was lucky. I've been picked up only twice. Once was when I covered the opposition party event. That's news coverage and there were some people being distributed at the event, ... not related to the event of this party. Something critical of the regime, the head of the government. So they thought that I took the papers, and I might report that. So, they wanted to to know if I had the papers in hand. I said I don't report

things like that because it's a more personal thing, no news to me. But they're not happy with the fact that I didn't ... "We had the information that you took it." So they want to know that I took it. Actually I took it. I became a very good liar. So they were unhappy. We were both picked up, but fortunately he didn't really take it, so he could sleep early. I was awake until 2 in the morning, I kept write statement. I had to write it again, write it again, I had to write it again. So I had to keep awake all the time because if I fell asleep and I started writing, you know different story that would not be good. So he slept early and I slept pretty late. And then the next day they continued.

Q: And the second time?

Aye Win: Actually, that's the second time, sorry. First time was the story that was reported.

Min Zaw: about The Lady¹.

Aye Win: Yes, about The Lady and that there was some problem with The Lady and her close colleagues. I reported, quoting a government intelligence officer at the gate. So they were very angry that I quoted an intelligence officer at the gate. So they wanted to know who that person was. So I said I got the information. In my story, I said that according to the source at the gate of her house, an official, so they wanted to know who that official was. And the reason they called.

¹ Aung San Suu Kyi is an opposition politician and chairperson of the National League for Democracy in Myanmar. She is the daughter of General Aung San, who negotiated independence for Myanmar from Britain.

And they can call, pick up a person for those small little things. That shows they have power to arrest anybody anytime for any minor reasons. So I think they want to show their authority.

Q: How many time were you picked up?

Min Zaw: Six times. As far as I remember, once for taking photographs of The Lady's gate because she was inside we're about to write a story about her house arrest. That was the first time. And the second time, we were taking pictures of military trucks, loaded with military troops to the teeth. And there was a pagoda in the background. So it was a contrast, very good picture, that's why we took it. And as soon as we had taken the picture, we were called into one of the government offices nearby and we were held there for one day. The third time was later, student rise.

Aye Win: That was which one? We were together, taken away?

Min Zaw: No, I was with your brother. I was covering the student protest at the hotspot. The fourth time was with her. And the last was during the Saffron Revolution. Actually, my bureau chief from Bangkok, he was in Yangon with me. He stayed at the Traders' Hotel, downtown area and he wrote reports. I was the foot soldiers, I go around, give all the information for him and he filed stories from there. And he was deported and I was arrested and I was held in confinement for a week.

Q: What did they do to you?

Min Zaw: Well, they asked me my contacts, my sources, and everything. I told them that I could not tell them anything about my sources. Actually, to tell you the truth, this time

2007, there was no military intelligence department. Military intelligence department had been dismantled in 2004, because military intelligence guys I must say they're smarter than the ordinary police who handled politics. They know how to deal with us. I must be fair to them. They treated us nice, I mean compared to the police. These police they are very rude and I had a quarrel with the investigation officer.

To tell you the truth, first time I was arrested, I was afraid. I didn't know what they're going to charge me because there were a lot of frame of charges that military side, you just cannot do anything at all, you just have to face it. So for the first time, I was afraid but after so many times, I wasn't. So I argued with them and I was released after 7 days. Because I'm diabetics and my foot was swollen after 7 days.

Aye Win: Actually, we were walking after covering the monks protest, so we had to walk a lot those days.

Min Zaw: We had to walk all day.

Aye Win: So his ulcer bled, his blood sugar was uncontrollable. Actually, his ulcer is already black and blue. So he said on that particular morning that my blood sugar level was very high and ulcer was getting very ganginus.

Min Zaw: I asked to see a doctor. They brought a doctor and the doctor said my ulcer is not very good. So they tried to move me from the solitary confinement to the Guard Ward because in the prison they had a hospital. When they moved me out there, the warden of the prison did not accept me because I wasn't arrested with a former paper. They just came knocked on the door, picked me up so it was a blessing in disguise actually. So they tried to send me to another guardward in the Yangon general hospital,

there was a guardward but they didn't accept me there also. So they had meeting, the big guys from the police, they had a meeting and then they set me free after signing a few things that I would behave myself if I do anything wrong.

Q: Were you invited to press conferences from the government?

Aye Win: Yes. We were invited to government press conferences but they expressed their unhappiness when we asked them questions that made them feel very uncomfortable.

Q: How would they react to those uncomfortable questions?

Aye Win: First time, again I think that was 2007, I asked them questions about the number of deaths at the time, protesters were killed. So the police chief was saying one thing and I was focussing on the number. I kept asking, you said this on that day and the figure is different, why is it so. Until I can get a precise number of the deaths and the police chief was very unhappy with my cross questioning. So a junior officer came and he said you questions had made my boss very unhappy. "Well, I'm sorry if I did so but that's my job." And then even when there's a change in the government, they would come, they first have a press briefing and the first thing they asked me this is going to be the first press briefing, please make sure that this sort of regular press conferences will continue so don't ask difficult question, particularly me, it's better if you don't ask questions at all. I'm very angry, I'm really really angry, I said I'm not going to ask anything at all.

Min Zaw: And you know sometimes at press briefing, you have to get the questions first.

Murphy, Missouri School of Journalism student: Do journalists, because of the fear of the midnight knocks, practice self-censorship?

Aye Win: It's not to the point of self censorship but there is some sort of self restraint which actually is very unhealthy. I would always say that this is unhealthy. Self restraint in the sense that for example if we want to write anything about military, I would guess and gauge/gage you know is this worth the risk, how can I verify this information, what sort of proof. So I have to double check and you know recheck before I write a story so I have a little bit of restraint because of what I wrote, I might land into trouble, I want to stay out of trouble so that I can report. So there are times when I practiced a little bit of self restraint but not to the point of not reporting at all. We have to be very careful of what we write.

(Continue)

Aye Win: This also I think time of change. During several years ago, this was a very risky job. Nowadays it's not very difficult, you can get a journalist visa and you just stay clear of any trouble and then it's OK. So, it's less dangerous now. We have seen more journalists in the country, coming with valid journalist visas. In the past, most of my AP colleagues came in as tourists. They just applied.

Min Zaw: We called them "undercover agents."

Aye Win: But what happened was you know with the Internet coming, Burmese embassy could google their names, and they found stories with their bylines, "oh you're a journalist, no no no, you can't get a tourist visa." So some of them got rejected because they could google the name and found the name.

Q: Do they have a black list (of journalists)?

Aye Win: They had a long black list like thousands of people. They're gradually removing people from the black list, including journalists, including AP.

Min Zaw: Even my friend Benedict [Rogers]

Aye Win: Benedict is off the list. He wrote a book about our former dictator, General Than Shwe, Unmasking the Tyrants.

Q: What do you think about Burma VJ?

Aye Win: Burma VJ was done in 2007, right? It was scary, right? They did a very scary job, and at these days, it was very, very risky. Somebody with a video, somebody with a video camera, people with photo and video camera were seen as enemies, dangerous people and the government just found them, you became easy targets for the authority on the street. You became easy target.

Min Zaw: Who was that guy with CNN? Dan Rivers. He arrived at the airport, and suddenly they recognized him and he was kicked out of the country. And then again, he was invited [back]

Aye Win: We had really fun policy. You were really dealing with a crazy government at that time and that craziness is slowing going away. A little more stable.

Min Zaw: Most of the dictators they are crazy. You look at Africa, all the African countries ruled by military dictators.

Q: So, why do you think they suddenly changed like that?

Aye Win: Actually, the changes are not suddenly as you think it was because in 2003... It's actually long history. Burma is a country where you have to look back many generations to really understand the complexity of the situation. In 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi motorcade was attacked. Actually, it was more like tread on her life. She was thrown into prison, she was you know, that was very tense situation in the country. And the international community was criticizing the regime left and right and ASEAN countries were wondering whether they [Burma] should be kicked out of ASEAN community. So the government came up with a very clever solution. That's why these military regimes are clever. They are clever enough to stay in power. So they came up with a very clever solution which is to announce a seven steps roadmap. The roadmap is OK, we first do the Constitution, draw the constitution, adopt the constitution. There are so many steps that I almost forgot. And finally, we would have an election. The 7 steps, they introduced the 7 steps roadmap in 2003, and by 2010, they reached the 6th step, which is the elections. By March 2011, we have a new government, which is the 7th step.

But why they have to change, for us it's not very interesting because they need to change. This is the only peaceful exit for them. Otherwise, they would face what happened in the Middle East, the Arab Spring. They wanted to avoid the Arab Spring in Burma. To avoid the Arab Spring, this is the best way out, and they chose this path, which is a very clever way of changing hands and they felt safe at the same time because there was no real changing hands because they changed from one general to another in civilian clothes. So they trust their own kind. You know the president now is a former general. So they trust whoever is in power, the president, the executive, somebody who would protect them and their families. So it's a change of hands but the world will see as a real change.

But now it's a more democratic government. So they have to do things that other democratic governments would do but very reluctantly, you know always balancing whether it's too free or too dangerous for their own safety. So they're going on a balancing act and that's not an easy job also. We see these changes as out of necessity, for their own security and safety. So that's happening.

It is going in a positive way because compared to the military regime, yes we're better to have a democratic government, and proceeding on a democratic path. We are definitely seeing hopefully a better life ahead. But this democratic government has really gone through democracy, they're actually new to the system. So they're also trying very carefully how much freedom should be given to the people. How much freedom should be given to the media. With all these balancing acts in mind, they are slowly moving on. So we have to see so that they don't backtrack. There won't be another round of military coup, politicians are doing that, the civil society are also going to ensure that they're not going to backtrack. At the same time, the media would want to make sure that we are proceeding in the right direction.

Q: You mentioned earlier that one of your principle is to report objectively, how could you do that, especially you already had some preconceptions about the government? How could you remain unbiased?

Aye Win: That's actually a very difficult part. My father said whenever you write a story, put your emotions aside. So that's what I always do. You know even though I dislike the military regime, when I write a story, I write only factual reports. I also avoid analytical pieces because that's risky, you know that's my opinion, I avoid doing that. I report

mainly facts as I see them, as things happening. At first, it was not easy because my anger was always there. I found out that's difficult because I was trying to just put the facts as they are and I don't exaggerate. I see things, I put them into words, I tell stories like that. So it's not a very really difficult task but it's quite an effort to put my emotion aside, you know my anger. You know because since I was young, I didn't like our bully. When I have a bully government, I really dislike that. I really don't like it so when I write, I said, no I'm doing my job. I really put my emotions aside. Sometimes when I finished the story, I just said: "Go to hell, I don't like them." I really need time to vent out my hate, anger, and my feelings but in my stories, you don't really see the anger, I think.

Q: How's your coverage now? What kind of stories do you write?

Aye Win: It's the same stories that I did. Politics, nowadays the sectarian violence, ethnic clashes that's what they're doing now. But we have less tension. In the past, when we did a story, we always said: "are you sure we're safe". At night we would be afraid if there's a knock on the gate. So there was this fear all the time until I think 2010.

Min Zaw: Now we have press freedom, up to some extent, up to what we expect.

Q: What do you mean?

Min Zaw: I told you was taken in for taking photos of The Lady's entrance. But these days, the young journalists, they can take any picture they want, even the protest. You know we have lots of protests, because our country is opening up, and people are very outspoken now, knowing that they're not dangerous as before so there are many protests at the cities and they can photographed very freely. So this is to some extent, right?

Because in the former time I was taken in just for doing that.

But not to the extent that we expected because ... actually the Information Ministry, in my country most of the senior officers in the civil servant departments like ministries, they're all the military people. From the let's say director to the deputy director level to upstairs, from the managing director to upstairs, most of them are military guys. No civilians are in these places. So these guys are the same military guys in civilian clothes, running the country. The attitude, their mentality can't be changed abruptly, you know. What they're trying to do now is trying to control the media by enacting some laws like media law, hasn't been approved yet.

Q: What does that law like?

Aye Win: The government actually are trying to draw their own media law to ensure they can somehow control the media. But I always give my admiration to the local journalists in Burma also for exercising, you know exercising their rights. They're really pushing for greater freedom of press, whether the government like it or not, they're always pushing. And I always try to sort of tell them to push harder for greater freedom because we have to do it from the beginning before the law is enacted because we have to have everything in place to protect us and to ensure there is no clause or provision that would restrict our job.

So at first the government want to control the media law by forming their own press council with their own group of people that they can pull their string. So they aborted the Press Scrutiny Board last year but they need somebody that can control the media, they tried to form the press council with members chosen by them, handpicked by them. But finally when it came to existence last year, a lot of the journalists complained about that,

some even threatened to walk out of this press council, so finally the minister moved to another portfolio, he became cooperative officer and the new Information Minister was appointed and the new Information Minister was clever because he knew if he followed the footsteps of his predecessor, he'll be in trouble. So he said, OK we would form a new Press Council with more journalists and not handpicked by the government. So they have another new Press Council, and there was an agreement that OK, this press council will be tasked with drawing their own media law. And we will not do anything. Of course, what would cooperate into drawing the law but we will not touch you and you can draw independently. And then the government agreed to that but finally when this was all going and the government came up with this printing and publishing law out of the blue. So the press council was very angry because there was a gentleman agreement that the government will not draw any law until the media law come up. But on the other hand, the government very quietly do their own printing and publishing law, which will require every publisher to apply for license from the Information Ministry. So there are a lot of restrictions to control the media. The Press Council was very angry and protested very strongly. You didn't keep the promise. So that's why I said this regime still wants to control everything. So there's one step forward but there's always two steps backwards. Even though they said there's a gentlemen agreement, OK Press Council you can draw your media law, but quietly they would do other things. You know, they break their promises. And they're not reluctant to break their promises and they step on their own words. So for me, I've watched them for four, five decades and I have very little faith in them. I don't see them as very trustworthy establishment. That's why whenever I judge them, I have a little bit of skepticism because they're not really trustworthy people. They

will say one thing but do other things. They do one thing but they have their own motives. That's not something to be trusted. That's why I always take it with a pinch of salt whatever they say, whatever promise they make, I said don't trust them all-out. The international community wants to be very enthusiastic about the changes, I said yes, changes are happening but be careful, not to be over enthusiastic about what is happening because they're not sincere as you know we want them to be and they have their own agenda, you know all motives, we have to be careful.

Q: How about local journalists? How were they and how are they?

Aye Win: How are they? I think they're really struggling now because there is no censorship, which is good, censorship is a real waste of time and energy and effort. It's good that censorship is gone. But there are a number of laws, especially the government now they're using defamation and libel to give trouble to all the very critical newspapers and news journals. So they are using other laws to control freedom of press. There has been a number of newspapers which have been in trouble in 2012. But this year seems less trouble I think the government avoid suing the newspapers because there has been a lot of bad publicity so they have been avoided that year. This year has been pretty quiet, government has been more ... they want to sue the newspapers. Censorship is gone, it's good but there's the law that can always put the newspaper out of business. So that is still very dangerous. For the local journalists, they are really trying very hard. Now the government even allow the daily newspapers, that's maybe the dream of many newspapers' owners.

But when time is come, there is no real fair play, the government controls the distribution, the government has established the printing press, they have many printing press all over the country. So, they're for the government newspapers, they can print and they can distribute very efficiently and they have the money. But now, they have other newspapers compete with them. In terms of distribution, they're far behind because they don't really have this strong network. And they don't have printing machines all over the country, and when the transportation not efficient, how can you send the daily newspapers, you know to the district that will, you know the reader can read early in the morning. By noon, the newspapers are useless. So they have really unfair competition. They're now running at a loss, I don't know how long they can survive. A few, very strong media houses will survive but the rest will not survive because there is no fair competition and still the government wants to control the news, the information.

Min Zaw: It's difficult for you to get information from any ministry, government ministry. Only the government run newspapers, they have access to the information, this is not a fair play.

Q: What was that like doing stories before 2010?

Aye Win: Because whenever we did sensitive stories then we would think would there be a knock on the door. Because when we were taken for questioning, these were for stories that we wrote and they're watching our stories, reading our stories and when we filed our stories they're not happy. They just came, knock on our door, OK, we have a few questions. They just called us, took us to the interrogation room, questioned us, asked a lot of questions, mostly about our sources, and since we couldn't reveal our sources,

they're not happy, so it's just a lot of questioning, stupid questioning with no real answers. So this is a just a form of harassment, just to discourage us from working. So we faced this sort of discouragement and that's the fear we always had because we're quite used to being taken from home, those are very unpleasant and for me very traumatizing. Even to hear somebody knocking on the gate, I wake up in the middle of the night, who's that, is that for him, is that for you, is that for me?

