



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-first session

12 September–7 October 2022

Agenda item 2

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

## Written statement\* submitted by Jubilee Campaign, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

## The Increasing Persecution of Chin Christians in Myanmar Following the February 2021 Military Coup

Jubilee Campaign and the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. would like to raise to the Council's attention the plight of Chin Christians in Burma's Chin State and Sagaing Region following the February 2021 Tatmadaw coup.

### *Damage and Destruction of Churches and Religious Properties<sup>1</sup>*

Thantlang – In Chin State's Thantlang Township, military operations have targeted churches, religious buildings, and civilian homes since September 2021. The first to receive the wrath of the Tatmadaw was Johnson Memorial Baptist Church, which sustained severe damage and whose attack directly caused some thousands of local residents and church members to flee. The following month, Tatmadaw troops returned to Thantlang where they looted abandoned properties and set fire to Thantlang Baptist Church; the military made numerous trips to the area to further destroy church-affiliated offices, prayer rooms, and community centers. On 29 October, Tatmadaw troops heavily shelled both the Church on the Rock and Thantlang Presbyterian Church. In a November three-day arson campaign, Tatmadaw troops targeted St. Nicholas Catholic Church and Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church, whose Pastor Cung Biak Hum had been killed by the military in a separate incident. In early December, the Tatmadaw set fire to the United Pentecostal Church, likely in an act of revenge against former Vice President Henry Van Thio who was one of the church's notable members. On 30 December, troops burnt down the Thantlang Assembly of God Church, and a few days later set fire to and destroyed the Methodist Church and the Gospel Baptist Church. Between 30 January and 1 February 2022, Tatmadaw troops set fire to the Holiness Church. In late May, the military returned to Johnson Memorial Baptist Church and set fire to the building, destroying it with finality. On 9 June, they returned in another act of unfinished building to Thantlang Baptist Church, looting and burning it to rubble.

Mindat – In Mindat in August 2021, the Tatmadaw occupied and destroyed St. John Catholic Church in Chat Village, damaging and desecrating holy objects in the process. Between May and September 2021, junta forces occupied Grace Baptist Church, during which they vandalized the building and destroyed Bibles. In late July and early August 2021, troops looted, occupied, and damaged Taal Baptist Church. On 13 October in coordinated attacks, military forces destroyed Thlanrawn Village Christian Church and Thlanrawn Baptist Church after rainfall disrupted their plans to set the latter ablaze. Also in October, military troops temporarily occupied both the Ramthlo Baptist Church and the Ramthlo Assembly of God Church.

Hakha Township – In mid-March 2022, while occupying Sang Fen Memorial Church in Hakha's Zokhua village, Tatmadaw troops destroyed multiple associated properties of the church. Earlier, in October 2021, forces damaged and looted Chuncung Baptist Church.

Sagaing Region – In April 2022 in Sagaing's Kalaymyo, Tatmadaw troops launched rocket-propelled grenades upon Tounghphila Baptist Church as well as the church staff residences; they then looted the destroyed the building.

### *Persecution of and Violence Towards Chin Christian Pastors and Notable Leaders*

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<sup>1</sup> Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., [Seventeen Months After the Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma: Escalating Persecution of Chin Christians in Chin State and Sagaing Region](#), June 2022.

On 17 March in Sagaing Region's Kalay Township, junta forces shot and killed 25-year-old Pastor Cung Lian Ceu while he was attempting to rescue his sister who was trapped by the military.<sup>2</sup>

In June 2021, military troops raided Catholic St. Michael's Church in Hakha Diocese and arrested Father Michael Aung Ling after finding several bags of rice stored in the parish house. The troops accused Father Ling of providing food to civil resistance militias and interrogated him for 11 hours before releasing him.<sup>3</sup>

In mid-September 2021, Tatmadaw troops detained Reverend Thian Lian Sang, pastor of Falam Baptist Church in Chin State's Mandalay Township, and additionally seized his cellphone as well as 400,000 kyats (USD \$215) that he received following his father's funeral. Reverend Sang remains imprisoned in an unknown location.

Also in mid-September, junta forces shot and killed 30-year-old Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church Pastor Cung Biak Hum while he was on his way to respond to a military-caused fire that was encroaching upon residential areas. Witnesses of the murder reported that the assailants cut off Pastor Hum's finger from his body in order to steal his wedding ring.

