

# Myanmar legal case dropped against Kachin Baptist leader

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A military officer in Myanmar withdrew defamation charges he had filed against a Kachin Baptist leader who spoke briefly to President Trump about persecution of religious minorities.

[The Irrawaddy](#), an independent online news source that covers Burma and Southeast Asia, reported Lt. Col. Than Htike of the Myanmar Tatmadaw Northern Command withdrew his legal complaint against Hkalam Samson, president and former general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention.

U Than Tun, judge in Myitkyina township, said the court would not proceed with any legal prosecution against Samson, the news site reported.

A military spokesman insisted the decision to drop the case was not due to outside pressure, although the U.S. State Department had voiced concern about the case, *The Irrawaddy* reported.

Leaders of the Baptist World Alliance and the American Baptist Churches, USA, had appealed to U.S. government officials and the United Nations, expressing their concern about Samson's safety and calling for his rights to be upheld.

Samson had participated in a White House meeting with Trump during the Ministerial to Advance International Religious Freedom. He thanked the United States for [imposing a travel ban](#) on Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing and three other senior officers for actions the military took against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, also known as Burma.

Samson also urged the United States to support Myanmar's transition to

“genuine democracy” and federalism. His comments were included in a live news broadcast subsequently posted on social media.

In a Sept. 9 post on [Facebook](#), BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown wrote: “I am grateful for the many who have prayed, and I am especially thankful for Myanmar’s decision to honor religious freedom. Let us join together in celebration and continue to pray for the peace and well-being of all of Myanmar.”

Lee Spitzer, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches, USA, also commented on [Facebook](#), calling the development “a special and significant answer to ... churches’ prayers and advocacy.”

“Our prayers have been answered, though the larger struggle continues,” Spitzer commented.