



After the 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma:

Challenges for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

October 2021

Report of the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc.



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Cover: The Burmese military attacked Thantlang Town in Chin State Myanmar/Burma on September 18, 2021. This is one of 18 houses burned down in the attack; a hotel was also burned. The attack displaced nearly the entire town's 8,000 residents. Later, on October 29, 2021, heavy shelling from the Burmese military destroyed another 164 buildings in Thantlang Town, including two churches, 90 businesses, and many homes. *Photo:* By CAM's local source, which for security reasons remain anonymous.

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About the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc.

The Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization based in Ellicott City, Maryland. The Chin people are an ethnic nationality from Myanmar/Burma, and over 85% of them are Christian. Many Chin refugees have fled ethnic and religious persecution and taken refuge in the United States, including in Maryland. CAM empowers the Chin communities in Maryland to be successfully integrated into American society. CAM also advocates for durable solutions for Chin and other refugees and internally displaced persons, and religious freedom and human rights. Prior to this report, in September 2020, the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. produced two reports: *Unsafe: Chins Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India*¹ and *Unprotected: Chin IDPs in IDPs in Chin and Rakhine States, Myanmar/Burma*.²

Zo Tum Hmung is the Executive Director of CAM. He previously co-founded the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center-Union of Burma (ENAC), a research center that supports the peace process and development of democratic institutions in Myanmar/Burma, and served as its first Executive Director. In 2003, Mr. Hmung completed his Master of Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School, focusing on foreign policy and negotiations. He was born in Chin State, Myanmar/Burma and now lives with his family in Ellicott City in Maryland.

1 See *Unsafe: Chin Refugees in Malaysia and New Delhi, India*, CAM, September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/refugees/> (accessed October 10, 2021).

2 See *Unprotected: Chin IDPs in Chin State and Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma*, September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/refugees/> (accessed October 10, 2021).

Acknowledgment

Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) is grateful to Chin churches for their financial support for writing and publishing this report, especially the American Baptist Churches USA, Chin Baptist Association of North America, member churches of the Chin Baptist Churches USA, Zomi Christian Ministers Fellowship of USA, Inc, as well as Zotung, Mara and Senthang churches. CAM is also grateful to those who have provided information from inside Myanmar/Burma. Without their support, this would not have been possible. We are indebted to Chin community members including the Coalition of Burmese Ethnic Minorities (COBEM), Independent Chin Communities, and others in Myanmar/Burma especially in Chin State, in Mizoram State and New Delhi, India, in Malaysia, and in Thailand, who conducted the in-depth assessments and on the ground assessments for this report. We acknowledge Jennifer Siegel, a Ph.D. candidate, who was a consultant for this report. She compiled and edited the report, including background information and assessment information. CAM is grateful to Steven Ruben who selected photos for the report, and to Matthew Wilch, who provided expert advice to Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director, CAM throughout the report writing process and assisted with the editing.

The names of people in photos or who provided personal accounts or photos used in the report and the names of people interviewed have not been included to protect their safety and security.

We have tried our best to describe and analyze in good faith the emerging situations of Chins and others displaced internally and internationally in the wake of the military coup and its aftermath in Myanmar/Burma. However, if we have inadvertently made any errors in this report, they are our own.

Zo Tum Hmung
Executive Director
Chin Association of Maryland, Inc

Foreword

On behalf of Refugee Council USA, a diverse coalition of organizations committed to the protection of refugees and other displaced persons, I welcome this report from the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) that details the drastic humanitarian impacts of the February 1st military coup and its brutal aftermath in Myanmar/Burma. The coup marks a fundamental negative shift in the political and human rights situation in Myanmar/Burma.

The Chin, a Christian ethnic nationality from Myanmar/Burma, are among the many ethnic, religious minorities targeted by the Burmese military. Others include the Rohingya Muslims and Christian Kachin, Karen, Karenni, and others. Ongoing actions since the coup also illustrate the military's persecution of democratically elected leaders, democracy activists, and journalists.

We are mindful that this report comes at a time when COVID-19 remains challenging, and we read with deep concern the additional impact that the pandemic is having on Chins and other internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Myanmar/Burma. The U.S. resettlement program is well-equipped to operate safely with public health protocols in place. Once resettled to the US, many refugees have played a positive role in the communities that have welcomed them, including as essential workers—more than 176,000 work in the health care sector and 175,000 in the food supply chain.

U.S. and UNHCR policy makers should carefully review this report and urgently consider how to increase protection, humanitarian support and durable solutions for impacted IDPs and refugees from Myanmar/Burma, including the Chins.

John Slocum, Interim Executive Director
Refugee Council USA

Statements of Support

"As one of the nine national resettlement agencies in the United States, we are committed to a world where immigrants, refugees, migrants, and other people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome, and belonging. We commend the Chin Association of Maryland for its efforts to make that world a reality. Pope Francis recently renewed his call for peace in Myanmar/Burma, praying that 'the hands of those who live there may no longer wipe away tears of pain and death, but may join together to overcome difficulties and work together for the coming of peace.' Together with the Pope, we join in solidarity with the people of Myanmar/Burma, especially those forced to flee the life-threatening conditions detailed in this thorough and timely report."

Bill Canny
Executive Director
Migration and Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

"Since the coup by the Burmese military junta on February 1, 2021, the Chin community in the United States has worked tirelessly to advocate for increased protection and resettlement for Chins and other refugees fleeing religious and political persecution in Myanmar/Burma, and for the establishment of a federal democracy in their homeland. The American Baptist Churches USA supports this report by the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., which advocates for these lifesaving goals for the people of Myanmar/Burma and for their diaspora seeking refuge."

Dr. C. Jeff Woods
Interim General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA

"I am deeply grateful for this important report by the Chin Association of Maryland. This helps shed needed light on the challenge for refugees from the murderous Tatmadaw dictatorship."

Jim Winkler
President and General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

"As conflict continues to ensue in Burma, we have ongoing concerns about the plight of the Chin community, many of whom had to flee persecution as refugees into neighboring countries. This report provides a much-needed, eye-opening account of the reality of the hardships that the Chin people, and other religious and ethnic minorities, face since the military coup in February of this year. It is critical that the U.S. government and international community express strong support for the Chin community, and other religious and ethnic minorities, in the state."

Jenny Yang

Vice President for Advocacy and Policy – World Relief

"Our hearts break for all who fear for their lives simply because of who they are or how they worship. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service stands with the Chin Association of Maryland in calling upon the international community to help end the violence inflicted upon innocent children and families. We urge the United States to remember the people of Myanmar/Burma as the refugee resettlement system is rebuilt and works toward the new Presidential Determination of 125,000."

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, President & CEO, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

"This report by the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. is timely because it describes the devastating humanitarian impact upon the refugees and internally displaced persons in Burma after the Burmese military coup on February 1, 2021. We urge both the U.S. Congress and the administration to carefully consider the report and increase protection and resettlement of refugees from Burma."

Eskinder Negash

President and CEO

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

I. Executive Summary

On February 1, 2021 the Tatmadaw, the military in Myanmar/Burma, carried out a coup and ousted the democratically elected government. The Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) produced this report out of deep concern for this fundamental shift of the political and human rights situation in Myanmar/Burma.¹ Based on the facts and findings presented below, CAM urges President Biden and his Administration, Members of Congress, and the United Nations (UN) to continue urgently working with the international community to help stop the Burmese military's brutal campaign and enable the people of Myanmar/Burma to establish a federal democratic union. CAM also urges increased protection and humanitarian support for Chins and other ethnic nationalities and religious minorities, journalists, democratic activists, and other IDPs and refugees from Myanmar/Burma who are being forced to flee their homes by the Burmese military's religious, ethnic, and political persecution. Increased resettlement levels are also crucial for those who have fled to neighboring countries. It is crucial not only to protect Chins and other refugees who have ever more serious protection needs in Malaysia, India, and Thailand, but also so that the United States shares the responsibility of welcoming and protecting refugees with the host countries.

Two UN experts characterized the Tatmadaw's actions in the eight months since the coup as "a brute force terror campaign."² The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described the

post-coup conditions in Myanmar/Burma as a "human rights catastrophe."³ The events of the military coup on February 1, 2021, led to mass demonstrations by people across Myanmar/Burma calling for a return to democracy, which have been met with human rights violations by the military, including the arbitrary detention of thousands of prodemocracy supporters and the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians, dissidents, and protestors at the hands of the military regime.⁴

The Burmese military regime has systematically targeted democratically elected political leaders, ethnic nationalities and religious minorities, prodemocracy activists, and journalists. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, reported to the UN Human Rights Council that the international community's response to reverse the "downward spiral of events" are not working, and urged that "a change in course is necessary."⁵ Among other things, he urged the international community "to make a stronger commitment to ensuring lifesaving aid reaches those in need."⁶

Violent clashes between the military and other armed groups have caused additional internal and international displacement. Since February 1st, at least 219,000 additional persons have been driven from their home in Myanmar/Burma and are internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar/Burma (adding to the already existing 370,000 IDPs as of December 31, 2020). At least 22,000, many of them Chins, have fled to neighboring countries

1 The Union of Burma is the original English name for the country. In 1989, the government adopted the name Myanmar. While the United Nations, European Union and much of the international community uses the name Myanmar, the United States, Great Britain, other countries, and many resettled refugees continue to use the name "Burma". For this report, for this report, while acknowledging the widespread use of the new name, we use both names, "Myanmar/Burma," out of respect for thousands of refugees.

2 UN News, "Myanmar: 'Human rights defenders under siege say UN Experts [Mary Lawler, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, and Tom Andrews, Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar]" July 19, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27323&LangID=E> (accessed October 10, 2021).

3 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, "Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar," September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

4 The growing numbers are provided in these daily reports. See Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), "2021 Coup Daily Briefings," <https://aappb.org/?cat=109> (accessed October 7, 2021).

5 UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Myanmar: UN expert says current international efforts failing, calls for 'change of course,'" September 22, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27515&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

6 Ibid.

(adding to the 980,000 persons from Myanmar/Burma already seeking refuge in neighboring countries).⁷

Among the largest number of IDPs and refugees forced to flee their homes have been Rohingya Muslims suffering ethnic and religious persecution by the Burmese military. For example, over 700,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge in Bangladesh since 2017,⁸ 103,030 Rohingyas are already registered refugees and asylum seekers with UNHCR in Malaysia,⁹ and 237,000 are internally displaced in Rakhine State, most of them Rohingyas.¹⁰ The Tatmadaw is following the same pattern of violating the human rights and religious freedom of the Chins, Kachins, Karennis and others as seen in their brutal campaigns against the Rohingyas.

Clearly, safe voluntary repatriation to Myanmar/Burma is not viable right now as a durable solution, especially considering the military coup and the widespread, brutal violence and human rights violations by the military, and the consequent political, social, and economic instability. Local integration of Chins and other refugees in Malaysia, India and Thailand is also not a viable durable solution for most Chins and other refugees since neither host country is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.¹¹ Nor has either country

yet established alternative pathways for local integration that could create a viable durable solution for those seeking refuge. Thus, there is an urgent need for the continued and expanded use of the durable solution of resettlement for Chins and others seeking refuge in Malaysia, India, and Thailand.

In the United States, this past year has been marked by important initiatives to build back the refugee resettlement program, actions the Chins and other refugees from Myanmar/Burma have benefited from and remain grateful for. The May 2021 Emergency Presidential Determination (PD) to increase the number of refugees admitted into the U.S., from 15,000¹² to 62,500 including 6,000¹³ from East Asia, was a welcomed announcement. We are especially encouraged by the 2022 Presidential Determination of 125,000, including 15,000 for refugees from East Asia.¹⁴ Other promising steps include a further restoration of a Preference 2 (P-2) designation for certain Chins and other refugees from Burma of particular humanitarian concern and of the Preference 3 (P-3) designation, allowing for certain refugees of any nationality to join family members who were already resettled as refugees or asylees in the United States.¹⁵

5, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en and https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-5&chapter=5&clang=en

12 President Trump initially set the 2021 PD at an all-time low of 15,000. See Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021, "Presidential Memoranda," October 27, 2020, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-determination-refugee-admissions-fiscal-year-2021/> (accessed September 15, 2021)

13 President Biden raised the 2021 PD to 62,500. See The White House Briefing Room, "Memorandum for the Secretary of State on the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021," May 3, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/05/03/memorandum-for-the-secretary-of-state-on-the-emergency-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2021-2/> (accessed September 15, 2021)

14 Memorandum for the Secretary of State on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022, October 8, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/08/memorandum-for-the-secretary-of-state-on-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2022/> (accessed October 18, 2021)

15 See US State Department, "Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022 Report to Congress," September 20, 2021, <https://www.state.gov>

7 UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, <file:///C:/Users/jenny/Downloads/Myanmar%20Emergency%20Update%20-%2018%20October.pdf> (accessed October 19, 2021)

8 "Four Years After Fleeing Violence in Myanmar Rohingya refugees see no solutions," Doctors without Borders, October 4, 2021, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/story/four-years-after-fleeing-violence-myanmar-rohingya-refugees-see-no> (accessed October 25, 2021)

9 Figures at a Glance: Malaysia, UNHCR, September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html> (accessed October 25, 2021).

10 Myanmar Emergency Update, UNHCR, October 18, 2021, p 3, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89242> (accessed October 25, 2021).

11 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, UN Treaty Collection, Chapter V, 2 and

While we are deeply concerned about further displacement and protection needs of the people of Myanmar/Burma, especially in the wake of the military coup, we acknowledge the events in Afghanistan and join in the call for protection of those who are in danger for having helped the U.S. mission and humanitarian efforts in that country. We likewise urge the U.S. government to remain vigilant in its ongoing commitment to resettle refugees from East Asia and other regions around the world, providing a “safe harbor” for some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

The Chin refugee community from Myanmar/Burma in the United States, is already deeply grateful to the U.S. government and local communities in Maryland and across the country who have welcomed us through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Throughout the years, it has provided protection and opportunities for approximately 63,087 Chin refugees to build new lives for our families in the United States (see *Appendix B-1 for more details on resettlement of Chin and other ethnic nationalities from Myanmar/Burma in the United States from 2001 to 2020*). CAM estimates that the total number of Chins now in the United States is approximately 70,000. We pray that you may continue to open your hearts to welcome our Chin brothers and sisters and others from Myanmar/Burma who have fled to Malaysia, India, and Thailand, especially now in the wake of the military coup, as they flee from escalating human rights atrocities and are unable to return home.

This report includes stories and information highlighting the urgency and severity of the situation in Myanmar/Burma and the need for increased international action, particularly humanitarian protection and assistance, and resettlement. We strive in our reporting to convey the values of the Chin people: a deep, loving concern for family and a strong commitment to religious freedom.

Report Methodology

This report focuses on the experiences of Chin and other ethnic nationalities and religious minorities who are internally displaced in Myanmar/Burma and internationally displaced in India, Malaysia, and Thailand, especially focusing on those newly displaced by the military coup of February 1, 2021, and by subsequent human rights violations. CAM was provided with ongoing, up-to-date information on this emergent crisis gathered by IDP and refugee community leaders on the ground in Myanmar/Burma, Malaysia, India, and Thailand, including Rohingya leaders in Malaysia. The refugee leaders collaborating with CAM are from the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) in New Delhi, India and Mizoram State, India; independent Chin communities in Malaysia including the CRC, the Alliance Refugee Committee (ARC), the Dai Community, the Falam Refugee Organization (FRO), and the Zomi Association of Malaysia (ZAM). CAM also collaborated with the Coalition of Burmese Ethnic Minorities (COBEM) including the Arakan Refugee Relief Committee (ARRC), the Kachin Refugee Committee (KRC), the Malaysia Karen Organization (MKO), the Mon Refugee Organization (MRO), the Organization of Karenni Development (OKD), and the Shan Refugee Organization (SRO). Identities of community leaders providing information are kept confidential due to the security situation. To provide the larger political and human rights context, the report is further supplemented with various reports by UN agencies, other reputable international organizations in the region, and reputable media sources.

II. Recommendations

For the U.S. Government

1. Work with the UN and international community to enable Myanmar/Burma to address the root causes of forced migration and political instability and to establish a federal democratic union.
2. While ensuring that U.S. funds are not directed to the Burmese military, increase humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar/Burma to address suffering caused by the military coup and the military's subsequent brutal campaign, particularly for
 - a. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs);
 - b. Religious minorities, such as Chins and other ethnic Christians, Rohingya Muslims and others, to prevent and respond to religious freedom violations against them by the Burmese military;
 - c. Democratically-elected leaders and Democracy activists;
 - d. Food security;
 - e. Vaccines, treatment, equipment, isolation spaces, and other health interventions related to COVID-19; and
 - f. Establishing a peace process and supporting and strengthening the civil disobedience movement.
3. Continue to build back the U.S. refugee resettlement program to levels consistent with resettlement needs by building toward an annual refugee admission goal of 200,000 and equitably increase regional allocations consistent with historic norms and current urgent needs in each region.
4. Increase resettlement of refugees from Myanmar/Burma both to protect individuals with serious protection concerns in host countries and to share the responsibility to protect and welcome refugees with the host countries, including
 - a. Chins and others resettled as ethnic religious minorities with strong family ties in the U.S.;
 - b. Other refugees, such as democratic activists, journalists and others persecuted on account of race, nationality, political opinion, social group membership, or political opinion; and
 - c. By updating the Preference 2 (P-2) categories to facilitate resettlement of refugees from Myanmar/Burma who arrived more recently in Malaysia and Thailand.
5. Increase humanitarian assistance to Malaysia, India, and Thailand in the wake of the recent influx of people fleeing from Myanmar/Burma seeking protection from ethnic, religious and political persecution and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling those countries to respond to the protection, food, and health needs of those seeking refuge.
6. Provide more financial support to the offices of UNHCR in Malaysia, New Delhi, India, and Thailand to increase their capacities related to protection, livelihood support, and access to healthcare and education. This includes funding to register and provide documentation to recently arrived and not yet registered individuals seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma.
7. Engage the governments of Malaysia, India, and Thailand to help facilitate self-sufficiency and resilience of Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma living in Malaysia, India, and Thailand by improving their livelihood opportunities, including through access to work authorization, education, and healthcare.
8. Engage the governments of India and Thailand to allow UNHCR and other humanitarian actors access to new arrivals from Myanmar.

- Engage the governments of Malaysia, India, Thailand, and Bangladesh to help strengthen protection, humanitarian support, education, livelihoods, and durable solutions for those seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma, including increased resettlement.

For Myanmar/Burma

- Ensure UN agencies and humanitarian partners access to protect and assist IDPs.
- Halt the military takeover of the government of Myanmar/Burma so that the democratically elected leaders can return to their duties of governing and pursuing ongoing federal democratic, systemic reform in Myanmar/Burma.
- End the systematic persecution of ethnic nationalities and religious minorities and democracy activists.
- Accede to the Stateless Conventions of 1951 and 1961.

For India

- Provide UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) access to provide humanitarian assistance for Chins seeking refuge in India including in the border states such as Mizoram, including the 15,000¹⁶ - 20,000¹⁷ who arrived in Mizoram since the military coup and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma who are in need of protection and assistance.
- Allow UNHCR to access those from Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge in India's border states including Mizoram so UNHCR can register them and also so that UNHCR can help to

augment the state's COVID-19 response for host communities.

For UNHCR in Myanmar/Burma

- Open UNHCR offices in Chin State, including in Hakha, the capital, as well as Mindat, Paletwa and other townships where there is compelling need. This will allow for enhanced coordination and provision of protection to IDPs and others in need of aid and protection in Myanmar/Burma.

For UNHCR in India

- Advocate with India on behalf of Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma for
 - UNHCR to have access to register all those from Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge in India, including in Mizoram State, and including all who have been displaced since the coup as well as those who remain unregistered and undocumented who arrived earlier.
 - UNHCR to have access to those from Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge in Mizoram to augment the state's COVID-19 response for them and for all the people of Mizoram State.

For UNHCR in Malaysia, India, and Thailand

- Protect Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma from arbitrary arrest, extortion, detention, and deportation, especially in the wake of the February 1, 2021, coup and the COVID-19 pandemic. Help to prevent any host countries from turning back those seeking refuge.
- Improve livelihoods for Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma, particularly for urban refugees, including efforts to improve access to public education, health care and health insurance, work authorization, and child protection.

¹⁶ UNHCR, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, *supra* 8

¹⁷ Henry L. Khojol, "Fresh influx from Myanmar: Mizoram CM reminds Centre for assistance," East Mojo, September 16, 2021, <https://www.eastmojo.com/mizoram/2021/09/16/fresh-influx-from-myanmar-mizoram-cm-reminds-centre-for-assistance/> (accessed October 7, 2021).

3. Ensure there is registration and documentation for those seeking refuge after the February coup as well as for others from Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge who are not registered or documented.
4. Support and help to facilitate increased U.S. resettlement from Malaysia, India, and Thailand for Chin refugees and other refugees from Myanmar/Burma.
5. Provide immediate protection and financial and health assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, including improved access to vaccines, testing, treatment, access to isolation centers, and assistance to meet basic needs.
6. For Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma, open previously rejected cases and current pending cases to make a new determination on their refugee status given the deteriorating conditions for them in the host countries and in Myanmar/Burma.

III. A Brief Background on Myanmar/Burma and Chin State

1. *The Ethnic Nationalities and Religious Minorities Played a Central Role in the Founding of the Union of Burma*

Myanmar/Burma is located in Southeast Asia and borders China, India, Thailand, and Bangladesh. It is made up of seven ethnic states and seven regions and has a population of approximately 57 million.¹⁸ Sixty-eight percent of the population are from the Burman ethnic group, which is primarily Buddhist, and the other thirty-two percent are from numerous ethnic nationalities and religious minorities,¹⁹ including the Chins who are over eighty-five percent Christian.²⁰

Chinland was an independent territory until the British annexation in 1896 as were the Kachin Hills, Shan State, and Burma.²¹ Each were separately invaded, occupied, and governed by British colonists under separate regulations and acts: the Kachin Hill Tribes Regulation in 1895, the Chin Hills Regulation in 1896, the Shan States Act in 1888 (later the Federated Shan States Act of 1922), and the Burma Act of 1935 for Burma and territories under its rule.²² On February 12, 1947, Chin leaders signed the Panglong Agreement in Shan State, with the Burman General Aung San, and Kachin and Shan leaders to join together to speedily win independence from Great Britain and form a Union based upon equal rights and equal standing, not only for the majority Burmans but also autonomy and self-determination for the ethnic nationalities.²³

The Union of Myanmar/Burma came into being almost one year later on February 1, 1948, after independence; Chinland was one of the founders of the union.

