



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 2, 2023

Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi Likely to Spend Life in Prison

SINGAPORE — A court in military-ruled Myanmar last week ruled that deposed pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi was guilty of corruption and sentenced her to seven more years in prison, concluding the last remaining cases against her almost two years after she was first detained by the military in a coup.

Suu Kyi, 77, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has already begun her 26-year prison sentence due to over a dozen charges she has been slapped with since the coup.

The additional sentence, meted out to her in a courtroom that sits inside a prison in the capital of Naypyitaw, wraps up her legal trials and makes it highly probable that she will be jailed for the rest of her life — or as long as the junta remains in power.

Her lawyers hope to appeal, based on a source familiar with the proceedings. A military spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment.

Journalists have been banned from the proceedings, and rights groups have lambasted them as a sham aimed to get rid of Suu Kyi from Myanmar's political landscape.

Suu Kyi was deemed guilty on a raft of charges, such as taking bribes from Myanmar businessman Maung Weik to unlawfully import walkie-talkies and violating the country's Official Secrets Act. Five corruption charges were linked to the rental of a helicopter for a government minister, a case in which Suu Kyi supposedly did not adhere to regulations and that resulted in "a loss to the state."

Earlier in 2022, the country's military-backed Supreme Court declared that it would auction off her residence, where she spent almost 15 years under house arrest during the previous military regime, and she is presently serving jail time in a compound in Naypyitaw, near the courthouse where her trial is being held. Her household staff and pet dog, Taichido, have been removed from her. However, observers contend that the junta may permit her to resume some of her sentence under house arrest while it prepares for elections it has said will happen in 2023.

Myanmar has been wrestling with chaos, with some established ethnic rebel groups rebooting their clashes with the military in border areas, and the economy in shreds.

"People's Defence Forces" not adopting Suu Kyi's strict policy of nonviolence have also surfaced to fight the junta, and have surprised the military with their prowess, analysts say.

Over 2,600 people have been killed in the military's suppression of dissent, a local monitoring group said, and rights groups have blamed the military for extrajudicial killings and unveiling air strikes on



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Aung San Suu Kyi



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civilians that equate to war crimes.

On the other hand, the junta has claimed that “terrorists” have killed over 4,000 civilians.

The military claimed that there was massive voter fraud during the 2020 polls, won by Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party by a huge margin, despite insistence from international observers that the elections were mainly free and fair.

Suu Kyi is admired by many in Myanmar, but the military has long tried to minimize her influence, said human rights lawyer Kyee Myint in Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city. “As long as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is in politics, the military will never win,” the lawyer said. “That’s why long-term prison terms are imposed — to remove Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s influence in politics.”

Suu Kyi is the daughter of General Aung San, the country’s independence hero, who was assassinated when she was 2 years old.

As an adult, Suu Kyi was one of many people who spent years in imprisonment for political criticism of the military junta that seized power in 1962 and governed the country for decades, and in 1991 she won a Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent opposition to the generals who locked her up, transforming her into an icon for global democracy.

Eventually, she started a power-sharing arrangement with the military when her party won its first landslide election victory in 2015, and was presented the title foreign minister and state counselor.

When she was arrested in 2021, Suu Kyi had already lost some of her popularity, largely because she understated the army’s brutal actions towards Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslim minority, who have been coerced to escape Myanmar by the hundreds of thousands.

Nonetheless, she still enjoys throngs of staunch supporters.

“Burmese protesters have marched flying portraits of her father, Aung San, decades after he was murdered, so we can assume that her own portrait will continue to be used as a call to collective action and protest against those holding illegitimate power, regardless of her own action,” said Dr. Renaud Egreteau, a specialist on civil-military relations in Myanmar and a professor at the City University of Hong Kong. “She is still the matriarchal figure that invokes resistance against the army. I doubt a farcical trial can change that.”

Following her detention in 2021, Suu Kyi has been permitted to speak only with her lawyers, and her lawyers have been prohibited from speaking to the news media during the trials.

Human Rights Watch called for a more robust international response and more effective sanctions to pressure the junta. “The Myanmar junta’s farcical, totally unjust parade of charges and convictions against Aung San Suu Kyi amount to politically motivated punishment designed to hold her behind bars for the rest of her life,” its deputy Asia director Phil Robertson said. “The junta is obviously hoping the international community will miss this news, and there will be little global publicity about the final result of the military’s blatantly unjust campaign against Suu Kyi.”

In December last year, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution on Myanmar in decades to demand the junta end their violence on the population and request for the release of all political prisoners such as Suu Kyi.

“Today we’ve sent a firm message to the military that they should be in no doubt — we expect this resolution to be implemented in full,” said Britain’s UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward after the vote



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on the British-drafted resolution. “We’ve also sent a clear message to the people of Myanmar that we seek progress in line with their rights, their wishes and their interests,” she said as she addressed the 15-member council.

The council has long been divided on how to tackle the Myanmar crisis, with China and Russia protesting strong action. Both countries and India abstained from the vote, while the remaining 12 members voted in favor. “China still has concerns,” the country’s UN Ambassador Zhang Jun told the council after the vote. “There is no quick fix to the issue.... Whether or not it can be properly resolved in the end, depends fundamentally, and only, on Myanmar itself.”



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