

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/burma-censorship-board-back-in-action-03-08-2012,43164.html>

Asia - Burma

Alarming reversal

Censorship board back in action, suspends two weeklies

3 August 2012

Reporters Without Borders and its partner organization, the Burma Media Association, roundly condemn the resumption of censorship by Burma's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division (PSRD), which suspended two weeklies, *The Voice* and *The Envoy*, indefinitely on 31 July for allegedly violating "2011 Order No. 44" and a PSRD ban on publishing articles that have not received its approval.

"The PSRD's measures show we were right to have repeatedly voiced doubts in recent months," the two organizations said. "It is clear that part of the government or at least some of its most influential members are trying to keep the media under strict control. The current period's transitional nature cannot be used by the information ministry or the PSRD to justify these suspensions. Such drastic sanctions on the press must end once and for all."

The two organizations added: "We urge the PSRD to rescind the suspensions imposed on *The Voice* and *The Envoy* and to end its policy of deterrence, which just has the effect of getting journalists to censor themselves."

A PSRD official told *The Irrawaddy* that *The Voice* was suspended because of a story about a cabinet reshuffle that named five ministers and a cartoon by **Shwe Bo** on the cover above a photo showing information ministry officials inspecting the cartoon during an exhibition organized by the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation on 26 July in Rangoon. The cartoon, which likened the media to a chained elephant, was subsequently banned from the exhibition.



The Envoy was banned after it reprinted passages from an article about the cabinet reshuffle and an interview with a Burmese parliamentarian that had appeared in a Chinese publication, *Southern Weekly*.

PSRD director-general Myint Maung and deputy director-general Tint Swe summoned the editors of all of Rangoon's weeklies on 31 July to remind them of the PSRD's rules and the 1962 Printer and Publisher Act. Tint Swe said *The Voice* had printed eight news stories without submitting them for approval while *The Envoy* had printed seven.

Venus News editor Thar Lun Zaung Htet [told *The Irrawaddy*](#) after the meeting: "We are even afraid to publish the news. We are worried for our future."

More than 90 Rangoon-based journalists affiliated to various journalists' organizations subsequently attended an emergency meeting organized by Zaw Thet Htwe, the present head of the Myanmar Journalists Union.

The participants agree to form a Press Freedom Committee with Zaw Thet Htwe as its spokesman. This committee then issued a seven-point statement that was sent to President Thein Sein. It included calls on the government to lift the bans on suspended publications and to fire the officials responsible for imposing restrictions on the media.

The committee also warned that it would not recognize any media law if journalists were not properly consulted during the drafting process, and it requested a meeting with President Thein Sein with the aim of ending press freedom violations.

Reporters Without Borders and the Burma Media Association support the Press Freedom Committee's demands.

They are also worried by other recent press freedom restrictions and government attacks on the media.

The PSRD suspended the newspaper *Snapshot* last month for publishing the photo of a rape victim and judicial proceedings are now under way against the paper ([see report](#)). *The Voice* [is being sued for libel](#) by the ministry of mines. In January, a construction ministry engineer [sued *Modern Weekly*](#) and one of its reporters, **Thet Su Aung**, over a November 2011 article criticising road repairs in the Mandalay area.

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (JPEG - 77 kb)
-