



# Chin Association of Maryland 2023 Annual Report: *The Persecution of Christians in Burma*



Chin Association  
of Maryland, Inc.

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**Cover Photos:** St. Matthews Catholic Church in Kayah State and Ramthlo Baptist Church in Chin State, burned down by the Burmese military.

*Photo Source: CAM Sources in Chin State.*

**Back Cover Photo:** On November 7, 2023, a Chin pastor and his son were killed by the Tatmadaw in Saw, Magway Region.

*Photo Source: Khonumthung Burmese*

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction and Overview</b> .....	<b>2</b>
About CAM .....	2
About this Report .....	2
<b>Key Findings</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Religious Persecution in Burma.....	4
Why are Christians Targeted for Persecution?.....	6
Increased Persecution Against Chin and Christians Religious Minorities Documented throughout 2023 .....	8
The Aftermath of the Coup.....	8
CAM Findings .....	9
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>21</b>
To the Biden Administration: .....	21
To the US Congress:.....	22
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>23</b>

# Introduction and Overview

## About CAM

The Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization based in Ellicott City, Maryland, with an office in Washington, DC. CAM empowers Chin communities in Maryland to successfully integrate into American society. CAM also advocates for protection, humanitarian assistance, and durable solutions for Chin and other refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and religious freedom and human rights in Burma.

This is CAM's sixth report since the 2021 military coup. The others include *After the 2021 Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma: Challenges for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees (October 2021)*; *Seventeen Months After the Military Coup in Myanmar/Burma: Escalating Persecution of Chin Christians in Chin State and Sagaing Region (June 2022)*; *Two Years After the 2021 Military Coup: The Worsening Situation of Christians Across Burma (January 2023)*; and *Public Health on the Indo-Burma Border: The Situation of Chin Refugees in Mizoram (January 2024)*. In December 2011, Zo Tum Hmung, Matthew Wilch, Jenny Yang, and Stephen Ruben produced a report on Chin refugees in Mizoram called *Seeking Refuge: The Chins in Mizoram State, India*.

Chins, virtually all of whom are Christians, are an ethnic nationality from Burma, also known as Myanmar. They became Christians primarily due to the missionary efforts of the American Baptist Churches USA. They are a major group of refugees relatively recently arriving in the US, who fled from Burma to neighboring countries to escape ethnic, political, and religious persecution by the Burmese military since 1962. In 2001, about 1,000 Chin asylees came to the U.S through Guam, resettling largely in Maryland, Indiana, Florida, and Texas. Since 2002, the US has resettled many more Chin refugees coming through Malaysia and India. Chins now number 70,000 across the United States, with about 5,000 making Maryland their home.

## About this Report

CAM's 2023 Annual Report investigates and documents the persecution of religious minority groups in Burma, especially since the 2021 coup, and particularly focused on events that have occurred from January - December 2023. This report also makes recommendations for the United States (US) and international policy to the the Biden administration, the US Congress, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) active in the region. The key findings and recommendations in this annual report are based on research and advocacy by CAM as well as reports from CAM stakeholders in the region. In 2023 CAM published two reports; testified before the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), issued regular statements and monthly news reports, arranged meetings for Chin victims of persecution from the Burmese military as well as relatives of victims; advocated with members of congress and the administration, and has participated in the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit since 2019. We rely heavily on the accounts of consultants in the India-Burma border areas and in Burma, especially in Chin State and Sagaing Region. Board Chair Rev. Tim Siemens,

Advisor Matthew Wilch, and Zo Tum Hmung traveled to Mizoram State in March 2023 where they learned about the increased persecutions of Christians through their travels and meetings with pastors and leaders who led displaced Chin to Mizoram. In October and November 2023, a CAM Research Team also traveled to Mizoram to assess the public health situation, including access to needed healthcare. While there, they met with pastors and church leaders from Chin State who are taking refuge. They traveled to Champhai, Aizawl, Lunglei, Siaha, and Lawngtlai districts where refugees from Burma have been living.

In April 2023, the USCIRF released their Annual Report on the state of religious freedom around the world. CAM welcomed the report and the recommendations related to Burma, especially the redesignation of Burma as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC).<sup>1</sup> CAM also commended the recommendations to “Engage with the pro democracy Burmese opposition, including the National Unity Government (NUG), as well as ethnic armed organizations as outlined in the Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2022, and prioritize religious freedom...”<sup>2</sup>

On July 5, 2023, CAM welcomed and applauded the United States’ and India’s joint statement on Myanmar during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s state visit to the White House.<sup>3,4</sup> The leaders expressed “deep concern about the deteriorating situation in Myanmar, and called for the release of all those arbitrarily detained, the establishment of constructive dialogue, and the transition of Myanmar toward an inclusive federal democratic system.”<sup>5</sup> CAM welcomed this joint statement as a positive step, especially for India to have a greater role in resolving Burma’s political and humanitarian crisis. Since then, the Burmese military continues to conduct airstrikes and other attacks on the civilian population, especially and including Christian religious minorities. During a congressional briefing on September 18, 2023, CAM Executive Director Zo Tum Hmung issued a further statement, “We seek a determination that their attacks on Christians also constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. This would help put more pressure on the Burmese military, also known as Tatmadaw, to end its violence against minority religions.”

From February 1, 2021 through September of 2023 it is estimated that nearly 200 religious churches and buildings have been destroyed or damaged due to attacks from the Tatmadaw, with nearly half in Chin State.<sup>6</sup> Just as the Tatmadaw has been condemned for their ruthless brutality against the Rohingya Muslims of Rakhine State, so they must be condemned and held accountable for their brutality against the Christians in Chin State and Sagaing Region.

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<sup>1</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), April, 2023, <https://www.uscifr.gov/annual-reports>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>3</sup> The White House, “Joint Statement from the United States and India”, June 22, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/06/22/joint-statement-from-the-united-states-and-india/#:~:text=The%20leaders%20expressed%20deep%20concern,an%20inclusive%20federal%20democratic%20system>.

<sup>4</sup> Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM) Media Statement, “CAM Welcomes the Joint Statement from the United States and India,” July 5, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/statement-and-press-release/>

<sup>5</sup> The White House, “Joint Statement from the United States and India”, June 22, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Radio Free Asia (RFA) Burma, “With nearly 200 destroyed, religious buildings targeted by Myanmar’s junta,” September 8, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/religious-buildings-09082023132748.html#:~:text=The%20data%2C%20based%20on%20figures,85%20ethnic%20Chin%20Christian%20churches>.

To this end, this current report focuses mostly on the experiences of the religious Christian minorities in Chin state, Kayah (Karenni) state, Kachin state, and the Sagaing region. CAM recognizes that the Burmese military has targeted other religious minority groups, including minority Rohingya Muslims. The Burmese military has also destroyed other places of worship including Buddhist pagodas. Our report focuses on the persecution of Christians, not to ignore other persecuted religious groups in the country, but to highlight the current and ongoing systematic persecution of Christians in the country, with efforts to elevate their plight to the attention of the US and international community. They have carried out their persecution through the burning, destruction, and occupation of Christian churches and affiliated religious buildings as well as through the abuse, killing, and arbitrary detention of Christian leaders. Through the publication of this report, we hope to shed light once again on the pattern of persecution by the Tatmadaw against minority religious Christians in Burma.

