

Myanmar military releases Buddhist nationalist monk Wirathu from prison

by [Grant Peck](#) in the [October 10, 2021](#) issue



(AP Photo / Thein Zaw)

A nationalist Buddhist monk in Myanmar notorious for anti-Muslim remarks was freed from prison on September 6 after charges that he tried to stir up disaffection against the country's previous civilian government were dropped.

The monk, Wirathu, became prominent in 2012 after deadly riots broke out between Buddhists and ethnic minority Rohingya Muslims in the western state of Rakhine. He founded a nationalist group accused of inciting violence against Muslims.

Muslims from other ethnic groups and in other areas also faced disrespect and occasional violence after Wirathu and his supporters launched their nationalist campaign. Time magazine called Wirathu "The Face of Buddhist Terror" in a 2013 cover story.

People Media, an online news site, said it had received confirmation of Wirathu's release from Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, a spokesman for the Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw. No reason was given for dropping the case.

Wirathu had turned himself in for arrest last November after being a fugitive since May 2019, when a court issued a warrant for his arrest for remarks he made that included crude insults of Aung San Suu Kyi, then Myanmar's leader.

Her government was ousted in February in a military takeover. —Associated Press