Burma Human Rights Network

PRESS RELEASE
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Junta Restrictions Obstruct Mosque Repair and Reconstruction

New BHRN report documents decades of restrictions on Muslim places of worship and finds that 180 Islamic religious buildings were affected by the earthquake and at least 670 Muslims were killed



Successive Myanmar governments and military regimes imposed discriminatory restrictions that obstructed Muslim communities from constructing, repairing, and renovating mosques, and the military junta has continued those restrictions after the March 2025 earthquake, the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) said in a report released today.

The report, *"Blocked from Rebuilding: Myanmar Junta Restrictions on Mosque Repair and Reconstruction,"* documents 180 earthquake-affected mosques and other Islamic religious buildings across 29 townships in Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region, Naypyidaw Union Territory, Bago Region, and southern Shan State. BHRN documented at least 670 deaths among Muslims when mosques and other Islamic religious buildings collapsed during the magnitude 7.7 earthquake on March 28, 2025, when many mosques were crowded with worshippers.

> *"Myanmar's military and successive governments spent decades making it impossible for Muslim communities to repair and maintain their mosques," said Kyaw Win, executive director of BHRN. "Hundreds of Muslim worshippers died when mosques collapsed in the earthquake. More than a year later, many communities are still struggling to make damaged sites safe or rebuild them."*

Before the earthquake, BHRN documented Muslim communities that spent years seeking permission for major repairs and structural work without receiving formal approval. Interviewees described leaking roofs, weakened pillars, deteriorating brickwork, and repairs that could not be completed through a clear and predictable process. At one Mandalay mosque, an engineer identified cracks in supporting pillars beneath an excessively heavy roof. The trustee said he feared that seeking formal approval would create further problems over the mosque's land and ownership, so the community carried out the urgent work discreetly while watching for police and municipal officials.

BHRN found no clear, uniform legal framework governing mosque repair and reconstruction. Lawyers, mosque trustees, and construction professionals described overlapping procedures involving religious-affairs offices, municipal departments, land offices, the General Administration Department, and other junta-controlled offices, with requirements varying by location. One trustee who obtained approval said personal relationships and local influence were important. BHRN also documented allegations of payments linked to mosque repair and construction processes.

Land and documentation requirements created further barriers. Some longstanding mosque compounds pre-date Myanmar's current registration system and lack the ownership or land documents demanded during permit processes. BHRN found that recognised religious-land status did not guarantee permission to rebuild, while communities without that status could be required to obtain land documents before their applications would be considered.

After the earthquake, the junta continued to restrict the demolition, repair, and reconstruction of damaged mosques. In Bone Oh Village, none of the damaged mosques had received demolition permission three months after the earthquake. By September 2026, some applications had advanced, but many remained unresolved. One Mandalay trustee said more than 70 mosques had submitted applications, while only four had received repair permission and Panthay Mosque was the only mosque he knew to have received permission to rebuild from scratch.

Some Muslim communities were still using temporary prayer spaces more than a year after the earthquake. A construction professional who visited affected mosques said he had not seen a systematic effort to rebuild them to withstand earthquakes, strong winds, and other hazards, and described repairs at one site proceeding without proper structural calculations. BHRN documented that communities often relied on their own resources, private donors, or other non-

governmental assistance for reconstruction.

Junta-run media, meanwhile, reported officials and technical personnel overseeing restoration at Buddhist religious and heritage sites. During the same period, BHRN documented mosque communities still seeking permission to clear debris, demolish unsafe structures, and rebuild. BHRN did not obtain sufficient information to make a nationwide quantitative comparison of assistance to Buddhist and Muslim religious sites, but mosque representatives interviewed in September 2026 said they had received no financial support from junta-run institutions for reconstruction.

The earthquake triggered the collapses, but years of discriminatory restrictions had prevented or deterred some Muslim communities from addressing known structural risks before disaster struck. Afterward, those same restrictions delayed demolition, stabilisation, repair, and reconstruction. Restrictions that target Muslim places of worship, or are applied more restrictively to them than to comparable religious sites without objective and reasonable justification, constitute religious discrimination and interfere with freedom of religion or belief.

> *"The junta is continuing a discriminatory system that prevents Muslim communities from safely maintaining and rebuilding their places of worship," Kyaw Win said. "Governments should support affected communities through independent channels, cut the military's access to resources that enable abuses, and back efforts to hold those responsible to account."*

BHRN called on U.N. member states, the European Union, ASEAN member states, and members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to strengthen targeted sanctions against Myanmar military officials and entities responsible for serious human rights violations, restrict the military's access to revenue, arms, aviation fuel, equipment, and other resources that enable abuses, and support international and domestic accountability efforts.

Governments and donors should provide financial, legal, engineering, and technical assistance directly to affected Muslim communities through independent civil society organisations, cross-border mechanisms, and trusted locally led actors. Assistance should support structural assessments, safe demolition, repair, and earthquake-resistant reconstruction without strengthening junta-controlled institutions or forcing affected communities to rely on discriminatory administrative systems where alternative channels are available.

BHRN also called on the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar to document discriminatory restrictions affecting Muslim places of worship, preserve relevant evidence, and support appropriate accountability processes.

Read the Full Report

The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is an independent human rights organisation that documents human rights violations against Muslim communities and other minorities in Myanmar. The report is based on research conducted from March 29, 2025, through September 2026, including 18 interviews with mosque trustees and administrators, community representatives, lawyers, construction professionals, and representatives of Muslim religious and

community organisations, as well as field visits and a review of photographs, videos, engineering information, legal and administrative documents, and publicly available sources.

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About BHRN
Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar, working for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in the country. BHRN has played a crucial role in advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.