The names of people in photos or who provided personal accounts or materials used in the report, as well as the names of people interviewed have not been included to protect their safety and security. We have tried our best to describe and analyze in good faith the emerging situations of religious persecution of Christian Chins in the wake of the military coup and its aftermath in Burma. However, if we have inadvertently made any errors in this report, they are our own.

CAM's Jenny Siegel, PhD, Research and Project Manager, Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director, and John Indergaard, Advocacy and Research Coordinator, prepared this Annual Report as a tool for further advocacy with Congress and the Administration to promote religious freedom.

CAM will present and distribute this report at the International Religious Freedom Summit of 2024 and continue to raise concerns related to the persecution of Christians in Burma. CAM is grateful to Chin churches in the United States for their financial support for writing and publishing this report. CAM is also grateful to those who have provided information from inside Burma. Without their support, this report would not have been possible. We are indebted to Chin community members, especially in Burma and in Mizoram State, India, for the on-the-ground assessments in this report.

## Key Findings

### Religious Persecution in Burma

Burma is in Southeast Asia and borders China, India, Thailand, and Bangladesh. It is made up of seven ethnic states and seven regions and has a population of approximately fifty-seven million.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that the majority, approximately 88 percent, of the population in Burma are Theravada Buddhists. Approximately 6 percent of the population are Christians, primarily including Baptists, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans, and various small Protestant denominations. Muslims, mostly Sunni, comprise

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<sup>7</sup> Maizland, Lindsay, "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict," *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>

approximately 4 percent of the population of Burma. Less than one percent of the population are Animists (0.8 percent) and Hindus (0.5 percent)<sup>8</sup>

The 2008 constitution treats Buddhism as the de facto state religion, though it still recognizes others. Article 34 of Myanmar's 2008 Constitution grants citizens the right to "freely profess and practice religion ... subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Constitution." Furthermore, Article 364 seeks to protect religious groups from persecution by stating, "any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity or discord between racial or religious communities or sects is contrary to this constitution."<sup>9</sup> While these protections are embedded in the constitution, the constitution elevates Buddhism to a special position. In 1980, the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, appointed by the government, as well as non-governmental Buddhist religious associations, had significant influence in shaping the public and government discourse on religious matters, including by elevating Buddhism as a key tenant of Burma's national identity. These nationalist groups further pushed for the addition of Article 361 in the 2008 Constitution, which "recognizes [the] special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union."<sup>10</sup> In 2015, with the influence of Buddhist nationalist groups such as the Ma Ba Tha, Burma passed race and religion laws that regulate religious conversions, marriages, and births and restrict the freedoms of non-Buddhist religious groups.<sup>11</sup> For example, Christian marriages must be conducted by one of few registered priests or pastors with the Supreme Court and the marriage must be officially recognized by the Supreme Court, making it nearly impossible for Christian marriages to be officially recognized.<sup>12</sup>

February 1, 2024 will mark the three-year anniversary of the military coup by the Burmese military. The military and its governing political body, the State Administration Council (SAC; formerly State Peace and Development Council), have a long history of actively persecuting religious minority groups, especially including Christian and Muslim religious minorities. The Tatmadaw's repeated interference with Christians' and Muslims' abilities to practice their faith, repeated persecution, and repeated conversion strategies reveal the SAC's general policy of persecution and conversion of religious minorities. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has long reported the abuses of the Tatmadaw against Christians and Muslims and has consistently recommended Burma be designated by the US State Department as a "Country of Particular Concern (CPC)." Since 1999 the State Department has followed this recommendation under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

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<sup>8</sup> The US Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burma, p. 4, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/441219-BURMA-2022-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Myanmar 2008 Constitution, Official Religion, Article 364, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Myanmar\\_2008](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Myanmar_2008)

<sup>10</sup> Myanmar 2008 Constitution, Official Religion, Article 361, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Myanmar\\_2008](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Myanmar_2008)

<sup>11</sup> USCIRF, Annual Report, April 2023, <https://www.uscifr.gov/annual-reports>

<sup>12</sup> The US Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burma, p. 7, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/441219-BURMA-2022-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>

## Why are Christians Targeted for Persecution?

Persecution of Christian religious minority groups has taken place in Burma since the 1962 military coup. Their persecution has only escalated since the 2021 military coup as the Tatmadaw has targeted various Christian communities across the country, especially in Chin state, Kayah (Karenni) state, Kachin state, and the Sagaing region. A 2023 report by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) documented that 87 Christian religious buildings and 94 major Buddhist religious sites were destroyed or damaged by the Tatmadaw between the period of February 2021 and April 2023.<sup>13</sup> According to Radio Free Asia, nearly 200 Christian religious buildings have been destroyed since February 2021 up through September 2023, including 85 in Chin State, 50 in Sagaing Region, 39 in Shan and Kayah state, and 19 in Magway Region.<sup>14</sup> CAM estimates that from February 2021 through December 2023, 220 religious buildings have been destroyed. From September 2023 through the end of that calendar year, 23 additional Christian churches have been damaged or destroyed in Chin and Kayah states and the Sagaing region. Most of the religious churches and buildings destroyed are Christian due to the increased attacks in Chin and Kayah State. Christianity Today named Burma as one of the 50 countries where it's hardest to practice Christianity in 2024.<sup>15</sup> They estimate that since the military coup of February 2021 and through September 2023, 76 Christians in Burma were martyred and that over 200 Christian churches and affiliated buildings were destroyed or damaged. Benedict Rogers, former East Asia team leader for the human rights organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide commented that the Burmese military's attack on Christian churches is a part of a "deliberate strategy," and that "By targeting churches and other places of worship, they [the military regime] are striking directly at the identity of these communities" and further underscores the military's intolerance of non-Burman ethnic and non-Buddhist religious minorities.<sup>16</sup>

The table below highlights the estimated number of Christian churches and buildings that have been destroyed or damaged by the Burmese military. Estimates come from various organizations which have tracked these numbers. Factoring in the different time frames used by each source, the numbers of Christian churches and buildings reported damaged or destroyed are very similar. CAM estimates a higher number, approximately 220, factoring in approximately 23 additional churches and buildings destroyed by the military from September through December 2023.