Back in 2007 when he was arrested, that was during the curfew because the government imposed a curfew, that's after 7 [p.m.] you don't hear anything on the street. The roads were quiet, it's eerie, it's so silent, nothing, you can even hear the pen drop. And then about midnight, I shouldn't be awake because I had been running and walking all day, I should be sleeping like a log, but I could hear a car on the street. "What is this car doing?" And then it clicked. "Are they coming for us?" Normal person wouldn't think like that. And then I woke up, jumped out of bed and looked at the window, and then I saw the car slowing right in front of my house, and then I said, "wake up, they come for us." My heart was beating very fast and I ran down, ran to the gate. I said: "What do you want?". "Oh it's not for you, it's for U Min Zaw." I don't know whether I should be happy or not. I thought that was for me. But anyway, that's for him. So I said, "OK, they come for you." So they sat in the living room and I said "OK, what do you want?" "No, no, just get something like tooth brush, tooth paste," which means it's going to be long. So I got toothbrush, tooth paste and a towel, some medicine and then what I don't like about them is they threatened me after taking him: "We can search your house any time." I actually wanted to challenge them, "OK, if you want you can do it." but I didn't because if I challenged them, they would do it. So I had to really swallow my anger. Anyway, he

was taken away just like that. And then the next morning, the it continue, so in the morning, I just woke up and did my story. And then my friend came, “I think he was arrested also to slow you down.” If that was the purpose, they were wrong. I will not stop working. I’m working double because I have to report to his newspaper also because he’s not available anymore. So they cannot really stop me, I’m working double, for him too. So this little trick of stubborn in me keeps me going and I didn’t cry. I was like no emotion at all. You know, there’s so much anger in me that I continued to work, even in day time when our foreign correspondent clubs were thinking what they should do for his release, I said do what you had to do, you know, you can announce to the world that he was arrested, you can start writing complaints to the government, condemning the arrest of our club member, but apart from that I continued with my work.

Q: So after these years, does this emotion go away?

Aye Win: I think it’s slowly gone away because I’m not really afraid of those midnight knocks and I’m getting a little bit used to that in the last two and a half years. So I’m little bit confident lately because I never look back, and thinking about anybody knocking on the door. Another thing I think to myself, OK, if you want to knock on the gate, this time they will bring a warrant.

Min Zaw: Actually before, without a warrant, I was released because one didn’t accept me. So without a warrant, it was a blessing in disguise. I think I was lucky that time because one Japanese reporter was shot dead, and Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister asked for my release because I was working for the Japanese media. And one Japanese media guy, my boss in Bangkok, he was deported.

Aye Win: So much of news about Japanese reporters, Japanese media. He was lucky.

Q: Did local journalist get the same treatment like you? Did they get knocks on the door at night?

Aye Win: For the local journalists, they were not as free as we were. The local journalists at that time was weekly newspapers. Because there was censorship, they could not be bold enough to write anything. I'm sure they covered the protest, but they didn't do very active reporting of the protest, so they can do it more discreetly. But there were other journalists at that time, who working for dissident media, we call the exiled media. Many exiled media reporters got into trouble. When they're arrested, they were treated like traitors, reporting for the exiled media outlets. So they had been in a lot of danger, many had been in jail, given long term prison sentences, of course later they were free. So some of the dissident journalists working for the dissident media outlets were in big danger. But the local journalists, there were a few, I think, only two girls were in trouble for the coverage of the Cyclone. One was because she helped bring the victims to the UNDP to ask for help. So the government thought that she was extraditing, so she was thrown into jail.

Q: Would you recommend anybody to do this kind of job?

Aye Win: I would still highly recommend it, because if in Burma, then I would not want to see anybody get into trouble, I don't mind getting into trouble but to see others getting into trouble, I wouldn't be happy. But if you're talking about foreign journalists working in Burma now, I would recommend anybody to do that because this sort of danger is no more there. But covering the sectarian violence has not been free of struggle because my

AP photographer was sort of, he was surrounded by the protesters, very angry protesters. They threatened him to surrender his camera. So it's not the government, even the protesters can be your danger in terms of covering sectarian violence. This is a different kind of danger that all journalists have to face, not just in Burma, but in another country also when you have to cover the flood or whatever, and there are looters, looters of malls, you're taking pictures and I think the looters would not like you to do that. So there is always danger. But I think it's a very noble job to take up because you're telling the world what's happening and you're telling the world you know what's wrong with the regime, the government and corruption, you can point out their weaknesses, you can help people as well as the country. So I think it's still a good job.

That's why we still remain in this profession because of all the danger. I still think it's a very rewarding profession. I said we're like doctors, you can expect, work, you know even at midnight and you're still very happy to be on the job. Even somebody said something happened at 1 a.m., I said I'm very happy if somebody wake me up. So that's a very rare profession I think you know you want to be get up early in the morning at 3 and you're still very happy to do your job.

Q: You were talking earlier that the government would write bad things about you. Can you elaborate on that?

Aye Win: I still have copies of those at home and I will share them with you one day. They were focussing on the incidents when I covered the opposition leader was not allowed to have press briefing and some of the journalists were arranging that very quietly. I knew about that quiet arrangement and I said I wanted to sit in the conference

also. But the government thought that I was very close to the opposition leaders and the one who arranged the quiet, secret interview. Actually it wasn't that way but they thought, you know whatever they thought that's the truth to them. And they accused the person of you know masterminding the big plot, which actually is just the press conference with the opposition leader but for them it's a conspiracy. So they wrote in the newspaper that this female journalist working for a foreign media is a traitor. She arranged this interview very quietly without letting other people know and she arrange that. So it's like a big conspiracy. So they would write nasty articles about me.

And the next time when I interviewed the opposition leader, they were not allowed to do interview on the road side, so they went to a pagoda, which is a revere pagoda. So I followed them because that's where the news is. So there are four gates to the pagoda. And we're fortunate because he said: OK, let's go to that west gate, or south gate. It's just the journalist instinct. And fortunately, the opposition leader was there, I ran to him, I interviewed him on the footsteps, and then we did the interview and the government again thought that I knew everything, that the opposition leader was there. Actually it's just the news instinct. But then they wrote again nasty articles about this traitor, she knew everything, she was in cahoot with the opposition. It's their own assumption and they made all the allegation in the newspapers, but everybody knew they were referring to me because at that time I was the only female journalist [working for foreign media], so this woman journalist means me. That's pretty nasty.

Q: How did that make you feel going forward into reporting?

Aye Win: Actually, that makes me angry again. I'm angry all the time I think. That makes me older. So I'm angry when they said it but I made it I think, I wrote to the Intelligence Chief, your newspaper wrote nasty articles about me, and they're all wrong factually. If you want to know anything, you should ask me, rather than all these wrong facts on state newspapers. And the Intelligence Deputy Chief said that yes, I understand your explanation but because I mentioned in the future if you want to know anything, you can ask me, then in the future when they're unhappy with me, they pick me up. So maybe I made a mistake.

Follow up questions: via email, 4/14/2014

Q: Aye Aye Win, you said the first time you were arrested by the military government, it was because you quote a check from a security at the gate of The Lady's house. What was the quote?

Aye Win: The person who answered my question was not the security personnel at the gate but one of the police informant who watches the activities of Suu Kyi and her party. I don't want to make it public because this person was also questioned and held for some time because someone found out that he gave me the information.

Q: You said that before some press briefing, someone from the government even asked you to hand in the questions or not ask any questions at all. How is that now? Do they still come to you with the same request?

Aye Win: Not any more. It happened after the new government took power in March 2011. I don't remember the date but this is the first presser given by the new government and I was asked not to raise questions at this press briefing. (apparently worried that my

question would cause discomfort to the minister which might make the minister reluctant to give pressers in future)

Q: When you husband was in prison for 7 days, you said you worked for his newspaper too. How could you balance that?

Aye Win: It was not too difficult to report to my husband's newspaper because I was covering the protest anyway for AP. I wanted to ensure that my husband's newspaper continue to get information out of Myanmar despite the arrest of their correspondent.

Q: U Min Zaw, you said after Saffron Revolution, you were detained for 7 days, they had to remove you from solitary confinement to another prison, which turned you away because you didn't have the proper paper. What was the name of that prison?

Aye Win: When I was moved to Yangon General Hospital's Guard Ward due to my diabetic conditions, I was turned away because special branch police arrested me without a warrant and could not produce proper documents to the police officer in charge of the Guard Ward. Guard Ward is where detainees with health problems are held.

Q: The last time that we talked, you two were really skeptical about the change about politics and media from the government. How about now? Do you still keep the same opinions?

Aye Win: We are still skeptical about the change because the government still lacks the political will and sincerity. However, we have to admit that political and media climate in Myanmar is pretty relaxed.

Q: What do you think about the current media landscape, especially after the recent arrests of local journalists?

Aye Win: The current media landscape has eased up significantly in terms of journalists being able to write critical articles about the ruling government and critical articles about President Thein Sein. However, since Myanmar's judiciary is not independent and provincial authorities still act in authoritarian style, reporters in districts are subject to arbitrary arrests and unfair trials. Recent trials and sentencing of reporters is a grave concern especially with the elections approaching in 2015. Reporters are worried that they could either be physically harmed or face criminal charges during the campaign period or election period.

Q: Can both of you talk about you covering the government now? How different is it from before? How do they view you now (I hope not as traitors anymore)? Do you get access to every story you want to cover?

R: The situation is much relaxed in terms of news coverage but getting information from government ministries and departments is still difficult. The biggest hurdle journalists face is access to information. Many government ministries have assigned spokesmen for their respective ministries but in practice no one is available when we call them up.

I don't think the government viewed us as traitors anymore. Foreign correspondents like us don't stand out like sore thumb these days because there are many reporters working for private local dailies and weeklies. In the past, we, foreign correspondents, cover news more obviously whereas local reporters who have to pass through censorship had to keep a low profile and did not have the liberty of reporting what they see.

Q: I really haven't got the chance to ask about U Min Zaw's career path. Could you please give me some idea of what you've done since you jumped in journalism? And what is your beat, if you have one?

Min Zaw: I covered mostly politics in my career. I covered protests, arrests of political activists, trials of dissidents and other political developments.

Q: This is my last question for U Min Zaw: Why did you go into journalism? What attracted you for you had to go through a lot?

Min Zaw: I went into journalism mostly because of my curious nature, the desire to stand for the underdog and the belief that I could expose the atrocities of the regime to the world.

Q: Can you tell me more about the case with Mizzima?

Aye Win: Mizzima, a former exile media, was bought by FMI group operated by a businessman Serge Pun. Since it was bought by a tycoon, the business will be financially strong but we have to carefully observe that these media remain independent.

At least three private daily newspapers had stopped because they can no longer compete their disadvantages over state media being less efficient distribution system, printing press and not getting many advertisements which are backbone of a successful newspaper.

Q: Who is Serge Pun?

Aye Win: Name is spelt Serge Pun alias U Thein Wai. He is the founder of Serge Pun & Associates (SPA) Myanmar Ltd. He set up Yoma Bank and is also involved in manufacturing and real estate business. You can google him.

II. Than Lwin Htun: Bureau Chief, VOA News Burmese Service

4/7/2014

Washington D.C.

Via Skype

Q: Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. First, could you please tell me who you are and what are you doing?

R: I'm Than Lwin Htun, I'm VOA Burmese service chief, based in D.C.

Q: How long have you been working for VOA Burmese service?

R: Since 2004.

Q: And what did you do before that?

R: Oh yeah, it is a little bit long. Before that I was working with BBC, British Broadcast Corporation, for 11 years in London. Before moving to D.C., I was in Thailand, working for an organization called Internews. It's kinda a country advisor for Burma. We ran first journalism school in Thailand between 2002 and 2004. We ran a year long training course for journalists based in Thailand and Burma border. At the time, we smuggled a few journalists out from Rangoon, Burma to Thailand and gave them some kind of customized courses for journalists. [media ethic, health reporting, political reporting, photojournalism, etc.]

Q: You mean you "smuggled" them?

R: At the time until 2012, the media landscape in Burma was a little bit different. The media was not free. And also there were a lot of restrictions imposed on Burmese

journalists. They were not allowed to write freely but also there were a lot of restrictions on their movements as well as what kind of trainings they received, what kind of videos or photos they took, that sort of things. So that's why giving them journalism training inside Burma was impossible. So we smuggled them out.

Q: How did you smuggle them out?

R: Yeah, smuggle is a big word. We asked them to get out of Burma on a tourist visa to Thailand, just to visit some pagodas, Buddhist temples or shopping trip. That's one way. So while they were in Thailand, we just simply got them into some sort of safe house and gave them one or two week kind of course of journalism. Another way is that a few people who were adventurous enough to come out of Thailand-Burma border to attend a few of our courses.

Q: Did the government know that you smuggled them out of the country?

R: I'm quite sure they didn't know that or else those journalists would have been in big trouble.

Q: How many [Burmese] journalists did you train when you were with Internews?

R: There were a number of people who received Internews training but Internews are mainly about journalists in exile. I can tell you one thing, especially, there is a person who already passed away because of natural cause, just a few weeks ago. He was an editor and he came out quite frequently to the Thailand and Burma border to receive Internews journalism course. He passed away.

Q: I'm sorry to hear that. Was he a close friend of yours?

R: Yeah. He was a quite well known editor.

Q: Did you still get in contact with journalists you helped train with Internews?

R: Yes. Nowadays I have quite often chances to go to visit Burma. When I go there, I meet them. Before I met you in Rangoon for the East West Center Conference, I was in Taung Gyi, Shan state, to attend an ethnic journalist conference. Most of them I think received Internews journalism courses.

Q: So can we come back to before Internews. Did you ever work for local newspapers?

R: No. When I was in Rangoon, back in 1988, I was a student, studying and I took part in a massive uprising, a nation wide uprising, then I didn't have a chance to finish my study because I fled the country. I was a refugee in Thailand-Burma border. At that time, thousands of students like me fled to Thailand-Burma border, where we formed an organisation called All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), which was a student armed group. We allied with ethnic rebel groups, so we stayed there as student army. I would say I was with them for about two years and then I immigrated to England.

Q: And then you started working for the BBC right after that?

R: Yes.

Q: Was there any reason why you joined BBC or they just came to you with a job?

R: It's a kind of luck, probably, mainly because BBC had a tradition to work closely with Burmese Information Ministry during the time of Myanmar Socialist programming era. So like they got kind of an exchange program. So, every two years, Burmese government at the time selected broadcaster to send to England to work for BBC. But back in 1988,

because of the political oppression in Burma, BBC dropped that recruitment / cooperation with the government. So, when I arrived in England in 1991, they received a sort of fresh blood in a sense because since 1988, they stopped recruiting broadcasters over there. So I arrived in England and I knew a few people in BBC at the time, and they asked me whether I worked with them as a part time broadcaster. And I started producing health and news analysis program later on.

Q: What was your role in the 1988 uprising then?

R: I was the Joint General Secretary of All Burma Federation of Students' Union.

Basically we uprose at the time because the general population, people were oppressed by the socialist regime. There was no democracy. And also, at the same time, there was no student movement or student rights. We were actually a group of like-minded students met a lot of time to discuss the current situation at the time. We decided to revive the student union because student union at the time was outlawed by the socialist regime. So our first ... is to revive the student union movement and then we called for a nation-wide uprising. So because of that, I had to flee the country. My colleagues Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi, Htay Kwe almost all of them were in prison. They were spending more than 20 years in prison while I was away.

Q: Are they still alive?

R: They were released in 2010. They're now leading Burmese politics in Rangoon.

Q: When you started working with BBC, you started as a part time broadcaster. What did you do back then?

R: I remember, first I translated a lot of news by BBC journalists and produced weekly health and science program because of my science background. And also I did programs looking at news people in Southeast Asia. At that time, there was no Internet and communication is very bad. Again, I'm talking about 1991. So we got faxed copies of, for example, the Bangkok Post, South China Morning Post, or papers around the world, mentioning Burma. So I just simply collected these news articles, and just presented a summary to the Burmese audience. A lot of people appreciated that.

Q: How did they get the news from BBC?

R: Oh yes, for example, in England if the Guardian or Evening Post got the news, if they carried the news, articles about Burma, we could easily see that. But for the Bangkok Post, South China Morning Post, what we had to do was we had a few friends working in Bangkok, and they copied and faxed to us. The communication speed was quite slow, you know that. And the news were for Burmese people because BBC was quite popular for Burmese people inside Burma.

Q: I mean, how could BBC get into the country without being in the country?

R: BBC World Service has a lot of vernacular services, broadcasting in different languages. Burmese is just one. So, it was a quite popular service for audience inside Burma. They broadcast in short waves. Whoever in Burma had short wave radio, transit the radio, they could receive it. Same with Voice of America. We have together 47 languages, Burmese is one of them. So our main means of sending information inside Burma until now is short wave broadcast. Of course we do television but we mainly reach to our audience through short wave.

Q: Do you call your country Myanmar or Burma?

R: OK, that's a long story again. When I speak in Burmese language, Myanmar, so I call it Myanmar. But when I speak in English, I used to so in English I always refer to my country as Burma.

Q: It's not a very long story at all.

R: It's a long story, I just shortened it.

