

Speech by

Mr. Thura Aung, representing the 2019 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize Laureates

Award ceremony and Gala dinner, 2019 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

(2 May 2019, Sheraton Hotel - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Good evening ladies and gentleman,

It is a great honor for me to be here with you today to accept this award 2019 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize on behalf of my brother Wa Lone and his colleague Kyaw Soe Oo.

I wish that they could be here themselves to accept this prestigious prize. They would like to send their thanks for this press freedom prize. They were overjoyed when they heard that they had won it. They also received great strength and courage from this prize.

They would like to send thanks to all of you and for everyone who has been supporting them and standing up for press freedom in Myanmar and around the world.

The fact that they know that they have your support has helped them to keep them going during more than 500 days that they have now spent locked up.

All they wanted to do was to report the truth. Because they thought that was best for the country and for the world.

They were young journalists who were excited at the change in Myanmar since they were growing up and wanted to do their best. Then, they were sadly trapped and sentenced to seven years in prison.

They know that the importance of press freedom is much beyond Myanmar. They say that they are just two of the many journalists fighting difficult circumstances every day to try to get out the truth.

As you know, they have been in prison for more than 16 months. This is part of a worrying trend of intimidation, arrests and violence against journalists, which are coming to the newsroom every day. Some have been arrested on criminal charges simply for doing their work. Some were separated from their family like Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo now. They know that journalism and press freedom are under threat in different ways around the world. So, they would like to ask you to continue with your support to protect press freedom and to condemn anyone who tries to obstruct it.

The legal case ended when the Supreme Court rejected the last appeal of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo on April 23.

But, we are still hopeful that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo will not have to wait too long before they can be reunited with their families.

They want to be able to get back to their wives, their daughters, their colleagues, and their work. Their wives, daughters, and family members are still hopeful, waiting for the upcoming government 'New Year Amnesty' soon for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo.

We all just want them to come home.

So, I hereby strongly request the Myanmar Government the immediate release of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, and to bring justice for them.

Thank you. Thank you very much.