



## Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi

### Myanmar

Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi is a filmmaker and human rights activist who served a 10 month prison sentence in Myanmar for a series of Facebook posts.

Prior to his arrest, Ko Ko Gyi studied engineering in Singapore. He returned to Myanmar in 2003 and embarked on a film career. By 2018, Ko Ko Gyi directed eight feature-length films and two documentaries, the most recent being *Thanakha*, a 2012 documentary about former prisoner of conscience and current de facto leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Ko Ko Gyi also is the founder of Myanmar's Human Dignity Film Institute and the Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival, whose mission is to promote human rights awareness in Myanmar. The festival ran from 2013 to 2017, the first and largest of its kind in Myanmar. More than 120 films addressing various human rights issues were screened during the festival's four years.

Between February and March 2019, Ko Ko Gyi wrote a series of Facebook posts in which he criticized the military. His posts questioned the legitimacy of the 2008 military-drafted constitution, which does not fully guarantee the rights of Myanmar's ethnic minorities and ensures 25% of parliamentary seats to the army's nominees. In response to these posts, a lieutenant colonel filed a defamation lawsuit against Ko Ko Gyi, alleging that he violated Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. Days later, the same officer filed a second lawsuit, alleging Ko Ko Gyi violated Section 505(a) of the Penal Code, which criminalizes publishing materials with intent to cause a member of military to mutiny.

On April 12, 2019, Ko Ko Gyi was summoned by a police officer to appear in Insein Township Court, where the filmmaker was arrested. Despite suffering from liver cancer and having recently undergone surgery, the court refused to grant Ko Ko Gyi bail.

The Insein Township Court sentenced Ko Ko Gyi to one year of hard labor on August 29, 2019 under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code. He was released from prison on February 21, 2020.

The lawsuit under Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law remains pending. If convicted under that law, Ko Ko Gyi faces two years in prison.