

Call for accountability and new sanctions in Myanmar

February 1, 2023

A call for accountability from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and announced sanctions punishing the Burmese army marked the two-year anniversary of a military coup in Myanmar.



Pastor Cung Biak Hum was shot dead in the Chin state of Myanmar. (Facebook Photo / Asia Pacific Baptists)

Since the Burmese military—known as the Tatmadaw—seized control of Myanmar’s government on Feb. 1, 2021, human rights monitors have [verified about 3,000 civilian deaths](#), as well as the destruction of houses of worship and homes.

“The real death toll, taking into account the military’s offensives in the ethnic regions, is likely to be much, much higher,” Benedict Rogers, senior analyst for East Asia with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, wrote in a [recent blog](#).

Military targets ethnic and religious minorities

The Tatmadaw and the State Administration Council, which the military established to run the country, have targeted ethnic and religious minorities, the [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) reported.

“It has been two years since the coup, and we have yet to see the SAC brought to justice for the Rohingya [genocide](#) and myriad abuses of religious freedom and human rights,” Commissioner Eric Ueland said.

“The Biden administration must be more active in support for international efforts to hold the Tatmadaw and the Burmese authorities accountable with all tools at their disposal, including coordinated sanctions against Tatmadaw leaders for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.”



Participants at the Baptist World Alliance annual gathering in Birmingham, Ala., lay hands on Vernette Mint Mint San of Myanmar and Igor Bandura of Ukraine to pray for their

homelands. (Photo / Ken Camp)

Last July, the Baptist World Alliance general council at its meeting in Birmingham, Ala., approved a [resolution condemning the coup in Myanmar](#) and singling out the Burmese military for waging “a campaign of terror and violence, particularly against minority religions.”

Myanmar’s State Administrative Council has increased its sponsorship of extremist factions with the nation’s Buddhist majority, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom noted.

The commission “stands in solidarity with the people of Burma who have endured great suffering in these two years since the coup,” Commissioner Mohamed Magid said.

“We urge the U.S. government to continue to coordinate with international partners to hold the SAC accountable for its human rights abuses within Burma, especially its persecution of the Buddhist majority who do not want the authoritarian government to coopt their faith, the predominately Muslim Rohingya, and various Christian communities.”

Sanctions focus on aviation fuel for military



Burmese military shelled Thantland

township in Myanmar's Chin State.
(Facebook Photo / Asia Pacific
Baptists)

On Jan. 31, the eve of the second anniversary of the coup, the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom announced a new round of sanctions focused on the Tatmadaw. The sanctions target the [supply of aviation fuel](#) to the military, which has carried out multiple airstrikes on civilians.

“Our sanctions are meticulously targeted to deliver maximum impact, reducing the military’s access to finance, fuel, arms and equipment. The junta must be held to account for their brutal crackdown on opposition voices, terrorizing air raids and brazen human rights violations,” said U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly.

[Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) applauded the announcements of sanctions focused on the Burmese military and urged they be “implemented swiftly and fully.”

“We urge these governments to go even further and call on other members of the international community to follow suit until the military is completely unable to access the arms, aviation fuel and money that keep it afloat,” Rogers said.

“On this second anniversary of the coup, we reiterate our unwavering support for the people of Myanmar and emphasize our commitment to ensuring that this ongoing tragedy is neither ignored nor forgotten.”

Arrests of minority religious leaders



Hkalam Samson, past president and former general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention in Myanmar was detained by the Burmese military junta. (CSW Photo)

Since the coup, more than 17,000 people have been arrested, and at least 13,700 remain imprisoned.

[Hkalam Samson](#), the past president and former general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention, is among the religious leaders who remain imprisoned in Myanmar. Samson was taken into custody Dec. 4 before he could board a flight to Bangkok, Thailand, for medical treatment.

He currently is [held in a prison in Myitkyina](#), where he has been charged with two offenses under the Unlawful Association Act.

“To arrest, jail and prosecute one of the country’s most prominent Christian pastors is a sign of how hostile this regime is to the church,” Rogers said.