<sup>13</sup> International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Violations of the right to freedom of religion and belief since the coup d'état in Myanmar: A briefing paper, June 2023, p. 8-9, <https://ici2.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Violations-of-the-right-to-freedom-of-religion-and-belief-since-the-coup-detat-in-Myanmar.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> RFA Burma, "With nearly 200 destroyed, religious buildings targeted by Myanmar's junta," September 8, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/religious-buildings-09082023132748.html#:~:text=The%20data%2C%20based%20on%20figures,85%20ethnic%20Chin%20Christian%20Ochurches.>

<sup>15</sup> Casper, Jayson, "The 50 Countries Where It's Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2023," January 17, 2024, Christianity Today, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2024/january/christian-persecution-2024-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>

<sup>16</sup> Associated Press, Churches, Temples and Monasteries Regularly Hit by Airstrikes in Myanmar, Activists Say, January 23, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-churches-airstrikes-human-rights-chin-state-ddd8e076d127c7e78f668ef589d3950d>

Estimated Number of Christians Martyred and Christian Churches and Buildings Destroyed or Damaged by the Military Regime			
Source	Dates	Christians Martyred	Christian Churches and Buildings Destroyed or Damaged
Christianity Today <sup>17</sup>	October 2021 - September 2022	42	100+
	October 2022 - September 2023	34	100+
Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Burma <sup>18</sup>	February 2021 to September 2023	<i>Not reported</i>	198 <i>(incl. 85 in Chin State, 50 in Sagaing Region, 39 in Shan and Kayah state, and 19 in Magway Region)</i>
International Commission of Jurists <sup>19</sup>	February 2021 - April 2023	<i>Not reported</i>	87
Chin Human Rights Organization <sup>20</sup>	May 2021 - February 2023	<i>Not Reported</i>	75
Chin Association of Maryland	February 2021 - December 2023	<i>Not reported</i>	220* <i>(incl. 198 from February 2021 - September 2023, and an estimated 23 additional through December 2023)</i>

<sup>17</sup> Casper, Jayson, “The 50 Countries Where It’s Hardest to Follow Jesus in 2023,” January 17, 2024, Christianity Today, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2024/january/christian-persecution-2024-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html>

<sup>18</sup> RFA Burma, “With nearly 200 destroyed, religious buildings targeted by Myanmar’s junta,” September 8, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/religious-buildings-09082023132748.html#:~:text=The%20data%2C%20based%20on%20figures,85%20ethnic%20Chin%20Christian%20churches.>

<sup>19</sup> ICJ, Violations of the right to freedom of religion and belief since the coup d’état in Myanmar: A briefing paper, <https://icj2.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Violations-of-the-right-to-freedom-of-religion-and-belief-since-the-coup-detat-in-Myanmar.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> See CHRO March 2023 briefing and legal analysis, p. 10, [https://www.chinhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Legal-Analysis\\_final-1.pdf](https://www.chinhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Legal-Analysis_final-1.pdf)

Christians in Burma are targeted for various reasons, including ethnic minority status. Christians in Burma are often not Bamar or Burman, the country's majority ethnic group. Most Christians in Burma are from the Karen, Kachin, and Chin ethnicities, representing a very small minority in the overall population. In fact, 85% of Chins are Christian, the only majority ethnicity who identify as Christian in the country. Christians are also persecuted because they do not practice the majority and nationally recognized religion of Buddhism. Furthermore, many Christians tend to condone a pro-democracy and human rights vision for Myanmar, oppositional to the Tatmadaw's goals for the country.<sup>21</sup> Christian churches and other religious buildings have also been known to house IDP civilians and ethnic opposition groups.<sup>22</sup> One other important factor is that Christianity was brought to Burma from Western countries and therefore seen as and treated as a foreign and malign influence. Many of the Christians in the country identify as Baptists and Catholics, which can be traced back to Baptists missionaries from the US and Catholic missionaries from Europe. In 1899 American Baptist missionaries arrived in Chinland and succeeded in converting the first Chin Christians. Catholicism and other Protestant denominations also took hold, including Presbyterianism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism. After the coup of 1962, missionary organizations were nationalized by the military and missionaries were deported from the country. Ever since this time, arguably, "Myanmar's military has always been shaped by an extremist Burman, Buddhist nationalist agenda."<sup>23</sup> Burmese Prime Minister U Nu in 1961 briefly established Buddhism as the state religion and carried forward a nationalist slogan, "To be Burmese is to be a Buddhist."<sup>24</sup>

## Increased Persecution Against Chin and Other Christians Documented Throughout 2023

### The Aftermath of the Coup

Since the 2021 coup, the Tatmadaw has launched a brutal campaign against resistance strongholds in Burma. Chin State emerged as one of the country's resistance strongholds with the Chin National Front (CNF), the Chin National Army (CNA), and newly formed groups such as the Chinland Defense Force and the Chin National Defense Force. As such, the Tatmadaw has targeted Chin State, including civilians, and strategically targeted Christian leaders and places of worship.

In perhaps one of the military's most egregious acts, the Tatmadaw used mass arson on Thantlang Town over the course of several months from 2021 to 2022, ultimately displacing the entire population of 10,000. During this incident, Pastor Cung Biak Hum of Thantlang's Centenary Baptist Church was killed by the military. The Tatmadaw also destroyed Johnson Memorial Baptist Church, built in the memory of

<sup>21</sup> Unity of Catholic Asian News, "Stop the Systematic Targeting of Christians in Myanmar," December 4, 2023, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/stop-the-systematic-targeting-of-christians-in-myanmar/103457#:~:text=Indeed%2C%20ever%20since%20the%20coup,target%20for%20the%20military%27s%20attacks.>

<sup>22</sup> Associated Press, Churches, Temples and Monasteries Regularly Hit by Airstrikes in Myanmar, Activists Say, January 23, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-churches-airstrikes-human-rights-chin-state-ddd8e076d127c7e78f668ef589d3950d>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Harvard Divinity School, Religion in Myanmar, 2023, <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/buddhism-myanmar>

Robert Johnson and Thantlang Baptist Church, a church with over 3,000 congregants. All but one of the town's 22 churches were destroyed.

As of January 15, 2024, UNHCR estimates that 2.287 million people have been displaced within Burma and 60,500 are seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as India since the coup in 2021. The situation continues to worsen.<sup>25</sup>

Since the coup, the military has also arrested and imprisoned thousands of individuals who oppose the military government. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) produces a daily report in relation to the coup. As of December 29, 2023, AAPP counted 25,656 people have been arrested by the military and 4,273 have been killed.<sup>26</sup> A total of 19,858 remain detained by the Burmese military. This has included Christian pastors. Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson, arrested December 24, 2022, continues to remain in prison. On April 7, 2023, Samson was sentenced to six years in prison "on charges of terrorism, unlawful association, and inciting opposition to the military regime."<sup>27</sup> Rev. Thian Lian Sang, arrested September 7, 2021, also remains in Prison in Mandalay. On December 7, 2022, he was sentenced to three years in prison for "publishing or circulating any statement, rumor, or report with intent to cause...any officer, soldier...to mutiny or otherwise disregard or fail in his duty (Sec. 505(a) BPC)" and 20 years for terrorism charges.<sup>28</sup> Biak Mawi Sung, former pastor, age 45, was sentenced to life imprisonment by a military court in Hakha under Section 50 (J) of the Counter-Terrorism Law on September 29, 2023. Pastor Sung was accused of providing financial support to the Chinland Defense Force and held in a Hakha prison.