**Map of Myanmar/Burma
States, Regions, and Districts²⁴**



18 Lindsay Maizland, "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict," February 10, 2021, *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/background/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya> (accessed October 5, 2021).

19 Ibid.

20 Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015, p. 3, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNION_2C_Religion_EN.pdf (accessed September 6, 2020).

21 Panglong Agreement: Defining Panglong Agreement, Panglong Promises, and Panglong Spirit, June 12, 2019, p. 60 <https://www.pyidaungsuinstitute.org/index.php/en/publications/item/602-panglong-agreement-defining-panglong-agreement-panglong-promises-and-panglong-spirit> (accessed September 22, 2021).

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ministry of Immigration and Population, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015, p. ii, <https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Chin%20State%20Census%20Report%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf> (accessed October 13, 2021).

2. From 1962 to Present, Successive Military Regimes Have Ruled Myanmar/Burma for Almost the Whole Period, and Ethnic Nationalities have Defended their Communities from the Regimes and Struggled for Self-Determination and Full Autonomy

In March 1962, General Ne Win staged a coup that ushered in over five decades of successive military regimes. The Tatmadaw, the Burmese military, became known for brutally persecuting ethnic and religious nationalities and democracy activists. Ethnic nationalities continued to struggle in their fight for self-determination and autonomy, including for a federal democratic union and ethnic, political, religious, and cultural rights. They formed ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to defend against the Tatmadaw.

In 1988, a nationwide democratic uprising culminated in a national democratic election in 1990. Unfortunately, the military overturned the election results which would have put Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of General Aung San, into position as head of the government. Instead, the military nullified the election and put her under house arrest and the country did not hold another democratic election for 25 years. Finally, in 2015, the Tatmadaw allowed there to be a multi-party, democratic election. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won that election and was allowed to run the government for about 5 years.²⁵ Notably, the Constitution of 2008 under which the NLD government was formed was written by the military. It mandates that the military party hold at least 25% of the seats in Parliament, appoint the ministers of Defense, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs, and appoint one of the country's two vice-presidents.²⁶

NLD activities during that period included establishing a peace process and political

25 Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma," <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burma/>, (accessed October 5, 2021)

26 Ibid.

negotiations with the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) -- the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong -- that had as its goal achieving political reforms and an inclusive federal democratic union. Aung San Suu Kyi was reawakening her father Gernar Aung San's dream of an inclusive federal democratic union. Unfortunately, even with the NLD leading the government, the Tatmadaw abused the extensive military, political, and economic power it had maintained through the 2008 Constitution. The Burmese military continued to commit massive, egregious human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Rohingya Muslims and also Kachin and Chin Christians.²⁷ Most horrific was the military's scorched earth assault on the Rohingyas, which led to over 700,000 Rohingyas fleeing to seek safety in Bangladesh in 2017.²⁸

Despite the human rights violations by the military and the disappointing lack of NLD action to halt it, the second consecutive election victory by the NLD brought cautious optimism that there could be genuine progress towards establishing a federal democratic union. In the elections of November 2015 and November 2020, the NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, secured 79%²⁹ and 83%³⁰ of the contested seats in parliament, respectively. While much more work was needed to make progress in the peace process, the fourth round of the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong was promising. Participants agreed to Union Accord Part III, which was a positive step towards peace in Myanmar/Burma and was approved by parliament.³¹ The Union Accord Part III articulated

27 US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Annual Report 2021 of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, April 2021, pp. 14-15. https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/2021%20Annual%20Report_0.pdf

28 Ibid. pp. 15

29 BBC News, "Myanmar's 2015 landmark elections explained," December 5, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33547036> (accessed September 22, 2021)

30 Beech and Nang, "Myanmar Election Delivers Another Decisive Win for Aung San Suu Kyi," NY Times, December 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/11/world/asia/myanmar-election-aung-san-suu-kyi-results.html> (accessed October 10, 2021)

31 National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, (August 27, 2020), "Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Union Accord Part III" webpage <https://www.mdn.gov.mm/en/pyidaungsu-hluttaw-approves-union-accord-part-iii-signing-bimstec-agreement> (accessed August 30, 2021)

various conditions for peace, including a step-by-step implementation of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) among all EAOs as well as the fundamental principle that the Union must be based on a federal democratic system.³² Executive Director of CAM, Zo Tum Hmung, was one of the lead authors of the Panglong Agreement.

For the following sections, it may be helpful to understand the formal definition of the terms “refugee” and “internally displaced person”.

*A **Refugee** is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” The term refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention.³³*

***Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.” The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.³⁴*

³² National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, “Union Accord Part III” webpage <http://www.nrpc.gov.mm/en/index.php/node/470> (accessed August 30, 2021)

³³ See UNHCR, “Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees”, p. 3, <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>

³⁴ See The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, p. 5, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2>

IV. The Military Coup and the Response from the People and Elected Leaders

1. *The Military Staged a Coup on February 1 and established the State Administrative Council*

Unfortunately, on February 1, 2021 as the newly elected parliament was scheduled to open, the Tatmadaw, the military in Myanmar/Burma, overthrew the democratically elected NLD government and declared a state of emergency pursuant to Article 417 of the 2008 Constitution.³⁵ Prior to the coup, the Tatmadaw's party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (U.S.D.P), alleged widespread voter fraud in the November 2020 elections and demanded a rerun of the election with the military involved.³⁶ The military indicated it would "take action" if the election dispute was not settled; nonetheless, when the Union Election Commission (UEC) determined that there was no evidence of widespread fraud, the NLD affirmed its plan to open the new parliament, as scheduled.³⁷

On February 1, 2021, the NLD never opened the new parliament because the military staged a coup. Invoking the constitution to justify their actions, the Tatmadaw took control of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government.³⁸ The Tatmadaw also arrested President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as other government officials who remain detained by the Tatmadaw as of the publication of this report.³⁹ The Tatmadaw has charged Aung San Suu Kyi with breaching anti-corruption laws, allegations condemned by human rights groups including the

UN, which has called for her immediate release.⁴⁰ Led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the military regime took longer-term control by forming the State Administrative Council (SAC). SAC appointed new heads of government ministries, new heads of government in the states and regions, appointed new supreme court justices, and is continuing to commit ongoing and widespread human rights abuses to intimidate or destroy its opposition and consolidate its power.⁴¹

2. *The People of Myanmar/Burma Responded to the Coup with a Nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement*

In response to the events of the military coup, including the grave human rights violations and violent assault on democracy, the country has erupted in protests and the people have united to form the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). Peaceful protests, rallies, and prayer meetings led by the CDM have occurred in 247 of the 330 townships in Myanmar/Burma, with arguably the largest protest in the country's history occurring on February 22, 2021, characterized by millions of civilians peacefully, publicly protesting on the streets of Myanmar/Burma.⁴²

Chins, Kachins, and other ethnic nationalities and religious minorities are actively involved in the CDM with Christian ministers and parishioners joining the protests, including in Hakha, the capital of Chin State and in Kachin State. Further, civil servants from around the country including healthcare workers, teachers, central bankers, and civil servants of various government ministries have gone on strike in support of the CDM, causing substantial disruptions in daily life and the

35 Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews," March 4, 2021, p. 2. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_56.pdf (accessed October 5, 2021)

36 San Yamin Aung, "Myanmar Opposition Party Demands Election Rerun with Military Involvement," Irrawaddy, November 11, 2020. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/myanmar-opposition-party-demands-election-rerun-military-involvement.html> (accessed October 10, 2020).

37 Human Rights Council, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews," *supra* 35

38 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

40 The Guardian, October 1, 2021, Aung San Suu Kyi appears in closed court on corruption charges, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/01/aung-san-suu-kyi-appears-closed-court-corruption-charges> (accessed October 12, 2021)

41 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

economy.⁴³ As of August 2021, over 400,000 civil servants have reportedly gone on strike to join the CDM, including nearly 2,000 soldiers and police officers.⁴⁴ It is estimated that 85% of the population in Chin State have joined in support of CDM (higher than any other state), and 94% of the population of Hakha, Chin State capital have joined in support of CDM. It is likely because of such strong support for CDM in Chin State that the Burmese military has increased its offensive against the Chin.

3. *Ousted Elected Leaders Respond to the Coup, Forming a National Unity Government*

On February 4, 2021, refusing to recognize the SAC as a legitimate governing body, 390 newly elected members of parliament defied the military regime and signed their oaths of offices; and the next day in support of the anti-coup movement, 15 newly elected members of the parliament, also known as “Pyidaungsu Hluttaw”, formed the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) to support the anti-coup movement.⁴⁵ Joined by two ethnic members of parliament from Kayah State Democratic Party and Ta’ang National Party, this 17-member body’s objectives are to demand release of those arbitrarily detained, perform the duties of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, and form a government.⁴⁶ Just a few weeks later, on March 21, 2021, the military regime declared CRPH an unlawful association under section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act, heightening the risk for anyone engaging with CRPH.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, CRPH received extensive support from the newly elected members of parliament, from the legislatures of 11

regions and states in Myanmar/Burma, and from the Myanmar Lawyers Association and healthcare workers, key sectors within the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).⁴⁸

On March 31, 2021, the CRPH announced goals to set up a national unity government, end the military dictatorship, and draft a new constitution.⁴⁹ On April 16, CRPH announced it had formed the National Unity Government (NUG) that included all the newly elected members of parliament from the November election, and that was led by President U Win Myint, Vice President Duwa Lashi La, and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁵⁰ On May 5, the NUG set up the People’s Defense Force (PDF) to protect their supporters from attacks from the military.⁵¹ Shortly thereafter, Duwa Lashi La, the acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG), acting because of the detention of President U Win Myint, called on people across the country to join together against the military in the people’s “resistance war.”⁵² In this unprecedented moment, the NUG acting president further called for ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), police, soldiers, and other civilians of Myanmar/Burma to fight against the military regime to reinstate a federal democratic union. While the political outcome of this call to fight a “defensive war” is unknown, as of the writing of this report it has led to increased fighting and attacks from the military and further displacement of the people of Myanmar/Burma.⁵³

48 Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews,” *supra* 35

49 The Irrawaddy, “Myanmar’s Shadow Government Vows a New Constitution and End to Dictatorship,” April 1, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmars-shadow-government-vows-new-constitution-end-dictatorship.html> (accessed August 25, 2021).

50 Human Rights Council, “Written Updates of the OHCHR on the State of Human Rights in Myanmar,” UN, September 16, 2020, p 14 : https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_48_67.pdf (accessed October 10, 2021)

51 Reuters, “Myanmar’s anti-junta unity government says forming defense force,” May 5, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-anti-junta-unity-government-says-forming-defense-force-2021-05-05/> (accessed August 25, 2021).

52 The Irrawaddy, “Myanmar’s Shadow Government Vows a New Constitution and End to Dictatorship,” April 1, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmars-shadow-government-vows-new-constitution-end-dictatorship.html> (accessed August 25, 2021)

53 Radio Free Asia, “Attacks on Military on The Rise in Myanmar’s Ethnic

43 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

44 The Irrawaddy, “Over 400,000 Myanmar Civil Servants Still on Strike Against Military Regime,” August 25, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/over-400000-myanmar-civil-servants-still-on-strike-against-military-regime.html> (accessed September 20, 2021).

45 Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews,” *supra* 35

46 *Ibid.*, p. 5

47 Human Rights Watch, “Myanmar: Elected Lawmaker Group Declared Illegal,” March 25, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/25/myanmar-elected-lawmaker-group-declared-illegal> (Accessed August 25, 2021).

The NUG has provided humanitarian support to the people of Myanmar/Burma who have been most affected by atrocities committed by the military regime and the resulting displacement. NUG's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management is delivering food, clothing, supplies, and cash to IDPs in Chin State, Kayin State, Pekan Township in Southern Shan State, and Kayah State.⁵⁴

There have been rising concerns that the February 1, 2021 military coup could resemble the last military coup in 1990 when the resulting military rule lasting for over 25 years.⁵⁵ On August 1, 2021, exactly six months after leading the coup, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing of the Tatmadaw declared himself prime minister in the newly formed "caretaker government"; he also indicated that elections would take place in 2023.⁵⁶ Given Myanmar/Burma's history of military rule—the Tatmadaw has ruled for 54 of the last 59 years—many citizens are skeptical that the election will take place or if it does take place, that it will not be free and fair. Furthermore, there is great concern that the military is systematically weakening and dismantling the NLD prior to the 2023 election.⁵⁷

The Tatmadaw's actions in the months since the February coup have been characterized in UN reports as "a brute force terror campaign"⁵⁸ resulting in a "human rights catastrophe."⁵⁹ The military

coup led to mass demonstrations by people across Myanmar/Burma calling for a return to democracy. Those peaceful demonstrations have been met with widespread human rights violations by the military, including arbitrary detention of thousands of prodemocratic supporters and the murder of hundreds of innocent civilians, dissidents, and protestors at the hands of the military regime.⁶⁰ As detailed below, the military has systematically attacked ethnic nationalities and religious minorities, democratically elected leaders and pro-democracy activists, journalists, and others. As further detailed, violent clashes between the military and ethnic armed organizations and local defense forces created to defend against the military have also caused additional internal and international displacement. The "human rights catastrophe" has also contributed to serious, negative economic impacts.

Regions After NUG Declaration of War," September 21, 2021, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/attacks-09212021185957.html?f-bclid=IwAR28xDckShjBEHivE71NaCYLXQeYokuJQLiAbu58MATPFIHcfNbg-5GqXdmU> (accessed September 28, 2021)

54 Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, "Humanitarian aid provision between 6th to 28th June," June 29, 2021, <https://mohadm.nugmyanmar.org/2021/06/29/humanitarian-aid-provision-between-6th-to-28th-june-2021/> (accessed September 10, 2021).

55 The Irrawaddy, "Fears of Another Long Dictatorship as Myanmar Coup Maker Appoints Himself PM," August 2, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/fears-of-another-long-dictatorship-as-myanmar-coup-maker-appoints-himself-pm.html> (accessed October 5, 2021)

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 UN News, "Myanmar: 'Brute force terror campaign' targeting rights defenders, UN experts say," July 19, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096072> (accessed October 5, 2021).

59 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, "Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar," September 16, 2021, <https://>

www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E (accessed October 5, 2021)

60 AAPP 2021 Coup Daily Briefings, <https://aappb.org/?cat=109>

V. The Military Coup and “brute force terror campaign” is causing a “Human Rights Catastrophe” with Over 219,000 IDPs and Economic Devastation

1. *The Military Is Systematically Persecuting Ethnic Nationalities and Religious Minorities*

Grave acts of religious persecution against the Chin and other religious minorities have gone on with impunity. Since the coup, the military has systematically targeted religious leaders and religious institutions. Such targeting has included the murder of religious leaders and targeting them for arrest. Furthermore, the military has ransacked and destroyed religious buildings across the country.

In Kayah State (also known as Karenni State), an ethnic state in Myanmar/Burma with a large number of Catholics, the military has targeted eight Catholic churches that are led by Karenni religious leaders. The military has fired ammunition, destroyed property, and looted religious buildings.⁶¹ For example, military attacks against St. Joseph Church and Sacred Heart Church on May 23, resulting in four people killed and eight wounded and substantial damage to the churches.⁶² The attacks came as hundreds of displaced Karenni's were taking shelter in churches seeking safety from the fighting between the military and ethnic armed organizations; the military attacks on the churches makes it particularly challenging for displaced civilians to find protection.⁶³

The military has also destroyed and looted various religious buildings in Chin State. In Mindat Township, military troops destroyed a church near Chat Village and a Buddhist monastery near Khwee Rein Village in August.⁶⁴ In Falam Township, one of the only churches in the township was raided and looted by the military in July and August.⁶⁵ The military also reportedly destroyed bibles and choral songbooks. In August the Burmese Army occupied the Taal Baptist Church in Falam Township. Similarly, the Burmese Military occupied Grace Baptist Church in Mindat Township for approximately 5-months between May and September, 2021.



Grace Baptist Church occupied by the Burmese Military in Mindat. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

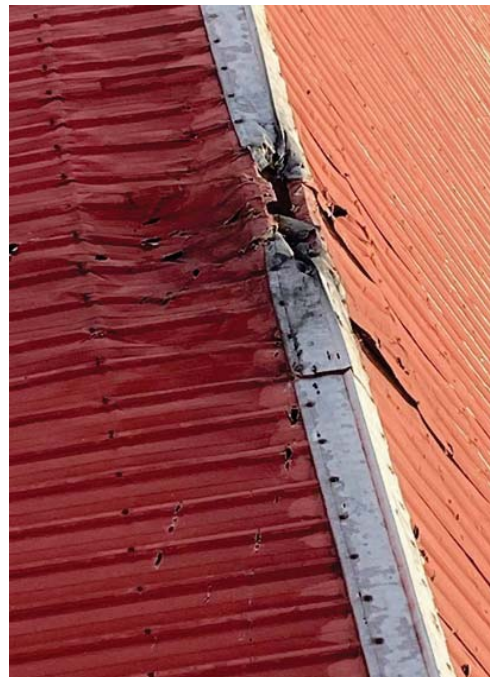
61 Chin Baptist Churches USA (CBCUSA) issued a statement on September 21, 2021, detailing the various ways the Burmese military regime has targeted church leaders and building across Chin State, Karenni State, and Kachin State.

62 Union of Catholic Asian News (UCA), “Another church attacked in conflict-torn eastern Myanmar,” May 28, 2021, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/another-church-attacked-in-conflict-torn-eastern-myanmar/92645#> (accessed October 5, 2021)

63 Robin Gomes, “Four Catholics killed in military attack on Myanmar church,” May 28, 2021, Vatican News, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-05/myanmar-catholic-church-attack-military-four-dead.html> (accessed October 5, 2021)

64 Official communication from the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, H.E. U Kyaw Moe Tun, addressed to the Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres, September 10, 2021, <https://www.myanmarmissionnewyork.org/post/letter-from-ambassador-kyaw-moe-tun-to-secretary-general-h-e-mr-antonio-guterres-on-10-sep-2021?fbclid=IwAR1eYCx4dMsFPiGpDvFrbdhbf0ieUbpUtsOLZPpFwFNDVEKySnz18upHmM> (accessed September 16, 2021)

65 Myanmar Now (September 29, 2021). Myanmar military destroys religious buildings in Chin State. <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/myanmar-military-destroys-religious-buildings-in-chin-state> (accessed September 29, 2021)



On September 14, 2021, the military regime stationed in Thantlang Town, fired on the Johnson Memorial Baptist Church in Thantlang Town, Chin State. Photos: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

On September 14, 2021, the military regime stationed in Thantlang Township, fired on the Johnson Memorial Baptist Church in Thantlang Town, Chin State. This church was named the Johnson Memorial Baptist Church in memory of the late Rev. Dr. Robert Johnson, the last American Baptist missionary to serve Chin State. He was preceded by other missionaries commissioned by the American Baptist Church headquartered in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, including Arthur and Laura Carson who first arrived in Hakha, Chin State on March 15, 1899. Dr. Johnson was deported by General Ne Win's military regime in 1966.



Pastor Cung Biak Hum of Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church in Thantlang Town was killed by the Burmese Military, as he was fighting house fires started by the military in Thantlang on September 18, 2021. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

Just days after the military attacked Johnson Memorial Baptist Church, the military shot and killed Pastor Cung Biak Hum of Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church in Thantlang Township.⁶⁶ On September 18, when the military began setting fire to houses and using heavy artillery in the residential area of Thantlang, Pastor Hum, age 30 and married with two children, was leading organizing efforts to help stop the fires from spreading to other homes and buildings. As he rode to the blaze, he was shot and killed by military soldiers. Witnesses reported soldiers proceeded to cut off his finger and stole his wedding ring, as well as his mobile phone.⁶⁷ In response, the SAC on the Tatmadaw denied the allegations, claiming "fake news" as the source of the claims.⁶⁸

Reverend Thian Lian Sang, pastor of Falam Baptist Church in Shwe, Mandalay Township, Chin State, was arrested in front of his house and taken into custody by the military.⁶⁹ Upon arresting him, the military also confiscated 400,000 kyats (\$215 USD) that his family had received after his father's funeral, as well as his cell phone and those of his family members.⁷⁰ Reverend Sang was recovering from COVID-19 at the time of the arrest. His whereabouts are unknown at the time of the publication of this report.⁷¹

66 The Irrawaddy, "Brother of Slain Myanmar Pastor Says Regime Fails to Take Accountability for Atrocities," September 24, 2021, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/brother-of-slain-myanmar-pastor-says-regime-fails-to-take-accountability-for-atrocities.html> (accessed September 26, 2021).

67 Chin Baptist Churches USA, Chin Baptist Church Statement on the Death of Pastor Cung Biak Hum, September 21, 2021

68 The Global New Light of Myanmar, "Answer of Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun, Leader of Information Team of Security Administration Council for the death of pastor from Christian Church in Thantlang," September 22, 2021, p. 4, https://www.gnlm.com.mm/answer-of-maj-gen-zaw-min-tun-leader-of-information-team-of-the-state-administration-council-for-the-death-of-pastor-from-christian-church-in-thantlang/?_cf_chl_managed_tk=pmd_I9ykhhn5Fz7CDwoF6KpiWhUVarMYPtb19QINVVbm-BAo-1633639073-0-gqNtZGzNA5CjcnBsZRT9 (accessed October 7, 2021)

69 Baptist World Alliance, Statement Calling for the Release of Pastor Rev. Thian Lian Sang and Justice for Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum, September 20, 2021, <https://www.baptistworld.org/myanmar-advocacy-letter/> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

70 Ibid

71 Ibid



On October 14, 2021, the Burmese military occupied the Chuncung Baptist Church in Chuncung village in Hakha Township. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.