In December, the Tatmadaw detained Pastor Om Kui while he was traveling to Kanpetlet to purchase food. Two days later, the pastor's lifeless body was found on a roadside; it is suspected that the military is responsible for his death, and there was a bullet wound in his head.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2022, military forces arrested Reverend En Khat Muan of Lawibual Baptist Church on charges of allegedly abetting resistance groups and inciting violence. Pastor Muan had been accused of encouraging his congregation to refrain from sending their children to junta-run local schools.<sup>5</sup>

### Resulting Mass Displacement

Widespread, incessant, and increasingly violent attacks have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. In August 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees estimates that there are approximately 39,300 civilians – likely predominantly Christian – internally displaced within Chin State; meanwhile, an estimated 42,100 civilians from Chin State and Sagaing Region have fled into the neighboring Indian states of Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland.<sup>6</sup> Chin refugees are not necessarily safe even in displacement camps, however. In August 2021, the Tatmadaw cut off all humanitarian aid and supply routes to the hilly town of Mindat in Chin State, leaving 50,000 refugees with only two weeks' worth of food.<sup>7</sup> In June 2022, Chin citizens and refugees were disheartened to learn that Chin State would be excluded from humanitarian aid promised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in October 2021 Tatmadaw forces raided a Catholic IDP Camp in Chin State, searching phones and interrogating refugees.<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendations

<sup>2</sup> Gina Goh & Jay Church, *Caught in the Crossfire: Myanmar's Christian Minorities Under Tatmadaw Rule*, International Christian Concern, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Union of Catholic Asian News, "[Myanmar military arrest Catholic priest in Chin state](#)", 17 June 2021.

<sup>4</sup> International Christian Concern, "[Myanmar Junta Kills Two Chin Pastors Last Week](#)", 13 December 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Chin Human Rights Organization, "[Chin Pastor Charged for 'Inciting' Violence against the State](#)", 20 July 2022.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Myanmar Emergency Update*, 1 August 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Radio Free Asia, "[Myanmar's Military Blocks Supply Routes to 50,000 Refugees in Chin State Amid Renewed Fighting](#)", 9 August 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Radio Free Asia, "[Refugees in Myanmar's Chin state excluded from ASEAN humanitarian assistance plan](#)", 7 June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> International Christian Concern, "[Burmese Army Raid Catholic IDP Camp in Chin State](#)", 11 October 2021.

Jubilee Campaign and the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. urge the member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council to:

1. Call upon UN Special Envoy Noeleen Heyzer, who is engaging closely with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to support an expansion of ASEAN's "Five-Point Consensus" (including ending violence, humanitarian aid, constructive dialogue, appointment of a special envoy, and unimpeded trips by the special envoy) to include the release of political prisoners of conscience, the prosecution of individuals and entities responsible for genocidal acts, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and the necessary inclusion of the National Unity Government in the consensus' future dialogue and peace processes.<sup>10</sup>
2. At the same time, discourage UN Member States from delaying humanitarian assistance and sanctions on the grounds of deference to ASEAN leadership.<sup>11</sup>
3. Urge the UNHCR to open offices in Chin State, including in Hakha, the capital, as well as Mindat, Paletwa and other townships where there is compelling need. This will allow for enhanced coordination and provision of protection and humanitarian to IDPs and others in need.<sup>12</sup>
4. Encourage the UNHCR in Malaysia, India, and Thailand to offer protection to Chins and other Burmese refugees from arbitrary arrest, extortion, deportation, or refoulement; relatedly, ensure refugee access to public education, health care, work authorization, and resettlement.<sup>13</sup>
5. Implore the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution instating a global arms embargo to eliminate the flow of arms into Myanmar, especially in light of the June 2021 General Assembly resolution of the same subject and the fact that that two permanent member nations of the UN Security Council – China and Russia – continue to prop up the military junta by selling them fighter jets and armored vehicles.<sup>14</sup>

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*Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.*

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<sup>10</sup> UN News, "["Window of opportunity" for unity opens in Myanmar](#)", 31 January 2022. ; Bhavan Jaipragas, "[Is Asean's Myanmar five-point consensus workable, and what is next?](#)", *South China Morning Post*, 25 April 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch, "[Myanmar: ASEAN's Failed '5-Point Consensus' a Year On](#)", 22 April 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Chin Association of Maryland, Inc., ["After the 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma: Challenges for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees"](#), October 2021.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, "[Myanmar: UN expert urges Security Council resolution to stop weapons fueling spike in military attacks on civilians](#)", 22 February 2022.