The SAC has also targeted other religious groups. Since the coup, it has been reported that 30 Buddhist monasteries in Sagaing region and 20 in Magwe region have been destroyed, raided, or looted. These monasteries were targeted because of their opposition to the military. The military has also targeted individual members of the Buddhist majority who are oppositional to the military, attacking and burning their homes and schools. The military has continued to target the Rohingya Muslims.

### **CAM Findings: January 2023 - December 2023**

CAM has been reporting atrocities committed by the Burmese military since the coup in February 2021. The findings below focus on the atrocities committed by the Tatmadaw from January 2023 through December 2023 in Chin State, as well as in Kayah (Karenni) State, Kachin State, and the Sagaing Region . CAM relies heavily on the accounts of consultants in India-Burma border areas and in Burma, especially in Chin State and Sagaing Region.

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<sup>25</sup> UNHCR, Myanmar UNHCR displacement overview 15 Jan 2024, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/106137>

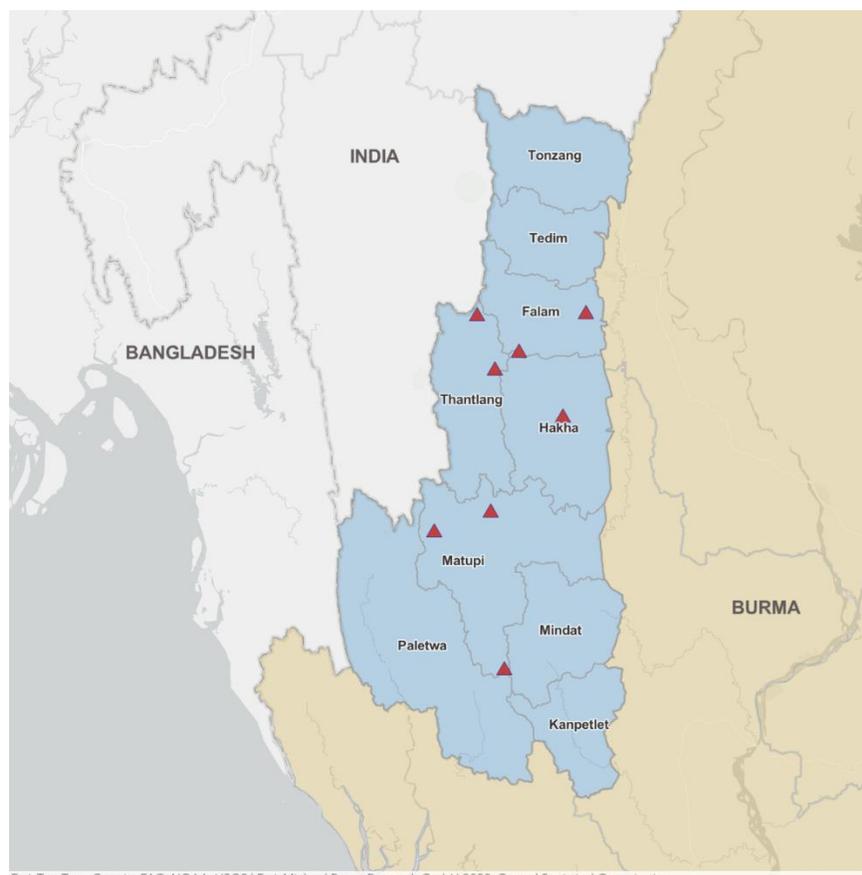
<sup>26</sup> Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), Daily Briefing in Retaliation to the Military Coup, December 29, 2023, <https://aappb.org/?p=27048>

<sup>27</sup> USCIRF, Forb Victims Database, <https://www.uscifr.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/hkalam-samson>

<sup>28</sup> USCIRF, Form Victims Database, <https://www.uscifr.gov/religious-prisoners-conscience/forb-victims-database/thian-lian-sang>

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) published a report in March 2023 outlining the legal argument that the SAC is carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>29</sup> In the report they outline tactics deployed by the SAC and the Burmese military, including the forcible displacement of over 20% of Chin State civilians; the murder and unlawful executions of hundreds of Chin civilians; the targeting, destruction, and occupation of Christian and other religious structures; torture; taking hostages and using civilians as human shields; and targeting civilians through airstrikes.<sup>30</sup> Recently, Myanmar Witness also published a report on their investigations of airstrikes and other military attacks in Chin state.<sup>31</sup> CAM's previous reports and current findings have corroborated such atrocities.

From February 2021 - December 2023, CAM has documented that the military has damaged or destroyed 220 Christian churches and affiliated buildings. Some of the Christian churches and affiliated buildings damaged and destroyed in 2023 are documented in the findings below.



Airstrikes on Christian churches and schools in Chin State, 2023

Map created by CAM staff using ArcGIS Online. The airstrikes shown in the map are cited in this report under Khuafu, Webula, Malsawm, Tlanglo, Ramthlo, Lailenpi, Rezua, Vuilu.

<sup>29</sup> Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), "Briefing: Legal Analysis Related to Sanction Designations on Members of Northwestern Command of the Burma Army and Members of the SAC in Chin State," March 2023, p. 10, [https://www.chinhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Legal-Analysis\\_final-1.pdf](https://www.chinhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Legal-Analysis_final-1.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Myanmar Witness, "Conflict Stricken Churches," January 2024, <https://www.myanmarwitness.org/reports/conflict-stricken-churches>

**January 14, 2023: Tatmadaw destroyed Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in Sagaing<sup>32</sup>**

In the morning of January 14, 2023, Tatmadaw troops entered Chan Thar and began to burn down houses.<sup>33</sup> They stayed overnight in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption, a 129-year-old building. On Sunday morning, January 15, they set fire to the church, along with the parish priest's house and the nuns' convent. Chan Thar's 800 inhabitants, who are majority Christian, fled when the Tatmadaw approached. There was no fighting in the area, and the arson attack was completely unprovoked. This happened less than a month after the aforementioned UN Security Council Resolution 2669 (2022) that "Demands an immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the Country..."<sup>34</sup>

On January 22, 2023, Pope Francis expressed sadness for these attacks: "Sadly, my thought turns in particular to Myanmar, where the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in the village of Chan Thar – one of the most ancient and important places of worship in the country – was burned and destroyed. I am close to the helpless civilian population subject to severe trials in many cities. Please God that this conflict will soon come to an end, opening a new period of forgiveness, love and peace. Let us pray together to Our Lady for Myanmar."<sup>35</sup>

**March 31, 2023: Airstrikes in Khuafu Village, Chin State, killed 8 villagers including 4 children<sup>36</sup>**

On March 31, 2023, Burmese military jets bombed Khuafu Village in Chin State, Burma and killed 8 villagers including four children and injured many more including a pastor. Sources indicated the Burmese military jets dropped at least twelve bombs on the village, which is just five miles from Thantlang Town. The strike destroyed two churches: the village's Baptist Church and the Believers Church.

**April 10, 2023: Burmese military's airstrikes killed civilians in Webula, Chin State<sup>37</sup>**

Not even two weeks later, on April 10, 2023, the Burmese military launched more air strikes on Webula Town in Chin State's Falam Township, hitting the local high school and killing nine civilians, including a 9-year old boy and a retired pastor. Webula is about 18 miles south of Falam town.