They first stayed at the property then looted and destroyed parts of the property. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

The U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) closely monitors the widespread religious persecution in Myanmar/Burma and around the world. In its latest Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF again designated Myanmar/Burma as a “country of particular concern [CPC]” due to “systemic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom” by the military against Rohingya Muslims, Chin Christians, and other

ethnic and religious minorities in the country.⁷² Notably, USCIRF recently explicitly indicated that part of our national commitment to fighting for religious freedom is to assure that we provide U.S. resettlement protection for refugees fleeing from religious persecution. They “welcomed” President Biden’s announcement in May to raise the admissions ceiling for refugees admitted to the U.S. for the 2020/2021 fiscal year.⁷³

The Tatmadaw’s acts of religious persecution and restrictions to religious freedom preceded the military coup, with previous USCIRF reports documenting many acts of religious discrimination and persecution against religious minorities including the Rohingya Muslims, Chin and Kachin Christians, and other Christians in Burma.^{74,75} In 2017, the military targeted Rohingya Muslims, who were victims of the military’s ethnic cleansing which led to over 700,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh to seek protection.⁷⁶ Also, at least 130,000 Rohingya remain internally displaced and in government run internment camps in Rakhine State.⁷⁷ While the 2008 Constitution recognizes Buddhism as the de facto religion in Myanmar/Burma it also gives every citizen the right to freely practice religion including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism.⁷⁸ Despite this constitutional right to freedom of religion, the Tatmadaw continued to persecute religious minorities between the creation of the 2008 Constitution and the coup, interfering with religious freedom, and causing large scale displacement, property destruction, and insecurity across the country.⁷⁹

⁷² USCIRF Annual Report 2021, pp. 14-15, *supra* 23.

⁷³ USCIRF, “USCIRF Welcomes President Biden’s Announcement to Raise the Refugee Ceiling,” May 4, 2021, <https://www.uscifr.gov/news-room/releases-statements/uscifr-welcomes-president-bidens-announcement-raise-refugee-ceiling>

⁷⁴ Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., “Unsafe: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India,” September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chin-Refugees-Final-Oct-8-2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021)

⁷⁵ USCIRF Annual Report 2021, pp. 14-15, *supra* 23.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 14

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 14

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 14-15

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 14-15

2. *The Military is Systematically Attacking Elected Officials, Democratic Activists, and Journalists*

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that the Tatmadaw has committed grave human rights violations for decades and that since the military coup of February 1, 2021, “the Tatmadaw has systematically unleashed a new level of violence and repression across the country against the people of Myanmar.”⁸⁰ A report by the UN Special Rapporteur reported the military has committed human rights violations including murder, arbitrary detention, beatings, and enforced disappearances.⁸¹ The OHCHR South-East Asia Regional Office indicated in a press release that, “Night raids, mass arrests and killings have become daily occurrences throughout the country” and called for a regional response to protect those fleeing violence and persecution.⁸²

The military has engaged disproportionate use of force against peaceful protestors. In the early months after the coup, the military used water cannons and rubber bullets to disband peaceful protests.⁸³ As the protests intensified, so did the military’s use of force, and civilian peaceful protesters were met with military artillery fire and lethal force tactics leaving peaceful protestors injured or dead.⁸⁴

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) produces daily briefings related to the coup, informing the people of Myanmar/Burma of the number of civilians who have been arrested, detained, or killed following the coup⁸⁵. Regretfully, as of October 23, 2021, 9,175 people have been arrested, 7,016 remain detained, and 1,196 have been killed by the Military.⁸⁶

The UN Human Rights Commission reports that the Tatmadaw has systematically targeted for arrest government officials, members of parliament, and the civilians who stand in resistance to the military coup. This has included political leadership and parliamentarians, state and regional government officials and political leaders, and young people who have organized in peaceful protests against the military coup.⁸⁷ Among those detained are children, some being tried as adults.⁸⁸

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN, in letters, weekly reports, statements, and legal information sheets to UN Secretary General António Guterres documenting extensive human rights abuses and atrocities across Myanmar/Burma.⁸⁹ For example, one of his letters to the General Secretary describes raids, destruction of villages, arbitrary arrests, hostage taking, and brutal killing, often resulting from summary execution or from prolonged torture in detention.

The military regime has also implemented draconian laws restricting civil and political rights including restrictions on freedom of expression. This has

80 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, “Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar,” p. 2, September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

81 Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews,” *supra* 35

82 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights South-East Asia Regional Office, “News Release: UN Human Rights office urges suspension of returns to Myanmar,” April 1, 2021, <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/myanmar-returns/> (accessed August 27, 2021)

83 Human Rights Council, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews,” *supra* 35

84 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, “Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar,” September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

85 AAPP 2021 Coup Daily Briefings, <https://aappb.org/?cat=109>

86 Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, Updated 23 October 2021, <https://aappb.org/?p=18355> (accessed October 23, 2021).

87 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, “Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar,” September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

88 Ibid. p. 8

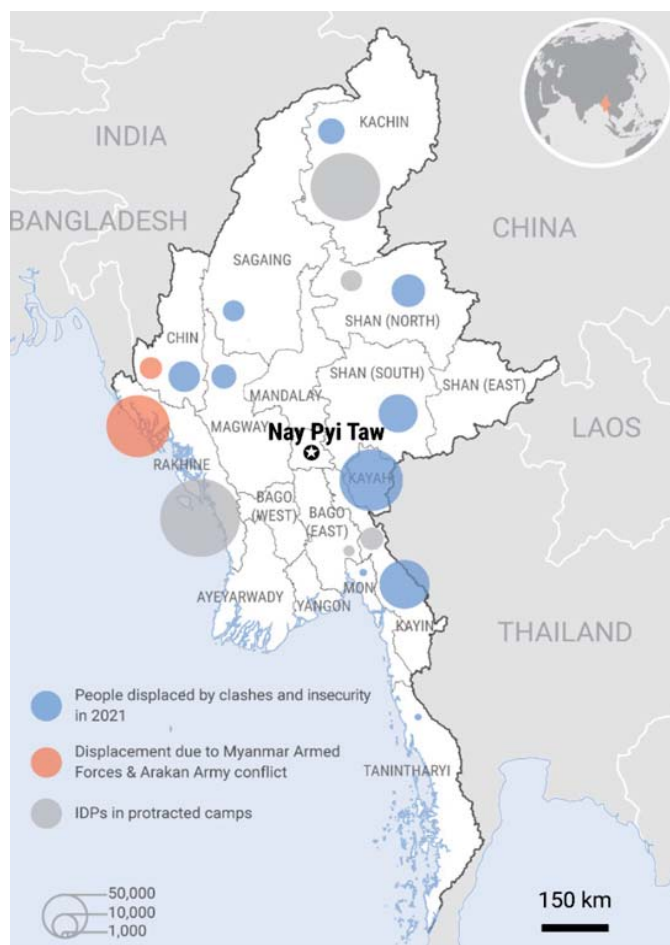
89 See letter from Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun to Secretary-General H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres on 17 Sep 2021 <https://www.myanmarmission-newyork.org/post/letter-from-ambassador-kyaw-moe-tun-to-secretary-general-h-e-mr-antonio-guterres-on-17-sep-2021> (accessed September 20, 2021), Note that the Ambassador appointed by the NLD-led government has remained at his post after the coup

occurred through massive telecommunications disruptions including internet blackouts and blocking social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram.⁹⁰ The military regime has also implemented restrictions to freedom of press and has arbitrarily arrested and detained 98 journalists as of July 2021 since the coup.⁹¹ Furthermore, five independent newspaper publications and eight media outlets have been shut down.⁹²

3. *Forced Internal Displacement Has Greatly Increased in Myanmar/Burma*

The military coup and nationwide military crackdown have forced from their homes many persons from ethnic and religious nationalities and many ousted government officials and democratic activists, leading to a substantial increase in forced internal displacement. Any progress made between the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and the military in recent years of negotiations prior to the coup has all gone by the wayside, and fighting has renewed, especially in the northern region in Chin State, Kachin State, and the Sagaing Region as well as in Kayah State (also known as Karenni State). This has resulted in heightened insecurity for an estimated 219,000 newly displaced persons within the country since February 1 (see *Appendix B-2 for further details on displacement numbers*).⁹³ An estimated 2 million are newly in need of humanitarian assistance, leaving the country with a total of 3 million people needing humanitarian assistance.⁹⁴

Internal Displacement in Myanmar/Burma as of October 2021⁹⁵



90 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, "Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar," September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

91 Ibid

92 Ibid

93 UNHCR, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, *supra* 8

94 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Daily Noon Briefing Highlights: Afghanistan – Myanmar," September 27, 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-afghanistan-myanmar> (accessed October 6, 2021)

95 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 1, October 1, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Myanmar%20-%20Humanitarian%20Update%20No.11.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2021)



Chin IDPs from Thantlang Town staying in Thau Village near the Indo-Burma border on September 20, 2021. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.



Chins fleeing Thantlang Town to the Indo-Burma border area on September 19, 2021. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that fighting in Kayah State (also known as Karenni State) had displaced 22,000 Karennis in the month of September 2021 alone.⁹⁶ Since February 1st, an

96 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, [supra 91](#)

estimated 142,000 have been displaced in Kayah State mostly due to insecurity and fighting.⁹⁷ In Chin State, it is estimated that between 12,000⁹⁸ -- 31,204⁹⁹ Chin are internally displaced from 9 different townships across the state (*see Appendix B-3 for more details on displacement figures*). This adds to the 8,470 who were already displaced in Chin State prior to February 1, 2021.¹⁰⁰ The largest number of displaced in Chin State have so far come from the Thantlang Township. due to heavy fighting that erupted in late September between the military and the Chinland Defense Force (CDF). On September 18, 2021, heavy military shelling by the Tatmadaw destroyed 18 houses and a hotel and led to the forced displacement of nearly all residents of Thantlang Town in Thantlang Township, accounting for at least 8,000 people.¹⁰¹ Many have taken refuge in the Indo-Burma border areas, and others have fled to neighboring Mizoram State, India. On October 29, 2021, even heavier military shelling by the Tatmadaw led to the burning down of 164 more buildings in Thantlang Town, including two small hotels, two churches—the Church on the Rock and the Presbyterian Church—an estimated 90 businesses (e.g., restaurants, pharmacy, computer, grocery, textile, and watch stores), and many residences.¹⁰²

UNHCR has a formal presence in Myanmar/Burma, providing protection for IDPs as well as humanitarian assistance such as food, basic supplies (e.g., mosquito nets, kitchen sets, fuel containers, etc.) and shelter. UNHCR also collaborates with local partners and advocates on behalf of those displaced in Myanmar/Burma.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid. p. 1, indicating that as of September 12, 2021, 12,000 are displaced in Chin State

99 CAM sources on the ground in Chin State, providing up-to-date information indicated that as of the end of September, after the events in Thantlang that displaced the entire township, displacement numbers in Chin State are over to 30,000.

100 Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., "Unsafe: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India," September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chin-Refugees-Final-Oct-8-2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021)

101 BBC News, "Myanmar: Whole town flees amid fierce fighting," September 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58650762> (accessed October 5, 2021)

102 Report was from CAM sources in Chin State, Myanmar/Burma.



On October 29, 2021, heavy shelling by the Tatmadaw resulted in the burning down of more than 164 buildings in Thantlang Town, including two small hotels, two churches—the Church on the Rock and the Presbyterian Church—over 90 businesses. Photo: The Chinland Post

It works to stop human rights violations and to protect IDPs, working closely with other UN agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF, ICRC, as well as other local NGOs. UNHCR has formal representation in Yangon (Yangon Region), a liaison office in Nay Pyi Taw, a sub office in Maungdaw (Raakine State), field offices in Hpa-An (Kayin State), Myitkyina (Kachin State), and Sittwe (Rakhine State), as well as field units in Bhamo (Kachin State), Buthidaung (Rakhine State), Lashio (Shan State), and Loikaw (Kayah State).¹⁰³

UN agencies and other local and international NGOs have worked diligently to provide assistance to IDPs and others in need of aid since the coup. However, aid organizations have faced various challenges due to insecurity from the fighting. Further, the military regime has implemented restrictions to stop travel, creating barriers for delivering aid. For example, UN agencies and INGOs have reported being stalled, waiting for travel authorization from the military to access Mindat and other townships in Chin State.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, UNHCR does not have offices in Hakha, the capital of Chin State.

UNHCR Formal Presence in Myanmar/Burma¹⁰⁴



4. *The Tatmadaw Fails to Respond to COVID-19 Adequately as the Pandemic Worsens in Myanmar/Burma*

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar/Burma was experiencing record numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the months of July and August 2021.¹⁰⁶ In the weeks between July and August, the death rate due to COVID-19 averaged over 1,300 a week, with a peak of 2,620 deaths in one week in late July.¹⁰⁷ Tens of thousands of COVID-19 cases were confirmed on a weekly basis. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates actual case numbers are even higher but are not captured due to low testing capacity in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁰⁸

Since the military coup, the country has struggled to appropriately respond to the needs of the people related to COVID-19 and the number of cases and deaths due to the virus have been severely underreported. Testing and vaccination capacity in the country is severely limited.¹⁰⁹ For

105 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

106 Human Rights Watch. Myanmar: Displacement Camps Are COVID-19 Tinderboxes. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/30/myanmar-displacement-camps-are-covid-19-tinderboxes> (accessed October 5, 2021).

107 World Health Organization Health Emergency Dashboard, Myanmar <https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/mm>

108 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Daily Noon Briefing Highlights: Afghanistan – Myanmar," September 27, 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/story/daily-noon-briefing-highlights-afghanistan-myanmar> (accessed October 6, 2021)

109 UN News. (2021, July 14). Coup, COVID fuelling 'perfect

103 UNHCR (2021, August). UNHCR Representation in Myanmar. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Myanmar%20factsheet%20August%202021.pdf> (accessed September 15, 2021).

104 UNHCR, Myanmar: Operational Update, August 2021, p. 1, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Myanmar%20Operational%20Update%20July-August%202021.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2021)

a country of 574 million people, only between 9,000 and 17,000 people are tested daily causing severe underreporting of COVID-19 cases; and since the only reported COVID-19 deaths are those in medical facilities, the mortality numbers are also vastly underreported.¹¹⁰ Distribution of vaccines has also been slow. Five days before the coup, the NLD launched a vaccination campaign, which was stalled in the wake of the coup, and which the military has struggled to revamp.¹¹¹ Also, the Special Rapporteur underscored that the people of Myanmar/Burma mistrust the military, undermining the military's roll out of vaccines.¹¹² Further, given overcrowded conditions and lack of medical care, he expressed concern about the impact of COVID-19 for those detained, particularly if they have underlying conditions; he feared that they "could see their detention become a death sentence."¹¹³

As of August 2021, the UN documented 260 Tatmadaw attacks targeting medical personnel and medical facilities including 18 deaths.¹¹⁴ Similarly, the UN indicated over 600 health care professional are evading arrest warrants and 67 have been detained.¹¹⁵ The military has arrested volunteers delivering medical supplies, claiming they are in support of the People's Defense Force (PDF).¹¹⁶ These attacks continue as the third wave

of COVID-19 in Myanmar/Burma rapidly spreads and as hundreds are in need of medical attention due to injury from military attacks and illness related to COVID-19.¹¹⁷ In response to the "soaring" COVID infection rates and deaths, the UN called for a "COVID ceasefire" to stop the Tatmadaw's systematic attack of medical professionals.¹¹⁸



Many Chin Christian Ministers in Chin State and Sagaing Region have died due to COVID-19 and the limited availability of treatment. Photo: The Teddim Post.

IDP camps are overcrowded--not permitting social distancing—and they lack the sanitation necessary to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.¹¹⁹ Movement restrictions placed by the military have sometimes prevented humanitarian organizations from delivering life-saving humanitarian and protection to those in need.¹²⁰ Still, UN agencies and other community organizations and volunteers have worked diligently to respond to COVID-19. UN agencies have worked to address the oxygen shortage, to accelerate the vaccination availability,

storm' in Myanmar, UN expert warns. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1095822> (accessed October 5, 2021)

110 Tsoi, G. & Mynt, M. (2021, July 30). Covid and a coup: The double crisis pushing Myanmar to the brink. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57993930> (accessed October 7, 2021)

111 Ibid.

112 UN News. (2021, July 14). Coup, COVID fuelling 'perfect storm' in Myanmar, UN expert warns. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1095822> (accessed October 5, 2021)

113 Ibid.

114 Myanmar: Rights expert calls for 'COVID ceasefire', urges UN action, July 27, 2021. https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096492?fbclid=IwAR0k_ud5Pq8O0UQ_s7hO58K9-8IBSB7PZAC9k_JDfnHv7CPFBmtYknN-80BQ

115 Ibid.

116 The Irrawaddy. (September 24, 2021). Myanmar Junta Seeks to Arrest Doctor Assisting Displaced Persons in Chin State. https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-seeks-to-arrest-doctor-assisting-displaced-persons-in-chin-state.html?fbclid=IwAR37DtDVwAM-HwiNq6jxzFa8iOOrWswPb3yUc1MCi0T03CAZWSuYrTg9_SLE (accessed September 26, 2021).

117 UN News (2021, July 27). Myanmar: Rights expert calls for 'COVID ceasefire', urges UN action. https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096492?fbclid=IwAR0k_ud5Pq8O0UQ_s7hO58K9-8IBSB-7PZAC9k_JDfnHv7CPFBmtYknN80BQ (accessed October 6, 2021).

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

and to increase testing capacity.¹²¹

5. Economic Conditions in Myanmar/Burma are dire.

The UN is reporting that Myanmar/Burma “is increasingly at risk of state collapse, with shattered economic, education, health, and social protection systems.”¹²² The coup has led to a significant deterioration of the labor market characterized by significant job loss and food insecurity.¹²³ Overall, the last decade had brought economic growth to Myanmar/Burma. The country’s GDP nearly doubled since 2008 and the poverty rate declined from 48% in 2005 to 25% in 2017.¹²⁴ The recent global pandemic caused a troubling decline in the economy, especially impacting the country’s most impoverished. However economic challenges were heightened in the wake of the coup due to limited mobility and labor shortages as well as disruptions to logistics, telecommunications, and essential businesses.¹²⁵ The World Bank projects the Myanmar/Burma economy may contract by 18% due to the ongoing political turmoil and spread of COVID-19 in the country.¹²⁶ As of the end of September, the currency in Myanmar/Burma had lost more than 60% of its value driving up costs

of good including fuel and food.¹²⁷ Such economic shrinking will continue to result in heightened health risk and risk for food insecurity across the economy. It is estimated that the poverty rate will increase from 24.8 per cent in 2017 to 48.2 per cent by early 2022.¹²⁸ People at risk of food security are projected to more than double, from 1.5 million to 3.4 million.¹²⁹

6. Religious Leaders and Bipartisan U.S. Government Officials Support the People of Myanmar/Burma

Pope Francis is among world leaders condemning the actions of the Burmese military in Myanmar/Burma. He has repeatedly called for the release of the detained political leaders, appealed for an end to the violence in Myanmar/Burma, and urged dialogue and peace.¹³⁰ Pope Francis has further called on Catholic Church leaders worldwide to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar/Burma and their fight for democracy.¹³¹ This has included his calling attention to a Catholic nun who dissuaded Burmese military from using violence against peaceful protestors in Myitkyina [Kachin State] by kneeling in prayer. Pope Francis responded to her bravery stating, “I too kneel on the streets of Myanmar and say: stop the violence!”¹³²

121 UN Myanmar, UN Country Team in Myanmar Steps up COVID-19 Response Efforts, July 19, 2021. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNCT%20Press%20Statement%20-%2019%20July%202021_FINAL.pdf (accessed October 6, 2021)

122 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, “Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar,” September 16, 2021, section 69, p 14, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session48/Documents/A_HRC_48_67.docx (accessed October 21, 2021)

123 Lindsay Maizland, “Myanmar’s Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict,” February 10, 2021, *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya> (accessed October 5, 2021).

124 Alice Cuddy, “Myanmar coup: What is happening and why?” April 1, 2021, BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070> (accessed August 25, 2021).

125 World Bank, “Myanmar Economy Expected to Contract by 18 Percent in FY2021: Report,” July 23, 2021. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/07/23/myanmar-economy-expected-to-contract-by-18-percent-in-fy2021-report?fbclid=IwAR0LbQhAGumv5v9MzWwLlk08JYwqgeiGnFyJHE2SBt5a_uU80i-MuAHC0iw (accessed October 5, 2021)

126 Ibid

127 Reuters News. (2021, September 29). Myanmar currency drops 60% in weeks as economy tanks since February coup. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-junta-powerless-currency-drops-60-four-weeks-economy-tanks-2021-09-29/> (accessed October 5, 2021).

128 UN Development Program (UNDP). (2021, April). “COVID-19, Coup d’état and poverty,” p. 14. https://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/democratic_governance/covid-19-coup-d-etat-and-poverty-impact-on-myanmar.html (accessed October 7, 2021)

129 World Food Program (WFP). (2021, April 22). Analysis of the Economic Fallout & Food Insecurity. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-analysis-economic-fallout-food-insecurity-wake-takeover> (accessed October 7, 2021)

130 Devin, Watkins, “Pope calls for an end to violence against Myanmar protesters,” March 3, 2021, Vatican News, <https://www.vatican-news.va/en/pope/news/2021-03/pope-francis-myanmar-appeal-violence-against-protesters.html> (accessed October 5, 2021).

131 Vatican News, “Pope: I too kneel on the streets of Myanmar,” March 17, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-03/pope-francis-myanmar-appeal-general-audience-wednesday.html>

132 Vatican News, “Pope: I too kneel on the streets of Myanmar,” March 17, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-03/pope-francis-myanmar-appeal-general-audience-wednesday.html>

Various Christian leaders and groups have formally issued statements against the actions of the military (see *Appendix C for letters of support from religious and community groups*). On February 3, 2021, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Catholic Archbishop of Yangon, called on the military to release detained elected officials and to end the violence, concluding that “Peace is the only way. Democracy is the only light to that path.”¹³³ On February 5, 2021, the Myanmar Baptist Convention issued a statement calling for the immediate release of the President, State Counsellor and all detainees. The statement further said the convention hopes for Burma to establish a federal democratic republic. On February 9, 2021 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. urged the military to “abide by the will of the people” and re-establish democracy.¹³⁴ On February 9, 2021, the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of Myanmar, the Myanmar Council of Churches, and the Myanmar Christ Mission Cooperative Board joined in a statement calling for the immediate release of President U Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other detainees. Additionally, on February 27, 2021, the Kachin Baptist Convention issued a statement calling for Myanmar/Burma to abolish the 2008 Constitution and to establish a federal union based upon a new constitution.