Q: Oh I see. Is there any reason you call it Burma or just out of habit?

R: It's kind of a habit I think. Because you know like once Cambodia was made Kampuchea. Do you remember anyone, English speaking people, call it Kampuchea? That's the same thing here.

Q: So it's not a political statement or something like that?

R: It's not really for me because I have no problem [with it]. Whenever I speak in Burmese, in Myanmar language, I always refer to my country as Myanmar.

Q: So when you worked for BBC, did you do any original reporting or you just copied news from Thailand and translated?

R: Oh yeah, later on. I think I entered the broadcasting service quite early in 1991. I don't know if you were born yet then. During my time in BBC, a lot of changes came in like telephone communications were better, and then Internet came in, computers arrived. So back in 1991, when I started working with BBC, there was only one computer in the whole service and we were editing our audios in a big tape reel machine. Lots of changes

were coming in. The information flow became faster. So at the beginning when I worked with the BBC, of course, I copyright for news agencies, and I did a lot of translation, and gathered a lot of articles and produced programs out of that. Later on, because telephone was more available, and because Internet and emails were available, so news gathering capacity on our own tremendously improved. So we did our own journalism in that sense. We did our own writing, own reports ... expertise. So BBC was very good at organizing our expertise. They kinda began treating us as regional experts. So invited us to their flagship programs, for example World Today or East Asia Today programs or something like that. So I was not only in Burmese service, I also went around and worked with other services and to contribute my expertise on the region.

Q: So when you worked on your own stories, how could you get your sources inside Burma to talk to you?

R: As I mentioned the telephone communication got better, but at that time the telephone communication was not important in that sense because fear was everywhere. It was very difficult. So we needed to build trust. Do you remember I mentioned during the East West conference that because of me, not of me but the interviews with me, two people were put into jail. That kind of things. So it's quite difficult. But as you know in every oppressed society, there are few brave people anyway to talk to us.

Q: How did you build that trust?

R: Possible because of my background. A lot of people knew. And then second thing is I worked in a reputable news organization, BBC, so a lot of trust. And also because of my

connections because there were a lot of underground movements by the students and by politicians who were very ready to get the information out for us. They took a great risk.

Q: Can you talk again about those two people who got into trouble because they gave information to you?

R: Giving information to the BBC was the guy name Nay Min, do you remember we honored him [at the East West conference]? He was a quite well known one who was put in prison for a long time. And also I mentioned in the meeting that there was one parliamentarian, a lady who at the time won one of the townships in Rangoon division. She was the parliamentarian for Aung San Suu Kyi party National League for Democracy. Her name is Daw San San. She was also at the time working as the deputy leader for the organization ... for National League for Democracy. We heard there were some harassment and arrests of members of the National League for Democracy at the time. So I contacted her. But before that, she didn't mention her name, she didn't let us use her voice, but at that day she was very angry and frustrated I think. So she said she didn't mind because it was her responsibility she said to make the voice out because it's more authoritative and more credible you know that instead of using anonymous and she's a responsible person, she's an authoritative spokesperson at the time. I warned her at the time, hey, be careful, you would get into trouble, but she said no, it's OK. But exactly after the interview, once I did the broadcast, the next day she was picked up from home. I think she received about ten years I think in prison. Later on, she was released five years after that. Four or five years after that. Yeah. But once she was released she had to sign an agreement that if she committed such a crime again, she would have to serve the remaining sentence, plus new charges.

Q: So did she do that again?

R: Later on, she came out to the Thailand and Burma border, she fled the country. So I met her in Thailand-Burma border when I was visiting there, it was quite an exciting and emotional reunion and she was just hugging me and she was announcing to everybody around, saying “this is one of my jailers”.

Q: So what was the interview about again?

R: It’s about the harassment against members of the National League for Democracy.

Q: When was that?

R: I think back in 200., no 1994.

Q: When you were still working with BBC?

R: Yes.

Q: So where is she now?

R: She’s in Australia now I think. She was in Thailand, leading what it called exiled movement for National League for Democracy. And now she’s in her 70s. I hope she stays healthy. As far as I know she’s in Australia.

Q: How often did you get people to speak on the record, you know giving their names and their voices to your broadcast?

R: We basically called them and recorded their voices, but it was kind of unusual circumstance that we broadcast with her voice, of course with her permission. Not many

people did that because the Burmese government was quite good at making sure that people notice about the danger and they effectively prevented people daring to speak out or speak to us.

Q: So I guess that lady was the only one?

R: Not the only one. A few people did but later on it became very very rare that people spoke out and used their names and their voices. So, even with our very trusted informants, contacts, they always made sure that please don't broadcast our voices. Sometimes, for security reasons, we often played a little bit of the voice, at the time we tried to distort the voice, but didn't mention their names and hid their identities.

Q: So the old man who was honored at the conference, did he give his name and his voice for the interview too?

R: No, no. He was arrested even before I joined the BBC. This guy actually was giving a lot of information, of course his voice was recorded but BBC didn't mention his name, well I'm not sure maybe BBC mentioned his name but most of the information that BBC got through him was mentioned in an anonymous source base. The only reason he was picked up because for some reasons, Burmese intelligence or government knew that he was waiting for a call from BBC one day and just snatched him. He was treated badly [in prison] and journalists showed that we didn't forget about our sources, and so simply asked the general how is he and that one question saved him quite a lot.

Q: So you mostly talked to Burmese people for your stories, did you ever try to talk to officials then, you know because you have to give your coverage some kind of balance?

R: At that time, it was an era of darkness, you remember I said that? The Burmese government just completely cut off communications with us. With that, it's quite easy for them to blame us, these guys are just broadcasting one sided information for example. It's very difficult to balance our reporting in that sense. Whenever we tried, for example the nearest was the embassy in London when I was with BBC, but the embassy never talked to us. Another one is officials in Rangoon, they never even picked up the phone. So it's always difficult. The only thing to try to balance in that sense was at the time, we had to look at the government newspapers. So somehow we had to quote government-run newspapers, government newspapers said such and such but here's the thing such and such. So we basically tried to what it's called do our job the best we can. Sometimes there were representatives or delegations in United Nations General Assembly or some international meetings, they made some kind of reading out of prepared statements or something like that, so we had to report these kind of statement again like government said this, so and so. But we're always accused of one sided, what I call subversive organization.

Q: So you changed from BBC to VOA, do you see any kind of difference between the two news organizations in dealing with Burma?

R: Yeah, between [working for] the two organizations, I was in Thailand for two years, running journalist school over there. After two years, I moved to Voice of America. They're two different organizations, BBC at the time I joined in 1991 and when I left in 2004, it's a private (professional) organization anyway but Voice of America from the beginning it is a kind of government broadcast station, starting from the WWII, reaching out to the occupied places or something. Only back in 1995, they developed the Voice of

America charter. So that means of course VOA are funded by the government, the congress, but we who work for VOA are journalists, we have to do our own job without being influenced or being told by the government or congress. So that is now what we are running. But when I joined VOA in 2004, it changed my not really set yet so I found a lot of differences in the beginning but later on and now we're much in tune with our own VOA charter, in our own journalistic ethics. So to be honest now we're no different from BBC. Like BBC World News Service is funded by British Foreign Commonwealth Office which is the government anyway, or approve by the government. Same thing now, you know, Voice of America, we're funded by the congress and government but we stick to our own journalistic conduct and code.

Q: How many people are there working with the VOA Burmese service?

R: I have 13 full time members, plus 20 part-timers. So we have about 33 people.

Q: And are some of them now in Burma?

R: We have six people working for VOA in Burma?

Q: Not including the 33 people you just mentioned though, right?

R: Yes, we have 33 in Washington, six in Burma. We have two in Thailand.

Q: How was that working for VOA in the first few years?

R: Oh yes, I told you. In the beginning I found it a little bit different because of the mindset, because of the work ethics, but later on it changed a lot, we became more journalistic in a sense. So we're a journalistic organization, there are a lot of challenges, especially after I joined Voice of America then the digital revolution started. So we tried

to digitalize and we do a lot of new programming, especially back into 2007, remember when several revolutions came up, and then in 2008 we had Nargis Cyclone struck Burma and in 2008 we have a new constitution so called for the people and all those exciting times, you know. During that time, we increased our broadcast to hours. At the beginning when I arrived, VOA was broadcasting only one hour and a half radio a day. And because of the problems inside Burma back in 2007, I increased into three and a half hour radio a day plus one hour television program. So that may be three fold increase in the production.

Q: That sounds great. Let's take Cyclone Nargis as an example. Can you tell me what did you do back then to get the information from the country?

R: That Cyclone was quite difficult challenge, for two reasons. All the communications were black out, possibly because Burmese government didn't want. Unlike other regional governments like Bangladesh or Indonesia or something like that, once there was some national disaster, the governments always let outside people know in order to get international assistance. But back in 2008, Burmese government was really gynophobic. They didn't want international aid workers and other countries to come inside Burma to do things freely. So, they tried to restrict the flow of information out and possible they thought that the main ... themselves. Later on, they really realized the situation was really bad. Well that's why UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon he went to Burma just out of Nargis and met with government officials and leaders with General Than Swe I think and convinced them to open the country for the international assistance. So, for the record, Ban Ki-Moon always boasted his only achievement in his tenure is that "I opened Burma." You can look at it, whenever ... a lot of people claim / complain that Ban Ki-

Moon was kind of not effective general secretary, but he always defends one of the major achievements that he boasted was that he opened Burma. "I opened Burma."

Q: And so how did you do your coverage then?

R: Yes, because of that information was not readily available. And also all the communication lines were cut off. Telephone lines were not good, mobile phone no way, no Internet. To be honest, for about three or four days we did not have any information at all. We got a few information that arrived to the Thailand-Burma border in person, describing how bad was that or something like that. So, only later on, there was only sketchy one information and also at the time we got a few information through US embassy and through UK embassy, those embassy sources for information.

Q: So did you reach out to NGOs at all?

R: There were a very limited number of NGOs [in Burma] before Cyclone Nargis. That's why Ban Ki-Moon somehow openly said that he opened Burma but actually it's not him, Cyclone Nargis opened Burma. Because of the destruction, Burmese government at the time had to allow NGOs, international NGOs to be operating inside Burma, to deliver relief, to help victims.

Q: Regarding the government, I understand that the government had a distrust toward exiled media. How were your opinions of them then?

R: Yeah, because the thing is they knew that what they had been doing was just to oppress people. So the most effective way to oppress people is to block the information reaching to them. At the same time, they had to let people know, brainwash the people

that people working for the exiled media were exiled crew, working for the rebels and tried to destroy the unity of the country or something like that. Another thing is they always intimidated people who informed information to us, charged them heavy charges, even treason for example. So this is their job anyway. They tried to cut information reaching to us so that the real information did not reach to the people. This is one way. And then, during our time working in the dark era, we had to deal a lot with the misinformation as well like sometimes we got a lot of distorted information deliberately.

Q: Where did that come from?

R: You can guess. I was even tricked once, I think. It was in 2008, I think, six months after the big Cyclone Nargis, I received a report, reached out to my radio stringer in Thailand, saying that in Irrawaddy Delta, where Cyclone Nargis hit, a village was hit by a sandstorm, so big the whole village was covered with sand, and lots of people were buried alive. And that news it is reached to one of the trusted connections, contacts in Rangoon. The lady claimed herself that one of her brothers was buried alive. She was from that village and the government kinda concealed that information. So my radio stringer talked to her and she agreed to talk on the record, she was even crying, and sent it to us and so we ran it. But the very next day, the Burmese newspaper with a photograph of the opening ceremony of a middle school in that village with a big black bold letters, Burmese government said that VOA distort information and tried to scare people with the misinformation. They said, yesterday VOA News mentioned about the tragedy in the village which is totally untrue and here is a photograph. They responded surprisingly quick. For example, our news broadcast was at 9 o'clock in the evening and the rebuttal appeared on next day newspaper. So we knew then that we were trapped.

Q: So what did you do after that?

R: Of course, we checked and we realized that it was a really bad trap that we went into. So simply I made an online apology, correction. So what can we do? I mean we talked to the sister of the supposedly dead person.

Q: So did the government have a lot of that saying about you?

R: Everyday. What I mean everyday is until August 2012, Burmese government ran back page advertisements everyday saying BBC, VOA they lied on air, don't listen to them, with a lot of distorted information, they tried to destroy the unity of the country or something like that. That's an advertisement everyday. It stopped in August 2012 and in November 2012, I was allowed to visit the country for the first time in 23 years.

Ninh: Did your family live in the country when you fled to Thailand?

Q: Yes.

R: Were they ever harassed by the government?

Q: Not really but as far as I know they came to my house twice and they confiscated my belongings like books. Although I was young at the time, people were readily accused somebody of [being a] communist. Find a trace, read off what I was reading or what is it all about my inner thinking. But luckily, I didn't not have any. They just found a lot of my love letters. I remember they were very friendly. I was in Thailand for two years and after that I arrived in England and I started working for BBC, at that time my parents didn't know that. The local intelligent officer went to my house and asked: "do you know your son is now in England and working for BBC." So my parents were quite surprised.

“We heard a little bit about him migrated into England but we didn’t know that he’s working for the BBC. Good for him.” So then my family kept listening to the BBC to hear my voice.

Q: Well thank you so much, Government for letting us know.

R: Yeah.

Q: So they didn’t get into any kind of trouble because you worked for the BBC or VOA?

R: Not my parents but they snatched my auntie, my mom’s youngest sister.

Q: Why?

R: She was a bit active in politics. She collected some kind of funding for National League for Democracy. So back to 1997 after I started working for the BBC, she was snatched from my home in Rangoon.

Q: So it wasn’t because of you though, right?

R: They didn’t mention explicitly about that. But it was very obvious and they just simply snatched her and sent her to prison for 17 years.

Q: Was she ever released?

R: After serving nearly the full sentence.

Q: How was she treated in prison?

R: As far as I know, she was snatched from my home. And for about four months, my parents tried to trace where she was, but nobody could tell. Only four months after that,

they were informed that she got 17 years sentence and then she was serving her sentence in Molmane prison which is about 200 miles away from Rangoon. Only then my parents tried to reach her in prison. So, her story was not actually related to me but it's obvious that they wanted to show: hey, this is what you deserve.

Q: How was she treated there?

R: Luckily she was a woman. I cannot tell about everybody but most of the women were not badly beaten or something like that but they suffered a lot of psychological hardships.

Q: How did the government see exiled media like you back then?

R: As I told you, they always saw us as a type of destructive element, subversive organization, that tried to tarnish their image, try to what it's called incite government's revolt like big brother country. The information is the main source of what I call people revolution anyway. So without real information, people wouldn't dare to rise against them. So we're the main threat for them. So that was the main reason I was banned from going back to my country for 23 years.

Q: Let's talk about August 2012. How did you see that? When you saw all the changes, what were your thinking back then?

R: There was one good comment by a politician in Burma. He famously said that Burmese army now is in the process of tactical withdrawing. I think it is true because after accumulating a lot of wealth, power, and also not only them, for their children and all those people around them, cronies, they're really really rich. Inside Burma, there are no more than 100 families controlling the Burmese economy. With that, they had to look

in a way how to what it's called make their wealth permanent by giving up power gradually up. And also they need international organizations. Because of those generals, they're getting old so they tried to push their children into politics but not successful anyway. It's not a dictatorship like North Korea. One dictator cannot transmit his power to his son or something like that. They somehow tried but knew that it didn't work. From the beginning they did somehow arrange a collective leadership. Of course one general was on top but it is collective, like accumulating wealth for themselves. So it's kinda impossible to transfer power to one of their own sons or relatives anyway. So instead they divided very carefully and cleverly of the seven steps roadmap.

Q: So do you think the positive changes are here to stay?

R: I think so, because unless a lot of ugly things happen. It is obvious in Burma as I told you, about 100 families stay controlling the economy. And the West has been working with them. And we are ... in this sense? although a very short period we see trickling down effect to a few middle class people. So it's quite important. So I don't think the people in the military or politics are stupid enough to go back because they're getting what they want.

Q: So let's talk about your work now, compared to before. You have six people in Burma now, how long have they been there?

R: When I opened my office, I sent a report in Washington D.C. in a three month rotation, so every three month because at that time we were not fully, officially recognised by the Burmese government. It is kinda settling up period. During that time they're there just a short time visa. But now VOA is officially recognized as an

accredited news organization inside Burma. So I will have my bureau chief, who is stationed there for two years. But that is only one person and I have other five people who are locals.

Q: When did you go to setup your office there? November 2012?

R: Yes, 2012. Yes, the very first time I met the Burmese Minister of Information there and the very first time I requested and I explained to him that we like to be a very balance, reliable and credible news organization, so we need access to information, especially to the government officials and also to the ground information. Before that I had a bureau in Bangkok, we monitored Burma from Bangkok. And monitoring from Bangkok is not adequate, so I requested to send my reporter. So he said yes. So after that I sent a reporter occasionally. He said yes, case by case basically. So I have to look for cases. So whenever there was an occasion, I requested, hey I wanted to send my reporters. And by doing so, getting some kind of relationship, I just pushed him to allow to open an office. It took more than a year and a half.