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<sup>32</sup> CAM Media Statement "Burmese Fighter Jets Attacking Camp Victoria in Chin State, Burma, Also Drop a Bomb on Mizoram State, India, January 10, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-11.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> CAM, *Two Years After the 2021 Military Coup: The Worsening Situation of Christians Across Burma*, January 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/19484-2-Years-After-the-Coup-FIN.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Press Release, "Security Council Demands Immediate End to Violence in Myanmar, Urges Restraint, Release of Arbitrarily Detained Prisoners, Adopting Resolution 2669 (2022)," December 21, 2022 <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15159.doc.htm>

<sup>35</sup> Aleteia, "Myanmar, Peru, Cameroon: Pope Prays for countries in conflict," January 23, 2023 <https://aleteia.org/2023/01/22/myanmar-peru-cameroon-pope-prays-for-countries-in-conflict/>

<sup>36</sup> CAM Media Statement, "Burmese Fighter Jets Bombed Khuafu Village in Chin State, Burma and Killed 8 villagers including 4 children," <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-8.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> CAM Media Statement, "The Burmese military's air strikes on the Webula Town in Chin State, Burma Killed Civilians," April 11, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-7.pdf>

**April 27, 2023: Burmese military airstrikes on Tlanglo Village in Chin State killed civilians and destroyed Christian churches and residences<sup>38</sup>**

At the end of April, the Burmese military attacked Tlanglo village in Chin State with airstrikes. In the aftermath, two civilians were killed and eight were injured. Sources indicated that 19 homes and three churches at Tlanglo village of Thantlang Township were destroyed. The entire village was displaced.



One of the destroyed churches in Tlanglo Village. *Photo Source: CAM Source.*

CAM received credible information that the Burmese military has burned 21 of the 22 churches in Thantlang Town, Chin State.<sup>39</sup> Only Olive Baptist Church has avoided destruction. The entire population of the town, approximately 10,000 people, continues to be displaced since the brutal attacks of 2022, with many who have fled to the Indo-Burma border area and others taking refuge in Mizoram State, India.

**May 2, 2023: The Burmese military burned homes and other buildings including the Gospel Baptist Church at Chuncung Village in Chin State, Burma<sup>40</sup>**

Within a week, on May 2, 2023, the Burmese military continued their attacks in Chuncung village in Chin State. In their arson attacks, 14 homes and other buildings were damaged or destroyed, including the

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<sup>38</sup> CAM Media Statement, "The Burmese military's airstrikes on Tlanglo village in Chin State, Burma Killed Civilians and Destroyed Christian Churches and Residences," April 28, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-6.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> CAM Media Statement, "List of Churches Burned in Thantlang Town of Chin State, Burma," July 6, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-2.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> CAM Media Statement, "The Burmese military burned homes and other buildings including the Gospel Baptist Church at Chuncung village in Chin State, Burma," May 3, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-5.pdf>

Gospel Baptist Church and its staff quarters. Chuncung Village is approximately 15 miles from Hakha, the capital of Chin State in Burma.

### **May 5, 2023: Burmese military's airstrikes on Malsawm Village in Chin State destroyed Malsawm Baptist Church<sup>41</sup>**

On May 5, 2023, the Burmese military's airstrikes on Malsawm Village in Chin State, destroyed Malsawm Baptist Church. Malsawm Village is approximately 35 miles from Hakha, the capital town of Chin State, Burma.

### **August 2023: Report lists total of 42 religious buildings damaged in Kayah State since coup**

Kayah State has also been targeted by the Burmese military. Tens of thousands of civilians in Kayah State have been displaced and roads, bridges, homes, hospitals, schools, and religious buildings have been destroyed or damaged. The Progressive Karenni People Force (PKPF) estimated as of August, 2023, 42 religious buildings have been damaged, including 14 Catholic churches, six clergy homes, two convents, eight parish halls, one home for the elderly, one formation home, and one catechistate.<sup>42</sup> These included Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Pathein Parish in 2021 and St. Matthews Catholic Church in Dognekhu Parish in 2022.



In 2021, the military shelled Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Kayah State.

*Photo Source: CAM Source*

<sup>41</sup> CAM Media Statement, "The Burmese military's airstrikes on Malsawm village in Chin State, Burma Destroyed the Malsawm Baptist Church," May 10, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Statements-4.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Diocesan Emergency Response Team (DERT), A Report on DERT: Loikaw Diocese January - August 2023, August 2023



In 2022, St. Matthews Catholic Church in Kayah State was burned down by the Burmese military.  
*Photo Source: CAM Source*

**July 16, 2023: Military attacked Chin pastor and three deacons in Mindat, deacons missing<sup>43</sup>**

During July, the Burmese military continued brutal attacks on Christian leaders in Chin state. On July 16, 2023, the Burmese military attacked four Chin Christian religious leaders working at an IDP camp at the Presbyterian Church in Mindat, Chin State. Pastor Htang Kay On was beaten unconscious and left for dead. Three deacons, Chai Kay, Hon Chway, and Hon Kay, were arrested and detained by the military. The military denies the incident occurred and the deacons’ whereabouts are unknown, however they are presumed dead.<sup>44</sup>

ND-Burma published a report on human rights violations in Myanmar on July 24, 2023. The report states the SAC launched a multitude of airstrikes and dropped bombs in Sagaing Region, Chin State, and Kayin State from July 15 - 21. Such attacks left 12 people dead, including two children.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> CAM Media Statement, “Chin Pastor and Three Deacons in Mindat Attacked by Tatmadaw, Deacons Detained,” August 4, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CAM-Statement-Mindat-Abductions-08.04.23.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> RFA, Christian deacons presumed dead after abduction by Myanmar military in Chin state, August 2, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/christian-clergy-men-08022023161429.html>

<sup>45</sup> ND-Burma, Human Rights Situation Weekly Update (July 15 - 21), July 24, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/human-rights-situation-weekly-update-july-15-21-2023>

**August 12, 2023: Ramthlo and Sunthla Villages in Falam bombed by Tatmadaw, Ramthlo Baptist Church destroyed<sup>46</sup>**

On Saturday, August 12, 2023, Burmese military jets bombed Ramthlo Village and Sunthla Village in Falam township, Chin State. The airstrike destroyed three houses and the Ramthlo Baptist Church. Seven civilians were severely injured. The US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain released a statement via X, formally Twitter, on August 18 about the airstrike, calling on the Burmese military to end attacks on places of worship and members of ethnic and religious communities.<sup>47</sup>



On August 12, 2023, military airstrikes destroyed Ramthlo Baptist Church in Ramthlo, Chin State.  
*Photo Source: CAM Source*

<sup>46</sup> CAM Media Statement, "Ramthlo and Sunthla Villages in Falam Bombed by Tatmadaw, Church Destroyed," August 15, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CAM-Statement-08.14.23-Ramthlo-Bombing.docx.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> See US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain, Statement on X, [https://twitter.com/IRF\\_Ambassador/status/1692625587578245310](https://twitter.com/IRF_Ambassador/status/1692625587578245310)