In September, the Kachin Baptist Church, the Chin Baptist Churches USA, the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), and CAM issued statements condemning the murder of a pastor, the destruction of churches and church buildings, and the threats to church ministers. Statements further condemned the murder of Pastor Cung Biak Hum and the bombing of religious facility and houses in Thantlang and Hakha, Chin State, Myanmar/Burma. CAM **called for justice for those who killed Pu Ral Tu,**

133 Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, “Message to the People of Myanmar and Our International Communities,” February 3, 2021, <https://www.catholicmyanmar.com/newview.php?n=286> (accessed October 2, 2021).

134 Press statement by the National Council of Churches, “NCC calls on Myanmar’s military to ‘abide by the will of the people’ as expressed in the November 2020 elections”, February 7, 2021, https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/national-council-of-churches-issues-statement-on-the-military-coup-in-myanmar/?fbclid=IwAR3V-2bk4rH715U-nAsMDUssVs2IFld99IxtYXo199LHIV-K6x_0k99oq5VI

Pu Hram Cung, and Pastor Cung Biak Hum. The BWI statement called on the military to “restore religious freedom, human rights, and peace through dialogue across Chin State and Myanmar as a whole.”¹³⁵

Also bipartisan U.S. Congressional leaders are calling for solidarity with the people of Myanmar/Burma. They condemn the Burmese military’s February coup that ousted the democratically elected government, and they condemn the military’s continued brutal violence against its own people.^{136,137} U.S. Senators Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) and Todd Young (R-IN) introduced a Senate Resolution condemning the February 1 military coup that overthrew the democratically elected government.¹³⁸ Senator Young stated the resolution is a bipartisan act to stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar/Burma who want to “rule themselves rather than be ruled by force.”¹³⁹ Senator Mitch McConnell has also reportedly helped President Biden to ensure a bipartisan, united front in Congress to address the coup and work to restore democracy in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, on October 5, 2021, a bipartisan group of senators including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Gregory W.

135 Baptist World Alliance, Media Statement, “Calling for the Release of Pastor Rev. Thian Lian Sang and Justice for Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum”, <https://www.baptistworld.org/myanmar-advocacy-letter/> (accessed October 5, 2021)

136 Vatican News, “Pope: I too kneel on the streets of Myanmar,” March 17, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-03/pope-francis-myanmar-appeal-general-audience-wednesday.html>

137 Press Release of Cardin, Young Lead Senate Call for Immediate and Unconditional End to Military Coup in Burma, February 4, 2021, <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/cardin-young-lead-senate-call-for-immediate-and-unconditional-end-to-military-coup-in-burma-> (accessed October 7, 2021)

138 US Senate Resolution of the 117th Congress, 1st Session. <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Cardin%20Young%20Burma%20Coup%20Resolution.pdf> (accessed October 6, 2021)

139 Press Release of Cardin, Young Lead Senate Call for Immediate and Unconditional End to Military Coup in Burma, February 4, 2021, <https://www.cardin.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/cardin-young-lead-senate-call-for-immediate-and-unconditional-end-to-military-coup-in-burma-> (accessed October 7, 2021)

140 Andrew Desiderio, “Mitch McConnell tends his legacy 8,000 miles away,” April 12, 2021, Politico, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/12/mitch-mcconnell-myanmar-480648> (accessed October 5, 2021)

Meeks (D-NY), House Foreign Affairs Asia-Pacific Subcommittee Ranking Member Steve Chabot (R-OH) and Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) introduced the BURMA Act, also known as the Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2021.¹⁴¹ The BURMA Act condemns the actions taken by the military in the February 1 coup through targeted sanctions, authorizes U.S. support for civil society and humanitarian aid, and calls for a new position at the State Department to promote international efforts of imposing multilateral sanctions. It further calls on the State Department to issue a genocide determination for the Burmese military regime's systematic persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁴² The Chin refugee community welcomes this bipartisan effort and urges that the bill provide tools not only to help stop the violence and restore the democratically elected government, but also to address increased protection and humanitarian needs of Chin and other IDPs in Myanmar/Burma and increased protection and resettlement needs of Chins and other refugees seeking refuge in Malaysia, India, and Thailand.¹⁴³ The Chin community, including CAM, intend to be involved in continued advocacy on this bill.

In addition to political support from members of the United States Congress, the Administration also continues to stand by its commitment to provide humanitarian assistance and aid for IDPs and refugees from Myanmar/Burma. Most recently, the U.S. State Department committed \$180 million of humanitarian assistance for those affected by the Rakhine State and Rohingya refugee crisis in Burma, Bangladesh, and elsewhere in the region.¹⁴⁴ This is in addition to \$124,674,734 of aid through

USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance and \$117,785,888 of aid from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.¹⁴⁵ This additional aid is part of a larger and long-term humanitarian commitment to the region (see *Appendix D-1 for a more detailed breakdown of U.S. Government and UN support in Myanmar/Burma*). Such aid helps support multiple aspects of human need including education, protection, food, shelter, disaster response, water, and sanitation, among others.¹⁴⁶ Besides announcing humanitarian aid, the U.S. State Department also used the recent announcement to condemn the coup, calling on the Tatmadaw to stop the violence and "restore Burma's path to democracy."¹⁴⁷

One important Chin collaboration that facilitates advocacy with the U.S. government is with the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), and it is called the Burma Refugee Commission (BRC). Coordinated out of the ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary, the BRC includes representatives of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, International Ministries, the Regional Executive Ministers Council, Burmese Baptist Churches USA, Chin Baptist Churches USA, Chin Association of North America, Kachin Baptist Churches USA, Kachin American Baptist Association, and Karen Baptist Churches USA. BRC has been actively advocating for durable solutions for refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia, Thailand, and India. BRC also meets with political leaders including members of Congress and the Administration in its advocacy efforts.

141 House of Foreign Relations Press Release, "Chairman Meeks, Senator Cardin, and Rep. Chabot Introduce BURMA Act," October 5, 2021, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-releases?ID=1F0B-CA5D-5B90-4979-91EF-5FBBACD370E2> (accessed October 5, 2021).

142 Ibid.

143 Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., Letter to Congress regarding The BURMA Act of 2021, September 20, 2021.

144 US Department of State, Press Statement, "United States Announces Nearly \$180 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for the Rakhine State/Rohingya Refugee Crisis," September 22, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-nearly-180-million-in-humanitarian-assistance-for-the-rakhine-state-rohingya-refugee-crisis/> (October 7, 2021)

145 See USAID, Fact Sheet #6, Fiscal Year 2021, p. 1, August 12, 2021, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/08.12.2021_-_USG_Burma_and_Bangladesh_Regional_Crisis_Response_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf (accessed October 18, 2021)

146 US Department of State, Press Statement, "United States Announces Nearly \$180 Million in Humanitarian Assistance for the Rakhine State/Rohingya Refugee Crisis," September 22, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-nearly-180-million-in-humanitarian-assistance-for-the-rakhine-state-rohingya-refugee-crisis/> (October 7, 2021)

147 Ibid

VI. Chin State Human Rights Conditions are Worsening, Causing Increased Numbers of Internally Displaced Persons with Serious Protection and Humanitarian Needs

1. *The Chin People in Myanmar/Burma and their unique cultural and political heritage*

Chinland was an independent territory until the British annexation in 1896 and the British ruled the territory with the Chin Hill Regulations together with other territories including Kachin Hills, Shan States, and Burma.¹⁴⁸ Each was separately invaded, occupied, and governed by the British under separate acts and regulations: the Kachin Hill Tribes Regulation in 1895, the Chin Hills Regulation in 1896, the Shan States Act in 1888 (later became the Federated Shan States Act of 1922), and the Burma Act of 1935 for Burma and territories under its rule.¹⁴⁹ On February 12, 1947 Chin leaders signed the Panglong Agreement in Shan State, Myanmar/Burma with Burma, Kachin, Karen and Shan with the goal of speedily gaining independence from Great Britain and forming a Union based upon equal rights and equal standing.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the Union of Myanmar/Burma came into being on February 1, 1948 after independence from Great Britain.

Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-Township are at the southernmost part of Chin State and include Matupi District and Paletwa and Sami Towns, with Paletwa being the administrative center for the township. Paletwa Township borders Minbya and Mrauk-U Townships of Rakhine State to the south. The total population of Paletwa Township, including Sami, is 108,482.¹⁵¹

148 Panglong Agreement: Defining Panglong Agreement, Panglong Promises, and Panglong Spirit, p. 60, http://burmese.burmaenac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20180920_Panglong-Handbook_Combined-BE.pdf (accessed September 22, 2021)

149 Ibid

150150 Panglong Agreement: Defining Panglong Agreement, Panglong Promises, and Panglong Spirit, p. 60 http://burmese.burmaenac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20180920_Panglong-Handbook_Combined-BE.pdf (accessed September 22, 2021)

151 Henry Khojol, (January 23, 2020), Prod to Centre on Kaladan, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/prod-to-centre-on-kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport-project-between-mizoram-and-myanmar/cid/1739082> (accessed September 18, 2021)

Chin State Map
Thantlang Township¹⁵²



The importance of Paletwa and Sami is attributed to their geographic proximity to the Kaladan River and the economic potential of this major waterway. The Kaladan River flows from Mizoram State, India, runs through Paletwa Township, Chin State, and connects to the Sittwe Seaport of Rakhine State, which is at the mouth of the Kaladan River on the Bay of Bengal. The Kaladan River is well-known for the Kaladan Multi-Model Transit Transport Project, a project that is part of India's Act East Policy and

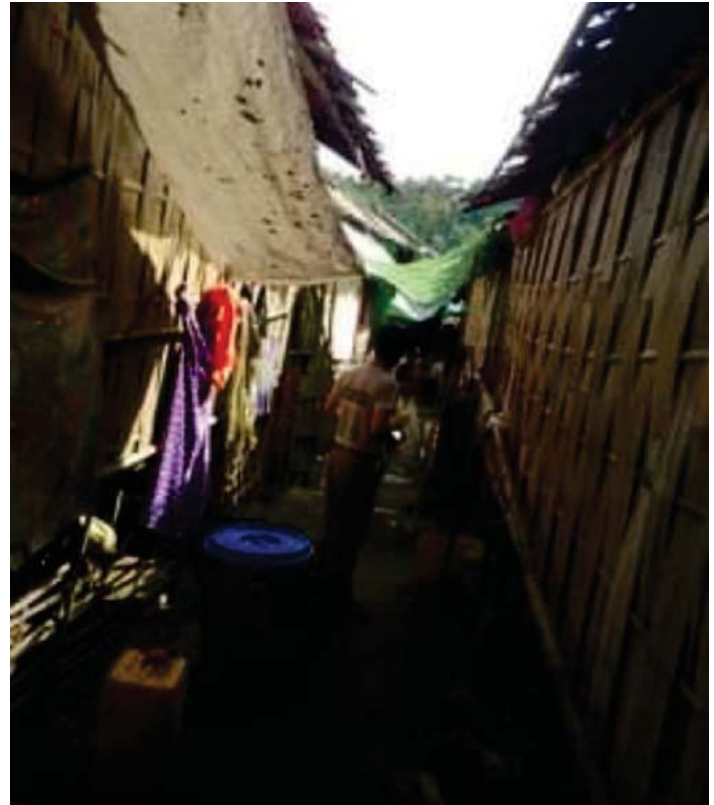
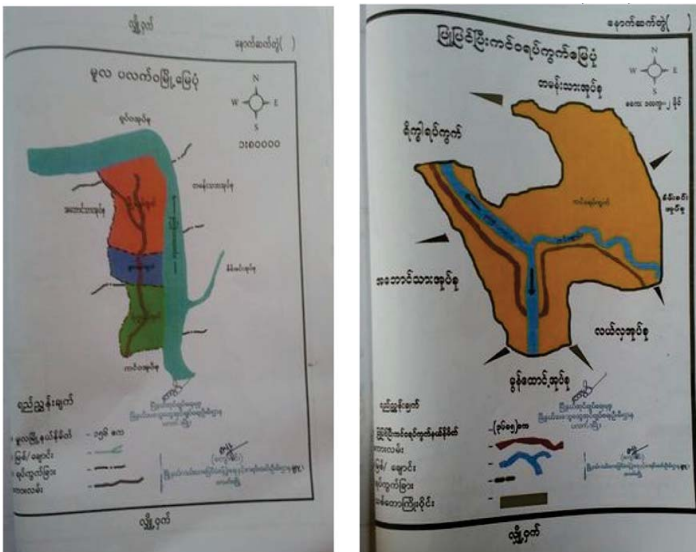
152 The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Chin State, Haka District: Thantlang Township Report, October 2017, p. 1, https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/TspProfiles_Census_Thantlang_2014_ENG.pdf (accessed October 9, 2021)

a project that India's competitor China is watching closely. If completed, the estimated US \$484 million project is anticipated to have a substantial economic benefit for Myanmar/Burma and for India.¹⁵³

The Arakan Army, an ethnic armed organization (EAO) opposing the Burmese military, has a heavy military presence in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-township. The Tatmadaw have strategically located themselves in Paletwa Township and Sami Sub-township with intentions to gain military power over the Arakan Army and over Paletwa Township due to its promising economic potential.

Paletwa Township Map

Paletwa Township Paletwa New Town Plan



IDP Camp in Paletwa. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.

The Chins, who are over 85 percent Christian,¹⁵⁴ are an ethnic nationality that live primarily in the ethnic state of Chin State, Myanmar/Burma. The high percentage of Chins who are Christian is often attributed to U.S. Christian missionaries living among the Chin people beginning in the 1800s. Nonetheless, Christian Chins are part of a religious minority since 88% of the people of Myanmar/Burma identify as Buddhist and only 6.2 as Christians.¹⁵⁵ The Chin have suffered from religious and ethnic persecution dating back to the 1962 military coup led by General Ne Win. Following the coup were years of violence, armed conflict, and totalitarian rule in Myanmar/Burma. In 1988 a briefly successful pro-democratic uprising in Myanmar/Burma ultimately resulted in

¹⁵³ This number reflects an updated number from community sources. The Myanmar/Burma 2014 Census indicated the population of Paletwa Township and Sami sub-Township was 97,083, http://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/census_main_report_union_-_english_2.pdf (accessed October 5, 2021).

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, May 2015, p. 3, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNION_2C_Religion_EN.pdf (accessed September 6, 2020)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

3,000 deaths and ended in another military coup in 1990 resulting in increased militarization in the country, including in Chin State.¹⁵⁶ For over half a century, successive military regimes have brutally ruled Myanmar/Burma, persecuting Chins and other ethnic religious minorities fighting for self-determination and federal democratic union, and for over three decades, the military has persecuted members of the NLD as the party has fought for federal democratic rule in Myanmar/Burma.¹⁵⁷

The most recent census data indicates the population of Chin State is 478,801.¹⁵⁸ With approximately 600,000 Chins living outside of Chin State, the total population of Chins in Myanmar/Burma is approximately 1,178,801.¹⁵⁹ The Chins have a distinct culture and tradition. Chin National Day is celebrated on February 20th and is often celebrated through the performance of custom dances such as the bamboo dance as well as through traditional clothing, including the Matu, Hakha, Falam, and Tedim clothing with the colors of red, green, or black. Chins also celebrate the Chin New Year over three days from October 26-28. Since the military coup of 1962, Chin holidays have been banned in Myanmar/Burma, however Chin in the U.S. continue to celebrate these important cultural holidays.



Miss Universe Myanmar won the “Best National Dress” award in the 2021 Miss Universe contest in the United States, wearing a traditional Chin dress. Photo: Cross Academy.

2. Chins Responded to the Coup by Joining the Civil Disobedience Movement and Starting the Chinland Defense Force

As noted in section III above, after the coup, the people of Myanmar/Burma responded almost immediately by mobilizing a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) across the country. In March, the CDM gained significant traction in Chin State. Substantial numbers of people have left their jobs in protest against the military takeover and brutal campaign, including many civil servants working in Chin State’s capital, Hakha.¹⁶⁰ This has included health care workers, teachers, government employees, and other civil servants. Also some soldiers of the Tatmadaw and police officers in Chin State have left their positions to join the CDM.¹⁶¹

On April 4, 2021, Chin students and youth

160 Aljazeera. (2021, May 18). ‘A humanitarian disaster in the making’ in Myanmar’s Chin State. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/a-humanitarian-disaster-in-the-making-in-myanmars-chin-state> (accessed October 6, 2021)

161 Irrawaddy (2021, September 23). Thirty Myanmar Police, Troops Defect in Chin State Since War Declaration Against Junta. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/thirty-myanmar-police-troops-defect-in-chin-state-since-war-declaration-against-junta.html> (accessed October 6, 2021)

156 Human Rights Watch, (January 2009), “We Are Like Forgotten People”: The Chin People of Burma: Unsafe in Burma, Unprotected in India, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/01/27/we-are-forgotten-people/chin-people-myanmar/Burma-unsafe-myanmar/Burma-unprotected-in-india> (accessed August 28, 2020)

157 Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, “2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma,” <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/burma/>, (accessed October 5, 2021)

158 Myanmar/Burma Department of Population, (May 2015), The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, http://www.dop.gov.mm/sites/dop.gov.mm/files/publication_docs/census_main_report_union_-_english_2.pdf (accessed September 16, 2020)

159 CAM, *Unprotected: Chin IDPs in Chin State and Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma*, and *Unsafe: Chin Refugees in Malaysia and New Delhi, India*, CAM, September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/refugees/> (accessed October 10, 2021).

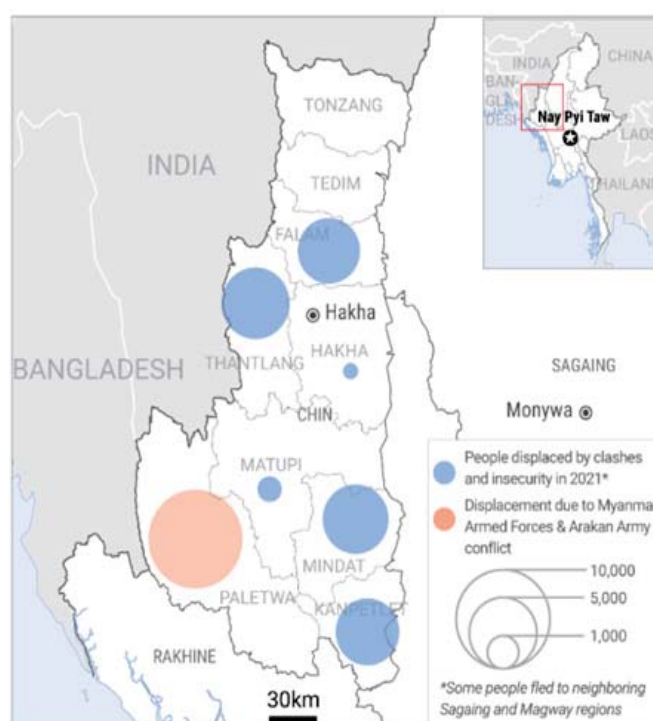
established the Chinland Defense Force (CDF) in various townships across Chin State, to defend Chins from the Tatmadaw. The CDF is present in Halkha, Thantlang, Mindat, Paletwa, Kanpetlet, Tonzang, Matupi, Zotung, Zophei, Mara, Lautu, Kalay Kabaw, Gangaw, and Hlawnceu (Falam) Townships. The CDF has been active all over Chin State as well as Kalaya areas of the Sagaing Region. The CDF recently took over the Burmese Army camp stationed in Lungler Village in Thantlang Township. CDF also destroyed the Burmese Army camps in Vuantu of Thantlang Township. The Burmese army evacuated their soldiers from Vuantu avoiding further armed conflict there with the CDF. Between April and September 2021, it is estimated that nearly 300 firefights erupted between the military and the CDF, and that they have led to 560 deaths of combatants on both sides.¹⁶²

The military cut off access to the internet across Chin State, especially in areas with resistance forces.¹⁶³ The internet blackout not only hinders the ability for resistance forces to organize, it also hampers student and vocational learning and the ability for businesses to function. Furthermore, key transportation routes have become insecure due to fighting, resulting in a shortage of food and supplies across Chin State.¹⁶⁴

As of September, Chin State has become one of the epicenters of military violence causing the displacement of thousands of civilians in surrounding villages and townships in Chin State (see *Appendix B-2 and B-3 for displacement figures*). The military increased their presence in Chin State with a series of violent attacks, shelling villages and burning down residences, businesses, and religious buildings. In some instances, the military is shutting off water and electric supply, attacking

IDP camps, and blocking needed food and other aid supplies causing some to be displaced for a second or third time.¹⁶⁵ Because of the widespread displacement of Chins from their villages and townships, the IDP camps in Myanmar/Burma are reaching their capacity to provide aid and shelter. To respond to this crisis, at the end of September 2021, the local community set up the Chin Christian University in Hakha, Chin State to be an IDP Camp.