Q: How is it to access to the government sources now?

R: It's quite easy, I suppose. We can talk to government spokesperson. A few spokespersons are media friendly. But now I feel that a few politicians or officers, they talk to us but people in the bureaucratic chain still are not willing to talk to us. They're afraid of their status. They would lose their job or something like that. And also another thing is that for us recruitment is a little bit difficult. Young journalists who were brought up in Burma, they were not exposed to the international norms and standards while connecting to interview. Also, they are reluctant to talk to people in the authoritative. So

a few interviews or process of getting information out are a little bit in a sense defective. For me it's not satisfactory.

Q: So you mean the difficulties for you now is the lack of experience of young journalists and the lack of access to officials?

R: Yes, young journalists they don't know how to properly challenge politicians or government, even Aung San Suu Kyi. Sometimes young journalists at conference by Aung San Suu Kyi they don't know proper question, they don't care to challenge her certain actions. That's a bit of a trouble.

Q: What are you going to do about that?

R: It takes time, you know because the culture issue is very big as well. You know Buddhist culture. People misunderstood that challenging, questioning and filing questions and being disrespectful are different. And also it's because of long years of blockage. Young people who are not exposed to abroad, exposed to other journalists how they write and how they present. So even for the Burma history, one they learn is they don't have a variety of books and memoirs, things to be used as background and context. So that gave them a lot of weaknesses to talk to the politicians, to talk to anybody. In any sense, for example in an interview of a business for example, if you don't have a proper background or knowledge for that business, how can you make a good interview, how can you write a good article. And we don't blame them, mainly because they didn't have access to these materials for a long time. So everything in Burma now is in the beginning.

Q: What about older journalists?

R: Older journalists who were very active before the dark area, which was just before I was born, until 1962, Burma enjoyed very free media, Burma was as free as the media landscape in Southeast Asia at the time, very vibrant. These guys you can count in just one hand. One by one they're all gone you know. Even the one who is still alive like U Win Tin, he's not well. Many few people survived from that area. So, after that we're brought up, even for me I was born after Burmese nationalization of newspapers or something like that. We were brought up in a socialist way of giving out news, like ITAR-Tass news agency, Vietnamese News Agency, you know the way they're dealing with [information]. So we're brought up in that situation. So our knowledge on journalism is very limited. So first generation I told you they're gone, second generation like me, I was just lucky in that sense that while still young enough I went out and worked for BBC, but few people who lived inside Burma, they all are very good. But there's a kind of habit of indirect writing. They don't write directly, and since people always fear of being arrested if they were revealed as sources or something like that. In journalism you know credibility and sourcing information are very important but the atmosphere and the environment inside Burma in the last 30 years prohibited us to actually look for good sources and write credibility. So they write very vaguely. People tend to write vaguely and people tend to love it or something like that and this became kind of a funny habit that remains right now. And also lots of people are keen to write in op-ed instead of news. A lot of people are quite good at it and popular. I don't say that their opinion pieces are wrong but lot of them are problematic in that sense but they're not based on facts, sources or something like that. But I cannot deny that some of them are right and good read anyway. They need to overcome this kind of habit because a lot

of people are quite influential in Burma media circle because of their opinionated pieces or something like that. So, how can I just go there and say, hey, you know ...

Q: What do you think about Aung San Suu Kyi speech on journalism and responsibility?

R: She didn't say much. She just said journalism and responsible.

Q: So what would you ask them to let her talk more?

R: To be honest I have a little bit of doubt about her understanding of journalism. She famously said that: to be honest as the opposition, I want the newspapers to write for me. She tends to use newspapers or news outlets as her kind of propaganda machine. Before she was arrested in 2003, she used Democratic Voice of Burma as her mouth piece. In that sense, I have to say exploiting young journalists who didn't dare to challenge what she said, she just simply tells them whatever she wants. Like she's a kind of saint. They broadcast her speeches, broadcasting whatever comments. And later on, now she tries to use Radio Free Asia, with her usual news outlet to carry her messages. She rarely speaks to any other journalists nowadays. So, sometimes, she made some kind of press conference, mostly consisting of young journalists who simply ask kind of simple and not effective questions. I don't see she sits down nowadays with kind of journalists and discuss and be challenged about her problems or her vision. She stopped doing that for about one and a half years now. You might notice she was really annoyed with BBC, she couldn't avoid sitting down with BBC journalists anyway. She was a bit grilled usually by the journalist on her stand on the Rohingya and she was annoyed.

Q: You said you have free access to information in Burma right now but is there any kind of topic still kind of out of questions?

R: For local news, almost everything can be discussed. For us, there are few areas we don't do for the moment unless there's a pressing issue. For the moment we don't have access to for example we want to talk to retired general Than Shwe, he's being very well insulated. For example when I have a chance, I want to go there and talk to him before he dies.

Q: How about investigative stories, do you do that, do you have the access to do that?

R: That depends on the cooperation, so of course we can just simply talk about the corruption stories or nuclear weapons stories or whatever but for the moment I don't think we have the proper cooperation from the government to do that. Investigative journalism needs a lot of skills, a lot of cooperation from both sides.

Q: What is your assessment of the media landscape in Burma right now?

R: Print media is very free, a lot of influence on the populist ideology, and sensational journalism, yellow journalism, mainly came in because people are hungry for those issues and they didn't have it in the past few years. So whenever the newspaper came up, flashing news on former dictators, they love it, they love to read it. So these newspapers they sell a lot. So a lot of business coming in with the kind of pure business sense and just make that sensational approach. At the same time, broadcast journalism we don't see much change. The government stays controlling. Because it's kind of a mass media they scare of. Think of it as most of the people in the government they are former military people, they know that telecommunications, wireless communications are really , they start thinking of national security issues

III. Soe Myint: Editor in chief, Mizzima

4/9/2014

Via email

Q: How long have you been with Mizzima and when did you start?

R: I founded Mizzima in August 1998 and since then I have been founding Editor In-Chief of Mizzima.

Q: Did you take part in the student uprising in 1988 and what was your role?

R: Yes I was studying at Rangoon University for International Relations and International Administration in 1988 as final year student (or 2nd year honours student) and I took part in the student-led uprising for democratic and economic changes in the country. I was working as a photographer for (an underground) student union's magazine, called "Mainstream" during the uprising.

Q: What did you do after the student uprising?

R: I left for border areas after the military coup in September 1988 with an aim of taking up armed struggle against the Burmese military government. Till end 2011, I lived in exile in India as a refugee before I actually returned to my homeland.

Q: Can you give me some examples of how you worked during the military oppressed era? How did you get the news inside Burma then?

R: We had underground reporters, photographers and offices (in Rangoon/Yangon) during the time when the military regime was there. We then had physical offices in India and Thailand which worked closely with our network of reporters and photographers for the information flow inside and outside the country. We from time to time sent our senior

reporters and editors to the country clandestinely to organize training and networking in the country.

Q: How did you get your sources to speak on the record? Did you ever give their names out in your reports?

R: Depending on the situation and cases, we could mention that we were from Mizzima and mentioned our names, especially when we telephoned to our sources in the country. But, some times, we also could not mention our names and Mizzima especially when we tried to talk with authorities (under the military regime). However, most of the time, we got interviews with our names and organization mentioned on the record.

Q: Did any of the sources get into trouble with the government because of you? Can you give an example?

R: It was generally risky for anyone in the country to talk to exile (and independent) media like Mizzima and to read Mizzima's websites or publications. But I have not heard anyone getting into trouble because of us.

Q: Who funded Mizzima in the beginning? How long did it last?

R: I used my own money and my wife's money when I established Mizzima in August 1988. Some well-wishers and friends also supported us by ways of contributing to Mizzima. Then we started receiving donor funding in 2000 starting with USD 3,000 from Open Society Burma Project. Then till 2011, we received funding (as yearly grants) from some diversified sources such as Open Society Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, International Media Support, Burma Relief Center for our expenses for

media products. We also started generating revenues by selling our news and photos to international news agencies and institutions and by selling our content (including television content) to other media houses.

Q: When was Mizzima allowed to be back to Burma? How many staff do you have there now?

R: I and Mizzima returned to Myanmar in January 2012. Mizzima Media was registered as a private Myanmar company in March 2012 in Yangon. Mizzima had around 50 staff (inside and outside Myanmar) at the time when it moved back to Myanmar. We closed down our offices in India and Thailand in 2013. Presently, Mizzima Media has head office in Yangon and bureaus in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. We now have around 190 journalists and support staff.

Q: How different is your coverage now on the government, compared to years before?

R: It is much wider now than in the past.

Q: How different is the working condition now for your journalists? Do you get access to the government sources?

R: The working conditions are much much better than in the past. One of the challenges is Access to Information, especially when it comes to the government ministries and the military.

Q: What are the challenges you still have on the government stories?

R: Most of the time, the government ministries are still not providing information, facts and figures that we asked for.

Q: What are the challenges for Mizzima now that you're back to the country?

R: It is the competition in the market and to be one of the top and big media houses in the country. Mizzima aims to become number one media house in multi-media products in the country by end 2015.

Q: Do you call it Myanmar or Burma?

R: I refused to call my country as Myanmar under the military regime to protest against the military regime which changed the country's name (and many other names of the country) without any public discussion or procedure. I only use the name Myanmar only after the new government came to power in 2011 as a way to recognize some changes being made by the government for starting democratic and economic reforms in the country. Then, in 2012, Mizzima started using the country's name as Myanmar. But we still use the country's name as Burma (if and when someone continues to use it) in our stories.

Q: How is Mizzima doing now financially? Did you briefly close your business after going back to the country?

R: After I joined with two other partners in October 2013, Mizzima is financially strong. We were struggling financially in 2012 and 2013 while we moved from donor funding model to business model after we returned to Myanmar in 2012.

Q: Who are the partners?

R: Mr Serge Pun and Mr Sonny Swe.

Q: Do you feel your reporters can work freely without fearing repercussions from the government?

R: There are repressive laws still in Myanmar. State or non-state actors can file us any court cases any time for our reporting and for our media-related work. But we are reporting (in print) without any fear to anyone, including the government.

Burma/Myanmar is in transition to democracy and there are challenges and risks in the transition but we take these challenges and risks as they are.

Q: What do you think about the recent arrests of journalists?

R: Once again, Myanmar reporters are being put behind bar for their media work and it is unacceptable. We will continue to fight against it.

Q: How different is your coverage of the government now, compared to before? I understand you were very critical of the old government? Has that changed?

R: Our coverage on government has not changed but we can now more closely watch and cover the government than in the past. We recognize the government as one stakeholder in the transition to democracy.

IV. Aye Hnin: Editor, Radio Free Asia

10/19/2013

London

Via Skype

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

R: I started working as a journalist since 2006. Before that I was in Burma, I wrote some articles for exiled media. So I tried to write some articles but I was not a journalist then. I was in Norway for 6 months and then I came to Thailand, trying to work as a BBC journalist in Thailand. I worked for BBC till 2009, and then I moved to RFA and work for them until now.

Three years ago, I have my own program. Sometimes, it depends on the theme, it runs from 8-12 minutes. The program is called Journalist Diary. I tried to interview with the ordinary people who are doing something for the country or who survived, and are struggling with their lives. So I do interviews with them and make a program.

Q: How long have you been working in London?

R: I've been in London for over 5 years. Sometimes I miss my country, of course, this is London. I miss the culture, the way we speak to each other, the way we treat each other, I really miss that.

Q: Do you call your country Burma or Myanmar?

R: I really don't mind calling it Myanmar or Burma. When I speak in my language, I'm calling it Myanmar. When I speak in English, it's Burmese but it doesn't matter to me. Some people don't like it just because of the way the government changed it.

Q: How did you get people from inside the country to talk to you?

R: It depends. For example, if I know you, so I'll ask you I want to talk to this kind of person, do you know anyone, if you do, can you give me their number and I'll try to contact them. My family is also in Burma. Sometimes my family also helped me. I also have a lot of friends who are writers, journalists. My uncle, who already passed away, was an editor in a Burmese newspapers. So my family is kinda a journalists group. We have a lot of contacts and connections. Recently, people can give interviews without concern. Before, people wouldn't talk to you if they don't know you. Sometimes of course I couldn't find a good person to talk to.

I don't fully accept this change but this is changing. You can get lots of people talk. You can get a lot of sources, positive, negative, and so you can have a balance in your reports.

Q: How can you get news from Burma?

R: I have some journalists friends who were in Burma at that time, so I tried to ring them. Oh how are you, hows the family and tried to dig the news, because they couldn't talk to me immediately. The phone lines were not safe, if they knew you're a journalist, if your family is quite prominent, you tried to ring them, saying that. Sometimes they would give you another phone number so that they could talk to you from that other number. Those numbers were normally from other ordinary people, who did not have anything to do with the media or politics.

At that time, you had to show your ID to buy a sim card, you had to register with your name, your family, your address. At that time, you were not free to use your own phone line.

One thing you could do is you bought a number from other people. If you're the first owner, you had to register with your ID.

Q: Have you been back to Burma?

R: I didn't go back in Burma. I met my family in Thailand. I chose it because I felt like I wanted to be safe because I worked for BBC. I didn't want to take a risk because I already broadcast my name on air. At that time, anyone could be arrested. One of my brother's friends came to UN for some meeting, when he came back, he was arrested at the airport. Some people were arrested at a bus station. I don't know this is true but it might be true 80%, some young women were raped while they were in jail.

Q: How did the government treat your family?

R: I'll explain to you a little bit about my family. My brother belongs to the 88 generation. He left the family in 1991 and he led the student army. Sometimes they tried to raid your home, knocking on the door, searching. He didn't come back of course. He worked for DVB in Norway.

In 2009, I needed to renew my passport in London. Normally, if you're a student in London, you could have a renewed passport within 12 hours. When I was there, I showed them my passport. The passport had a BBC working permit, so they said I couldn't have a renewal. Obviously they reported back to Burma so the local police came to my family. They asked my mom why she let me to do this job because she already lost her son. The told my mom that she should report me to them when I came back. They kinda threatened my mom, saying she would never see me again. My mom told them: "Well, she's over 18. Even though she's the youngest, she's more than 18 now, she can do whatever she

want. I can't control her. She's quite naughty." My mom is quite intelligent. So that's the one time they raided my house and questioned my mom.

Since 2010 and 2011, they didn't ask bother us again.

Follow-up interview, 4/6/2014, London, via Skype

Q: So how have you been since so many months ago?

R: It's been the same, crazy but I'm good.

Q: So where are you working right now? Are you still working with Radio Free Asia?

R: Yes.

Q: How many people working in your Burmese service unit?

R: Most of the people are working in Burma, in bureau in Rangoon, you know, and working in other places. For example, in Mandalay we have one reporter or two also Arkan state, you know lots of areas.

Q: How many people in London right now?

R: There is only me.

Q: How long have they been there?

R: [They've been there] almost six months I think. I'm not sure but less than a year.

Q: So was that because of the change in Myanmar?

R: That is true. Last week was the first anniversary of private newspaper. Before this we don't have any private newspapers. So it's like a real change. The government didn't allow any international media like RFA, VOA, BBC. I think it's almost six months. the international agencies they have the bureaus and offices in Rangoon.

Q: It's much better now I guess.

R: Yeah, I guess,

Q: So when you talk with your colleagues now in Myanmar, do they feel comfortable working as journalists there?

Q: Yeah, they do. And also like not only from our station, other people as well. Like they post news on Facebook. I feel like they're doing what they want. But one thing like they can't do investigative journalism in Burma right now because of the time constraint and also economical constraint. And also when I talk to my friends, they're now trying to do those things, you know media now being the watchdog of the government in the very near future.

Q: How possible for the media in Burma to become the watchdog against the government?

R: I'm not sure. I just talk to a friend.

Q: Who are the friends that you talk to?

R: Oh that guy, he's working for the media for 5 years, very close to being a journalist.

Q: Have you gone back to Myanmar since then?

R: Not yet. I'm going back home next year. Maybe I'm going back home for good.

Q: That's great. How exciting! So you are thinking about going back home now?

R: Yes I am.

Q: Why do you feel like you want to go back home for good?

R: Because I mean my family is there. I also want to do something for my country. So that's my plan really. I want to go to the rural areas, and also like to go to the ethnic areas, and do kind of participating media just go there, collect their stories and send to those radio stations, and all the mainstream radio stations. I don't know, that's what my plans are. Like I have to be here for work and prepare for that and like when I'm ready, I think in 2015 I will be ready. That's mine ... I don't know (smile)

Q: That is really really a good sign to think that you want to be home for good. Your family should be very happy.

R: Yes, my mom especially. My mom told me that you can come back home and have a look if you can work in a year, of course I have to see if I have a chance to work there, if not, why come back?