**August 14, 2023: Hakha Baptist Church compound in Chin State attacked by Tatmadaw<sup>48</sup>**

On Monday, August 14, 2023, the Burmese military, or Tatmadaw, launched an attack on the historic Hakha Baptist Church compound in the town of Hakha, Chin State. On the same day, in a separate attack, military artillery damaged a Christian temple in Set Kant village, Sagaing region.<sup>49</sup>

In September, junta airstrikes and bombardments killed 44 civilians and injured 142, with Sagaing Region the hardest hit. Radio Free Asia reported that from January 2023 through September 2023, 816 civilians had been killed in shelling and aerial attacks and 1,628 had been injured.<sup>50</sup>

**October 9, 2023: Munglai Hkyet IDP Camp attacked in Kachin State<sup>51</sup>**

On October 9, the military targeted the Munglai Hkyet IDP camp and bombed the camp in the middle of the night. It was reported that at least 28 civilians were killed, including 11 children, and over 60 people were injured. The attack also damaged and destroyed civilian structures. The attack was deemed an “apparent war crime” by Human Rights Watch due to the targeting of civilians for no apparent military objective.<sup>52</sup>

Later in the month, on October 25, five Burma nationals from Thantlang, Chin State, including Salai Ling of the Chin Human Rights Organization, filed a joint complaint-affidavit against junta officials for war crimes in Chin State at the Philippine Department of Justice.<sup>53</sup> This is the latest of several universal jurisdiction cases brought against the military junta in other countries.<sup>54</sup>

**November 7, 2023: Chin pastor and son killed by Tatmadaw in Saw, Magway Region<sup>55</sup>**

On November 7, 2023, the Burmese military killed Chin Pastor Mang Kui and his son in the town of Saw, Magway Region. Mang Kui, 55, had been a pastor at Kanpetlet Baptist Church in Chin State, and was reportedly traveling to Saw in order to buy medicine for his wife. Witnesses stated that a soldier in plain-

<sup>48</sup> CAM Media Statement, “Church Compound in Hakha Attacked by Tatmadaw,” August 23, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CAM-Statement-08.23.23-Hakha-RPG-Attack.docx.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> RFA, Residents say Christian churches attacked by junta in Myanmar’s Chin state, August 10, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/chin-churches-bombed-08152023160053.html>

<sup>50</sup> RFA, Airstrikes and shelling killed 44 civilians in Myanmar in September, October 2, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-airstrikes-and-shelling-10022023053726.html>

<sup>51</sup> CAM Media Statement, “CAM Statement on the Munglai Hkyet Attack in Kachin State,” October 9, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CAM-Statement-10.10.23-Laiza-Attack.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch, Myanmar: Airstrike on Village an Apparent War Crime, October 17, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/17/myanmar-airstrike-village-apparent-war-crime>

<sup>53</sup> Manila Bulletin, DOJ to evaluate ‘war crimes’ raps vs Myanmar military junta officials, October 25, 2024, [https://mb.com.ph/2023/10/25/doj-to-evaluate-war-crimes-raps-vs-myanmar-military-junta-officials-sec-remulla#google\\_vignette](https://mb.com.ph/2023/10/25/doj-to-evaluate-war-crimes-raps-vs-myanmar-military-junta-officials-sec-remulla#google_vignette)

<sup>54</sup> The Diplomat, Victims of Myanmar Junta File War Crimes Charges in Philippine Court, October 26, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/victims-of-myanmar-junta-file-war-crimes-charges-in-philippine-court/>

<sup>55</sup> CAM Media Statement, “Chin Pastor and Son Killed by Tatmadaw in Saw, Magway Region,” November 15, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CAM-Statement-11.15.23-Chin-Pastor.docx.pdf>

clothes shot the pastor in the head at close range.<sup>56</sup> The pastor's son, a Chinland Defense Force commander, was killed when he came to retrieve the body.



On November 7, 2023, a Chin pastor and his son were killed by the Tatmadaw in Saw, Magway Region.

*Photo Source: Khonumthung Burmese*

### **November 15, 2023: Tatmadaw airstrike killed 11, including 8 children, and destroyed a church in Vuilu, Matupi Township<sup>57</sup>**

On Wednesday, November 15, in the early evening hours, Burmese military jets launched an airstrike on Vuilu village in Matupi township, southern Chin State. The strike killed at least 11 civilians, including eight children. A reliable source familiar with the situation informed CAM that the strike also destroyed a Christian church and two school buildings, along with 18 civilian homes. Vuilu village has not seen the presence of armed combatants nor been the site of any fighting since the 2021 military coup.

### **November 19, 2023: Airstrikes destroyed church and killed four civilians in Lailenpi, Chin State<sup>58</sup>**

During the four-day battle for Lailenpi, a town in Matupi Township near the Indian border, Tatmadaw airstrikes killed four civilians and destroyed a church, a school, and six civilian homes. The Khonumthung Media Group reported that on November 19, the Chin National Army, CDF-Thantlang, CDF-Mara, CDF-Matupi, CDF-Lautu, and CDF-Zophei launched a joint attack on the Burmese military post in Lailenpi.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> RFA, Myanmar resistance fighter shot while collecting his father's body, November 8, 2023, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/pastor-killed-11082023054325.html>

<sup>57</sup> CAM Media Statement, "Tatmadaw Airstrike Kills 8 Children, 3 Other Civilians in Vuilu, Matupi Township," November 20, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CAM-Statement-11.17.23-Vuilu.docx.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> CAM Media Statement, "Airstrikes Destroy Church, Kill Four Civilians in Lailenpi, Chin State," November 28, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CAM-Statement-11.28.23-Lailenpi.docx.pdf>

<sup>59</sup> Khonumthung Media Group, November 20, 2023, <https://khonumthung.org/%e1%80%9c%e1%80%ad%e1%80%af%e1%80%84%e1%80%ba%e1%80%9c%e1%80%84%e1%80%ba%e1%80%b8%e1%80%95%e1%80%ae%e1%80%99%e1%80%bc%e1%80%ad%e1%80%af%e1%80%b7%e1%80%80-%e1%80%85%e1%80%85%e1%80%ba%e1%80%80%e1%80%b1/>

**November 27, 2023: Tatmadaw occupied cathedral compound in Loikaw, Karenni<sup>60</sup>**

In the early morning hours on November 11, 2023, an outbreak of attacks took place between the Burmese military and the People’s Defense Force in eight different locations within Loikaw, Kayah State. The attacks from the Burmese military continued for nearly a month. During this time the Tatmadaw killed civilians, used civilians as human shields, and damaged and looted buildings and churches including Christ the King Cathedral. On three different occasions the Tatmadaw attempted to take over Christ the King Cathedral, however, Bishop Celso Ba Shwe and the resident priests convinced the military to let them be. The church compound had become a place of refuge for an influx of approximately 1,300 displaced persons due to the ongoing conflict in Karenni. On November 27th, the military finally attacked the church and the IDPs, the Bishop, and the priests evacuated. The Burmese military used “heavy weapons, fighter jets, ballistic missile systems, and mobile defense systems.” Because of the intensifying conflict, “more than 80% of the urban and rural people in Kayah State, have been internally displaced” (see Appendix A for Letter from Bishop Celso Ba Shwe)<sup>61</sup>



The Burmese military attacked Loikaw, Karenni State and damaged Christ the King Cathedral.

