Burma Human Rights Network

STATEMENT
bhrn.org

UN Secretary-General Must Act Regarding Increasing Repression of Religious



The undersigned organisations raise serious concerns about violations of freedom of religion or belief in Burma/Myanmar, which have increased significantly since the military illegally seized power on 1 February 2021. We call on United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to personally lead high-level efforts to address this growing crisis.

We have seen in the recent past how, left unchallenged, state-sponsored hate speech and incitement to violence has led to and enabled widespread anti-Muslim violence across Burma/Myanmar and culminated in the genocide of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

Since the military coup, we have seen hate speech and targeting of religious groups increase and

the release from prison of prominent anti-Muslim activists. There is serious concern that the military will increase the use of hate speech and propaganda targeted at non-Buddhist religious groups to attempt to divide the resistance and deflect and divert attention from the coup and subsequent oppression and economic collapse.

In recent months, hate speech against Christians has increased, and Christian figures have been murdered and arbitrarily detained by the military. Religious oppression is a longstanding issue in Burma, and the coup has emboldened the military to further persecute Christians and Muslims living in the country

Most recently, the junta murdered a Christian pastor and three other men. The incident began when several homes were set ablaze by artillery fire during fighting between the Chin Defense Force and the Burmese military on 18 September in Thantlang, Chin State. A Christian pastor named Cung Biak Hum was shot dead while he attempted to help extinguish a fire at another resident's home.

The junta is currently holding another Pastor, Thian Lian Sang, in custody. Thian Lian Sang is a pastor of a church in Mandalay. He was arrested on 16 September by plainclothes police. His family was later reportedly robbed of Kyat 400,000 by SAC officials, which they had received to help cover the cost of burial for Sang's father.

Previously, raids occurred at Mohnhyin mosque and Butaryone Street Mosque in Mohnhyin city, Kachin State, on 3 June 2021. During the attack, a custodian of the mosque was arbitrarily detained. Similarly, a Catholic church in Kantharyar Loikaw City, Kayeh State was shot at on 24 May as civilians sought refuge there. Three women and one man were killed in the incident. Around the same time, an ethnic Karen Church was destroyed on 23 May by the military and police in Insein Township. Three people, including a pastor and a disabled person, were beaten and detained.

The attacks on the protesters and the religious minorities have been widespread and systematically carried out by the order of the same general who also ordered for the mass killings of Rohingya people in 2017, which was described as a genocide by the UN Fact Finding Mission.

The Burmese Military must end all hostilities against religious minorities, release all religious and political prisoners, step down from power, and allow the democratically elected government to resume.

The National Unity Government (NUG) must fully commit to ensuring all rights for religious minorities and present a detailed plan for doing so when they regain power. The international community must increase pressure on the military to comply with these demands to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in and from Burma/Myanmar.

A global arms embargo and targeted sanctions on the military's sources of revenue are vital to support the promotion of human rights and democracy in Burma/Myanmar. Countries should impose their own unilateral arms embargo in the absence of a UN-mandated arms embargo.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres should lead high-level efforts to increase diplomatic pressure on the junta and mobilise countries in the region to deploy their influence to end the military's violence and repression and seek the release of political prisoners and the establishment of genuine federal democracy and respect for human rights for all.

At the same time, the international community should increase humanitarian assistance,

especially for ethnic and religious minorities and particularly for those internally displaced, taking care to use civil society channels that do not result in aid being blocked or misappropriated by the military.

It is time to cut the economic lifeline of the illegal military regime while providing humanitarian lifelines to the people of Burma/Myanmar.

With current UN and ASEAN efforts failing to achieve any progress, the office of the United Nations Secretary-General has the authority to mobilise the international community to support his diplomatic efforts to achieve change in Burma/Myanmar.

Repeated warnings regarding the impending genocide of the Rohingya were ignored for years, until it was too late. We sound the warning bell now that there is a real danger of the military again using nationalism and attacks on non-Buddhists for its nefarious political agenda, with devastating consequences for religious minorities in the country.

The time to act is now.