Map of IDPs in Chin State Since February 1, 2021¹⁶⁶



162 The Irrawaddy. (2021, September 24). Fears of More Atrocities as Myanmar Junta Blocks Internet in Parts of Chin, Magwe. <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/fears-of-more-atrocities-as-myanmar-junta-blocks-internet-in-parts-of-chin-magwe.html> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

163 Ibid.

164 UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, "Myanmar Emergency Update," September 15, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Myanmar%20Emergency%20Update%20-%20001%20Sep.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2021)

165 Human Rights Council, 48th Session, "Written updates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar," September 16, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27521&LangID=E> (accessed October 5, 2021)

166 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

3. The Tatmadaw Brutally Attacks Chin State Townships Falam Township

Mindat Township

In April, the military invaded Mindat and arrested civilians, including 15 youth who were later used as human shields.¹⁶⁷ The CDF resisted the military by fighting back and demanding the release of those detained. On May 13, the Tatmadaw placed Mindat Town under martial law and initiated a three-day siege using heavy artillery.¹⁶⁸ During these attacks, at least 5 civilians were killed and 50 were injured. Reports at the time indicated civilians gathered for a political rally daily, urging the Tatmadaw to “free Mindat” from martial law.¹⁶⁹

The military expressed intentions to arrest and prosecute Dr. Aye Nyein Thu and other volunteers who have been providing healthcare treatment to those in IDP camps in Mindat Township in Chin State claiming their work is in support of the PDF.¹⁷⁰ Dr. Aye Nyein Thu was among those who joined other healthcare volunteers after the February coup to provide medical services to wounded civilians in Mandalay.¹⁷¹

According to the Mindat IDP camp officials, an estimated civilians from Mindat and surrounding villages have sought shelter and protection in the nearby temporary camps. UN agencies and the NUG have delivered aid to Mindat Township to help meet the needs of those internally displaced.^{172, 173}

167 Fishbein, E., Awng, Z.M., Lusan, N.N. (May 18, 2021). A humanitarian disaster in the making’ in Myanmar’s Chin State. Aljazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/a-humanitarian-disaster-in-the-making-in-myanmars-chin-state> Accessed August 17, 2021

168 Ibid

169 Head, J. (May 22, 2021). Myanmar: The small embattled town that stood up to the army. *BBC World News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-57197081> Accessed August 17, 2021

170 The Irrawaddy. (September 24, 2021). Myanmar Junta Seeks to Arrest Doctor Assisting Displaced Persons in Chin State. https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-seeks-to-arrest-doctor-assisting-displaced-persons-in-chin-state.html?fbclid=IwAR37DtDVwAM-HwiNq6jxzFa8iOOrWswPb3yUc1MCi0T03CAZWSuYrTg9_SLE (accessed September 26, 2021).

171 CAM sources in Mindat state provided information about Dr. Aye Nyein Thu and other volunteers.

172 UNHCR (2021, August). UNHCR Representation in Myanmar. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Myanmar%20factsheet%20August%202021.pdf> (accessed September 15, 2021).

173 Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management. (2021,

On October 13, the Burmese military stationed two tanks and 51 military trucks carrying approximately 700 soldiers, into Falam Township. The CDF and the CNA responded by firing at the Burmese military, who retaliated by burning down 13 houses in Thlanrawn Village, Falam Township. Thlanrawn Village Christian Church was also destroyed and looted. The Burmese military also destroyed houses in Falam Township. The fighting is ongoing as of the publication of this report.

June 29) Humanitarian aid provision between 6th to 28th June. <https://mohadm.nugmyanmar.org/2021/06/29/humanitarian-aid-provision-between-6th-to-28th-june-2021/> (accessed September 10, 2021).



*The Burmese Military burned a church in Rialti Village, Falam Township on October 13, 2021.
Photo: The Hakha Times*



On October 13, the Burmese Military burned 13 houses including a church in Thlanrawn Village, Falam Township. Photo: The Hakha Post.



*The Burmese Military burned 10 houses in Taal Village, Falam Township on October 25, 2021.
Photo: The Hakha Times.*



Heavy shelling of the Tatmadaw led to the burning of 164 buildings in Thantlang Town on October 29, 2021, including two small hotels, two churches, personal residences, and over 90 businesses. Photo: The Chinland Post

Thantlang Township

The Tatmadaw has three military stations in Thantlang Township, one at a hotel, one at a Buddhist monastic school, and one at a police station. The total population of Thantlang Township is 50,374.¹ Fighting there between the military and the CDF increased in September 2021. The most violent and destructive clash on September 18 started at the hotel where the military has a station. Burmese military soldiers shelled a residential area in Thantlang Town, going up and down the streets shooting heavy artillery at residents' homes, burning 18 houses.² Such brutal acts forced nearly the entire town of 8,000 to flee their homes and seek refuge in other parts of Myanmar/Burma,

1 The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, Chin State, Haka District, Thantlang Township Report, p. 7, https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/TspProfiles_Census_Thantlang_2014_ENG.pdf (accessed October 13, 2021)

2 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

with many fleeing to Mizoram State, India^{3, 4, 5} It was during these military attacks in Thantlang that a Chin Christian Pastor was killed as he was trying to help neighbors stop the fires set by the military, as described above (see page 13). On October 29, 2021, even heavier military shelling by the Tatmadaw led to the burning down of 164 more buildings in Thantlang Town, including two small hotels, two churches—the Church on the Rock and the Presbyterian Church—over 90 businesses (e.g., restaurants, pharmacy, computer, grocery, textile, and watch stores), and many residences.⁶

3 The head of a civil society group indicated that 5,500 people had arrived from Myanmar in two Mizoram districts over the past week.

4 UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

5 BBC World News. Myanmar: Whole town flees amid fierce fighting. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58650762> (accessed September 26, 2021)

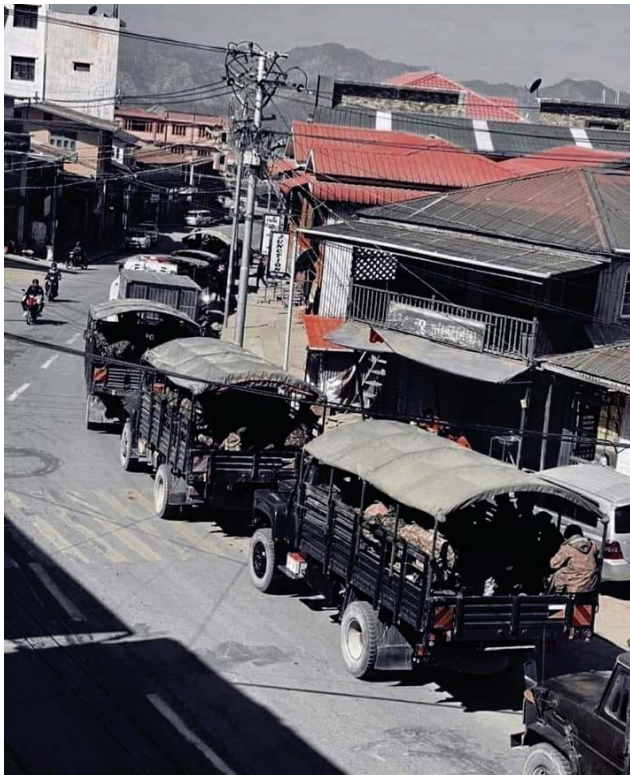
6 Report was from CAM sources in Chin State, Myanmar/Burma.



Thantlang Town burns during the Tatmadaw's attacks of September 18, 2021, when 18 homes and a hotel were burned down by heavy shelling. Photo: CAM source, anonymous for security reasons.



The Burmese Military set fire to houses in Hakha, the capital of Chin State on October 18. Photo: The Hakha Post.



On October 20, the Burmese military arrived in Hakha with 40 trucks. Photo: The Hakha Post.

Hakha

Fighting between the military and the CDF has gone on in Hakha since May.¹⁷⁴ By June 22, the fighting resulted in almost 12,000 IDPs from 25 villages in Hakha.¹⁷⁵ On September 18, the Burmese military burned down two houses. Just one month later they attacked and looted Chuncung Baptist Church in Chuncung Village in Hakha. Days later, on October 18, 2021, the Burmese military burned down a state government building housing the state's immigration department at Chin Oo Si Ward in Hakha. On October 20, 2021, reports indicated approximately 40 trucks of the Burmese military entered Hakha with intentions to target the CDF and CNA. The security situation in Hakha Township is deteriorating at the time of this report and the numbers of displaced persons is likely to continue to increase.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Stated in official letter from Members of Parliament elected from the Hakha Constituency, Chin State, June 22, 2021.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ CAM sources in Hakha Township provided information on the number displaced from Hakha Township

VII. Ever More Urgent Humanitarian, Protection, and Resettlement Needs Emerge in Malaysia as More Chins and Others Seek Refuge from Myanmar/Burma

The next three sections detail the growing protection, humanitarian, and resettlement needs for Chins and others from Myanmar/Burma who are seeking refuge in Malaysia, India, and Thailand. One crucial role of the United States is to support efforts by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the host countries to protect and provide humanitarian assistance for refugees from Myanmar/Burma and another is to provide the durable solution of resettlement. Resettlement not only protects individuals who have serious protection needs in host countries, but it also enables the United States to share the responsibility with the host country of welcoming and protecting refugees.

In a recent report (UNHCR) estimates that approximately 22,000 persons have been internationally displaced since the February military coup in Myanmar/Burma to seek refuge in neighboring states, including in Mizoram State, India.¹⁷⁷ This is in addition to the 980,000 forcibly displaced persons from Myanmar/Burma who were already forced to flee their homes and are seeking refuge in nearby countries.¹⁷⁸ As the crisis in Myanmar/Burma continues to unfold, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNHCR have called on neighboring countries to offer protection and refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution.¹⁷⁹ UNHCR's protection role is especially critical since Malaysia, India, and Thailand are not a signatory states to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.¹⁸⁰ Earlier reports have

outlined the protection issues, discrimination, and arbitrary arrests and detention faced by some Chins and other refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia and India.¹⁸¹ The following sub-sections detail ongoing issues in Malaysia, including since the February coup. Unless otherwise indicated, the information is provided by the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), a non-governmental Chin organization in Malaysia.

1. *An Overview of Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in Malaysia*

UNHCR estimates that 179,510 refugees and asylum seekers are registered with UNHCR in Malaysia including people from Myanmar/Burma, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq.¹⁸² An overwhelming majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia are from Myanmar/Burma, which accounts for 154,880, including 103,030 Rohingya (see *Appendix B-4 and B-5 for more details on displacement figures in Malaysia*).¹⁸³

As of August 2021, the Coalition of Burma Ethnic in Malaysia (COBEM) reported there were 22,466 Chin refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia (see *Appendix B-6 for more details of Chin refugees in Malaysia*).¹⁸⁴ Of these refugees, over 5,000 have UNHCR registration cards and 16,970 have been granted UNHCR protection letters.¹⁸⁵ UNHCR also estimates that

[no=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtmsg2&clang=en](#)

181 Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., "Unsafe: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India," September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chin-Refugees-Final-Oct-8-2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021)

182 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance in Malaysia," September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html> (accessed September 15, 2021)

183 Ibid.

184 The Coalition of Burma Ethnic Malaysia maintains a list of registered refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia.

185 UNHCR Malaysia estimates there are more than 2,000 cases have been forwarded to the US Department of Homeland Security for refugee

177 UNHCR, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, *supra* 8
178 Ibid

179 UN News, "Protect all those fleeing Myanmar, UN offices urge countries in the region," April 1, 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1088842> (accessed August 27, 2021)

180 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, UN Treaty Collection, Chapter V, 2 and 5, <https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtmsg>

approximately 3,000 have had their UNHCR documents confiscated by Malaysian police or government authorities, a growing trend among refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.¹⁸⁶

2. *The Deteriorating Political Support and Protection for Rohingyas in Malaysia*

The Rohingyas in Malaysia have faced serious protection concerns including discrimination as well as arbitrary arrests and detention. Their population totals 103,030, making them the largest group under UNHCR protection in Malaysia.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, since the Tatmadaw's scorched-earth attacks against the Rohingyas in 2017 in Rakhine State, Myanmar/Burma, Malaysia has been one of the primary destination countries where Rohingyas have sought safety. Initially, the then-prime minister expressed welcome to the Rohingya and provided support to them in the country.¹⁸⁸

In recent years, the politics have shifted with a new prime minister and new leadership in the Ministry of Home Affairs. On the ground, this political shift has included statements from public officials calling on the Rohingyas not to enter or to leave Malaysia, with the prime minister indicating "Malaysia can no longer take Rohingya Muslims."¹⁸⁹ In April, 2020 the Malaysian Navy intercepted two boats of people fleeing from Myanmar/Burma, keeping them from reaching Malaysia; and it has since then turned back at least 22 boats from Myanmar/Burma.¹⁹⁰

Malaysian authorities have also arrested and detained Rohingyas seeking refuge in Malaysia, charging them with immigration crimes and unfairly treating them as criminals.¹⁹¹

Since the pandemic and the economic downturn in Malaysia, public sentiment has also shifted against the Rohingya. Rohingyas are being unfairly blamed for spreading COVID-19 in online chatter and in public discourse.¹⁹² Xenophobic rhetoric and misinformation contribute to a political climate in which local Malaysians and government officials target Rohingyas, leaving them fearful and vulnerable to the intolerance they experience in their communities.¹⁹³ Further, those without proper documentation, are not able to access aid, education for children, health care, and housing.

3. *Revitalized Refugee Registration and Documentation is Needed to Protect Chins and Others Seeking Refuge in Malaysia from Arrest, Detention, and Deportation¹⁹⁴ and also to Facilitate Pursuit of Durable Solutions, Including Resettlement*

Since Malaysia is not a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,¹⁹⁵ some of the Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma have faced

processing.

186 The Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) maintains a list of registered refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia.

187 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance in Malaysia," September 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html> (accessed September 15, 2021)

188 Christine H. Kim, "Challenges to the Rohingya Population in Malaysia," July 10, 2020, Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/challenges-rohingya-population-malaysia> (accessed October 5, 2021)

189 Reuters, "Malaysia can't take any more Rohingya refugees, PM says," July 26, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-malaysia/malaysia-cant-take-any-more-rohingya-refugees-pm-says-idUSKBN23X19Y> (accessed October 7, 2021)

190 Christine H. Kim, "Challenges to the Rohingya Population in Malaysia," July 10, 2020, Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/challenges-rohingya-population-malaysia>

www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/challenges-rohingya-population-malaysia (accessed October 5, 2021)

191 Ibid.

192 Ibid.

193 UCA News, "Rohingya face discrimination and hostility in Malaysia," August 10, 2021, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/rohingya-face-discrimination-and-hostility-in-malaysia/93653#> (accessed October 7, 2021)

194 This information comes from the Coalition of Burma Ethnic Malaysia (COBEM) and the Chin Refugee Committee in Malaysia. Each produced a report on the context of Chin and others seeking refuge in Malaysia in September 2021. This report is not publicly available to protect the identities of those who produced the report.

195 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, UN Treaty Collection, Chapter V, 2 and 5, <https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsgno=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en>

serious protection concerns including discrimination as well as arbitrary arrests and detention.¹⁹⁶

In June 2018, UNHCR announced the cessation of refugee protection for the ethnic Chins residing in countries including Malaysia. UNHCR believed that conditions in Chin State Myanmar/Burma had improved enough to enable the safe return of ethnic Chin refugees in the near future. However, after strong opposition and advocacy efforts from various refugee and human rights groups in the region and elsewhere, UNHCR abandoned its cessation policy.¹⁹⁷ Despite UNHCR affirming that it would provide international refugee protection for Chin refugees, in recent years, a significant number of Chins seeking refuge in Malaysia have not been registered. Others have received UNHCR documents that have not been renewed, have lapsed, or have been confiscated by the government. Some Chins and other asylum seekers have been denied status during their Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process.

Chins and others seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma who lack registration or UNHCR documentation are vulnerable to being arrested and deported by Malaysian officials. While prior reports have documented an increase in deportations of Chins and others seeking refuge in Malaysia since 2019,¹⁹⁸ even more recent efforts of the Malaysian Immigration Department and the Home Ministry have put many Chins and others seeking refuge in imminent risk of deportation back to Myanmar/Burma.

In February 2021, the Malaysian Immigration authorities announced intentions to deport detained migrants back to Myanmar/Burma via naval ships.¹⁹⁹ The threat was carried out, as the

Malaysian government forcibly deported 1,086 persons seeking refuge from Myanmar/Burma back to their country during the opening days of the Myanmar military coup, despite directives from the Kuala Lumpur High Court to hold off the deportations to avoid violating the principle of non-refoulement found in international law.²⁰⁰ As of September 2021, the Embassy of Myanmar/Burma in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reported continued deportation back to Myanmar/Burma of Chins and others seeking refuge in Malaysia.

4. UNHCR Needs Access to Detention in Malaysia to Protect Chin and Others Seeking Refuge from Wrongful Detention and Deportation

Since 2019, the Malaysian government has restricted UNHCR's access into immigration detention. Prior to that time, UNHCR had access to detention and, as such, could advocate for the release of individuals documented as refugees or could provide documents that individuals were legitimate asylum seekers. UNHCR's lack of access into detention is increasingly more problematic, especially since many detainees are being held for extended periods of time. Without access, UNHCR, NGOs and community organisations, along with the close friends and families of detainees are unable to verify the wellbeing of detainees. As of August 2021, Zomi Association of Malaysia (ZAM) estimates approximately 160 Chins are currently being held in immigration detention in Malaysia.²⁰¹

Conditions in Malaysian immigration detention are reportedly inhumane. It is overcrowded, there is limited water for drinking and showering, and inadequate meal portions, as well as cruel

196 Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., "Unsafe: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India," September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chin-Refugees-Final-Oct-8-2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021)

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid.

199 Amnesty International, "Malaysia: Deportation to Myanmar puts

lives in danger," February 18, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/myanmar-deportation-malaysia-danger/> (accessed September 2, 2021)

200 BBC News, "Malaysia deports Myanmar nationals despite court orders," February 24, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56178270> (accessed September 26, 2021).

201 Zomi Association of Malaysia, a Chin Based Community Organization in Malaysia, keeps a record of Chin in Malaysia.

treatment by some of the officers.²⁰² Refugees and asylum seekers who enter detention centres often leave traumatised. The U.S. State Department indicated concern over the numbers of people who have died in Malaysia's immigration detention due to untreated health and medical issues.²⁰³ NGOs and UNHCR have also found growing obstacles to secure the release of those wrongfully detained. Recently, UNHCR's Outreach and Protection Intervention (OPI) unit has reported to the community that many of their security interventions have been delayed due to little or no follow-up information from government officials.

5. Systemic Obstacle to Affordable Healthcare for Chins and Other Refugees in Malaysia

Immigrants in Malaysia do not have access to affordable, quality healthcare. As such, even registered refugees and asylum seekers are subject to higher rates in government hospitals. They are required to pay an up-front deposit of RM3,000 (\$720USD) for inpatient treatment and RM5,000 (1,200USD) for surgeries. Those seeking refuge in Malaysia also face discrimination in healthcare from healthcare workers who refuse to treat them or who provide inadequate treatment simply because of their foreigner status. According to reports from local refugee leaders of COBEM, some refugees have been denied life-saving procedures and treatments due to an inability to make a deposit, placing their health and lives at-risk. There are some community organizations and NGOs that provide limited financial assistance for those in need of medical care, and many often take loans from friends and family members to cover costs associated with medical care.

Seeking healthcare treatment at government institutions also comes with a serious risk, especially for unregistered asylum seekers. In recent years,

some government hospitals have taken active measures to meet government directives to report any undocumented individuals. Some hospitals have facilitated immigration officers on standby to arrest unregistered asylum seekers seeking medical care. Reportedly, some hospitals have even facilitated immigration enforcement against patients experiencing severe health conditions or treatment, including the arrest and detention of women right after giving birth.

For refugees living in rural areas of Malaysia, access to appropriate medical care is further limited, since there are fewer clinics in these areas. Community-based organizations and coalition groups have responded by partnering with NGOs and healthcare providers to run mobile clinics in these regions. While such efforts are helpful, with limited resources, there is limited medical capacity compared to hospitals. For example, during the pandemic, due to lockdown restrictions, most mobile clinics have had to shut down altogether.

6. COVID-19 Treatment and Vaccination Efforts for Chins and Others Seeking Refuge in Malaysia

The COVID-19 pandemic has created various health, economic, and social challenges for Chins seeking refuge in Malaysia. COVID-19 has severely impacted the refugee community in Malaysia, with high infection rates. Many refugees live in small housing units with many other families and are unable to quarantine. Furthermore, testing remains costly and limited, thus symptomatic individuals are unable to verify they have COVID-19. Even if they become COVID positive with severe symptoms, those seeking refuge in Malaysia rarely seek or obtain medical care because they fear being arrested or detained, leaving their health and lives at risk.

As COVID-19 infection rates in Malaysia reached an all-time high in August of 2021, hospitals have been unable to keep up with the demand for medical

²⁰² State Department, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Malaysia," p. 2, March 2020, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/malaysia/>

²⁰³ Ibid.

care, including in Kuala Lumpur. Since June of 2021, hospitals admitted only those in a critical condition, and various medical facilities postponed all elective surgeries. The Malaysian government has responded to the medical emergency by deploying military-built temporary hospitals and converting some hotels into quarantine and treatment centers. Unfortunately, such centers are only available to Malaysian citizens.

Malaysia's COVID-19 vaccination program was launched in February 2021. This included vaccines from COVAX, AstraZeneca, Pfizer, the Chinese government, Pharmaniaga Berhad, and Duopharma. The Malaysian Ministry of Health (MOH) arranged the vaccine centers for both citizens and non-citizens including refugees and asylum seekers in various regions of the country. UNHCR in Malaysia has also increased efforts to expand COVID-19 testing by opening clinics that make testing freely and readily available. UNHCR efforts have included outreach to Chin and others seeking refuge in Malaysia providing education regarding the spread of COVID-19. In parts of Kuala Lumpur, many Chins and others seeking refuge have received COVID-19 vaccines. Still, some remain hesitant, fearing that getting a vaccination would expose them to arrest and deportation.



COBEM work with locals to screen for COVID-19 vaccinations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Photos: COBEM.

7. *Protection Concerns for Women and Children Seeking Refuge*

Gender-based violence (GBV) towards refugee women and girls is a prevalent problem in Malaysia. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence against women and has increased substantially during the pandemic with more people spending time at home. Many refugee and migrant women are unaware of their rights, thus significant numbers of domestic violence cases go unreported. For those cases that are reported, patriarchal values engrained in the culture often mean that police officers dismiss the seriousness of the allegations by the domestic violence victims and provide victims little protection.

Violence against women also occurs outside of the home, especially due to women's marginalized status as refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia. Women and girls, some as young as 10, are more susceptible to rape, molestation, sexual harassment, stalking, and cyber-crimes. They are also at heightened risk for exploitation and forced to provide sexual favors in exchange for freedom from arrests and detention. Pedophilia and sex trafficking also are prevalent problems in Malaysia, especially for unaccompanied refugee minors without a parent or legal guardian. As of 2020, Malaysia was placed in Tier 3 of the U.S. Government's Trafficking in Persons Report, indicating Malaysia is of particular concern because it has not created or implemented laws to prevent or penalize human trafficking.²⁰⁴

8. *Obstacles to Education for Chins and Others Seeking Refuge in Malaysia*

Refugee children face various barriers to education in Malaysia since they are not eligible to attend public schools in the country. Those who do attend school often attend "refugee learning centers," where they receive education but no official

certification for their schooling. Many children and youth often stop attending school before they reach high school. Many do so in order to work and do their part to help provide for their families. Some of these are in jobs with conditions and hours not suitable for children. During the pandemic especially, additional families pulled their children out of school, when they were unable to afford school fees or electronic devices for online classes. Consequently, some of these children have been left idle at home with the risk of negative impacts on their wellbeing.