*Photo Source: CAM Source*

**November 26, 2023: Tatmadaw shelled a Baptist Church near Mindat, Chin State<sup>62</sup>**

On November 26, 2023, the Chin Human Rights Organization reported the Burmese military shelled a Baptist Church near Mindat. The church was hit three times. Two people were injured, including a 50-year-old female member of the church.

<sup>60</sup> CAM Media Statement, “Tatmadaw Occupies Cathedral Compound in Loikaw, Karenni,” November 28, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CAM-Statement-11.28.23-Karenni.docx.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Bishop Celso Ba Shwe, November 27, 2023. See Appendix A.

<sup>62</sup> Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) on X, November 26, 2023, <https://twitter.com/ChinHumanRights/status/1728765423662039279>

**November 29, 2023: Airstrikes on Rezua Village in Matupi Township, Chin State destroyed a church and displaced 2,000<sup>63</sup>**

On the morning of November 29, 2023, Chin forces captured the junta military outpost at Rezua, Matupi Township, and took control of the town. The Chin forces included fighters from the Chin National Army, CDF Matupi (B2) and ZZLMS, a grouping that includes CDF-Zotung, CDF-Zophei, CDF-Lautu, CDF-Mara, and CDF-Senthang. On December 1, 2023, the Burmese military retaliated with airstrikes on the civilian population, destroying a church and displacing 2,000 people.



November 29, 2023 airstrikes in Rezua, Matupi Township, Chin State.

*Photo Source: Chinland Information Center*

On December 25, 2023, the Chin Human Rights Organization reported that SAC military Battalion 222 had been occupying the St. Valentine Catholic Church compound in Hakha Township since December 19.<sup>64</sup> Members of the church have not been able to attend church services, even on Christmas day. It was reported that Battalion 222 is the same battalion that participated in the mass arson attack on Thantlang Town.

<sup>63</sup> CAM Media Statement, "Airstrikes on Rezua in Matupi Township Destroy Church, Displace 2000," December 1, 2023, <https://chinmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CAM-Statement-12.01.23-Rezua.docx.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> CHRO on X, December 25, 2023, <https://twitter.com/ChinHumanRights/status/1739194633727647895>



November 29, 2023 airstrikes in Rezua, Matupi Township, Chin State.  
*Photo Source: Chinland Information Center*



November 29, 2023 airstrikes in Rezua, Matupi Township, Chin State.  
*Photo Source: Chinland Information Center*

## Recommendations

Given the evidence reported above, CAM firmly believes that the atrocities committed by the Burmese military against the Chin Christians constitutes religious and ethnic persecution, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. CAM therefore calls upon the Biden administration and congressional leaders to take further steps to protect Burma's religious minorities. USCIRF has long recommended Burma's designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for "engaging in egregious, ongoing, and systematic violations of religious freedom" and most recently on December 29, 2023.<sup>65</sup>

### To the Biden Administration:

1. Designate atrocities against Christian religious minorities as war crimes and crimes against humanity, consistent with the designation of crimes targeting the Rohingya ethnic and religious minority;
2. Call on the SAC to cease targeting places of worship and to stop the unnecessary and brutal detainment and killing of Christian religious leaders;
3. Call on the SAC to immediately release Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint and all other political prisoners and religious leaders;
4. Actively impose targeted sanctions against the military officials who have committed atrocities against the people of Burma, including atrocities targeting religious minorities such as Christians in Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Karenni States as well as Sagaing and Mandalay Regions; and Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State;
5. Include language condemning the violations of religious freedom by the Tatmadaw in future US legislation and United Nations (UN) resolutions on Burma, especially at the UN Security Council;
6. Increase US leadership and engagement with the UN, ASEAN, and other concerned nations of goodwill to end the violence and restore a viable path to build peace and federal democracy in Burma;
7. Assist the NUG, the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), and EROs in their efforts to bring down the military regime and establish a federal democracy;
8. Work with National Unity Government (NUG), Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), and others to allocate some of the non-lethal assistance for protection of the civilians from the Tatmadaw air attacks;
9. Strengthen protection and assistance for refugees from Burma in neighboring countries, including Thailand and India, by funding local efforts to meet the needs of recent arrivals, and by urging increased access for UN agencies, their implementing partners, and INGOs;
10. Promptly appoint a well-qualified individual within the National Security Council (NSC) as Special Adviser to the President on IRF and provide financial resources and staff needed to fulfill the mandate outlined in IRFA;<sup>66</sup>
11. Allocate greater funding to programs that support civil society and human rights defenders in exile who document and monitor religious freedom violations in repressive countries;<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> USCIRF, Annual Report, April 2023, <https://www.uscirf.gov/annual-reports>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## To the US Congress:

1. Adopt a resolution on the persecution of Christians in Burma condemning the increased persecutions against Christian minorities;
2. To ensure that the final version of the Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2024 preserves the \$167 million funding figure for Burma from the Senate's State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill, S.2438, as well as the intended uses listed in its accompanying report;
3. Increase funding to investigate and document human rights abuses by the Tatmadaw against religious minorities in Burma, including abuses targeting Christians;
4. Conduct a Congressional Fact-Finding mission to the Indo-Burma border area and Thai-Burma border area related to the protection and humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees from Burma and related to the atrocities, including gender-based atrocities, against religious minorities;
5. Conduct a Congressional hearing on the persecution of Christians in Burma;
6. Increase funding to PRM, USAID, and UNHCR and other relevant partners to strengthen protection and humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons in Burma, and to strengthen protection, humanitarian assistance, and pursuit of durable solutions for refugees from Burma;
7. Call on the SAC to immediately release Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint and all other political prisoners and religious leaders;

## Conclusion

The persecution of religious minority Christians in Burma has increased substantially. Many have recognized that the Tatmadaw's strategies of destruction and tactics of war crimes used against the Rohingya minority are also currently being applied to Christians in the country. The military has used ground forces against the resistance groups, and is increasingly using fighter jets to bomb Christian places of worship or its other buildings.

CAM is urging the US Congress to adopt a resolution condemning the attacks of burning churches and targeting pastors and other religious leaders for arrest, arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and killing. CAM is also urging the Administration to determine that the atrocities committed against Christians constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In December 2023, the Secretary of State designated Burma as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the USCIRF of 1998, which was a welcomed step.<sup>68</sup> USCIRF has designated Burma as a CPC since 1999.<sup>69</sup> The US should do more to hold the Tatmadaw accountable.

