



BURMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

March 31, 2025

Dr. Stephen Schneck, Chair
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
732 N. Capitol Street, N.W. Suite A714
Washington, DC 20401

Subject: Urging the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to Recommend that Secretary of State Marco Rubio Determine the Burmese military's Atrocities against Christians and Other Minorities Constitute Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes

Dear Dr. Schneck,

I am writing to urge the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom ([USCIRF](#)) to recommend to Secretary of State Marco Rubio that the State Department determine the Burmese military's atrocities against ethnic and minority religions, including targeting Christians, constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. The military junta's administration body, the Security Administration Council (SAC), also known as the Tatmadaw, has continued committing egregious, widespread, and systematic violations of religious freedom against ethnic and minority religions even after the USCIRF 2025 Annual Report Release.

The Tatmadaw [continued](#) air strikes after the devastating earthquake on March 28, 2025. On March 16, 2025, the Burmese military [set fire](#) to St. Patrick Cathedral of Banmaw, Kachin State. The Burma Research Institute (BRI) confirmed the situation on the ground after this. These are just two very recent examples of the systematic campaign by the Tatmadaw to target religious minority groups and commit atrocities.

USCIRF has consistently designated Burma as a Country of Particular Concern since 1999, and its reports, including the most [recent report](#) just released on March 25, 2025, have provided consistent evidence of the Tatmadaw's attacks against religious minorities. As far back as its 2020 report, USCIRF recommended the U.S. conclude definitively and publicly whether atrocities against the Rohingya met the legal definition of crimes against humanity and/or genocide. In its 2021 report, USCIRF used the term "genocide."

USCIRF's determinations undoubtedly helped the State Department in [March 21, 2022](#), to make a determination that the Tatmadaw's atrocities against the Rohingya constituted genocide and crimes against humanity. We believe that a similar determination is long overdue that the Tatmadaw's actions against Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities also constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. [On March 7, 2025](#), we wrote to Secretary of State Marco Rubio asking that the State Department make that determination. We urge your assistance in making that case to the State Department.

I want to thank you and USCIRF for your generous support in our advocacy activities, particularly at Congressional briefings to highlight the systematic persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in Burma. We were honored to have you deliver remarks at our September 2023 Congressional briefing on the Senate side and at our January 2024 briefing on the House side which was hosted by Congressman Chris Smith. In addition, we were pleased to have other Commissioners delivered remarks at our briefings.

Such a determination of crimes against humanity and war crimes by the State Department can help decrease or even deter the violence against civilians by the Tatmadaw airstrikes. The Trump administration can impose

tougher and coordinated sanctions on aviation fuel and banking, and provide nonlethal assistance such as early warning systems, bunkers, and communication tools to protect civilians and places of workshop from the airstrikes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zo Tum Hmung".

Zo Tum Hmung
President, Burma Research Institute

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