



Houses burn in Thantlang on Saturday afternoon after being hit by junta artillery shells (The Chinland Post)

In the Shadows of the Military Coup

MYANMAR October 2021 | *The Myanmar military - who forcefully took over the country in a military coup in February 2021 - target the civilian population in Chin state, burning down churches and killing its population.*

Christians in Myanmar request urgent prayer for those affected and the tens of thousands who have been forced to flee.

Military forces in Myanmar have destroyed more than 160 buildings in a town in northwestern Myanmar, including at least two churches, local media and activists, [reported on 30 October 2021](#).

The attacks in Thantlang have forced more than 10,000 residents to flee the town, some staying temporarily in nearby villages and others seeking shelter across the border in Mizoram, India.

"They are refugees," UNHCR Jana Mason, *Senior Advisor for External Relations & Government Affairs at the UN Refugee Agency* said of those crossing the Myanmar border. She urged journalists reporting on the situation in Myanmar to not call them "migrants" as the term is misleading; **"those fleeing Myanmar now are refugees and have the right to protection against forced return."**



Fires burn in the town of Thantlang in Myanmar's northwestern state of Chin, on Friday. More than 160 buildings in the town, including at least two churches, have been destroyed by fire caused by shelling from government troops, local media and activists reported Saturday. (Chin Human Rights Organization/The Associated Press)

"Most of the structures on the main street, which has shop stalls and all kinds of businesses, have been destroyed. There is nothing left to salvage... The manner in which the fire was burning indicates that it was not just the incendiary rocket fires but also deliberately torching of houses and structures manually."

- Deputy executive director, Salai Za Uk Ling of the Chin Human Rights Organization regarding the Saturday 30 October 2021 attacks.

The shelling in October follows similar attacks in September which already led to several internally displaced. Baptist pastor Cung Biak Hum was one of those trying to stop the spread of the fires following the Military attacks in September. Myanmar military forces opened fire randomly on the residential area of the town using heavy weapons and explosives. A [friend of the pastor reported](#) that it took around two hours to retrieve the body from the street, as the military remained in the area, randomly shooting at people. When they finally reached the pastor's body, he had two gunshots in his chest and neck area, fired by Myanmar's military. Pastor Hum's body was also found missing his ring finger, "We believe they [Myanmar military] cut off the finger to get his [wedding] ring...The finger was cut off from near the base. Otherwise the ring couldn't be taken easily," [Reverend Dr Lal Uk, the chair of the Thantlang Association of Baptist Churches shared](#). **Pastor Hum is survived by his pregnant wife and their two young sons. The fires Pastor Hum was trying to put out destroyed at least 18 homes and a government building.**

Baptist groups in Myanmar's Chin State and Kachin State—the Chin Baptist Convention (CBC) and Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC)— have strongly condemned the killing of the pastor as "shocking and horrible". The groups also called out the actions of the Myanmar troops in Chin State as "barbaric and unacceptable". The groups have reported an upsurge in violence by the Myanmar military, including raids and bombings of civilian homes and buildings, and the destruction of churches. [In Thantlang, Myanmar military](#)

[troops have attacked civilians since late August 2021, "killing three including a 10-year-old boy and injuring a number of other civilians."](#)



What has happened:

In February 2021, the Military of Myanmar took over the country following a general election in which [Aung San Suu Kyi's](#) party won by a landslide, the military had been supporting the opposing party. Following the illegal takeover of power the military declared a [year-long state of emergency](#).

Following the coup there have been countrywide protests against the military takeover - the military has used violence to target the protesters and [killed and wounded thousands](#) - regardless of ethnic background.

The Burmese protesters from the majority ethnic group and from the larger cities saw firsthand a similarity between the newfound military atrocities perpetrated against them now and the military's brutality towards the ethnic and religious minorities in the smaller towns and districts in years past. Many of the anti-coup protesters apologized for their [silence earlier](#) during the military's violent crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in 2017, and were remorseful for not speaking up on behalf of the minority populations.

Violence against Christian Chin and other ethnic minorities is not new:

The Myanmar military has been targeting and bombing the religious and ethnic minorities in the surrounding towns and villages of Myanmar on and off [since the 1990s](#). While the genocide of the Rohingya in Rakhine state is well-documented in international media - the Chin and Karen populations' persecution is less known both in the media and political engagement, though they have been equally targeted. Jana Mason with UNHCR USA shared this during a recent webinar on the situation of minorities in Myanmar following the February 2021 coup. She explained that the military's reignited campaign against minorities "follows an old pattern," and noted that in the public press, less information was known about persecution faced by the Chin and Karen populations. She urged for a UN resolution which "quells the violence" perpetrated by the Myanmar military which is affecting "all ethnic and religious groups- the Chin, Rohingya, Karen, Kachin..."

Prayer Requested



Pictured: Pastor Hum, his wife (pregnant when her husband was murdered) and their two sons (11 and 7 years old).

Christian believers have requested prayer for Christians from Thantlang, Chin State, and from other regions in Myanmar.

Forced to flee with their children and belongings, those already traumatized by the military attacks must take the arduous and perilous journey to get over the border into neighboring India, having to cross strong current rivers with makeshift "boats".

Pray for safety, protection and the peace of God; and pray for the cessation of the military attacks.

Pray for the children who have lost a mother or a father from the attacks, like the two sons of Pastor Hum; and pray for parents who have lost their children as a result of the Myanmar military's attacks on civilians.

Free Burma Rangers also [reported](#) attacks in Karenni state between the Myanmar military and local Karenni resistance groups. The fighting in August 2021 has forced 6000 people to flee from their homes and local villages in Northern Karenni and Southern Shan State. **Please pray for them as well.**

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