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<sup>68</sup> US Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, "Countries of Particular Concern, Special Watchlist Countries, Entities of Particular Concern, December 29, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/countries-of-particular-concern-special-watch-list-countries-entities-of-particular-concern/>

<sup>69</sup> USCIRF, Annual Report, April 2023, <https://www.uscifr.gov/annual-reports>

# Appendix A



### The Current Situation of Kayah State (Diocese of Loikaw – November 27, 2023)

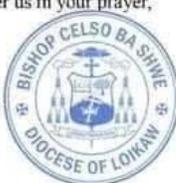
The diocese of Loikaw is in Kayah State (known as Karenni State), which is the smallest in Myanmar. The total population is around 300,000. Kayah State covers an area of 4,500 square miles, and it is mostly hilly and mountainous.

Due to intensifying armed conflicts in November, more than 80% of the urban and rural people in Kayah State, have been internally displaced. On November 11, about 800 town-inhabitants began to flow into Christ the King’s Compound. Thus, the number of both old and new displaced persons exceeded 1,300.

The Burmese junta has used heavy weapons, fighter jets, armored vehicles, ballistic missile systems and mobile defense systems. As a result, People both urban and rural are fleeing their residences and go into different directions. Some have fled to the northern part of the State, some to Ye Phyu, Hsi-hseng and other places in Shan State. Among refugees, there were old and sick people, the paralyzed, women, some young people who remained at the Pastoral Center of Loikaw until yesterday and there were altogether 82 people (inclusive of 10 priests, 16 Religious and some employees).

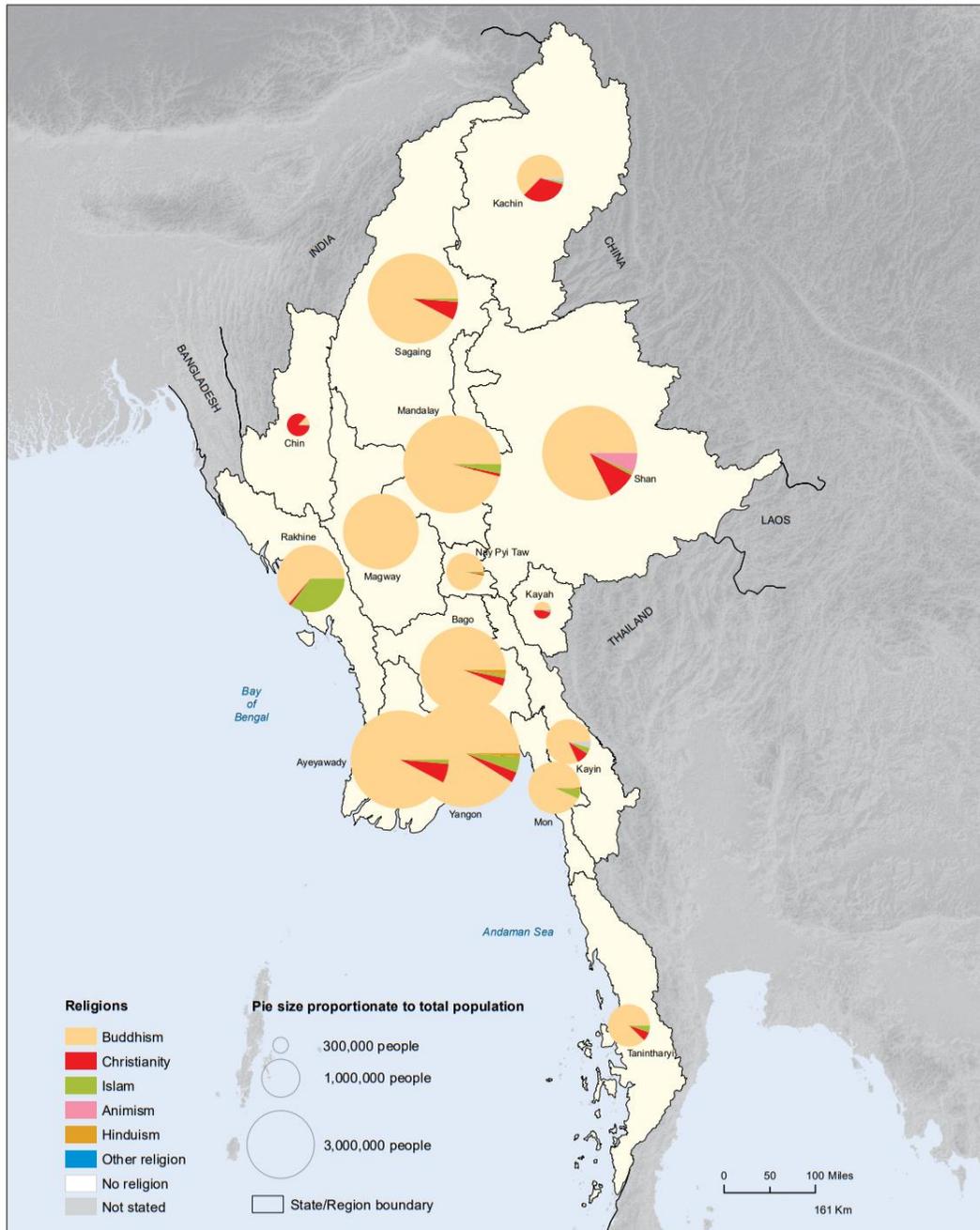
The Burmese military attempted for 3 times to take over the compound of Christ the King’s Cathedral in Loikaw diocese and yet the Bishop and the resident priests made effort to convince the military Generals of the importance of the religious sites and requested them to spare the place. However, on the night of November 26, the military intentionally shot the Pastoral Center with 120mm artillery pieces for many times and the roof of the chapel of the Pastoral Center was hit and the ceiling was destroyed by the artillery shells. So, for the sake of safety the Bishop and the priests decided to leave the Pastoral Center today. Just before their departure, 50 soldiers came and occupied to make use of it as a shield.

Please continue to remember us in your prayer,

  
 H. E. Msgr. Celso Ba Shwe
 

Loikaw Diocesan House, No. 28, Pyay Road, 7 Mile, Mayangone P.O., Yangon 11061, Myanmar  
☎:95-1-660723

**Map 2.9 Religion, States/Regions**



The base population for this indicator is individuals, both enumerated and estimated, that were living in conventional and institutional households at the time of the 2014 Census.

Percentages of less than 1.0 are given in Table 2.9 but they are too small to be shown as slices of the pies on the map.

The estimated population of Rakhine is assumed to be Muslim, but no assumptions are made as to the religious affiliation of the estimated population of Kachin and Kayin. See text opposite for a more detailed explanation of the Census' reporting of religion data.

© Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 2017.

Source of statistical data: 2014 Population and Housing Census of Myanmar.  
Source of geographic data: Department of Population GIS Unit.

Administrative boundaries are shown on maps in this atlas purely for the purpose of presenting census data. They may not reflect the true location of administrative boundaries on the ground.

Source: 2014 Myanmar Census Atlas, page 27

[https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MyanmarCensusAtlas\\_lowres.pdf](https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MyanmarCensusAtlas_lowres.pdf)

