

UN official condemns 'unspeakable tragedy' in Myanmar

September 27, 2023

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned atrocities committed by the ruling military regime in Myanmar as “inhumanity in its vilest form.”

In [Sept. 26 remarks to the U.N. Human Rights Council](#), High Commissioner Volker Turk called for an end to “an unspeakable tragedy,” saying the Burmese military regime should be brought before the International Criminal Court.

“There is no time to lose,” Turk said, noting at least 4,108 deaths caused by the Burmese military—known as the Tatmadaw—and its affiliates.

Last year, the Baptist World Alliance general council approved a [resolution condemning the coup in Myanmar](#), saying the Burmese military was waging “a campaign of terror and violence, particularly against minority religion.”

The violence has escalated and the human rights situation has deteriorated dramatically in recent months, Turk told the council.

“Widespread campaigns of violence perpetrated by the military continue, in full disregard for the fundamental principles of humanity and repeated demands of the United Nations Security Council for an immediate cessation of the hostilities and calls for unhindered humanitarian access,” he said.

Turk presented a [report](#)—the eighth report submitted by his office since the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar—covering the period from April

1, 2022, to July 31, 2023. It points to “a seemingly endless spiral of military violence” in Myanmar.

“Its findings describe a range of incidents—many of particular brutality, emblematic of a systematic negation of human rights, human life and human dignity,” he said. “We are faced here with a system of ruthless repression designed to coerce and subjugate its people and to erode a society so that the predatory interests of the military are preserved.”

Turk reported 22 documented incidents of mass killings. In some cases, soldiers tortured villagers and mutilated their bodies.

“Three specific military tactics have been systematically directed against the civilian population: airstrikes, mass killings and burning of villages,” Turk said.

He pointedly noted the Burmese military is depending on heavy weaponry that “can only be purchased from foreign sources,” and it relies on foreign currency to buy hardware, aviation fuel and other materials.



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

On Sept. 18, 2021, Burmese [military shot dead a Baptist pastor](#) in the Chin State. Pastor Cung Biak Hum was shot while he was attempting to help a church member extinguish a fire after the man’s home was set ablaze during military attacks.

“Civilian rule of law in Myanmar has vanished,” Turk said.

He noted credible sources reported 24,836 people have been arrested,

19,264 still are detained, and 150 have been sentenced to death by military-controlled courts. At least 7,368 individuals have been convicted “in ad hoc trials, most lasting mere minutes, and without defense counsel,” he added.



Hkalam Samson, past president and former general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention in Myanmar was detained by the Burmese military junta in December. On Good Friday, he was sentenced to six years in prison. (CSW Photo)

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

“People in Myanmar have long suffered with insufficient attention being paid by the international community to their plight,” Turk concluded. “That must change.”

Earlier this month, the founding president of the 21Wilberforce human rights organization [urged Texas Baptists to call on Congress](#) to provide support for persecuted people in Myanmar.

Randel Everett, a former executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, sent an email asking Texas Baptist leaders to endorse a letter to Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, urging full funding for the Burma Act.

Everett noted the importance of contacting Granger and other members of Congress immediately to influence the decision-making process for funding.

“The funding will provide vital aid that will help the communities affected by the violence to rebuild, promote a federal democracy, and hold accountable those responsible for the ruthless abuses of human rights and religious liberty,” Everett wrote.