

# Conditions deteriorating in Myanmar, Baptist doctor says

March 5, 2021

Conditions continue to deteriorate rapidly for citizens peacefully seeking to resist military rule in Myanmar—and particularly for medical personnel who are caring for injured protesters, a Baptist physician in the troubled nation reported.



Anti-coup protesters march in Yangon, Myanmar, on Feb. 25, 2021. (AP Photo)

“Doctors, nurses and first responders have become the No. 1 enemy of the military for our role in saving lives and also for the countrywide civil disobedience movement we initiated,” she wrote in a March 5 email.

The medical doctor—who asked to be identified only as Octavia—was living safely in Singapore when the military coup occurred Feb. 1, but her Christian faith compelled her to return to her homeland of Myanmar, also known as Burma.

“As a humanitarian worker all my life, I wanted to be with my people, knowing they will need me most, and I will be able to contribute more

amidst them than living in Singapore,” she wrote.

She pointed to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25—“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me”—as her motivation for service in a dangerous situation.

“Helping the least among us is my faith and my mission,” she wrote.

Through her contacts with the [Baptist World Alliance](#), Octavia stressed she wanted to let others around the world know what is occurring in her nation and to “be a voice for those who cannot speak.”

## **Medical community led in peaceful protest**

She and her health care colleagues were “the first to defy the coup and lead the CDM (civil disobedience movement), followed by teachers and engineers,” Octavia wrote in a March 1 email. Soon, civil servants and students joined the peaceful protests.

“The first victim due to a gunshot wound was a 19-year-old female student from Naypyidaw. She had been taking shelter behind a bus stop from the police’s water cannon,” she reported.

During a nationwide strike on Feb. 22, a 16-year-old male was shot in the head while trying to retrieve an injured man from the crossfire in Mandalay, she wrote.

“The excessive use of force, beatings, firing live rounds, arresting innocent civilians for no apparent reason became a routine for the armed police and soldiers,” Octavia wrote. “Widows, orphans and mourning parents became a common scene. Doctors and teachers are the main targets, followed by

young students.

“The police and military continue to block roads and commit atrocities across the country and the death toll keeps rising daily. Many lives have been lost to a brutal coup, but the people of Myanmar are determined to continue with their struggle till the end.”

## **BWA helped support charitable clinics**

Baptist World Aid helped Octavia and other Christian health care workers establish charitable clinics in key locations.

“Little did we know that our charity clinic announcement would have such an impact on our health care colleagues who saw us standing together with them in solidarity to fight for a good cause,” she stated.



In her March 5 email, she wrote: “Currently, we are focusing on three key areas, supporting CDM workers, supporting needy families of the fallen heroes and charity clinics. At the time of this writing, we have four charity clinics across the country and plans to set up more.”

Through the clinics, health care professionals not only treat general ailments, but also care for wounded protesters. Because of that, they and the first responders who work with them are targeted by the military, she said.

“Ambulance drivers and rescue teams were brutally assaulted, and one died due to a fracture of the skull caused by repeated beatings with a rifle

butt,” she wrote.

In addition to protesters and those who offer them medical attention, the military also has harassed and detained members of an ethnic Kachin Baptist congregation.

## Members of ethnic Baptist church arrested

[International Christian Concern](#) reported the military police raided the Kachin Baptist Church in Lashio, in the Burmese state of Shan, on Feb. 28 and arrested four ministers and several youth.



Elijah Brown

BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown confirmed the arrest, although details surrounding the cause of their arrest remained unclear. BWA learned from two sources the arrested church members had been released, Brown wrote on March 3.

“While we note with thankfulness that they have been released, we continue to ask for prayers for them and their families as they process what appears to be an unjust arrest,” Brown stated. “We are also continuing to call upon the Myanmar government to respect all people of faith and all ethnicities in Myanmar and to stop targeted arrests that damage families and undermine community peace.”

After the military seized control of the government in Myanmar, declared a state of emergency and placed the nation's elected leader and members of her party under house arrest, [BWA issued a call](#) to prayer, advocacy and solidarity for the people of Myanmar.

Octavia expressed her appreciation for the support BWA provided and for the prayers of Christians globally.

"Please stand with us, pray for us and also support many who have given up their jobs, livelihoods and lives," she wrote. "The future is bleak, the air is filled with tear gas and our roads are stained with blood flowing from innocent lives."