9. *Challenging Economic and Social Conditions in Malaysia*

The pandemic have exacerbated already dire economic conditions for Chins and others seeking refuge in Malaysia. With social distancing requirements, stay at home orders, and economic disruptions such as disruptions of the supply chain, many businesses are limiting or closing operations. It makes finding jobs nearly impossible. Many find themselves unable to afford groceries and now rely on aid from local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or other community organizations. In many cases, the dry rations do not provide enough sustenance to fully meet the nutritional needs of a family, especially of the children.

The pandemic has also created various social issues including an increase in evictions as well as negative mental health impacts on adults and youth. Families are often isolated in crowded quarters for days at a time leading to social isolation and related mental health issues. Further, refugee and migrant communities across Malaysia are being unfairly blamed for spreading COVID-19. Xenophobic rhetoric and misinformation have created a political climate that contributes to local Malaysians and government officials targeting refugee communities, making life for Chins and others from Myanmar/Burma extremely difficult.

²⁰⁴ US State Department, Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking, "2021 Human Trafficking in Persons Report," <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/> (accessed October 5, 2021).

VIII. Increased Humanitarian, Protection, and Resettlement Needs for Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in India

1. *Chins and Others Seeking Refuge Finding Welcome in Mizoram State, India*

Chin refugees from Myanmar/Burma represent a substantial portion of those seeking refuge in Mizoram State, India. Northeast India borders northwest Myanmar/Burma, with Mizoram State sharing a border with Chin State (Sagaing Region and Kachin State also border northeast India). The positive relationship between Mizoram State and Chin State has a deep history that dates back over a century. The people in the two states share similar racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and historical roots. When Myanmar/Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948, the people from Chin State and Mizoram State have maintained contacts in the border areas and have been allowed to travel 16 kilometers into one another's border without having to show a passport.²⁰⁵ Chin State welcomed those fleeing Mizoram State from the Mautam Famine in 1959. In the decades following the Burmese military coup of 1962, Chins experienced great persecution, and many continued to find refuge in Mizoram State.²⁰⁶

The Young Mizo Association (YMA), the largest nongovernmental association in Mizoram founded by Christian missionaries and leaders, provides humanitarian and service activities for various communities in need in Mizoram State, including the Chin. While many Chins are often referred to as brothers and sisters to those in Mizoram State, the community response to their presence is complex, and in recent years, not all residents or government officials have welcomed the Chins.²⁰⁷

Map of India²⁰⁸



Since the military coup and ensuing violence in the northwestern parts of Myanmar/Burma, including in Chin State, India has seen an influx of Chins and others seeking protection. According to recent reports from the Mizoram State government and UNHCR, it is estimated that between 15,000 – 20,000 newly displaced from Myanmar/Burma have made it to bordering Mizoram State, India, since February 1, 2021 (see *Appendix B-9, B-10, and B-11 for further displacement figures in Mizoram State,*

²⁰⁵ Matthew Wilch, Zo Tum Hmung, Jenny Yang (December 2011), *Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India*, <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/b3/FileItem-222256-SeekingRefugeTheChinPeopleinMizoram->

²⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷ Ibid

²⁰⁸ Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India, *supra* 2015

India).^{209, 210} Those seeking refuge include civilians, government officials, police personnel, teachers, firemen, and bureaucrats.²¹¹ Approximately 20 members of parliament from Chin State, including the Chief Minister of Chin State, is seeking refuge in Mizoram State.²¹² Many have found refuge in Vombuk Village and Sangau Village in Saiha District of Mizoram State, where local residents have helped to construct refugee camps, making dwellings out of bamboo. Others have found refuge throughout neighboring Lawngtlai District, where estimates indicate there are approximately 3,019 refugees from Myanmar/Burma (see *Appendix B-10 and B-11 for further details of displacement in Lawngtlai District*).

In the following subsections about conditions for refugees in India, unless otherwise specified, the information is provided by the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), a Chin refugee community in New Delhi, India.

2. In New Delhi, UNHCR Registered 120 Chins and Others Fleeing the Coup

Chins and others fleeing from Myanmar/Burma have also gone to other parts of India with approximately 120 seeking refuge in New Delhi since February 1, 2021.²¹³ The number of Chin and others seeking refuge in New Delhi is likely to increase given the current situation in Myanmar/Burma. The UNHCR office has provided formal registration to these new arrivals. Recent arrivals are joining those who fled to New Delhi prior to the coup, mostly from Chin State and the Sagaing Region. This brings the total number of Chins in New Delhi to nearly 3,000 including 557 families and 132 children under the

age of five (see *Appendix B-7 and B-8 for further displacement figures in New Delhi, India*).²¹⁴ Most Chins have been living in India for over a decade and most are struggling to survive.

3. Mizoram Chief Minister Advocates for Protection and Assistance for Chins and Others Fleeing the Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma

India is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.²¹⁵ Nonetheless, like all countries, including its neighbors who are non-signatories Malaysia and Thailand, India is bound by the international legal obligation of nonrefoulement, whereby no country can return a refugee back to a country where there would be a likely serious threat to the person's life or health.

Map of Mizoram State, India²¹⁶



²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol on the Status of Refugees, UN Treaty Collection, Chapter V, 2 and 5, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en

²¹⁶ Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India, *supra* 205

²⁰⁹ Henry L. Khojol, "Fresh influx from Myanmar: Mizoram CM reminds Centre for assistance," East Mojo, September 16, 2021, <https://www.eastmojo.com/mizoram/2021/09/16/fresh-influx-from-myanmar-mizoram-cm-reminds-centre-for-assistance/> (accessed October 7, 2021).

²¹⁰ UNHCR, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, *supra* 8

²¹¹ The Economic Times, "14 Lawmakers Among More than 2,200 Myanmar Nationals Taking Refuge in Mizoram," April 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/14-lawmakers-among-more-than-2200-myanmar-nationals-taking-refuge-in-mizoram/article-show/82036490.cms> (accessed August 23, 2021)

²¹² The Chin Refugee Committee in India keeps record of Chin refugees in India, including Mizoram State and New Delhi

²¹³ Chin Refugee Committee in New Delhi

Earlier reports have outlined the protection issues, discrimination, and arbitrary arrests and detention faced by some Chins and other refugees from Myanmar/Burma in India.^{217, 218} Recent restrictionist immigration policy from India's Ministry of Home Affairs has deteriorated the situation for people seeking refuge. Prior to 2015, many refugees could access long-term visitor visas, an alternative pathway that provides some protection from deportation. In 2015 and 2016 many refugees who attempted to extend their visitor visas were denied extensions for unspecified reasons by India's Ministry of Home Affairs Office. Beginning in 2018, all UNHCR registered refugees in India were summarily denied visitor visas. As such most of Chin and others seeking refuge do not have legal status in India and are at risk of being deported. Further, without a visa, Chins and others seeking refuge in India face significant challenges accessing employment, accessing medical care, or traveling outside of their communities.

With the increased flow of refugees from Myanmar/Burma to India as a result of the military coup, India Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has released an advisory to Chief Ministers of Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur States. It urges those state leaders to prevent the influx of refugees from Myanmar/Burma, referring to those seeking refuge as "illegal" migrants and calling for their expedited deportation. While the MHA remains vigilant in efforts to curb refugee flows, the Chief Minister of Mizoram State continues to express an openness and commitment to supporting refugees from Myanmar/Burma. The Chief Minister has sent letters to Prime Minister Modi, requesting aid and calling for India to support refugees newly displaced from Myanmar/Burma (see *Appendix A-1 for a letter from Zoramthanga, Mizoram Chief Minister to Prime Minister Modi*).²¹⁹

217 Seeking Refuge: The Chin People in Mizoram, India, *supra* 205

218 Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., "Unsafe: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia and New Delhi, India," September 2020, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Chin-Refugees-Final-Oct-8-2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021)

219 Henry Khojol, "Fresh influx from Myanmar: Mizoram CM reminds Centre for assistance," September 16, 2021, East Mojo, <https://www.eastmojo.com/mizoram/2021/09/16/fresh-influx-from-myanmar-mizoram-cm-reminds-centre-for-assistance/> (accessed October 7, 2021).

In a letter to Prime Minister Modi, the Chief Minister of Mizoram stated, "India cannot turn a blind eye to this humanitarian crisis"²²⁰



Local residents in South Vanlaipahai Village in Lunglei District, Mizoram State, help construct refugee camps out of bamboo for Chins. Photo: Myanmar Refugee Relief Committee, Mizoram.



Local residents in Sangau Village in Lawngtlai District, Mizoram State, help construct refugee camps out of bamboo for Chins. Photo: The Hakha Post.

220 Chief Minister of Mizoram State issued a letter to PM Modi on March 18, 2021. This came after PM Modi issued a letter to all Chief Ministers in India requesting they deport illegal migrants from Myanmar/India.

4. COVID-19 Health Concerns for Chins and Others in India

Chins seeking refuge in India have suffered severe trauma and loss as a result of COVID-19 spreading in their communities. The ability to socially isolate within their own homes has been virtually impossible given that most Chins live in shared accommodations with two or three other families. As such, when one member of a household gets infected with COVID-19 there are significant challenges finding space to isolate that person to prevent the spread. An effective alternative to stop the spread would be to use community isolation centers, but the isolation center available to the Chin community does not have enough capacity.

The Chin Refugee Community, New Delhi (CRC) has made an urgent request to UNHCR to help provide isolation centers in three different parts of the city where many Chins live.²²¹ As of August 2021, at least 5 people have died due to COVID-19 and more than 200 Chin refugees (96 families) have been infected. Many are in need of hospitalization and services in intensive care units. Due to unavailability of hospital beds, many are not able to receive needed treatments. Isolation centers would help to prevent the spread of the deadly virus and reduce the human suffering and the strain on the health system.

5. Access to Education for Chins and Others Seeking Refuge in India

Access to education for Chins and others seeking refuge has also been challenging without them having legal status. The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, of which India is a signatory, should give noncitizen children access to government run schools. Nonetheless, there are often obstacles to access to government run schools including the requirement of a special ID (referred to as UID or Adhar Card) or valid legal residency permit. Other obstacles exist for Chins seeking higher education. Without legal residency, Chins and others seeking

²²¹ In February 2021, the CRC met with the local UNHCR office requesting isolation centers to prevent community spread with the second wave of COVID-19 in India. This request was ignored.

refuge accepted into university are required to pay international tuition rates. Such tuition fees are completely unaffordable for most refugees.

While barriers to education exist for Chins and others seeking refuge in India, recent actions by the Mizoram State Government have brought hope to many Chin families. The Government of Mizoram, Directorate of School Education issued a letter directing all schools in the state to admit all refugee children into elementary school so they can resume their education, citing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) (see *Appendix A-2 for the letter*).²²² As such, Chins and others seeking refuge in Mizoram State have been able to attend the local schools.



Residents in Vombuk Village, Lawngtlai District, Mizoram State, help construct refugee camps for newly displaced from Myanmar/Burma. Photo: The Hakha Post.

²²² Official letter from the Mizoram State Government, Directorate of School Education

IX. After the Coup, There are Serious Access to Protection Issues and Resettlement Needs for Those from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in Thailand

UNHCR reports 97,000 refugees are already in Thailand in nine different refugee camps along the border with the majority of refugees, 91,479, being mostly Karen and Karenni from Myanmar/Burma.²²³ The armed clashes between the military and EAOs in Kayah State (also known as Karenni State) has led to further internal displacement in Myanmar/Burma of an estimated 85,900 Karenni men, women, and children since February 1, 2021.²²⁴ Many are seeking shelter in surrounding communities or building temporary shelters in the forests across Kayah State and in southern parts of neighboring Shan State. In Pya Chauk Maing Village Tract in Demoso Township, a Catholic church and houses were damaged and burnt by heavy artillery fire in early September 2021.²²⁵

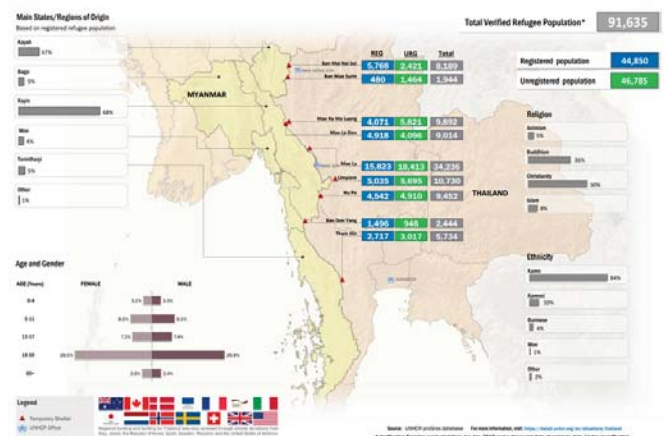
Karens too have been forced to flee their homes due to military fighting and airstrikes in residential areas that have destroyed their homes and put them in danger. Many Karens have fled to Thailand seeking refuge. Reports indicate that more than 8,000 Karen have fled to Salween River on the border, away from the fighting.²²⁶ In March and April, it was reported that more than 2,000 Karen attempted the journey across the border, seeking safety and protection in Thailand, but were kept from crossing by Thai soldiers.²²⁷

Reports and video footage has shown Thai soldiers forcing Karen refugees back on boats and telling them to seek refuge in the Ee Thu Hta displacement

camp on the Myanmar/Burma side of the border.²²⁸ Thai authorities have denied such allegations. Reports have indicated that Thailand's National Security Council implemented policy mandating Thai soldiers to monitor the border and block those seeking refuge in Thailand from Myanmar/Burma.²²⁹ Regrettably, aid groups and reporters have not been allowed near the Thai border to assess the situation.

The United States has an honorable legacy of shared responsibility for refugee protection with Thailand as it does with Malaysia and India, through its overseas assistance and resettlement of refugees. In Thailand, resettlement occurs out of the camps from Bangkok. This sharing of responsibility is ever more critical given the large number of Karennis, Karens, and others fleeing for their lives and seeking safe haven in Thailand.

Refugee Camps along the Thailand-Myanmar/Burma Border²³⁰



²²³ See UNHCR, Refugees in Thailand, <https://www.unhcr.org/th/en>

²²⁴ UNHCR, "Myanmar Emergency Update," October 18, 2021, *supra* 8

²²⁵ UN OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Update No. 11," p. 3, October 1, 2021, *supra* 91

²²⁶ Aljazeera News, "Thousands poised to flee to Thailand due to violence in Myanmar," April 30, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/30/thousands-in-myanmar-poised-to-flee-violence-to> (Accessed September 23, 2021)

²²⁷ Paul Wongcha um and Panarat Thepgumpanat, "Thailand denies forcing back Myanmar refugees blocked at border," March 29, 2021, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-karen/thailand-denies-forcing-back-myanmar-refugees-blocked-at-border-idUSKBN-2BL1JY> (accessed September 23, 2021)

²²⁸ Aljazeera News, "Thousands poised to flee to Thailand due to violence in Myanmar," April 30, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/30/thousands-in-myanmar-poised-to-flee-violence-to> (Accessed September 23, 2021)

²²⁹ Ibid

²³⁰ UNHCR, RTG/MOI-UNHCR Verified Refugee Population, July 31, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/th/wp-content/uploads/sites/91/2021/08/Thailand_Myanmar-Border_Refugee-Population-Overview_July-2021.pdf (accessed October 8, 2021)

X. Conclusion

After detailing the February 1, 2021, coup by the Tatmadaw in Myanmar/Burma, and the “brute force terror campaign” against the people of Myanmar/Burma, the Chin Association of Maryland (CAM) urges President Biden and his Administration, Members of Congress, and the UN to continue to urgently work with the international community to increase their efforts to help stop the Burmese military’s brutal campaign and enable the people of Myanmar/Burma to establish a federal democratic union. CAM also urges increased protection and resettlement for Chins and other ethnic and religious minorities, democratic activists, and other IDPs and refugees from Myanmar/Burma who are being forced to flee their homes by the Burmese military regime’s religious, ethnic, and political persecution.

Beyond that, CAM urges the Chin refugee community in the United States to join in advocating with U.S. and UN officials to help bring about peace and justice for the Chin people and all the people of Myanmar/Burma. Meanwhile, we urge you to join us in calling for protection, humanitarian support and resettlement for our displaced and fleeing brothers and sisters who are seeking refuge from this conflict.

Afterword

Chin Communities in the United States: Stories of Gratitude and Hope

In August and September 2021, Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director of Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., visited Chin communities in Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas and Missouri to assess the integration of Chins in U.S. communities. He met with Chin pastors and other community leaders. He reports that Chins he met in those states are having integration success because they are community minded, value education, and are hard working. Also, their Christian religion has been a source of connection and strength. It not only strengthens the communities of resettled Chins, but also facilitates engagement with other U.S. communities by providing social and political connections. This can be seen with the Chin churches in Missouri that have affiliated with the Southern Baptist Churches and the Chin Baptist Churches in Maryland that have affiliated with the American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

Many Chin youth have grown up in the U.S. and are committed to contributing to society. Some have joined the police force while others have joined the Army, Marines, and Navy. They have a strong desire to serve this country since America welcomed them as refugees. Some are also successful students, even studying at top U.S. universities including Harvard, Yale and Stanford.

Most of the resettled Chin refugees in the seven states work in food and meat producing companies. Among the hopeful success stories are those about Chin chicken farms. Approximately 65 Chin families in Monet, Missouri, own chicken farms, allowing for economic stability and integration in U.S. communities. Recently, Chins in nearby Purdy, Missouri, established Farm Chin Baptist Church. Chin help one another in the U.S. and share their experiences. This has led to other hard-working Chin families to buy chicken farms in various states including Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Maryland.

Mr. Za Chawn Lian, is one of the first Chins to purchase a chicken farm in Missouri. Mr. Lian was resettled as a refugee to the United States out of Malaysia in January of 2009. By 2017, Mr. Lian had developed the skill and enough capital to purchase his own chicken farm worth 1.2 million dollars, which he was later able to sell for a good profit. His business skill and strong work ethic have afforded him and his family, as well as other Chins, much opportunity.

"The Chins are deeply grateful to the U.S. government and local communities for the opportunities they have been granted through resettlement," concluded Zo Tum Hmung after his trip. "Chins have shown their ability to maximize such opportunities while also helping one another and giving back to the people and communities around them. We hope and pray that the United States government and local communities will continue to welcome the most recent refugees who are fleeing the military coup in Myanmar/Burma."



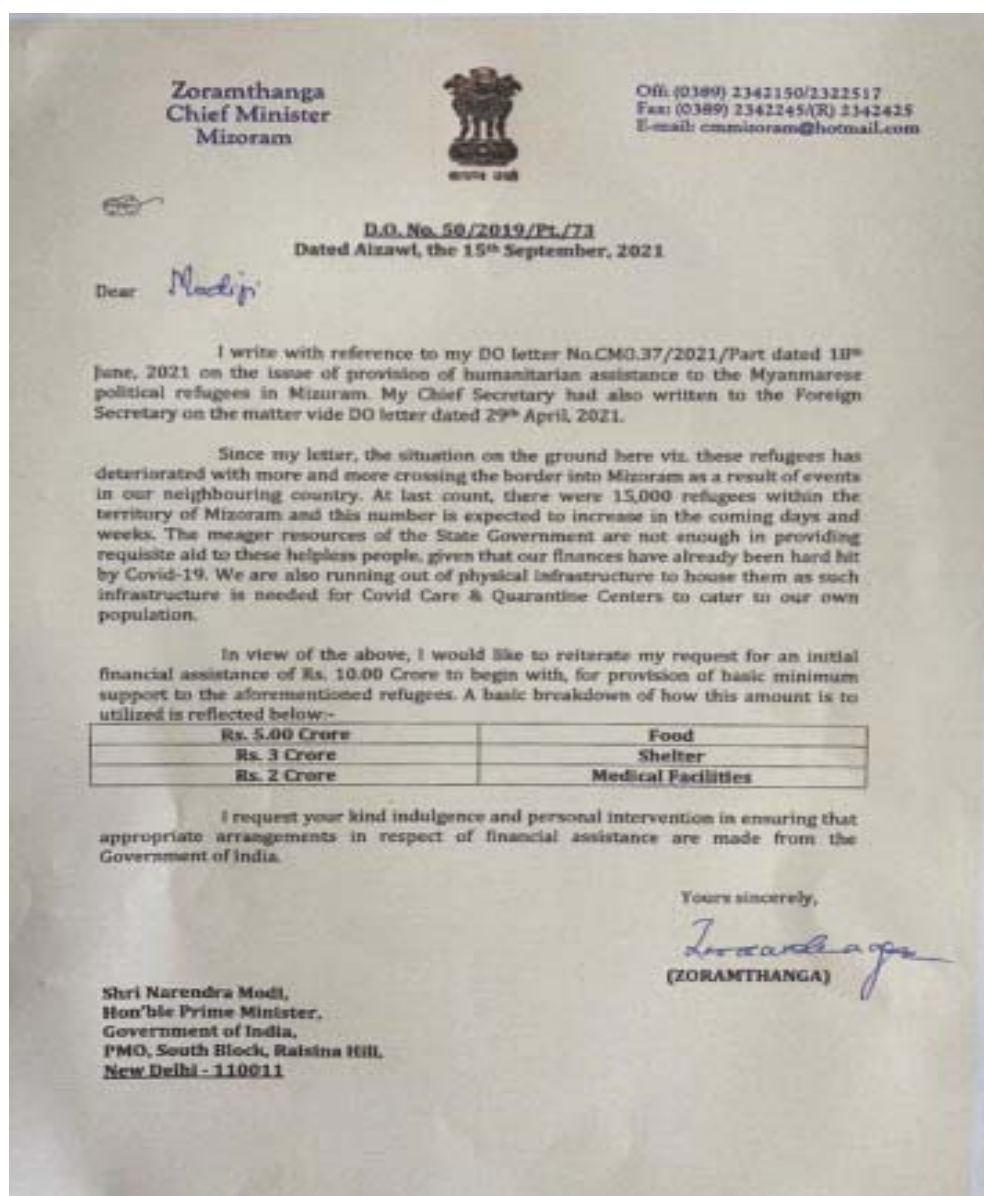
Chicken Farms purchased by a Chin family in the United States. Photo: Za Chawn Lian

Appendix A-1

Official Communication from Mizoram State, India

The Mizoram State government has expressed support for refugees from Myanmar/Burma, especially those fleeing the human rights atrocities committed by the Burmese Military in the wake of the February 1, 2021 coup. The letters below exemplify the ways in which the Mizoram State government has expressed support. In the first letter, Zoramthanga, Chief Minister of Mizoram State, requests financial assistance from India's Prime Minister to support food, shelter, and medical needs of refugees from Myanmar/Burma in Mizoram State. The second letter is from Mizoram's Directorate of School Education affirming the right to education for students from Myanmar/Burma, ages 6-14 years of age, in Mizoram State.