Q: Did you talk with Radio Free Asia about you wanting to go back home?

R: Yeah, no, they're like your thinking is good, if you want to go, do it, try. And also like almost five decades, we don't have a free media, and also private media so we really need what media can do professionally, you know. That's what I want to do, give some training.

Q: Yeah training is a very big problem right now. I heard that there are many newspapers now but there are not enough professional journalists.

R: I can tell from some of the news coverage online. Some of the news coverage is quite bad. For example, gender issue. They shouldn't reveal the girl or boy's name under 18 if it was rape, so you know you have to be careful. But some of the news agencies maybe they don't know how to cover the name. And also, of course not only Burma, some of the Asian countries, they don't accept the gay and transgender and so when they cover it, the coverage is quite bad. They shouldn't do that. Yesterday, when I read a news about recruitment in Malaysia. In the headline they said the whole village is running away from recruitment but in the story they didn't have a comment from the army. I emailed to the editor and told them their audience really want to hear from the army to know are they really doing this? It's just one side accusation. So that's my kind of example so I really want to give some of the training. That's what I want. I don't know if I can of course.

Q: What about stories about ethnic tension between Buddhists and Muslim people? What do you think of the local coverage?

R: Two sides are provoking, not one side. That started in 2012. The Tibet monks, many people died. But the Muslims, they used that picture to provoke, like Burmese monks killed Rohingya or Muslims. I mean, that's quite bad. They shouldn't do that. They're from another country and it's used as it happened in Burma. And also, of course from the other side, monks and nationalists, they're saying like we won't allow you to live in this country, we're going to wipe you out. I think that also not a good sign too. I want to say

too that some of these Muslim people they're not genuine migrants to Myanmar. So it comes from both sides.

Again about the coverage, some of the people they couldn't say this because they're in Burma. This is for their security as well. They can't get anything from the government side because they couldn't say that, because there's corruption. I can also say that all of the Western coverage is not entirely true. They only get access to the Muslim people.

They didn't have access to the government. And also they already see this government is bad. They don't trust whatever they [the government] said. Even it [the mistrust] is true because of the history.

Have you seen the Al Jazeera coverage? It's really bad, very one-sided. And some of the NGOs, I don't say all of them, but most of the NGOs help the Muslims more than the natives. Really, Al Jazeera is taking one side, not two sides at all.

Q: You said that you have people on the ground now covering Myanmar, compared to a couple of years ago, how easy is that for them to work in Myanmar?

R: It's easy to access the interviews, and also like we have the television channel. So we can take all the video footage. But again, some of the new reporters, they couldn't challenge the authority or other leaders because they're inside of the country, they know they can get into trouble anytime. But we're from outside, we can challenge them, they couldn't see me. Even know they know me, they can't get me into trouble, they can't arrest me. So there are pros and cons. But I can say that things are getting better and easy access to the authority comments. They can go to events straightaway if they hear there's something going on. So it's much more better.

Also, not all of the people in the government are familiar with the media, they're old military people. It's a transition period now. They have some kind of insecurity, if they say something wrong, they might get fired. They couldn't give any comment that you want. They do try but some of the generals or ex-generals they don't want to give comment if the issue is big. They just give excuses like they don't have time. But some of the generals, they start to give interviews to the media.

But you can't change Burma in a day. We didn't have private media in 50 years so it's been quite a lot already. I don't expect everything is going on well right away but I'm saying it's changing and I hope this change will last.

In 2007, Internet was really supporting the news coverage because all of the bloggers they took pictures and posted online and alarmed the international community. They showed how the government killed the people. So, people realized Internet helped us get our freedom of press. It is very exciting. I talked to my mom, and my mom doesn't know internet and facebook. My mom said that if you don't do this, I'm going to post online. So social media is really spreading in Myanmar even the old time people is relating to that.

Q: You do a lot of daily news stuff on Burma. What type of stories/ topics that you think you still can't get a full picture of?

R: That's investigation. I'm sure lots of treaties, business that the work with international, we can't dig deeply like what kind of benefits we can get, what things they are going to take from my country, you know because the government don't have transparency. So those news we couldn't report well on. For example, I can cover the news about Burmese

general signing a business deal. I can't cover what kind of business they're going to get to my people and also what kind of things they're going to get from my country as well as how many years this treaty will last. So this kind of thing we can't report deeply. Nobody is going to answer your questions at all, even the lower rank people.

Generals are really really rich. They have houses in Thailand, China. So if something happen, they can go to another country. We can't invest these things. We need to investigate. A lot of corruption stories we can't report. Nobody is going to talk to you that they're corrupted but we can investigate those things. Like we can ask them, they can sue you for libel.

Q: In Vietnam we would have dissident bloggers writing corruption stories like that. Have you read the same thing from exiled media as well?

R: All of the exiled media really want to go back to Burma. They don't do that kind of stories, really. I want to do those stories but of course I can't decide what stories I want to do. I'm sorry we can't. Around 2000, 2004, most of the exiled media, they really did that kind of corruption news. Like this general had this house, worth one billion/million chat, these days they really want to be friends with these generals because they want to have offices in there. They can't do stories on corruption any longer. Even though when reporters report that news, editors would be like are you sure he did this. The editors will censor and edit the stories. That's a shame.

Again, I'm not criticizing exiled media, I'm working for one. Just that what I see, now exiled media really want to go back home. So people don't do journalism professionally. They just want to go back home and open office.

Q: How different is your coverage now on Burma compared to before?

R: Mine is the same. I really like this job. I don't have to worry about my family and I don't need to support my family so I'm doing this job not for money, just for what I want to do.

Q: Do you see any kind of change in tone on RFA while covering Burma?

R: Yes, there are changes I can see. Some of the journalists are still challenging the authority but some are not. When you ask them questions using powerful words, but these days some of them don't use those powerful words, just use soft and polite words. I'm not saying using rude words, but if you want to ask some questions, you have to be tough. But some of them just ask easy questions.

Q: How do you keep that consistent in your newsroom?

R: My stations is really popular in Burma. Just from our audience reaction, I think we don't have a good name as before. We used to challenge them. This is kind of a business thing actually. They are really targeting for 2015, if the government kicks them out before that, so the station will not get access in this election. I can understand why they compromise. This is a very sensitive time. Now your reporters are their, your station is there, if they kick you out, your reporters can't work.

Q: Do you see a total free-press for Burma?

R: I can see in the past we had the censorship but after the election in 2012, we left the censorship. Now we have private media, private daily newspapers as well. Yeah I can see we have more than 50% free press. One thing we can't do investigate coverage. Apart

from that, for journalists, they can go to ethnic people as well. Before you couldn't go to Kachine state and do interviews with Kachine leaders. Nobody is going to stop you.

V. Steve Herman: Southeast Asia Bureau Chief, VOA

4/4/2014

Bangkok

Via Skype

Q: Can you first tell me who you are and what you do?

R: I am Steve Herman. I am the Southeast Asia Bureau Chief for the voice of America and corresponded primarily responsible for coverage of 18 countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Q: So you're just in charge of Southeast Asia?

R: No, its South Asia as well. So India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, I'm not responsible for Pakistan or Afghanistan. I occasionally go other places like I just got back from Ukraine. I did not like the food but the vodka was good and cheap. That is one thing I can say about Ukraine.

Q: Where were you before that?

R: I just moved here from Seoul last August but I've been covering Asia on and off most of my career. I lived in Japan two times for a total of 18 years.

Q: How long have you been covering Myanmar?

R: Oh, for a few months and I've made one trip as you know. I've done a number of stories about Burma from Bangkok. By no means do I consider myself to be any kind of expert on Burma.

Q: So you call the country Burma?

R: That is still our preferred term. We also use Myanmar but Burma has one less syllable so it's easier to say.

Q: What do you think about the political change in Burma?

R: Yes, yes. What do I think about it? Well, it's potentially something quite historical, but there are a number of analysts who say what is happening in Burma should be termed economic liberalization rather than political reform.

Q: What do you mean?

R: Well, what that means is there is a definite loosening of restrictions especially in the area of economic activity but as far as significant political reform we still have a situation that no matter what happens with the elections the army generals still have veto power. I mean to put it crudely that in a sense is the situation there. I was just speaking with an ambassador from another country who is very well schooled on Burma and he did agree with my assessment on that.

Q: How has it been for foreign media?

R: Well, I mean obviously it is very positive and I think the event that we attended was in some sense a landmark event. But as was expressed at that event there is tremendous frustration, puzzlement, and consternation among the foreign media especially the major news organizations based there about lack of access to government officials. Lack of transparency and of course we can't say that foreign correspondence are free to travel anywhere in the country. Much of the country is restricted and literally as recently as a few weeks ago foreign correspondents have been chased out of Rakhine state. So I think

the situation is better than it was a few years ago but by no means is it comparable to many other countries in the region.

Q: What kind of stories you are following now?

R: Well, we have obviously the story about the census is a story we are following. Our Burmese service just had a story today that in Sittwe there were 12 people arrested for attacks on international NGOs. The situation with the Rohingya is a situation we are watching but compared to other international news organizations since we do have a Burmese language service that our coverage of Burma is much more comprehensive and not focused on one particular issue. So I would say compared to most international news organizations we probably have more comprehensive well rounded coverage than other news organizations although I don't take credit or responsibility for that I'm just one member of a large team with an interest in Burma with VOA as a whole being conducted by our Burmese service.

Q: Can you give me an example?

R: Well, let me give you an example. I think things are getting better. But as far as being able to call up a government official and get a quick and accurate response on something I think that most ministries in Burma compared to other countries still have a long way to go. That's fundamentally the situation and also cases where we know that X is going on and the government says "negative X". Whether that is naivete, a lack of information, or deliberate obfuscation I am not sure.

Q: What do you think about the media landscape in Burma now?

R: Well, I think there's been a remarkable transformation as the domestic media as the onerous censorship is not there as it was. You have a boom in the number of newspapers being published. There are probably too many newspapers right now. I don't know how that many will be economically viable but that's not unusual historically for a country when it opens up and you have an economic boom and that is good in a way. There definitely is at all levels intimidation against reporters. Obviously, the case about Hannah Beech of Time magazine is a case study where she was overtly punished by not being given a visa for the international media conference for something she wrote. Yes, I've heard critics of that piece who thought it was unfair or whatever, and there are other countries that do that. Sri Lanka for example blacklist foreign correspondents that it does not like by being restrictive on issuing visas to journalists. By no means is Burma unique but of course speaking as a foreign correspondent we find these incidents disconcerting.

Q: What do you think about that?

R: Well, I think I was very encouraged to see such a large dialogue about Burma and I think it demonstrated the tremendous amount of progress in Burma in the last few years and also demonstrated just how much more ground should and will be covered in the years ahead. Look, Burma has a lot of challenges. A lot of historical challenges that are unresolved. There will be an election next year and there are a lot of problems confronting the country and there are a lot of outside people very interested and want to help. Hopefully, things will come together as the United Nations and United States have expressed there are concerns about the treatment of minorities, especially the Muslims who want to be identified as Rohingya and the ethnic Burman nationalism allied with radical Buddhist element is something that is being closely watched and hopefully there

will be a sustained period of peace in the country because that's what I think most people really want.

I think a lot understanding about Burma is very superficial. The history of the place is extraordinarily complex and understanding about San Suu Kyi and what she represents and her role in the political future of the country. I think many people have looked at her as sort of a culmination of mother Teresa and Martin Luther King and she is the daughter of a very famous Burman Nationalist General and her role in the country needs to be better researched and understood by foreign correspondents who are just coming in casually to cover the country. I think there are some excellent reporters who have been focused on Burma for a number of years who work for the wire services and magazines and have a deep insight into the country.

Q: So what do we know about Burma?

R: No, I'm the first to admit that we never know enough and that access is always a challenge in a country like that and a lot of the country is very difficult to reach some of these states due to the poor infrastructure. How many insurgent armed groups do you have? Is it 18 generally? But that is also what makes the country exciting and intriguing. One thing you can say for Burma is it is not boring.

Q: Are there any challenges working with Burmese government?

R: Yeah, absolutely! Look at the background of the people in the government they've came out of military background. It was an autocratic country for decades, they did not have to and did not need to, in their view, deal with the media as partners in a dialog or in society. They have to learn how to with first and foremost with the domestic media and

for foreign correspondents its another layer of difficulty because you have language issues as well.

Q: Did you get a chance to talk to local journalists while you're there?

R: Yeah, I've known people for years that expatriate journalists based in India or the United States and I didn't get enough time to speak with them as I wished but I also have Burmese colleagues working for the Voice of American Burmese Service. I met the entire staff in Washington earlier this year. I saw our service chief at the conference as well. I guess I have an opportunity to have a dialogue with Burmese journalists that are not based in the country.

Q: Your assesment on the change attitude of the government towards the press?

R: It is obviously night and day but there is a bit of concern about whether the changes are here to stay. I think most would agree that we are seeing a period of economic liberalization not massive political reform. I think how the election is handled next year will be a major litmus test for what happens. Also, I think some of the Burmese journalists think we are focused too much on the Rohingya issue and that the whole country is not that but it's not just foreign journalists sounding alarm you have a number of international NGOs that are also been quite distressed about what could happen there. I think the international scrutiny is very important.

Q: Do you have any statistics on the Muslims in Burma?

R: The census will tell us. I've heard some estimates that it could be 10% Muslim population in Burma and I do know Buddhists are concerned. They feel a growing Muslim population is a threat to the Buddhists.

Q: I feel the international media are too interested in the conflict.

R: They are interested because look at history and they see patterns in history and there is concern that we could see some sort of very severe sectarian violence break out in that area that is why international media are responding and what international NGOs are reporting as well.

Q: Do you think there would be a total free-press for Burma?

R: I don't know. The place has tremendous potential. It is in a geopolitically important location. It has tremendous natural resources depending on how they are handled will either make the country very wealthy or cause environmental disasters and become an exploitative economy. Compared to a lot of other countries in the region has this tremendous pool of intelligentsia where civil society can play a very valuable role. Those are some reasons to be optimistic about the future. If there is this hard core reactionary sort of Buddhist political movement and nationalism at the expense of everything else then that is going to cause a lot of problems for the country. Maintaining a permanent peace with all the minorities in the country is also a tremendous challenge. I think a lot of ethnic groups would like to see some sort of federation but you have the Burman nationals and the old army generals who prefer to have a top down structure because that is what they are used to. I think we've seen tremendous change in the last few years but the significant change will take place over a series of decades.

I think the attention on Burma by the international media is very important because when domestic journalists have significant issues and those that are repressing the journalists or in cases where journalists are jailed or attacked and killed. Knowing that the international media will focus on this and it isn't happening in a vacuum can give pause to these perpetrators. One thing I have found in covering Asia over a period of decades is that the countries that end up prospering are those that have rule of law.

That really is the bottom line. When you have people in power who can get away with repression and brutal actions that shuts everything down. We aren't just talking about media but if you look at the role of democracies with a free press over the centuries it has made a tremendous differences. If you don't have a free press then the society will be hobbled in many other ways as well.

Q: How do you get your information on Burma?

R: We talk to people. The best thing to do is to go interview somebody in person or pick up the phone and call someone. I am in constant dialogue with NGOs also because we have a Burmese service that does radio and television broadcasts daily they have people on the ground in Burma and a large staff in Washington. I get a run down daily of what they are covering. Sometimes they are ahead of what I may be covering sometimes the other way around. There is coordination and sharing of resources between the division I look for and the language services. We look at what the domestic media is reporting and announcements from the government. It isn't just one way. There are multiple ways. It is difficult because I'm not based in Burma and I don't cover Burma full time. It is one of

the countries in my portfolio and I don't have the depth or give it the attention I would if I were in Rangoon.

Q: What is your assessment on Burmese press freedom compared to other countries in the region?

R: I guess it's still behind many other countries in the region but arguably there are a few other nations where things are quite restrictive. Vietnam would be lower but even countries like Singapore where there are serious issues as well. These are sort of subjective rankings. I think there is a big question mark about where I'd put Cambodia or Laos. But Burma is not on the same level of Thailand or Indonesia who have a robust free press. Malaysia has some issues but it is a tremendous change from a few years ago. A few years ago we would have certainly put Burma at the bottom.

Q: So I guess they're somewhere in the middle?

R: I don't know if they are in the middle but I think the one country we could put them ahead of would be Vietnam.

VI. Geoffrey Goddard: Former editor, Myanmar Times

9/24/2013

Yangon, Myanmar

Via Skype

Q: How is it in Myanmar now?

R: Things in Myanmar are the best they've been in years.

Q: How do you call it, Myanmar or Burma? Why?

R: I call it Myanmar because, and I have quite a strong opinion about it, because the majority ethnic group are called the Burma I think it is more inclusive to call the country Myanmar and I think we need a more inclusive world for it to be a better place. I think there may be many Myanmar Muslims and Christians who agree with me.

