

Calls for accountability mark genocide anniversary in Myanmar

August 29, 2022

Advocates for human rights and religious freedom marked the fifth anniversary of the genocidal campaign against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims by calling for an end to military rule in the nation.



During a March 21 speech at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya people of Myanmar constitute “crimes against humanity and genocide.” (Screen capture image)

U.S. Secretary of State [Antony Blinken declared](#) earlier this year the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya people of Myanmar—beginning in October 2016—constitute “crimes against humanity and genocide.”

Violence intensified—and expanded to include other religious minorities—after the Burmese military, also known as the Tatmadaw, staged a coup in February 2021 that has [claimed more than 2,000 lives](#).

The [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) on Aug. 25 called for accountability by the military junta, and the [United Kingdom announced](#) it will join in a genocide case against the Burmese army at the International Court of Justice.

“The Biden administration took a pivotal step in recognizing the Burmese authorities’ violent actions against the Rohingya as genocide and crimes against humanity,” Commissioner Stephen Schneck stated. “We urge the United States government to actively support multilateral efforts to hold the Tatmadaw and other Burmese officials accountable through the international legal system.”

Three pending cases are intended to hold the Burmese authorities accountable for their actions against the Rohingya. In February, the National Unity Government—Burma’s shadow government opposing the ruling military junta—accepted the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. In July, the international court rejected the Tatmadaw’s objections against one of those cases, brought by The Gambia, allowing the court to proceed trying the case.

Commissioner Eric Ueland said the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom “reiterates its recommendation to the U.S. government to increase engagement with multilateral and regional partners ... to stem ongoing religious freedom violations and promote accountability.”

“We call on the U.S. State Department and Congress to hold the perpetrators accountable immediately so the Rohingya can return back to Burma,” Ueland said.

In addition to declaring its intention to join in the International Court of

Justice genocide case against the Tatmadaw, the United Kingdom also announced it would implement additional sanctions to target military-linked businesses to Myanmar.

Foreign ministers of the United States and the United Kingdom joined the European Union and the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway in issuing [a statement](#) Aug. 25 calling on the international community to “help to ensure justice for Rohingya victims, support host communities, and foster conditions that will allow for the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return to their communities.”



Attendees of the 2022 Baptist World Alliance annual gathering pray for Myanmar (Burma) and Ukraine. (Photo by Eric Black)

At its annual gathering in Birmingham, Ala., in July, the [Baptist World Alliance general council adopted a resolution](#) condemning the military coup that led to “a campaign of terror and violence” in Myanmar. The resolution called for “the establishment of a true democracy that respects the rights of religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar.

“Since the coup, the military has terrorized communities in Kachin, Karen, Kayah State, Chin State and Sagaing Region by burning villages, destroying churches, and detaining pastors and religious leaders,” the resolution stated.



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

The resolution offered support for “the November 2021 call of the United Nations Security Council for an immediate end to the violence” and prayers for “Baptists and other Christians ministering in persecuted communities and among displaced persons.”

Last September, the Tatmadaw [shot and killed Cung Biak Hum](#), a Baptist minister in Thantlang who was helping a member of his church extinguish a fire after the man’s home was set ablaze during military attacks.

About three months later, Salai Ngwe Kyar, a pastor in the village of Thet Kei Taung and a student at the Asho Chin Baptist Seminary in Pyay Township, [died from injuries sustained during a military interrogation](#) in Magway Region.