Letter from Chief Minister in Mizoram to the Prime Minister



Appendix A-2

Official Communication from Mizoram State, India

Letter from Directorate of School Education in Mizoram State.

No.D.32019/3/2017-DSE(Estt)
GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM
DIRECTORATE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
Education Centre, Treasury Square, Aizawl – 796001
Phone – 0389-2326233 Fax-2317542 E-mail :dirsems@gmail.com

Dated Aizawl, the 31st August, 2021

To

1. All District Education Officers
2. All Sub Divisional Education Officers
Mizoram

Subject: Admission for migrant/refugee children.

Sir/Madam,

I am to state that chapter 2(4) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act-2009) mentioned that children aged between 6 to 14 years belonging to disadvantaged communities have the right to be admitted to school in a class appropriate to his or her age for completing elementary education.


I, therefore request you to take necessary action on admission to migrant/refugee children in your jurisdiction to schools so that they can continue their schooling.

Yours faithfully,


(JAMES LALRINCHHANA)
 Director
 School Education
 Mizoram :Aizawl

Memo No.D.32019/3/2017-DSE(Estt) : Dated Aizawl the 31st August, 2021.
 Copy to:

1. PS to Hon'ble Minister, School Education Department.
2. PS to Secretary, School Education Department.
3. Guard file.


 Director
 School Education
 Mizoram :Aizawl

Appendix B-1

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Refugees from Myanmar/Burma Resettled to the United States by Ethnicity

Myanmar/Burma is a country made up of various ethnic nationalities. Table B-1 shows the U.S. Department of State statistics of the various ethnicities from Myanmar/Burma resettled in the United States from January 2001 to September 2020. The most common are the Karen, Chin, Karenni, and Rohingya.

Table B-1: Demographical Profile of Refugee Arrivals in The United States from Myanmar/Burma (January 1, 2001 - September 7, 2020)	
Ethnicity	Individuals
Arkanese	2,577
Burmese	6,067
Chin	63,087
Kachin	4,169
Karen	74,460
Karenni (Kayah)	13,401
Lahu	20
Mon	2,221
Pa-Oh	115
Rohingya	9,189
Shan	1,218
Wa	12
Total:	176,536

Refugee Processing Center, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, September 7, 2020, <https://wrapsnet.org/> (accessed September 7, 2020). Note this information is no longer available to the public online. CAM has a copy of the original information, available on request.

Appendix B-2

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Internally Displaced Persons in Myanmar/Burma

The military coup of February 1, 2021 has caused widespread and increased displacement in Myanmar/Burma, adding to those who were displaced prior to the coup. Table B-2 provides statistics from UNHCR regarding those newly displaced in Myanmar/Burma since the February 1, 2021 military coup in the country by state and region. Table B-3 details on the ground information from CAM about those newly displaced within Chin State.

Table B-2: Internally Displaced Persons in Myanmar/Burma
displaced since February 1, 2021

States and Regions in Myanmar/Burma	Individuals Displaced
Chin State	21,400*
Kachin State	7,000
Kayah State	85,900
Kayin State	50,200
Magway Region	12,300
Mon State	3,000
Sagaing Region	7,100
Shan State (east)	<i>data being gathered</i>
Shan State (north)	7,700
Shan State (south)	21,500
Tanintharyi Region	3,000
Total	219,000

Table Source: UNHCR Emergency Update Myanmar, October 18, 2021,

<https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-emergency-update-18-october-2021>

*CAM sources in Myanmar/Burma report approximately 31,204 displaced in Chin State. CAM is sharing with UNHCR our on the ground information about these newly displaced persons in this ever-changing, emergent situation.

Appendix B-3

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Internally Displaced Persons in Myanmar/Burma

Table B-3 details the number of newly displaced persons since February 1, 2021, that have been identified by CAM sources within the nine townships of Chin State. As detailed previously in Table B-2, UNHCR has identified 21,400 newly displaced persons in Chin State, while CAM sources in Myanmar/Burma, as shown in Table B-3, report approximately 31,204 displaced in Chin State. CAM is sharing with UNHCR any information we can about these newly displaced persons in this ever-changing, emergent situation. CAM is committed to collaborating with UNHCR and others to fully identify and meet the protection and humanitarian needs of IDPs in Chin State and is hopeful that UNHCR may be able to soon establish offices in Chin State.

In addition to CAM's reporting on newly displaced Chins in Chin State, CAM sources identified 2,540 newly displaced in Kalay Township, Sagaing Region. CAM sources also identified Chins displaced prior to the coup, including 8,474 displaced in Paletwa Township, Chin State, as well as 8,575 in Rakhine State. Considering those displaced prior to the coup and after the coup, there are currently an estimated 50,793 Chins displaced throughout Myanmar/Burma.

Table B-3: Internally Displaced Persons in Chin State <i>displaced since February 1, 2021</i>	
Townships	Individuals Displaced <i>Since February 1</i>
Falam	2,000
Hakha	2,432
Kanpalet	1,000
Matupi	1,118
Mindat	10,000
Paletwa	426*
Teddim	300
Thantlang	13,778
Tonzang	150
Total since Feb 1, 2021	31,204

Source: Numbers provided by CAM source in Chin State as of October 15, 2021

*With 8,470 still displaced in Paletwa Township from before the coup, the total displaced in Paletwa Township has now risen to approximately 8,896.

Appendix B-4

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chin and Other Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malaysia

Table B-4, Table B-5, and Table B-6 below provide details on the number of Chin and other refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia. Table B-4 provides details of the total number of refugees from Myanmar/Burma who are registered with UNHCR in Malaysia.

Table B-4: UNHCR Registered Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia <i>as of September 2021</i>	
Ethnic Nationality	Individuals Registered with UNHCR
Chin	22,470
Other ethnic nationalities	29,370
Rohingya	103,030
Total	154,880

Table Source: UNHCR Figures at a Glance Malaysia, September 2021,
<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html>

Appendix B-5

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in Malaysia

Table B-5 provides the UNHCR numbers of registered Rohingyas and total number of registered refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia. Details are also included from CAM sources on the number of unregistered Chin and other refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar/Burma in Malaysia. Adding the registered and not yet registered together, an estimated 196,860 people from Myanmar/Burma are seeking refuge in Malaysia and are in need of protection. Registration of the unregistered is crucial, since without it, the unregistered will remain unprotected.

Table B-5: UNHCR Registered Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Community Reporting of Unregistered Others from Myanmar/Burma Who are Seeking Refuge in Malaysia as of September 2021			
Community Organization	UNHCR Registered	Non-Registered Individuals	Total
Arakan Refugee Relief Committee (ARRC)		<i>not reported</i>	
Independent Chin Community (ICC)*		36,282	
Kachin Refugee Committee (KRC)		2,400	
Malaysia Karen Organization (MKO)		3,000	
Mon Refugee Organization (MRO)		5,500	
Organization of Karenni Development (OKD)		300	
Rohingya	103,030**	<i>not reported</i>	
Shan Refugee Organization (SRO)		800	
Total	154,880**	48,282***	203,162

Table Source: Refugee community organizations in Malaysia

*Independent Chin Community is comprised of all Chin Community Organizations in Malaysia

**UNHCR Statistic, see Table B-4

*** Numbers are higher than reported UNHCR Numbers, as they reflect unregistered as well

Appendix B-6

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chin and Other Seeking Refuge in Malaysia

Table B-6 indicates the number of Chins seeking refuge in Malaysia, including registered refugees and asylum seekers and those unregistered with UNHCR. The numbers in Table B-5 are provided by Chin community organizations in Malaysia who serve their respective communities.

Table B-6: Chin Seeking Refuge in Malaysia as of August 2021			
	UNHCR Registered	Non-registered Individuals	Total
Alliance of Chin Refugees (ACR)*	7,546	8,635	16,181
Chin Refugee Committee (CRC)	9,500	3,500**	13,000
Dai Community	110	1,010	1,120
Falam Refugee Organization (FRO)	1,500	2,200	3,700
Zomi Association of Malaysia (ZAM)	3,810	20,937	24,747
Total	22,466	36,282	58,748

Table Source: Chin community organizations in Malaysia who serve registered and unregistered refugees and asylum seekers from their respective communities

*ACR breakdown of numbers of registered and unregistered are estimates

**1,500 of non-registered cases reported by CRC include individuals whose documents were confiscated by Malaysian authorities, a growing trend in Malaysia.

Appendix B-7

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in India

Table B-7, Table B-8, and Table B-9 provide details of the number of Chins and others from Myanmar/Burma seeking refuge in New Delhi and Mizoram State, India. Table B-9 provides a detailed look at where Chins are seeking refuge in one district, Lawngtlai District, in Mizoram State. UNHCR estimates there are 22,459 persons of concern from Myanmar/Burma in India as of July 31, 2021. In the tables below, CAM reports there are just over 2,500 refugees and asylum seekers in New Delhi, including registered and pending cases. Approximately 20,000 Chins have sought refuge in Mizoram State since the military coup on February 1.

Table B-7: Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in New Delhi, India as of September 2021				
Refugee Community	UNHCR Registered Individuals	Pending Cases	New Arrivals	Total
Burmese Community	37	3	8	59
Chin Refugee Committee	2,243	35	103	2,381
Kachin Refugee Community	15	<i>not reported</i>	9	34
Total	2,381	38	120	2,539

Table Source: Numbers provided by Burmese Community, Chin Refugee Committee, and the Kachin Refugee Community in New Delhi, India as of September 2021

Appendix B-8

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in India

In Table B-8, CAM reports the number of Chins seeking refuge in New Delhi based on reports from numerous refugee community groups collected by the Chin Refugee Committee in New Delhi.

Table B-8: Chins Seeking Refuge in New Delhi, India as of September 2021				
Refugee Community	UNHCR Registered Individuals	Pending Cases	New Arrivals (Cases)	Total
Delhi Burmese Christian Fellowship	223	3	21	247
Falam Community	163	9	9	181
Hakha Community	470	<i>not reported</i>	14	484
Matu Community	282	14	42	338
Mizo Community	242	9	17	268
Zanniat Community	185	<i>not reported</i>	<i>not reported</i>	185
Zomi Community	678	<i>not reported</i>	<i>not reported</i>	678
Total	2,243	35	103	2,381
<i>Table Source: Numbers provided by Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) from Myanmar/Burma in New Delhi, India as of September 2021</i>				

Appendix B-9

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chins and Others from Myanmar/Burma Seeking Refuge in India

Table B-9 shows the total number of Chins who fled to eight different locales across Mizoram State, India, between February 1 and May 7, 2021. These numbers do not account for the events in Thantlang Township on September 18, 2021, in which virtually an entire town was displaced due to heavy artillery fire from the Burmese Military. UNHCR has estimated that there are 15,000 who have fled to Mizoram since the coup, while Mizoram State government officials estimate there are approximately 20,000.

Tables B-9, B-10, and B-11 illustrate the nature of seeking refuge right now in Mizoram State, underscoring the reality that Chins fled their homes quickly and are not settled in a central location, rather they are spread throughout districts in Mizoram State. This reflects the need for UNHCR, NGOs, and civil society to have a unified and centralized response to meeting the needs of people fleeing the ongoing persecution in Myanmar/Burma.

Table B-9: Chins and Others Seeking Refuge from Myanmar/Burma in Mizoram State, India -- Statewide as of May 7, 2021	
District in Mizoram State	Individuals Seeking Refuge from Myanmar/Burma
Saiha District	1,029
Lawngtlai	1,784
Hnahthial District	2,366
North Vanlaiphai Area	65
Khawbung Area	1,426
Champhai South	1,567
Champhai North	484
Aizawl City	6,000
Total	15,121*

Table Source: numbers provided by a reliable source in Mizoram State, India as of May 7, 2021.

*Total number does not reflect displacement after May. Mizoram Government officials indicated there were 20,000 new refugees in Mizoram State as of October 2021.

Appendix B-10

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chin and Others Seeking Refuge in India

Tables B-10 and B-11 show details of about 15-20% of the Chins seeking refuge in Mizoram State since the coup. Table B-10 shows the subtotal from the Eastern Area of the District; and Table B-11 shows the subtotals from the Paithar Area, Lawngtlai Town Branch, and the Western Area of Lawngtlai District. When Table B-10 and B-11 are added together the total number of Chins seeking refuge in Lawngtlai District as of October 19, 2021, is 3,019.

Table B-10: Chins Seeking Refuge in Lawngtlai District, Mizoram State, India—Part 1 Eastern Area <i>as of October 19, 2021</i>	
Eastern Area Lawngtlai District	Individuals
Lungzarhtum	59
Bualpui - East	112
Bualpui – West	120
Siachangkawn	52
Vawmbuk I	75
Vawmbuk -II	33
Archhuang	89
Lungpher	75
Cheural	0
Rawlbuk	0
Sangau - I	180
Sangau - II	290
Sangau - III	108
Sangau - IV	171
Thaltlang	108
Sentetfiang	40
Pangkhuah	111
Lungtian - I	75
Lungtian - II	41
Tlangpui	3
Niawhtlang	156
Tuipui V	4
Niawhtlang III	56
Tialdawnglung	40
Subtotal	1,998

Appendix B-11

Tables Providing Further Details of Displacement Figures

Chin and Others Seeking Refuge in India

This table continues to show that 15-20% of Chins who fled since the coup are seeking refuge in the Lawngtlai District. Table B-11 includes Chins seeking refuge in Paithar Area, Lawngtlai Town Branch, and Western Area in the Lawngtlai District.

Table B-11: Chins Seeking Refuge in Lawngtlai District, Mizoram State, India—Part 2 Paithar Area, Lawngtlai Town Branch, and Western Area <i>as of October 19, 2021</i>	
Paithar Area Lawngtlai District	Individuals
Saikah U	108
Saikah L	77
Paithar	42
Rulkual	12
Vanhne	13
Chawntlang	24
Sihtlang	10
Kawlchaw	12
Subtotal	298
Lawngtlai Town Branch	Individuals
Vengpui	106
Bazar	51
Chandmary	188
College Veng	38
AOC	22
Bethel	135
N. Vengpui	25
L- III	8
Council Veng	96
Electric Veng	10
Subtotal	679
Western Area Lawngtlai	Individuals
Chawngte	7
Hruitezawl	37
Subtotal	44
Total in Lawngtlai District	3,019

Appendix C-1

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-1: Message of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo to the People of Myanmar, February 3, 2021¹

My dear Friends,

I write these lines as a spiritual leader, empathizing with the sentiments of millions of people at this moment. I write to my dear people, the civilian leaders, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar army) and the international community. I have watched with sadness the moments of darkness in our history and watched with hope the resilience of our people in their struggle for dignity. We are journeying through most challenging times of our history. I write with love towards all, seeking a durable solution, praying for an end forever to the periodic darkness that envelops our dear nation.

To My Dearest People of Myanmar

I share deep fellowship with all of you in this moment as you grapple with the unexpected, shocking events that are unfolding in our country. I appeal to each one of you, stay calm, never fall victim to violence. We have shed enough blood. Let not any more blood be shed in this land. Even at this most challenging moment, I believe that peace is the only way, peace is possible. There are always nonviolent ways for expressing our protests. The unfolding events are the result of a sad lack of dialogue and communication and disputing of diverse views. Let us not continue hatred at this moment when we struggle for dignity and truth. Let all community leaders and religious leaders pray and animate communities for a peaceful response to these events. Pray for all, pray for everything, avoiding occasions of provocation.

We are living through a time of pandemic. Our courageous health workers have saved many lives. We understand your pain. Some have resigned as protest, but I plead with you do not abandon your people in need at this time.

To our Tatmadaw General and the Tatmadaw Family:

The world has reacted with shock and agony to what has happened. When, in 2015, a peaceful transition to the elected government was effected by the Army, that won the admiration of the world. Today the world tries to understand what went wrong in the following years. Was there a lack of dialogue between the elected civilian authorities and the Tatmadaw?

We have seen so much pain in conflicts. Seven decades of shedding blood and the use of violence brought no results. You all promised peace and genuine democracy. Democracy was the streak of hope for solving the problems of this once rich country. This time millions voted for democracy. Our people believe in peaceful transfer of power. Now the Tatmadaw has unilaterally taken over. This has shocked the world and the people of Myanmar. Allegations of voting irregularities could have been solved by dialogue, in presence of neutral observers. A great opportunity was lost. Many leaders of the world have condemned and will condemn this shocking move.

¹ Message of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo to the People of Myanmar, February 3, 2021, <https://www.rfp.org/message-of-cardinal-charles-maung-bo-to-the-people-of-myanmar/> (accessed October 25, 2021)

Now you promise greater democracy – after investigation and another election. Myanmar people are tired of empty promises. They will never accept any fake protestation. You also promise to hold multiparty elections after one year. How will you gain the trust of our people? They will trust only when words are matched by sincere actions.

Their anguish and disappointment must be understood. Your actions need to prove that you love them, care for them. Once again I plead with you, treat them with great dignity and peace. Let there be no violence against our dear people of Myanmar.

Sadly, the elected representatives of our people belonging to NLD are under arrest. So are many writers, activists and youth. I urge you, respect their rights and release them at the earliest. They are not prisoners of war; they are prisoners of a democratic process. You promise democracy; start with releasing them. World will understand you.

To Daw ASSK and President U Win Myint and all our beloved leaders.

Dear NLD leaders : You are in this plight in your unending struggle to bring democracy to this nation. The unexpected turn of events has made you prisoners. We pray for you and urge all concerned to release you at the earliest.

Dear Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, you have lived for our people, sacrificed your life for our people. You will be always the voice of our people. These are painful days. You have known darkness, you have known light in this nation. You are not only the favorite daughter of the father of the nation, General Aung San. You are Amay Suu to the nation. Truth will prevail. God is the ultimate arbiter of truth. But God waits. At this moment I offer my personal sympathies with your plight and pray that you may once again walk amidst your people, raising their spirits.

At the same time I wish to confirm that this incident takes place due to lack of DIALOGUE and communication and lack of acceptance of one another.

To the International Community:

We are grateful for your concern and appreciate your sense of shock. We are grateful for your compassionate accompaniment at this moment. It matters a lot.

But history has painfully shown that abrupt conclusions and judgements ultimately do not benefit our people. Sanctions and condemnations brought few results, rather they closed doors and shut out dialogue. These hard measures have proved a great blessing to those super powers that eye our resources. We beg you do not force concerned people into bartering our sovereignty. The international community needs to deal with the reality, understanding well Myanmar's history and political economy. Sanctions risk collapsing the economy, throwing millions into poverty. Engaging the actors in reconciliation is the only path.

What has happened is painful. It has shattered our people. I write this with a desire to console them. I write not as a politician. I believe all the stakeholders in this country wish the best for our people. I write with prayers and hope that this great nation, this golden land of a graceful people will enter into global stage as a reconciled community of hope and peace. Let us solve all disputes through dialogue.

Peace is possible. Peace is the only way. Democracy is the only light to that path.

Appendix C-2

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-2: Statement of the Kachin Baptist Convention on September 20, 2021



JINGHPAW WUNPAWNG HKALUP HPUNG GINJAW

ကချင်နပ်စ်ခြင်းဝရင်ယာန်ဘမ္ဗဲရူပ်

KACHIN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Rg. No. 34/1950-51

Date - September 20, 2021

Letter No - 164/M-1/KBC (21)

STATEMENT OF KBC

1. CBC (Chin Baptist Convention), one of the 18 Language & Region Conventions of MBC (Myanmar Baptist Convention) released a statement on the 19th of September 2021. Reading upon the shocking news, KBC (Kachin Baptist Convention) members are saddened by the news, and KBC would like to convey that we are in this together.
2. As stated in CBC's statement, KBC, too, strongly condemns the inhumane murder of Pastor Cung Baik Hum, the torching of churches, buildings, and houses, and the barbaric acts of threatening the security and life of the pastors, the members of churches and the civilians in Chin state.
3. Since 1st of February 2021, the citizens of Myanmar face with immense worries and feeling of hopelessness for the future. Hence, KBC's stand is: the wills and voices of the citizens must be implemented by standing on the side of the truth.

***"For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish."***

Psalm 1:6

Kachin Baptist Convention

Appendix C-3

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-3: Statement of the Catholic Bishop Conference of Myanmar, the Myanmar Council of Churches, and the Myanmar Christ Mission Cooperation Board

Union of Myanmar

Statement of Request by the Various Christian Churches and Organizations in Myanmar

- 1) We, share the fears and serious concerns of all people in Myanmar over the Tatmadaw's control of power following the recent declaration of a one-year state of emergency in the country. We call on the Tatmadaw to immediately release President U Win Myint, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and others detained and request the pursuance of reconciliation.
- 2) The State and the people of Myanmar are making decisive actions for prevention, control, and treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and working tirelessly to combat the outbreak. As we combine our efforts and resources to slow the spread of the virus, we stress the importance of keeping in mind the COVID-19 health and safety protocols so that we do not lose a soul going forward.
- 3) We request all citizens of Myanmar to refrain from discrimination and the use of force among each other but instead, to take the responsibility to support each other and pledge the continuing efforts to take steps together to a brighter future.
- 4) We thank all the support received from our friends around the world who realize the potential of Myanmar to be a free, democratic, and prosperous country. We request your support to help fill the major gaps in the overall development needed for the people of Myanmar.
- 5) We call on people from all religions to bind our hearts together and remember in your prayers for our nation to attain justice and peace, as well as for development and hope. We request our fellow Christians to humble ourselves before God with an expectant heart to start fasting and prayer for our country.