Burmese is, if you use Myanmar you tend to refer to the people as Burmese but if you use Myanmar it is a noun and an additive. That is why it is more inclusive it refers to everyone. The Burma are the majority ethnic group of the Myanmar people.

The people who would call it Burma are often people who hated the Junta and they had good reason to. They preferred to call the country Burma because it was the Junta who changed the name to Myanmar but the word Myanmar dates to the 13th century. Though I suspect that may be referring to the Burma people. It's a political argument but I prefer to use Myanmar for the reasons I've explained.

Masinki is a good friend of mine. She is a very proud Burma and she has an inscription in a museum in Bagon. It was written in the 13th century, I think, and uses the word Myanmar.

She sticks to Burma because she hates the, well I should retract that, she would prefer the name of the country be decided in a referendum and I have no problem with that. But it would be my suspicion that she will not use Myanmar because the name of the country was changed by the people who persecuted her and her party and suppressed Democracy.

Q: Well, let's start again. Can you tell me who you are and what you do?

R: My name is Jeffery Goddard, I'm Australian, I'm 60 years old and I've been a journalist for 42 years. I went into journalism in 1978 I went to work in Thailand. It was my first experience of Asia and I fell in love with it. I then worked in Thailand until 1986. Off the record I married a Thai and her father was rich and Sino-Thai. I don't think he was comfortable about his daughter marrying a white face. He gave his approval for us to get married on condition that we leave the country which actually did both of us a big favor. So, we went and lived in Sydney for a year. I worked for the Australian. There was a job at radio Australia that I just had to apply for and so I went and worked at radio Australia from 1987 to 1997 that was the most professionally satisfying job I've had in my career. Then I left radio Australia because I took a redundancy package because the government was cutting funding for radio Australia. I would like to draw a distinction between radio Australia and VOA and RFA. Radio Australia is independent but government funded where I regard VOA and RFA as soft propaganda. What they do is a bit more controlled and not as independent as radio Australia. I was disgusted by that. I left radio Australia and got a job Singapore for 18 months and I was quite happy in Singapore but a position was advertised in Australia for SBS radio and television organizations for which I have huge respect because SBS broadcasts in more languages than the BBC world service. It is inclusive and that is what

appeals me. I worked as SBC radio and then I was offered a position at the nation newspaper in Bangkok and I felt very uncomfortable about the circumstances of the job. So I worked for Dane Quick which was quite dramatic. So I went back to Australia and I got a job with a Murdoch SundayMelbourne. It was good doing reporting again but some of the interviewing I had to do was offensive to me, like interviewing bereaved people. So I when I saw a job advertised with Myanmar times I couldn't resist applying. I was a bit of a moral dilemma for me because when I worked in Thailand in the early 80s I had a holiday in Myanmar and I fell in love with the place for bad reasons. The people were really sweet. But it was charming because it was run down. After what happened in 1998 I promised myself I would never go back to Myanmar until it was a democracy. So I had to compromise that pledge to myself because I was bored shitless in Melbourne. I was offered the job and I was the editor of the Times English edition from 2001 to 2006. I left at the end of 2005, because in November 2004 my dear friend Sunny Sway. He was taken away in the intelligence purge in 2004. He was taken away. It was all set up because the information minister wanted his share of Myanmar times. His puppet was able to acquire majority share. Sonny was sentenced to 14 years jail on censorship offenses because we were censored by military intelligence. The enabling decree under which military intelligence existed was abolished when military intelligence was purged and that gave military intelligence the right, if it wanted to, to censor publications and they chose that right to censor the English and Myanmar editions of the Myanmar Times. After the decree was abolished that meant Sonny could be charged with failure to submit the Myanmar times to the normal censorship authority. He received 7 years for each (English and Myanmar

editions) which was disgraceful abuse of justice. He was released in April and it was the best day of my life to have him again. So here I am. I got very depressed and at the end of 2005 I applied to a position in Thailand with Thai day, which was a supplement edition of the International Tribune circulated in Thailand. I worked there a year and was a victim of politics in Thailand because it was owned by Sondhi LimtongKun, he was one of the main leaders of the yellow shirts. But Taxen was in power then. Thai business were afraid that if they advertised with us Taxen would find a way to make life difficult for them. I was able to stay on until the end of 2006 and then I went back to the Myanmar times. I did for 6 mod in 2007 I did training. Then some of the foreigners who invested in Myanmar times acquired the Pinongpan post. I was sent over there in about April 2008 to work for the post while it made the transition from being a fortnightly to a daily I worked there until the end of 2008 then I went back to the Myanmar times to be foreign news editor and I guess I stayed there until I resigned in May.

Q: So you are in Yangon right now?

R: Yeah, in beautiful downtown Yinkin township, Myanmar.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about Myanmar Times?

R: The situation at the Myanmar times is a bit messy at the moment if you do a search of Myanmar Times or for RussDunkley you'll realize why. I just got sick of it. I mean, Dunkley and the asshole who took over they've been at logger heads for about 7 years. In the documentary called, "Dancing with Dictators" I said Dunkley should have read more Kiplinger, especially the poem that says, "A fool lies here who tried to (intelligible) the East." Dunkley should have tried to be more Asian by trying to work with this guy rather

than antagonize him all the time. The bottom line is a foreigner playing games like that in Myanmar is never going to win. So, I resigned at the end of May and my plan was to retire in Thailand and I realized retirement was premature and boring so I've come back and had some casual work at Myanmar times but it isn't my preferred option. I've edited travel guides published in Myanmar and one in Hong Kong published by Odyssey publications. I quite like editing.

Q: Can you walk me through the censorship process then?

R: Censorship was a major frustration. Obviously. But, because when I had worked for radio Australia and had been chosen under the exchange program to work for Radio Beijing. It was to my advantage because my predecessor at Myanmar times had left because she had trouble dealing with censorship. I didn't because I was used to it and also because my attitude was it's their system and I want to be here, so I need to adapt. But that was when we were censored by military intelligence. So I get irritated by comments in magazines by Iriwadi, that we were given preferential treatment, that is not true. We were censored as hard by military intelligence. I think military intelligence because it did not want to be criticized by other branches of the military might have even been more zealous in censoring us more harshly than it needed to because it didn't want its enemies in other branches of the military criticizing it for being too soft. It was in those days we had to fax every story to an office that I never saw, an office of military intelligence. A day later someone in the office would call back and we'd find out if the story was rejected or paragraphs had to be taken out if sentences had to be changed in a story. That was very frustrating. Especially when we thought a story was very important that reporters worked very hard to get. One advantage to that system over the system that replaced it

was when we started putting packages together the stories had gone through the process so we didn't have to put the paper back together. After the purge when we became subject to the censorship of the Press Scrutiny and Censorship Department we had to send pages and they would reject stories on the page, photos on the page, and for many years until august 20 last year which was a great day for one of the ex pats on the English edition. Would be rostered on Saturday night on what was called censorship duty and we would spend the evening remaking pages to fill holes created by the censorship process which is why used to send what we called alternative stories and photos and they were back up to fill the holes.

What they would cut out would be marked with a red felt tip pen. It was incredibly frustrating. When I was on censorship duty I'd usually lose it a couple of times and curse a lot. It was part of the job. If you didn't like it you could leave and I didn't want to leave because one of the great things about living in Myanmar are the people are the most wonderfully warm people. It's an honor to work in the private media system in Myanmar with people who have struggled so hard with onerous censorship system and keep smiling and the fact we've made the transition from darkness to light. To see the reporters getting more satisfaction out of doing their job because they know if they write a good story it will be published.

Q: How did you deal with sources? How did you get you sources to speak on the record?

R: You mean stories referencing reliable sources without mentioning them. There are a lot of people who are prepared to talk. We operate like a normal newspaper except under a censorship system. Our reporters have sources. We subscribed to AFP. We subscribed

to the Washington Post and LA Times. In terms of sources it is fairly regular. Government, arts, sport, private sector, in that sense it was a fairly normal news gathering organization.

Q: Did you self-censor?

R: We never self censored. Never, ever. We never pulled punches. Some reporters were timid due to military dictatorship. Some reporters had a lot of guts and I had a lot of respect for them. Censorship made no differences to them on how they did their jobs. Their attitude was you may not like this story but I'm going to write it anyway.

Q: What did they do if you publish the reject articles anyway?

R: The authorities can fine, suspend, or close newspapers. We had one interesting incident soon after censorship was lifted when a cartoonist we were using commented on the war Kachine State. We ran a cartoon of a person in traditional Myanmar gear releasing white doves of peace into the air and a person next to him in a military uniform shooting them out of the sky. A couple of days after that the army run daily ran a two page commentary about irritation at the cartoon which we took to be a warning. That was as close as we got. I am aware of one newspaper for two weeks because it ran a photo of the body of a woman who was raped and murdered and it triggered the violence in Kitchin state. I think it was shut for 2 months.

Q: What do you think about Burmese journalists?

R: Sweet and lovely as they can be, one of my disappointment with Myanmar people is most of them have poison in their minds towards Muslims and it really disappoints me.

You can say I accept the the wisdom of the Buddhist teachings and as a Buddhist I find it terribly offensive that people are launching mini pogroms against Muslims. These disgraceful incidents are being led by Monks.

Q: Did you shy away from certain stories?

R: We've covered it all. We may not use the word lynchings. The Myanmar Times English edition may have covered it more sensitively than those in Myanmar. The prejudice is very, very deep. After it started in Rikan states I send an email the AFP bureau chief in Bangkok. I said you have to understand that you are probably going to have trouble getting unbiased accounts by your reporters and then I explained the poison in the minds of most of them. A couple of weeks later I got an email from him thanking me because he had that problem. One of the top international news agencies has a reporter here who is a Rikind Buddhist who is boorishly prejudiced. They had to pull him out of the country and send him to Singapore for two weeks for retraining. His stories were so biased they could not run them.

There is some suspicion there are dark forces behind this sectarian violence who are upset by the reform process and want to destabilize the government. There could be some truth to it. Some could be spontaneous. When you spoke to Mafingi did you get any indication that she may have bias towards Muslims?

Q: What needs to be done to increase the level of professionalism in journalism here?

R: Training and understanding that to be journalists they must be impartial. I'm aware of that problem. As I don't read Myanmar I don't know the extent of the problems. I mean if there was a story about a nasty incident in a Yangon township where Muslims were

wanting to build a Mosque I would be interested to know if the account in the Myanmar media included Muslims as well as Buddhists but I would be an interesting exercise to try and find out. Some organizations are known to be more biased than others. 11 media group allowed disgraceful stuff on its website after bloodshed started in Rikand state. It was like "kill them all."

Q: Can you tell me about the average reader in Burma?

R: Myanmar people are very literate. They are avid readers. One of the reasons for that is it has always been a fairly literate society. More recently Internet penetration is very low. If they use the Internet you can assume they are young, well educated, middle class and above and one of the interesting consequences of media freedom and one of the private sector newspapers can get daily licenses is because there is market resistance to dailies because they are used to weeklies and they think a weekly is a better value because there is more analysis. There is information on this on a site called Reppler.

Q: How about the Internet?

R: The Internet penetration in Myanmar is low but expanding rapidly. Facebook is thriving. It used to exasperate me to walk around the newsroom and seeing how many colleagues were on facebook when I felt they could be working.

Q: What are your opinions about exiled media?

R: Irrawaddy, there was a time when I didn't have huge respect for them but very impressed with some of the stuff it's doing now. It may not quality as exiled media but at one time it did. It and Mizima based in India. It prints a newspaper here. Democratic

voice of Burma prints here. Media reform is one of the most dramatic since the government came to power in 2010.

Myanmar Times was the first newspaper publisher in Myanmar at least since the military seized power in 1962. So we are a bit of pioneer. We've had influence on newspaper design. The traditional way of writing a newspaper article in Asia was to have the most important information in the last paragraph. Our way is in the intro. We've been successful but this war of egos between Dunkley and Dr. Tin Twin Eu and his wife is damaging. Dr. Eu has even applied to have the company liquidated and that application is going before a court on Thursday.

There was a time that I thought Irrawaddy was focused too much on the majority and little on the ethnic minorities. I'm pretty critical of the lady. I don't understand how she could support sanctions when there was economic sabotage. I can't understand why a Nobel Peace Prize winner has not spoken out more forcefully about anti Muslim discrimination and discrimination toward Christians.

Q: What do you think about Aung Sann Suu Kyi?

R: I call her the angel of infallibility, sarcastically. I'm not one of her fans. She answered about not speaking out on sectarian violence by saying, "I can't do this on my own." That shows what an incredible ego she has. No one can do it on their own. It was to be a community. My theory on why she hasn't spoken out more forcefully the NLD is primarily a Burma party and she is a politician now and she knows damn well if she speaks out forcefully she will alienate her constituency(likely voters). It's politics.

Minorities are amassing coalitions for the 2015 elections because they know it will likely be an MLD landslide and they want to get as many people as possible into parliament.

Q: Does it seem like a sudden change in politics in Burma?

R: The reform process is happening because of the military government. In 2003 the govt unveiled what it called its 7 step transition to a disciplined democracy. They have followed that road map and that is why the changes are taking place. They have a military mindset that it has to happen when they say it happened. This reform process is happening because the military planned it.

She didn't want to as you recall the NLD boycotted the election in 2010. I could not understand that decision either. So many of my Myanmar friends were disappointed because all they wanted was an opportunity to vote for the NLD against a government they hated but the NLD denied that opportunity. It was playing stupid politics. The boycott was all the more ridiculous once they realized it was a mistake and they participated in the bi election last year and they won 41 of 43 seats. No, but I was at press conference in 2003 when she was released from house arrest. She has an indomitable spirit, she is charismatic and articulate and photogenic. I think it a pity there is no woman like her in Vietnam or Laos it would attract media attention. She is flawed, a flawed character. Anyway, at this press conference in 2003 one of my Myanmar colleagues asked her a question and she knew Myanmar times and the association with military intelligence but she did not understand it very well. He asked her a question and she replied, "Why don't you ask your contacts in military intelligence that question." I thought it was a real smart ass thing to say.

VII. Gabrielle Paluch: Freelance reporter, U.S. citizen

3/4/2014

Yangon, Myanmar

Via Phone

Q: Can you tell me who you are and what you do?

R: My name is Gabrielle Paluch and I'm a freelance journalist in Myanmar and I've been living here since 2009.

Q: What did you do when you first came to Burma?

R: Yeah, when I first came here I was working with the New York Times and I was a sub editor and I arrived the week that Jean We Paw was released from prison so it was right around then. Her sentence was extended because the crazy Mormon man swam across the lake and broke into her house twice.

Q: Can you walk me through the censorship process back then?

R: It was back when there was censorship so every week we would have to submit our pages on Thursday and Friday then on Saturday night late in the evening we'd get our pages back from the ministry and we would put the corrections in and cut what they told us to cut and then run the paper.

Q: Is Myanmar Times a government-owned newspaper?

R: No, that is a complete misperception. I don't know why people think that. It was not a military owned newspaper. It was a privately owned newspaper previously co-owned by

the son of a man in military intelligence but it was never military owned. It is now owned by the local Pepsi contractor.

When the paper first started the Myanmar Times had a separate censorship mechanism from other newspapers whereby it went to the military censorship process which is not the same. After 2005 that all changed.

Q: How did you deal with the censorship?

R: It was really frustrating because we never really knew what would make it and what wouldn't. It was just depended on who was on duty and who was reading your page and sometimes things got through that you didn't think would and then things got cut and you had no idea why. There was a lot of guess work involved so it was our job to try to get away with whatever we could. I had a story cut about drag queens which to me didn't seem to politically sensitive but the next week I wrote a story in which the person I interviewed compared Burma to East Germany during the GDR era and that comment made it through. I was completely baffled by that.

In the end I kind of understand why. The Burmese government is very anti gay.

Homosexuality is not particularly accepted in Myanmar and it is kind of threatening to the social fabric. I do understand why they cut the drag queens in the end. I think honestly that comment about East Germany made it through because whoever the censor was didn't understand the significance of that comparison. You don't always have the sharpest piece of eyes on every copy. I was interviewing a German actor so it wasn't front page news or anything but it still was comparing East Germany to Burma.

Q: Did journalists self-censor?

R: There is a lot of self censorship. Also a lot of instances of people getting sued for stories they've written.

Q: How about now?

R: Well, I think after so many years people developed coping mechanisms and I think you have a little bit of a hangover of the coping mechanisms and they think that they can't say what they want to say. No one is censoring them but they are afraid they will get in trouble.

I think you are allowed to publish what you want now but there is always the threat that you may get sued.

Q: How did you get your information?

R: How do I get my information? Well, it depends. I have colleagues. You mean how do I know when something is happening? I rely on google journalists or I have sources that I call or Twitter.

Q: No I was asking about the past.

R: How did I get my news then? I was a more of a sub editor than a reporter so I did not break a lot of news and we were a weekly paper.

Q: What did you do after Myanmar Times?