Undersigned by:

Organisations

1. 21Wilberforce
2. ALTSEAN-Burma
3. America Rohingya Justice Network:
4. American Baptist Churches, USA
5. American Rohingya Advocacy
6. Arakan Institute for Peace and Development:
7. Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
8. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
9. Association Info Birmanie
10. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
11. Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
12. Boat People SOS - Religious Freedom Project
13. Burma Action Ireland
14. Burma Campaign UK
15. Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)
16. Burma Task Force
17. Burmese American Community Institute (BACI)
18. Burmese American Millennials
19. Burmese Democratic Forces
20. Burmese Muslim Association
21. Burmese Rohingya Association In Japan (BRAJ)
22. Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
23. Campaign for a New Myanmar
24. Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative
25. Cantors’ Assembly
26. Centre for Human Rights Research & Advocacy (CENTHRA)
27. Chin Association of Maryland, Inc (CAM)
28. Chin Human Rights Organization
29. Chin Leaders of Tomorrow

30. Christi Australia
31. Christian Freedom International
32. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW)
33. Coalition to Abolish Modern-day Slavery in Asia (CAMSA)
34. Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam
35. Crane Center for Mass Atrocity Prevention
36. Decency & Clarity
37. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization
38. Engage Action
39. Equality Myanmar
40. Fortify Rights
41. Free Burma Action Bay/USA/Global
42. Free Burma Campaign (South Africa) (FBC(SA)
43. Free Myanmar Campaign USA
44. Freedom, Justice, Equality for Myanmar
45. Future Thanlwin
46. Genocide Watch
47. Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy (GM4MD)
48. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
49. Info Birmanie
50. Initiative for Human Rights in Asia (IHRA)
51. Institute for Asian Democracy
52. International Campaign for the Rohingya
53. International Christian Concern
54. Islamic Renaissance Front
55. Jewish World Watch
56. Jubilee Campaign USA
57. Justice4Rohingya UK
58. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
59. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
60. Karen Organization of America
61. Karenni Human Rights Group
62. Keng Tung Youth
63. L'chaim! Jews Against the Death Penalty
64. Legal Action Worldwide
65. Los Angeles Rohingya Association
66. Metta Campaign Mandalay
67. Myanmar Advocacy Coalition
68. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
69. Myanmar Peace Bikers
70. Nationalities Alliance of Burma USA
71. NeT Organization
72. Never Again Coalition
73. Nguyen Van Ly Foundation
74. No Business With Genocide
75. Palms Australia
76. Parity
77. Pax Christi Australia (NSW)
78. Pax Christi Victoria

79. Prayer Pioneers
80. Progressive Voice
81. Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
82. Revealing Light Ministries
83. Rumi Forum
84. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas
85. Shan MATA
86. Society for Humanistic Judaism
87. South Asia Forum for Freedom of Religion or Belief (SAFFoRB)
88. Southern Youth Development Organization
89. Spring Revolution Interfaith Network
90. Stefanus Alliance International
91. Swedish Burma Committee
92. Synergy-Social Harmony Organization
93. Ta'ang Women's Organization
94. Tanintharyi MATA
95. The Common Good Foundation
96. S. Advocacy Coalition for Myanmar (USACM)
97. S. Campaign for Burma
98. Vietnam Coalition Against Torture (VN-CAT)
99. Vietnamese Women for Human Rights

Individuals

1. Denise Nichols OAM, Practitioner Affiliate
2. Dr Lionel Fernandes, Retired Reader In Politics & Former Head, Department of Civics & Politics, University of Mumbai, India.
3. C. Jeff Woods, Interim General Secretary, ABCUSA
4. Rollin A. Van Broekhoven
5. James Scott Coats, Global worker, International Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA
6. John Ball
7. Lauren Homer, President, Law and Liberty Trust International
8. Michael Mullerworth
9. Nguyen Dinh Thang, PhD, Laureate of 2011 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award
10. Quang Pham, Representative, Association for Advancement of Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam (AAFoRB-VN)
11. Rabbi David Wirtschafter --Temple Adath Israel of Lexington
12. Harry Kerr
13. Scott Morgan, President, Red Eagle Enterprises
14. Scott Stearman, -U.N. Representative Baptist World Alliance (ECOSOC) / Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (DGC)
15. Catriona Devlin csb