Catholic Bishop Conference of Myanmar



Myanmar Council of Churches



Myanmar Christ Mission Cooperation Board

Appendix C-4

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-4: Statement from the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) on September 20, 2021¹

Calling for the Release of Pastor Rev. Thian Lian Sang and Justice for Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum
The Baptist World Alliance (BWA), a Christian worldwide communion representing 49 million Baptists in 126 countries and territories, calls for the immediate release of Baptist Pastor Rev. Thian Lian Sang. This call is further joined by the BWA regional leadership of the Asia Pacific Baptist Fellowship and by the Asia Pacific Baptist Women's Union, which together represent over 34,000 local Baptist churches across 21 countries and territories in Asia Pacific – including Myanmar.

Rev. Thian Lian Sang is pastor of Falam Baptist Church in Shwe Mandalay. On September 16, 2021, Rev. Sang was arrested by armed men in plainclothes in front of his house between 40th and 41st streets. Also present at the time of his arrest were three military vehicles and approximately 20 armed men.

Following his arrest, members of the State Administration Council (SAC) entered Rev. Sang's home. They confiscated 400,000 kyats which the family had received for the funeral of Rev. Sang's father that had been held on August 25, 2021. These members of the SAC also confiscated five cellphones, including the phones of Rev. Sang's wife and mother. At the time of his arrest, Rev. Sang was continuing to recover from COVID-19, and the family is gravely concerned for his health and wellbeing. The location of Rev. Sang's imprisonment remains unknown.

Rev. Sang's arrest is compounded by additional troubling reports of human rights violations and the intentional targeting of religious leaders in Chin State. On September 18, over 19 houses were burned down by military forces. Baptist Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum attempted to help as one of the houses belonged to a member of his church. Instead, upon his arrival on the scene, he was shot and killed by military soldiers—making him the first Baptist minister to die due to the ongoing conflicts. The military soldiers also stole his cellphone, watch, and cut off his finger in order to steal his wedding ring. We call for the immediate release of Rev. Thian Lian Sang. We also call for those who killed Rev. Cung Biak Hum to be held legally responsible, and we ask for restoration of the homes burned by the military.

With 1.7 million Baptists in Myanmar who have a continuous history of over 200 years in the country, the Myanmar Baptist family remains a key part of both Myanmar and the Baptist World Alliance family. While addressing these immediate injustices, we further call upon the military junta to do all that it can to restore religious freedom, human rights, and peace through dialogue across Chin State and Myanmar as a whole.

The Baptist World Alliance, founded in 1905, is a fellowship of 241 conventions and unions in 126 countries and territories comprising 47 million baptized believers in 169,000 churches. For more than 100 years, the Baptist World Alliance has networked the Baptist family to impact the world for Christ with a commitment to strengthen worship, fellowship and unity; lead in mission and evangelism; respond to people in need through aid, relief, and community development; defend religious freedom, human rights, and justice; and advance theological reflection and leadership development.

¹ See Baptist World Alliance statement online, <https://www.baptistworld.org/myanmar-advocacy-letter/>

Appendix C-5

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-5: Statement of the Chin Baptist Churches USA on September 21, 2021



CHIN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

Office Phone: 317-497-8385

www.cbcusa.org

cbcusainfo@gmail.com

Date: September 21, 2021

Statement

On the Death of Pastor Cung Biak Hum, the Bombing of Religious Facility and Houses in Thantlang and Hakha, Chin State, Burma

From 10 am to 4 pm on September 18, 2021, the Burmese military and the Chinland Defense Force – Thantlang/CNA fought in Thantlang in Chin State, Burma.

The Burmese army used heavy artillery and bombed Thantlang, destroying 18 houses and one hotel. Fire fighters were not available, so local residents tried put out the fires burning their homes. Among them was Pastor Cung Biak Hum, a pastor at Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church, but the Burmese army shot him dead. The army cut off his finger and took his wedding ring and his mobile phone, a series of inhumane acts. That same day, the military bombed two houses in Hakha. Almost 100% of the people in Thantlang fled to neighboring villages in Burma or to Mizoram State, India.

On September 14, the Burmese army bombed the Johnson Memorial Baptist Church in Thantlang. The church was built in memory of the last American Baptist missionary to Chin State, Rev. Dr. Robert Johnson, who was deported by military regime of General Ne Win in 1966. Such destruction of religious facilities by the Burmese military continues in Mindat and other parts of Chin State, as well as Kachin State and Karenni State.

In response to the bombing and attack, the Chin Baptist Churches USA (CBCUSA), which has over 100 Chin churches in over 30 States, makes the following statement:

1. CBCUSA strongly condemns the inhuman act of killing Pastor Cung Biak Hum and of bombing the church and houses in Thantlang and Hakha.
2. CBCUSA echoes the words of UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews who said, "The murder of a Baptist Minister and bombing of homes in Thantlang, Chin State, are the latest examples of the living hell being delivered daily by junta forces against the people Myanmar. The world needs to pay closer attention. More importantly, the world needs to act." We urge the international community, especially the United States, to act to stop this systematic persecution of Chins and others in Burma.
3. CBCUSA stands in solidarity with the people of Chin State and Burma in their fight for religious freedom and human rights in Chin State and Burma, and urges Chin people all over the world to pray for peace and justice in Burma.

7216 US 31 South, Indianapolis, IN 46227

Appendix C-6

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

Statement C-6: Statement of the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. on September 30, 2021



CHIN ASSOCIATION OF MARYLAND, INC.

3132 Pricillas View • Ellicott City, MD 21043
info@chinmd.org • www.chinmd.org

CAM – Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. demands justice for those who killed Pu Ral Tu, Pu Hram Cung and Pastor Cung Biak Hum

September 30, 2021

Ellicott City, Maryland - - - On Wednesday, September 29, 2021 (around 6:30 pm Myanmar Time), the Burmese army stationed in Thantlang, Chin State, Burma, shot to death Pu Ral Tu and Pu Hram Cung in Thantlang.

On September 18, 2021, the Burmese military rained heavy artillery fire on Thantlang town, setting ablaze 19 structures, including 18 houses and a hotel. According to witnesses, the military shot Pastor Cung Biak Hum of the Thantlang Centennial Baptist Church in Thantlang to death.

On September 14, 2021, the Burmese army bombed the Johnson Memorial Church in Thantlang which was built in 2014 in memory of the late American Baptist Missionary to Chin State Rev. Dr. Robert Johnson. General Ne Win's military regime deported Dr. Johnson in 1966. On September 16, 2021, the Burmese army arrested Pastor Thian Lian Sang of Mandalay Falam Baptist Church.

On September 24, 2021, the Burmese military arrested Pastor Ngai Kung in Ngaleng, Matupi township. The Burmese military occupied the Grace Baptist Church in Mindat as a military camp for five months from May to September 2021.

Therefore, CAM issued the following statement:

1. CAM strongly condemns the killing of Pu Ral Tu, Pu Hram Cung, and Pastor Cung Biak Hum. The killers must be held accountable.
2. CAM calls for the unconditional and immediate release of Pastor Ngai Kung and Pastor Thian Lian Sang.
3. CAM strongly calls on the military to halt the atrocities.

Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) is a 501 © (3) non-profit organization based in Maryland. CAM empowers the Chin communities in Maryland to be successfully integrated into American society. CAM also advocates for durable solutions of refugees and IDPs, and religious freedom and human rights.

Media Contact:

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Appendix C-7

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

C-7: Article of Pope Francis Calling for the Release of Myanmar Leaders on February 9, 2021¹

"Pope Francis calls for release of Myanmar leaders: Anti-coup protests heat up across the country as state TV warns of action against those who disturb stability"

"Pope Francis has urged Myanmar's military to release detained political leaders while condemning last week's coup. His appeal came during his address to ambassadors from across the world in the Vatican on Feb. 8. He said the path to democracy undertaken in recent years was "brusquely interrupted by last week's coup d'etat."

"This has led to the imprisonment of different political leaders who I hope will be promptly released as a sign of encouragement for a sincere dialogue aimed at the good of the country," the pope said. It's the second time the pope has spoken about the coup. On Feb. 7, he expressed his solidarity with the people of Myanmar and called on Myanmar's leaders to work for the common good and harmonious and democratic coexistence.

Pope Francis made a first historic visit to Myanmar in November 2017 and regards the country with much affection. During that visit, the pope had an unscheduled meeting with military chief Min Aung Hlaing in Yangon ahead of an official meeting with civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the president in Naypyitaw. The pope told Min Aung Hlaing to work for peace, according to church sources.

The pope's concern over the Myanmar crisis comes as nationwide protests intensify against the coup and the removal of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy-led government. From commercial hub Yangon in the south to the Christian stronghold of northern Myanmar, thousands of people took to the streets on Feb. 8 to show defiance to military rule.

State-run television warned on Feb. 8 evening that action must be taken according to the law against offenses that disturb, prevent and destroy state stability, public safety and the rule of law. Gatherings of more than five people were banned and a curfew imposed from 8pm to 4am in the townships of Yangon and Mandalay. Despite warnings, thousands of people including teachers and doctors took to the streets in Yangon and Mandalay in the latest protests on Feb. 9.

The UN Human Rights Council will hold a special session on the Myanmar crisis following a call by Britain and the European Union.

"The Church is aware that her essentially religious mission includes defending and promoting human rights," Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon said in a tweet on Feb. 8. The outspoken Catholic leader has called for the release of Suu Kyi and other detained leaders and to pursue dialogue. Cardinal Bo has posted several messages about justice, human rights and peace while sharing photos of priests and nuns supporting peaceful anti-coup protests."

¹ See UCA New for the article, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pope-francis-calls-for-release-of-myanmar-leaders/91341>

Appendix C-8

Statements from Religious and Community Groups

C-8: Cardinal Bo's message of peace for Myanmar on Divine Mercy Sunday on April 11, 2021

Good deeds are needed today everywhere and the Lord of Divine Mercy reminds us not to have faith that is not matched by deeds.

The feast comes soon after Easter Sunday. Resurrection is the celebration of Hope. It is a strong affirmation that God can create wonders even out of the tomb. Life will spring forth from death, when the Lord's time comes. The last one year has been a year of darkness and death. You have witnessed so much of human suffering. Let the heart of Jesus heal everyone: the oppressor and the oppressed.

Myitkyina has been in the news for sad reasons and reasons of faith and sacrifice. Sad reason because of the great tragedy of killing the innocents in the streets, especially in front of the church. The Church was drawn into the struggle of our people, called to accompany our people in their blood and tears. You really walked a true way of the Cross. I pray that each one of you is healed of that sorrowful memories. For many of you, the thirteenth station of the Cross, of our mother crying over the dead body of her son, became real. We live in a country where hundreds of mothers live with inconsolable tears and their hearts wounded, like our Mother Mary, with the sight of their sons and daughters tortured and killed. To all those mothers and all of you directly involved, we pray with grace flowing from the heart of Jesus.

We are also grateful for the great witness the Catholic Church gave during the crisis. Starting from your prayer rally till today you have accompanied your people in their times of trial. The Myitkyina name is put on the international map through the inspiring witness of Sister Ann Rose of St Francis Xavier Sisters. The world watched with awe at the great sacrificial witness in front of the tsunami of evil. I commend the witness to the redemptive love of the sister, which inspired many to appreciate the Catholic Church and the religious life. Out of darkness, simple acts of generosity shines with great power.

This message of redemptive love is in summary the message of divine mercy. Forgiveness at the face of darkness, love at the face of hatred is the message our Lord gave to Sister Faustina in his many apparitions. Today's opening prayer starts "Heavenly Father and God of Mercy, We no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for He is alive and has become the Lord of Life." Yes, the resurrection mystery is solved through the mercy of God.

Amidst all the great challenges we face today, we seek the mercy of God. Times are dark, path seems challenging. We need the light of God's mercy in Myanmar. We pray with St. Faustina the chaplet Eternal God, in whom mercy is endless and the treasury of compassion inexhaustible, look kindly upon us and increase Your mercy in us, that in difficult moments we might not despair nor become despondent, but with great confidence submit ourselves to Your holy will, which is Love and Mercy itself.

We do pray that all your family, your children are guarded by the mercy and compassion of Jesus. His love is inexhaustible. Let every house be protected by the love of Divine Mercy.

What does this feast tell us at this juncture of History?

Jesus revealed to St Faustina that Divine Mercy is honored in three ways

- By Good Deeds
- By Good Words
- By Strong Prayer

Yes. Mercy starts with good deeds. The experience of all the disciples after the resurrection was to see one another as brothers and sisters. They shared everything. The Acts of the Apostle says: All the believers were one in heart and mind, sharing all resources. There was no one in need of anything. That was the ideal community after resurrection. This is what attracted thousands into the new community of believers. They loved one another as brothers and sisters.

Today, more than ever, our community stands in need of mercy. Millions are starving. Before they could come out of that disaster, the coup came. Most of our people are starving. We need to share our resources. However poor we are, we could share something. That is the sign of divine mercy.

If we are compassionate and merciful God rewards us hundredfold. Jesus said, even giving a cup of water gives us a chance to enter heaven. (Mt 10:42) These are times for mercy. The stomach is a great disaster when hunger sets in and millions are starving in this country because of the double disaster. Good deeds are needed today everywhere and the Lord of Divine Mercy reminds us not to have faith that is not matched by deeds. (James 2). Thousands are around us are affected: in IDP camps, victims of pandemic, the coup.

Hunger is not only the problem our people face: they are afraid, they are traumatized, their spirit is broken by street violence. They need Words. Words of comfort. We need to visit people who have lost their dear ones to the hatred. These families need our words. This is what our Lord told St Faustina: Heal one another with Words of Mercy. There are hundreds of people who live in fear, anxiety and dread. Thousands are in prisons. They all need the soothing words, like Jesus soothed his disciples: Do Not be Afraid; I am with you always.

The third act the Lord of Divine Mercy asked for is: PRAYER. Prayer is the utmost need. There are mountains of problems for all of us. COVID and coup – two big mountains suffocating our people. How to move these mountains and come to normal life? Jesus says: Have faith, pray unceasingly. If you have the faith of a mustard seed and ask this mountain to move, it will move. We need to move these mountains. Knock at the heavenly gates. Ask the Lord to give peace, seek and find harmony in our country. The Gospel reading follows the message of Resurrection. Let there be peace everywhere. When Jesus appeared after resurrection, he is repeating the message the Angels sang when he was born: Peace to all men of Good Will.

We have seen how lack of peace some people's heart can bring greatest damage to humanity. People who can trust others, who cannot live in peace, who cannot allow others to live in peace, destroy the peace of all. So Jesus wishes to his disciples, peace be with you. The greatest gift one can pray for is Peace. That is worthier than all gold and silver. Kachin land was blessed with so many riches above the ground and below the ground. But that did not bring peace: but only conflict. We pray that this year our land may see peace. Men's heart may melt and we may see peaceful life for all.

The second part of the Gospel has a moving scene. St Thomas. Thomas could not believe in the power of God. He wants to touch the wounds. He is like us today. We have seen so many wounds, so much blood, so much atrocity against the innocent people: We find it difficult to believe that God is present amidst this darkness. Yes. Amidst all these darkness, my brothers and sisters, it is important to believe that God will ultimately triumph over evil. His hand is the ultimate surrender. Like Thomas we will be called to cry out in wonder and say; My Lord; My God. Let all the Kachin areas say this prayer: We are wounded Lord, touch our wounds, make us to proclaim, My Lord and My God.

Thomas was healed of his darkness, his doubt, his loss of Faith. Jesus is the wounded healer. His wounds washes away our pain today. We pray to Jesus: Help us Lord, when our land is wounded and bleeding with hatred, let us become the wounded healer. Let us have the grace and courage to forgive and reconcile our worst enemies and give him the benefit of Love. Let us not repay inhumanity with inhumanity. Let us not repay brutality with brutality. Civil war would wound everyone and will take decades to heal. Let us not take that path of self-destruction. Let us pray with Francis of Assisi.

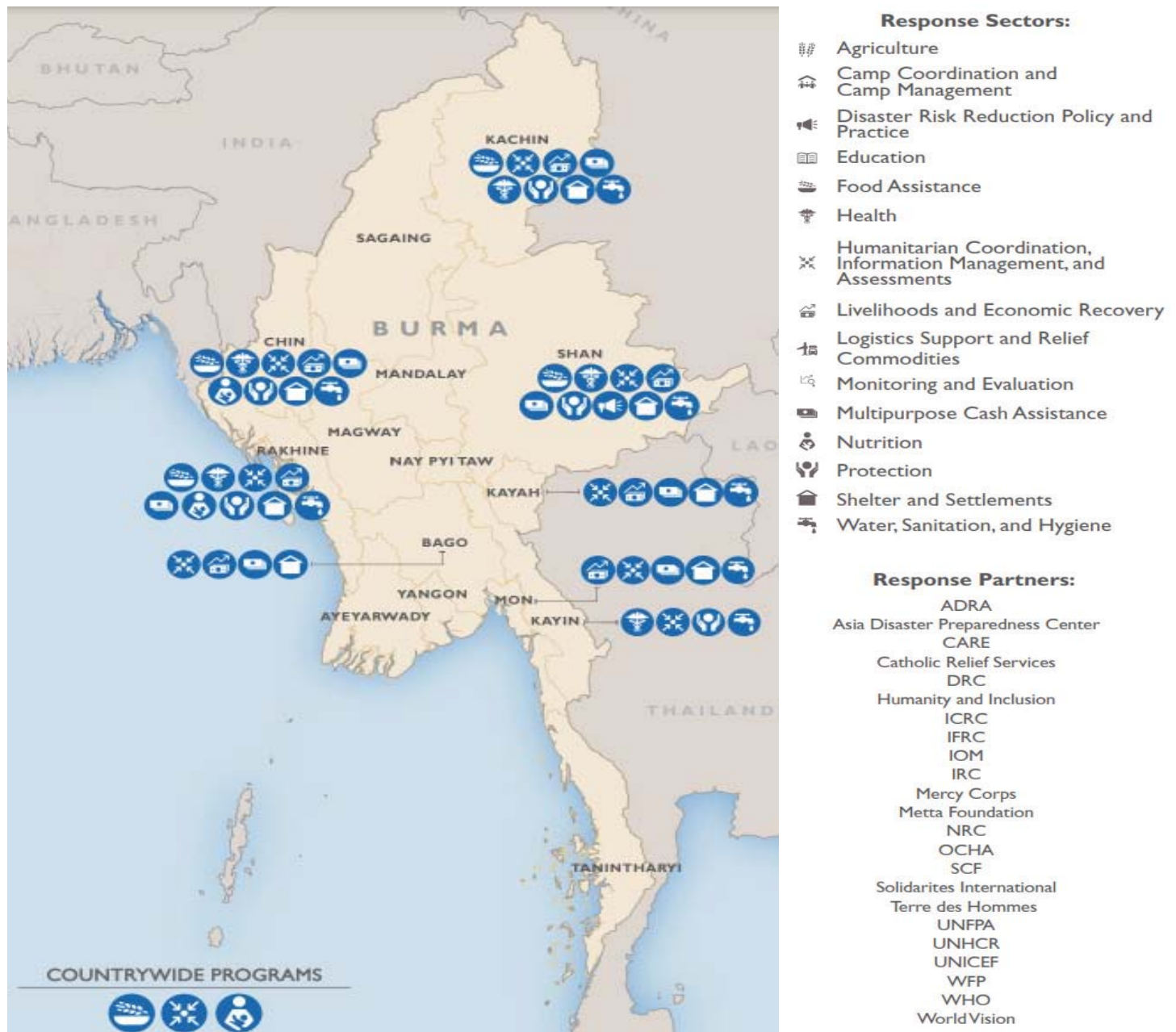
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

Stay Blessed: We shall overcome any darkness with the Light of Jesus.

Appendix D-1

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar/Burma

D-1: Map Detailing U.S. Government's Response to the Regional Crisis in Myanmar/Burma¹



¹ USAID, Burma and Bangladesh, USG Response to the Regional Crisis, August 12, 2021, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/08.12.2021 - USG_Burma_and_Bangladesh_Program_Map.pdf

Appendix D-2

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar/Burma

D-2: Table of U.S. Government Humanitarian Funding for the Burma Response in Fiscal Year 2021¹

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
FUNDING IN BURMA FOR THE REGIONAL CRISIS RESPONSE			
USAID/BHA			
Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)	Health; WASH	Chin, Kayin	\$1,500,000
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS), Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), Protection	Kachin, Rakhine, Shan	\$1,200,000
IOM	Shelter and Settlements	Rakhine	\$1,600,000
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Health, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter and Settlements	Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, Shan	\$3,600,000
Mercy Corps	Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA), MPCA, WASH	Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Shan	\$1,595,000
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	ERMS, HCIMA, MPCA, Shelter and Settlements	Bago, Chin, Kayah Kayin, Mon, Rakhine	\$2,400,000
Save the Children Federation (SCF)	Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Rakhine, Shan	\$2,500,000
UNICEF	Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Kachin, Rakhine, Shan	\$4,179,734
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$1,600,000
WFP	Food Assistance—Cash Transfers, Local, Regional, and International Procurement; Nutrition	Countrywide	\$18,000,000
	Food Assistance—Cash Transfers, Local, Regional, and International Procurement; Nutrition	Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, Shan	\$11,500,000
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING IN BURMA			\$49,674,734
STATE/PRM			
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	Humanitarian Assistance - Multi-Sector	Burma	\$8,400,000
UNHCR	Humanitarian Assistance - Multi-Sector	Burma	\$2,300,000
TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING IN BURMA			\$10,700,000
TOTAL USG FUNDING IN BURMA			\$60,374,734

¹ USAID, Fact Sheet #6, Burma and Bangladesh- Regional Crisis Response, August 12, 2021, p. 7, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/08.12.2021_-_USG_Burma_and_Bangladesh_Regional_Crisis_Response_Fact_Sheet_6.pdf



The heavy shelling by the Tatmadaw on October 29, 2021, destroyed more than 164 buildings in Thantlang Town, including two small hotels, two churches, residences, and business.

Photo: The Hakha Times

After the 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma: Challenges for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

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