R: I started working for VOA in Bangkok and then I started going back and forth between Bangkok and Yangon doing stories out of both countries. Then I relocated here and I'm stringing for VOA and a couple of other people.

Q: What kind of stories you are covering recently?

R: Recently it's been a lot of ethnic tension stuff I've been reporting on that a lot. The last story I did was a logging story. Extracted resources is another big beat.

Q: What do you think about the government opening up the country?

R: Yeah, there has been a huge influx of foreign reporters. There are a lot more than there used to be due to ease of restrictions and I mean people are a lot more open with the press than they used to be. The government is still really bad at communicating with the press and there are some problems with access for foreign reporters in conflict areas. They turn us around at checkpoints.

Q: How is the access to government information?

R: The foreign press? They don't give us access to what we need. They don't communicate with us. There is one spokesperson from the government to the entire foreign press.

Q: What about local journalists?

R: For local journalists it has gotten better in terms of freedom to report. They have some daily papers. They get better access. A couple of months ago some journalists got arrested for breaking a story about a chemical weapons factory and it was not a legitimate reason for arrest.

Q: How?

R: The press got accused to stoking ethnic tension. Local journalists have that fear of arrest.

Q: Like the case of three journalists arrested for breaking the story about a chemical weapons factory?

R: They didn't self censor and went ahead and broke the story (about the chemical weapons plant) and now they suffer the consequences. Most people would think twice about breaking that type of story now.

Q: How can the government harm you?

R: Whenever people report on that issues (ethnic tension) the government claims the most recent massacre never happened. If you write an article that contradicts the governments versions of events you could be sued for libel. The government in the past has sued people for causing unrest for publishing photos of ethnic violence. You don't know where the line is and what they will sue you for.

If you make someone mad they can make you suffer. Unfortunately the justice system is still so bad that you can really manipulate it.

Q: What do you think about the media landscape here?

R: A lot of dailies have opened and closed in the past couple of years.

Q: What are your opinions of the readers in Burma?

R: People love to read here. A lot gets circulated on Facebook as well as newspapers and radio.

VIII. Thiha Saw: Chief Editor, Myanmar Freedom

4/8/2014

Via email

Q: You said that your publication is temporarily suspended for the time being and you're working on rebuilding it, what was the reason behind the suspension?

R: We said 'we are suspending the operations for a while, that is to restructure our business'. The reason behind this is the Myanmar media landscape is changing rapidly and more and more 'big money' companies (some call them cronies, meaning they got filthy rich through close connection with the former military regime) are coming into the media industry. They've got hundreds of millions of dollars and one big company started a 'price war'. Most private dailies are selling at around 100 Ks (about 10 cents) per copy and this big company brought down their per copy price to 50 Ks (5 cents) suddenly. That happened about a month ago.

Most private dailies started publishing last year -- mine too. Our initial business plan was to reach the 'sustainable point' in a year or so. Our initial projection for the capital we need was one million dollars in a year. I've spent almost 850,000 in the last 10 months. At this point when the price war started and the big companies coming in, I have not any choice but to team up with a stronger company to engage in this 'cruel newspaper war'. The challenge is to get a strong partner and maintain our independent editorial policy. Actually, I'm in and out of these 'business meetings in the past week. The teaming up task may take a week, a month or more. In fact, I've made great progress in that sense in the first week of our 'suspension'..

Q:

Q: Can you tell me when did you start working for Myanmar Freedom and when was the publication born?

R: All private daily newspapers started publications last year. The government started 'permitting' registrations early last year and the first private dailies appeared on 1st of April, 2013 (coincidentally, the April Fool's day). Myanmar Freedom Daily started in May, firstly the online version and the print version started in Aug, 2013. Actually it was 8.8. 2013, the 25th anniversary of the 8888 democratic revolution. I'm the founder/publisher/editor of the MMFreedom, so I was with it from its very inception.

3. I'm in the media industry for almost 35 years. First, I worked for an English daily newspaper (state-owned in those days) in 1979. I was a young editor when I lost my job after 8 of August 1988 (we adoringly call it 8888 revolution) pro-democracy uprising. I was a member of the 'Boycotting committee of Editors', which took over all six government newspapers and ran a free press for 25 days!!

Q: What did you do before joining Myanmar Freedom?

R: I started working in the private media afterwards, founding a monthly business monthly, which is 24 years old now. I started a weekly newspaper in 2008 and now founding the first private English daily in 50 years in Myanmar. Anyway, I just want to be addressed to as a veteran editor.

IX. Chit Win Maung: Chief Editor, Tha Ma Ga News Journal and Tet Lann Sports Journal; Advisor, MRTV-4

4/7/2014

Yangon, Myanmar

Via Phone

Q: OK, can you tell me first who you are and what are you doing?

R: My name is Chit Win Maung. I am one members of the Myanmar Press Council, also executive member of Myanmar Journalistic Union, and now I'm working at MRTV-14 newsroom, a television newsroom. Also I have my own publication, it is a sport publication.

Q: Can you tell me how old are you?

R: I'm 52.

Q: Did you join the student uprising in 1988?

R: We actively participated in 1988 uprising because then I had been working in university publication department as the office staff. The 1988 started from Yangon University, around me and we knew everything about it.

Q: What did you do then? Did you write articles about that or take part in the uprising?

R: I was a writer, I wrote for magazine, I wrote news, short stories for magazine in there. So I regularly wrote stories, some articles for the magazine. During the 1988 uprising, I published in newspaper for the demonstration about the students uprising. Then we didn't have to go to censorship because from August 1988 to September 1988 we got a little bit of freedom of press during the uprising.

Q: So which university did you work for then?

R: Yangon university at that time, it was Rangoon Arts and Science University.

Q: How long have you been working as a journalist?

R: In there, I published news about the uprising. We reported about what happened in Yangon around the country, then only government propaganda newspapers were allowed to publish. Not only my publications, there were so many other publications, newspapers, journals, student monthly periods of the uprising because then the government they couldn't control everything. Then I published it, edited it, wrote articles about the uprising.

Q: Did you get into any trouble after the uprising?

R: After the uprising, the military government put down everything. So many politicians, so many student activists, so many people were arrested. Many other people fled to other border areas. I did nothing, I had to stay in silence and was afraid because during the uprising I only published [in] the newspapers and not actually took part in any organizations. As a journalist, I wrote and published.

Q: So you didn't get into any trouble at all?

R: After the uprising, for about two years, I had to stay in silent. There was only one day, the intelligence officer questioned what I did, so I mentioned what I did and I published. Also they had my publications. But they did not detain me, only one day. After two years, I started my own magazine. This is one of the monthly magazine, called *Ya Nant Thit*. It is an international affairs journal.

Q: Where did you get your journalism training?

R: In 1991, I published a book about the Gulf War, Iraq and later Kuwait about this war. I wrote a book. It was translated into other international in the area. In 1992, I published my own magazine, it is a international affairs magazine Ya Nant Thit. It is very popular. It is about the mix of military and international affairs. We translated all the international affairs from Thai magazine, Newsweek magazine, other newspapers from other countries, we translated. Before Myanmar was closed there, people didn't have access to international news, because in there their life just not available in our country. So my magazine open the people to that. So it was popular. Also some of the articles about democracy which I wrote, other critical thinking. So the intellectual people they liked my magazine. And then in 1999, I had journalism training in Thailand for only two months.

Q: What was the organization offering the training?

R: IMMF Indochina, you know Indochina International Media Memorial Foundation. From 1992 until 2004, I published my magazine, which was very well-known in Myanmar. They very much liked my magazine because it was about trade and international affairs and that's why. Also the government closely watched my magazine. We had to go through the Press Scrutiny Council censorship department because we had to go through every publications. Very difficult years and very difficult times. So during 1992 to 2004, my magazine was banned three times. One time it was six months. So one day they banned my magazine to publish, this was a problem for me because financial problems I can't control my magazine staff because not only one times, two times. So my publication gradually slow and I can't continue after that.

Q: How many people worked for you then?

R: About 15 people.

Q: Can you tell me about the censorship process that you had to go through?

R: In Burma then all the publications you printed, you had to go through the press scrutiny board. You had to show whatever you printed. Everything you printed on your paper, you had to show what you printed. And then even magazine, then not so many journals, only government newspapers. The private owned magazines like my magazine only a few publications then. Every magazine had to go to the scrutiny board. For example, my magazine, after we finished our job, we had to go to this department and they checked my magazine's content, everything from photos, text, everything, they checked, if they didn't like they blocked [covered] the page with ink. And after two or three years, they didn't use the black ink, they teared out the pages that they didn't like. We went in the board with 200 pages magazine and got back 100 pages.

Q: How many pages are there in your magazine normally?

R: 150 pages, sometimes just 100 pages remained [after censorship]. So if they told you these pages were not allowed to be published, we carelessly put in our magazine, we were banned one month or two months.

Q: You said your magazine was banned three times. How long was it banned each time?

R: First time was six months, then three months again, then after that three months again.

Q: What happened exactly?

R: I told you we couldn't talk about the government policy and sometimes very sensitive either human rights or democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, we couldn't mention, general Aung San we couldn't mention, even the former prime minister U Mu, we couldn't mention, famous politicians in our own history. This military government, they're very sensitive about politics. For magazine, they only let us to publish not about politics, you can write about popular news like movies, some entertainment, some economics but not politics.

Q: You could write about economics?

R: Not my magazine but other publishers could write about business, such as house prices, not related to politics.

Q: How many people read your magazine back then?

R: My circulation was about 2,000 copies.

And in 1997, I published a sports journal. This is not politics, this is just for my business.

Q: So back to that magazine again, you said you had 2,000 copies, was that a weekly or monthly magazine?

R: Monthly. Very difficult time.

Q: So 2,000 copies, was that good or just average?

R: Just average, no profit. My aim is to get knowledge of the world to people because then the country was not open, most of the people they didn't include society, they didn't

know what happened around the world. My object is to know [educate] every people about the knowledge from the world.

Q: I'm sure people appreciated your effort. So if I can ask this question, have you ever been in jail because of what you've done?

R: No, I have never. Because I lived very cleverly.

Q: There is one question I always ask, do you call your country Burma or Myanmar?

R: Before we called our country Burma, we used Burma, we liked to call our country Burma. And now, even we don't agree that the government changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar, we must agree with them. Again, not only me, most of the people they don't the name to change from Burma because Burma was from the colonial area. We used to [call our country] Burma, all the international, the world know [it as] Burma, not Myanmar. But the military changed [it] and now it became gradually familiar to the world and even we use Myanmar. For me I don't like using Myanmar, I like Burma because it is an internationally known name.

Q: After 2004, you closed your magazine, what did you do then?

R: I told you in 1997, I published my weekly magazine about football, meaning soccer, very popular in my country. This is not politics, it's a sport. This weekly journal is very profitable for me.

I wanted to publish a weekly journal about local news but they didn't issue the license to me, they only issue license to people who were close to the military and the authority. So I couldn't get the license to publish the news journal. They did not issue the license to

me. Most of the news weekly journal now, the people who get the license are mostly close to the military. Most of the people now can apply to get the license, not difficult but then two or three years ago, it's very difficult to get a license to start a news weekly journal.

Q: What do you think about the government's changed attitude toward the media?

R: As I told you, I am now a member of the Press Council. We are now dealing with the government. My opinion, now we have freedom of press, but it is not really freedom of press because even now some of the journalists were detained. It is not the time of freedom of press. So, we can write anything, we can criticize the government, we can write anything openly but some politics they don't like [that], they arrested the journalists as the crime in the law.

Q: And so you don't have press freedom, literally?

R: Yeah, now we have so many newspapers, most of journalists can write nearly everything, no more censorship department, our press movement is more free compared to previous years but the government sometimes if they don't like these journalists they will arrest. Now they arrest journalists two or three cases a year.

Q: Are you aware the case of the journalists who broke the news about the chemical weapons factory?

R: Yeah, this happened three months ago. These journalists didn't know about the state secret act, they penetrated to the military area and they got information, writing about the weapons factory, it's not the chemical weapons factory. I think these journalists in these

media, they wanted to show they're journalists, their headline is the government is producing chemical weapons, this is embarrassing to the government's, so the government detained [them]. The journalists should have known that. Also, the government shouldn't arrest them because we have a press council, they should inform us and we can mediate there.

Q: So does the press council belong to the government?

R: Not belong to the government, it is an independent body. All of our members are members from media organizations, Myanmar journalists. This is appointed by the government office.

Q: Does the press council have any influence on the government's policy toward the media?

R: No influence. In 2012, President Thein Sein declared we had freedom of press, so we formed an independent press council.

Q: So do you have any influence at all? For example, in the case of the journalists who were arrested because of the chemical story, can you help them by telling the government they shouldn't arrest those journalists?

R: Yes, yes. We objected the arrest of the journalists. We made an announcement and object the arrest. But they have no response.

Q: Is there any kind of topic that you still can't report on?

R: No, no. As a journalist, we can write everything. Now, we have freedom of press.

Most of the journalists nowadays they can write everything. But sometimes, they confront with the government like the chemical problem.

Q: I heard a lot about young journalists who don't have a lot of experience. What do you think of that?

R: This is normally because we're 50 years out of freedom of press. Most of young journalists just graduate from universities, our education as you know is very poor, they don't have full capacity. I think that is the problem.

Q: What are you going to do about that then?

R: We already have some capacity training for young journalists. Within two years, there are some journalism school in here, also some international organizations coming to Myanmar to give training for the young journalists.

Q: What did you think about the media outside of the country like BBC, VOA, Reuters?

R: Before it was very useful and reliable for our people because the country was under the military rule, most of the country had to rely on outside media such as BBC, VOA, RFA because people could hear the truth about our society. People could rely on outside media, they could get the truth on these media. And also the government they propaganda news we're getting, so those media were very important before.

Q: So you trusted those media?

R: Most of us trusted these media.

Q: What about other media outlets like Irrawaddy and Mizzima?

R: They were dissident media, they wrote about Myanmar affairs, the truth. Like BBC, VOA and other outside media, Irrawaddy and Mizzima, most of the people liked them. But in our country, most of the intelligence, authority would arrest you if they found copies of Mizzima and Irrawaddy with you. They couldn't control the people but they could control the publications. I got the presents of Irrawaddy magazine from my friend, and I kept it secret on my bookshelf.

Q: So what do you think about them now since they're allowed to be in the country?

R: They do what they did. I think now Mizzima, BBC, VOA now compete with the local media, because before the people had to rely on those media outlets to get the truths, now people don't have to rely on them anymore.

Sometimes the journalists confront with the government and we have a little bit of danger now.

Q: What do you hope for the future of the media?

R: The situation of the current government, because they now so called the civilian government,

We have to see after the elections what will happen. This government will control, any change in the government, the media will be changed as well. More and more change.

I hope we get freedom of press.

Q: What is your definition of a free press?

R: Freedom of press means we can write everything, we can openly write about what's happening in the government, organizations, some authority. We had not got this chance.

Q: So this is my last question, in your opinion, why did the government change to an open government? Why did they let you have freedom press?

R: It is a good but not easy question. You know the government change from military to civilian, they can't control everything because outside world is changing. Again, this government had to change, if they didn't change, there would be so many problems with them, so they open to the west and other country.

Accuracy check and follow up questions via Facebook: 4/14/2014

Q: Can you tell me about the two years that you stayed silent? Did the government follow you? Did they monitor you in any way?

R: Not specifically but they watched carefully because we were always against the government policy

Q: I heard the government tapped into phones of journalists, was your phone not tapped?

R: some people tapped but I think that not me. but I was one of the journalist to be watched.

Q: How long have you been working as a journalist then?

R: more than 20 years

Q: Why did you get into journalism?

R: Journalism is the subject I loved since my younger days. I want to know everything happening around me. When I woke up in the morning I usually read newspaper or some kind of magazines. Journalists can correct the society. Journalists can point out what is wrong and what is right. If a government or society which were decayed with corruption or other bad things we, journalist can criticised or point out the situation and people will know the truth

Q: Your magazine Ya Nant Thit was an international affairs magazine. Was there any topic that you couldn't discuss then?

R: Particularly no but every publication printed in Burma subjected to submit to press censorship department prior to publish. If any parts or any wordings or anything opposing the military government. Some stories told the realities of our society but the government didn't like.

Q: What reality?

R: What the people suffered like the condition of living, high price of commodities, lack of electricity, poor transportation. Many things.

Q: Your magazine was banned twice or three times? How much time each?

R: Yes. 6 months twice and 3 months one time. We had stories politically criticizing the military government. My business was destroyed and I was very much disappointed. After they banned my magazine, I had nothing to do.

Q: Were the articles in the drafts or were they made it to publication?

R: They already made it to publication. It is because of them that they didn't noticed the stories. If they were just drafts, there was no problem. We just had to pull them off.

Q: So after that, why did you still go back to journalism?

R: Journalist is always journalist. You can ban the books but cannot ban the soul of a journalist.

Q: When did you apply for a license to open a local news journal?

R: Yes. Under the military rule, the licences were only issued to the people who were very close to military persons or military authority like generals. I was one of the blacklisted so I couldn't easily get a licence.

Q: When exactly did you apply for that licence and how many times?

R: In 1998, just one time and no more chance to apply because you're a person not allowed to publish a politically sensitive publication.

Q: When did they take you off the list?

R: This is when the relaxation of strict control from the new government in 2010.

Q: Do you think journalists in Myanmar now can play the watchdog role?

R: Yes. I believe we, journalists, in Myanmar now can hold the government accountable, even not 100%. We can make our voices heard now. Before we didn't have this. Compare to previous years, we can do more now.

Q: But then there are incidents like the arrests of those journalists who broke the chemical weapons factory story. What do you make of that?

R: This can happen in any democratic countries. There are still limitations in Myanmar.

Q: Can you speak more about the limitations?

R: Because we are on the course of the transition to a full democracy. I'm an optimist of the media landscape in Myanmar. The limitations are not only on the press but other administrations as well. Most of authorities are former military persons. They can't change their mindset.

Q: Did you ever try to apply for a license to open a local newspaper again?

R: I have a new job now at MRTV-4. I can apply for a licence but I have no intention to start a new job now.

Q: What do you do now at MRTV-4?

R: I give instructions to reporters, do quality control and inhouse training from basic journalism to code of ethics, code of conducts.

Q: How many reporters are working on the government beat? How are they doing?

R: 10. They do their best, covering about political parties, and their movements, some specialised in political affairs, some in social affairs. They need to improve their interviewing skills. We tell them that they do not need to give challenging questions.

X. Thiha Thwe: Correspondent and Cameraman, NHK

4/8/2014

Yangon, Myanmar

Via Phone

Q: Who are you and what are you doing?

R: My name is Thiha Thwe. I am 45. I have been working as a journalist since 2003. It is quite difficult to calculate my experience. Before that I worked as a freelance researcher for television from 1996 to 2003.

Q: From 2003 what did you do?

R: [Aung] Suu Kyi was released from house arrest, I think that was her second time. That was a big event. All the international media was focusing on her release. At the time there were many celebrations organized, which was kind of a big crew in Yangon, to cover her release. I was invited to join the coverage. Before her release we covered Myanmar economic situation. At that time I had to perform as a researcher, translator, and coordinator. Sometimes I filmed downtown in the market. The problem was the crew were already assigned to cover her release. It is a big event. After her release she visited her party. The crew already assigned. NHK wanted to have public response to her release as well. NHK leader left a small camera and asked me to go out and film people and ask their feelings on her release. It was the my first experience to work on the camera as well. So I have to say my career as a cameraman started that day as well.

Q: Did you work for NHK from that time?

R: I worked for NHK since 1996 as researcher and coordinator. NHK was a main client to me as well.

Q: Did you work for anyone else?

R: It was during Military Junta so it was hard for international media to cover Myanmar. Sometimes foreign journalists came to the country as tourists to cover stories. Sometimes I was here unofficially. Not formally working but sort of consulting. I helped western media as well.

Q: Were you there when the student uprising happened in 1988?

R: I was 18 years old so I was an activist at the time. I was a leader of high school student union. I was involved until 1990 elections. When Suu Kyi won a landslide in the elections, I stopped because I also got married. Maybe that's the main reason.

Q: What happened after that?

R: I got married. I was leader of a group of activists and I was being monitored by the secret police. I quit political activities after I got married. In 1991 there was an event a student boycott at the Rangoon university. There was a day Suu Kyi won the Nobel Peace prize in Norway. The government decided to close all universities in Yangon. Some students were taken to other locations including me. Even though I was not there it was because of my past experiences. They always thought of me as a manipulator or something.

I was put in prison in one month. It was enough time to think about my future. I decided to join a media carrier. We had no media school. I joined a construction material selling shop for three years from 1992 up until 1995. I also joined the foreign correspondents club in Myanmar. It was the only one in Myanmar organized by the government

officially. The foreign correspondence club provided workshops every 2 or 3 years to share experience and knowledge. I had a dream to become a journalist.

Q: So now you are a journalist.

R: Well, I didn't go to university. I couldn't pass my matriculation I stopped formal education. I had to struggle for my life too. I had no time to sit for my exams. I studied English and other things through books.

Q: When did the government stop monitoring you?

R: I was detained three times. It is kind of discouraging with the government having a view to stop us who involved in political activities. They have a kind of monitoring sessions in every area. There were checking activities, especially if I were to join business, they would approach the owner and tell him to stay away from me. It's a kind of persecution to people like me who involved in political activities. The problem to get the passport as well. Basically in the beginning, we didn't know we were monitored. In 1995, I received an offer from a documentary company to be the video producer there. I just decided to move to the company even though I didn't know how to do it. In a day, I became a media man and I had to learn a lot. I spend several years as a video producer. And that company worked for NHK as well, so at the time I was assigned as a researcher for NHK programs. The problems came when I tried to get a passport. I found out I was on a blacklist. That's the problem for many years. Up until 2004 I was on a blacklist. The military intelligence was abolished so the blacklist was too. The government started a new security system so my name was removed luckily. In 2004, I got my passport.

Q: What kind of research did you do from 1996?

R: The use of the personal computer started in Myanmar in 1996. I had to research how to use a computer. Basic knowledge about computers. The company produced a tourism video so we had to travel throughout the country and learn about the life of the tribes, like hill tribes and their culture and way of living. I was assigned to travel throughout the country to show this. I had to research the areas, culture, traditions, then I had to travel to the area with a cameraman, had to arrange for filmings, interviews, etc.

I was assigned to research some coverage for NHK. The company asked for preliminary research before covering a story in Myanmar. The research then sent to NHK and then sent their idea and further questions that had to be prepared before they come and cover the story.

Q: Did the government know you worked for NHK at that time?

R: The company took this responsibility and we were just staff. As the staff of the company I could accompany the NHK crew in the field.

Q: So they knew?

R: They didn't know about me. As long as I stayed away from politics, it was no problem. The passport meant I had to go to the police station. The passport is managed by Ministry of Home Affairs.

Q: Tell me about your first experience with the camera.

R: On the day that Suu Kyi was released, I had to go out on the streets and interview the people on their thoughts about the release. Asking and shooting at the same time. Just point and shoot.

I already learned how to film this picture from working with camera men. I know to frame. Piece of cake for me. It was easy the first day.

Q: Could you have gotten in trouble for shooting those interviews that day?

R: The hard part was selecting the right people. It was quite difficult to stop people and ask questions. I always nervous about annoying people. I had to be lucky for two points, one is the person is suitable to the interview and that they have good knowledge about my question.

Q: Were they normally willing to talk?

R: Yes, sometimes the person looks nice but when you start the question they run away.

It seems like it is hard to do video-taping in Burma.

Yeah, it was for a while but normal now. In 2003, it was very hard. Cameras were like guns to them. If you pointed at people with camera, as long as you are a foreigner, it's fine because they thought it's for your knowledge only. If you're a Burmese, it's quite different. Are you Buddhists? Son of authority? Why are they taking pictures of us? Why is the lens aimed at us? Sometimes they complain, "why are you aiming at me?"

Basically, they were living in a confusing time.

Q: What about the government side of that?

R: Almost impossible for us to aim at the government or people in uniform. We could not film any uniforms. It's not written somewhere but journalists in Myanmar then understood that we could not film anyone in uniforms.

When you brought your camera out on the street, were you afraid?

We had to be very careful and make a stolen picture.

Q: Do you have to hide that from the government officials?

R: We had to hide our cameras for two reasons. Basically, we didn't want people to know that we're journalists. We always kept the cameras inside our bags. That's one reason. And if you used the camera visibly, in front of the people, it's saying you're a journalist and people would run away from you. The second reason is that if you had to take pictures, it's better if you hid your camera, because at that time, I mean most of the time, not all, if there was a boycott or protest on the street, we had to do hit and run filming. So if you wanted to do any filming, you had to hide your camera. Otherwise you'd be stopped before filming.

Q: Why did they stop you?

R: They don't want to be filmed. Either activists or government. I don't know why.

Q: Do you call it Burma or Myanmar?

R: I prefer to call it Burma. Up until 1989, we used Burma, Burmese. I really like Burma. The other reason is I didn't like the government changing the name by their reason to promote the nationalism of Myanmar. We don't agree with their decisions. Nationalism is not our concern.

Q: So you do use Myanmar?

R: Yes, I'm no longer an activist. I want to get along with the government and not pick a fight over this.

Q: Did you read or listen to media outside the country at that time?

R: We had to listen to BBC, RFA, DVB, or VOA but frankly I don't listen to the radio a lot. We had to listen to those programs to know news about remote regions. State media didn't report on political events like that in remote areas. So we had to rely on BBC, RFA, VOA, something like that.

Q: Did you trust foreign media?

R: No, I decided when I was young they were the only ones we could rely on. As I grew up I came to realize that they are sometimes partly correct and sometimes fully incorrect. But at least we can filter. I can filter those reports with my own knowledge, which can be true, or wrong. We have our own filter.

Q: So, is that view common among Burmese?

R: Many people listen to foreign radio. They were living under the regime without proper knowledge. They were still convinced in reports of such kind of radio. They had anger at the government. They listen to the radio to hear bad things about the government. It is a relief from the radio reports. It's kind of a release of pain.

Q: Can you give me a brief comparison between before the change and after the change in the media landscape?

R: After 8/12 the government loosened its grip on reporting and new publications came out with freer opinions. The readers can have these kind of reports. With wider views of

the reporter and a new variety of reporters on different sectors of the country. The fruit of the freedom came to the people. It was very delicious. We were away from that kind of fruit for so many years. The taste of the delicious fruit is almost disappearing.

Yesterday, one DVB journalists were arrested. What he did was entering the ministry building to get the information. He was charged with intruding. We believe he didn't do anything wrong but he was sentenced. The ministry is a public place but the press still needs a pass to get in. It's quite difficult for us to enter a ministry from now on. If we step inside can we be charged like him. A journalist was arrested for entering a ministry. There are many questions for journalists to ask about our security in the future. We have to review the situations about our protection. There is confusion about our protection of approaching government people. The high ranking military are not persons who take questions from ordinary people like journalists. They think they don't have to care about questions from ordinary people. Very patronizing behavior. We have to clearly understand how ministry is thinking and handles these situations.

Some positive results we have experienced. But generally they are not satisfied with the reports and they feel the media is attacking them. It is not a good sign.

Q: Can you give a specific example of where the government does not cooperate with the media?

R: Many things happen. It is common story. The local media has a relation with the government. The ministry wants the media to approach the ministry frequently to get the story reported the way they want it reported. One reporter in one press conference complained that the government do not cooperate with media and [Aung] Suu Kyi said

that the media should keep on trying until they get the government to cooperate.

Basically, I think it is mostly the Buddhist Department and the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding to the security issues. But like the Ministry of Commerce do not interfere as much.

Q: Do you feel you have the freedom to work as a journalist now?

R: We can feel free if we compare with the past when we had to hide our camera in a bag. At the moment we also have to think about our risk in some cases. Such as covering conflict between military and armed groups. We have to think about it seriously. There could be repercussions for reporting. We feel both. We feel freer and more fear at the same time.

For example, I just came back from Sitwe, Ra Khine state recently. At that time, I was going along with a security guard. I was thinking at that time, without the security team, I would not be able to be there. There is no guarantee of my security. As a citizen, I should be protected by the government. I also heard that two days later, some NGO people were attacked by mobs. If the authority is not happy with my coverage, they would not protect me. This is kind of a discouragement that we have.

Q: So you have a press council in Myanmar?

R: Yes, this is another political problem. The people in the media are not willing to support it. They think the press council is organized for the interest of the president and not the media.

Q: What do you think of the current media landscape in Myanmar?

R: We need security under the law in Myanmar. Protections granted by the law. The other is strong organizations, either journalists association or press council. We should be well organized and supported by a majority of the people. So we need that two things, law and organization.

Q: Why did the government open up?

R: The scenario is the 2008 constitution. I was not as surprised because the new constitution gave that freedom. The new government took office and governed by this constitution which guaranteed freedom. The military system is good for the long run of the country. Essentially, it is the will of the military.

In 1962 there was a military coup. But within a couple years they introduced a one party system that ruled the nation for 26 years. That is simply showing they had to change the policy otherwise the people would get bored and complain about the system. They have to look new every so often to refresh the people's interest.

Additional interview on his role in Saffron Revolution in 2007, 4/16/2014, via phone

Q: I saw on your Facebook that you were interviewed for your experiences during the Saffron Revolution. Can you tell me more about it?

R: So for the first time, my two phones were shut down by the government. That was very surprising to me. I used on mobile phone to do an interview with one of the activists because they were monitoring our telephones. And also, another phone was totally barred at midnight. Next day was the first day of the Saffron Revolution. So I lost two telephones. I was shocked and surprised with this first experience. It was like a kind of

warning from the government, you know, they didn't want the media to cover [the revolution].

Q: What about other foreign correspondents?

R: International media journalists were in the same as me.

We didn't know in advance where the monks would start their demonstration. We had to hang around the streets, especially near the area where many monasteries located. Finally we got the information when the monks started marching from downtown area. They headed to Shwegadon pagoda. We followed them there and took pictures.

At that time there were a lot of officers disguised as ordinary people and attacked the demonstrators and the media. Some of them came to me in a threatening behavior. My camera was grabbed. I had to say I'm from the media and I had to run away. One of my friends working from Kyodo, his camera was seized by these people. We had to hide our camera all the time after filming. We had to move around the marching, we couldn't stay with the demonstration all the time.

In the beginning, the number of the monks were not many, a few days later the number of participants increased. At the time, ordinary people also made sure they supported the march. The side of the demonstrators were stronger than the authority. It was safer walking with the demonstrators then.

As international media, we were protected because they knew what they did for us meant they did to the international media. They just shut down our phone lines. There was only

one case of this reporter working for Japanese media who was arrested. We didn't know why though.

Q: How did you get the information to your bosses then?

R: Because my phones were shut down, I had to find another phone line. It was very difficult for me to get another phone line because people who knew me were afraid that they would be in the same situation as I did if they lend me their phones. I was also in a difficult situation because I had to have a phone to work, I had to communicate with my bureau in Bangkok. I had my satellite telephone but it was a great risk as satellite telephones were easy to hear.

XI. Thin Leiwin: Reuters correspondent in Indonesia

4/11/2014

Via email

Q: How long have you been working with Reuters, covering Burma?

R: Almost 6 years now. I joined not too long after Cyclone Nargis hit Burma (that was May 2008).

Q: What did you do before that?

R: I was freelancing in Vietnam (Saigon) for about 2.5 years before I joined Reuters.

Q: Can you tell me about your work back to the time when the government closed off the country?

R: As I'm sure others have also said, it was very difficult. Foreigners caught reporting may be deported but Burmese journalists caught reporting (especially coming in from abroad) would probably be arrested and just kept there. The junta had never treated journalists well and have always eyed them with suspicion so it was very very difficult to operate there. So every time I go back for reporting trips, that concern is always at the back of my head. Having said that, I have never worked in Burma. I left the country 16 years ago to do my undergraduate degree and never went back to live there. So you would probably get a much more interesting and contrasting experience if you ask this to journalists who were living and working in Burma.

Q: How was the government attitude to you/journalists like you? Did you ever successfully get interviews / quotes from government sources?

R: No I didn't try it to get official comments at that time so I don't blow my cover. I'd ask others to do it for me.

Q: Were your family harassed by the government because of your work?

R: Not that I know of, but pretty much all of them are living abroad. But the reason I didn't put my byline for the longest time was because I wanted to protect them, just in case.

Q: How different is your coverage now of Burmese government?

R: The approach is still the same as you would any person/ issue/ organisation. The only difference is it is now much easier to get access to them.

Q: You call the country Myanmar or Burma? Why?

R: I call it Burma because that's what I've always called and I didn't appreciate the heavy-handed way the junta changed it to Myanmar.

Q: How is your view about the change in the country? Do you think it will last?

R: There's been a lot of positive changes but also quite a few concerns - especially this virulent strain of nationalism is very worrying in an ethnically diverse country - which I think is typical of a country that is transitioning fast. I've never really bought into the type of "everything is fine in Burma" because, well, that's not realistic. Nowhere else in the world has a country that has been so closed off and oppressive suddenly become a beacon of democracy without a lot of heartache.

Q: What is your assessment of the media landscape in Myanmar?

R: Very very busy landscape.

Good:- Wide selection of journals and papers to read. Quality is improving. Pre-publication censorship is gone. Much much more open than it has ever been in the past 50 years I think.

Bad:- Not all the journals will survive. Some media has not been very responsible or ethical in their reportage, especially when it comes to religious/ethnic issues. Training of journalists still required. Post-publication censorship still there. Draconian laws still being used against journalists (check out the latest news about a DVB reporter being sentenced to a year's jail).