



BURMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Burma Research Institute: Hybrid Congressional Briefing Burma: Escalating human rights and religious freedom violations, targeting minority Christians

February 3, 2025

Dirksen Senate Office Building (Room B48)

Washington, DC



Organized by:

Burma Research Institute

Co-hosted by several organizations:

**American Baptist Churches USA, Burma Advocacy Group,
International Campaign for the Rohingya, Jubilee Campaign,
Campaign for a New Myanmar, and Boat People SOS.**

On Monday, February 3, 2025, a Hybrid Congressional Briefing on Burma was held at the Dirksen Senate Office Building (Room B48) in Washington, DC, focusing on escalating human rights and religious freedom violations, particularly the persecution of minority Christians. This marked the third time since the 2021 military coup that the briefing was hosted. The briefing was secured by Senator Van Hollen (D-MD), organized by Burma Research Institute and co-hosted by American Baptist Churches USA, Burma Advocacy Group, International Campaign for the Rohingya, Jubilee Campaign, Campaign for a New Myanmar, and Boat People SOS.

The session, which took place in a hybrid format, was attended by 57 people in person and 60 virtually via Zoom. It highlighted the increasing repression of religious minorities in Burma and called for urgent policy actions to safeguard human rights and promote religious freedom in the region.



Figure 1: Left to Right - Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, Coordinator of the Burma Refugee Commission and retired Associate General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA, Stephen Schneck, Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; and Carolyn Nash, Asia Advocacy Director at Amnesty International USA.

The session was moderated by Reverend Dr. Robin Stoops, Coordinator of the Burma Refugee Commission and retired Associate General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA. Key remarks were delivered by influential leaders, including H.E. Duwa Lashi La, Acting President of the National Unity Government of Myanmar; Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD); Senator Todd Young (R-IND); Stephen Schneck, Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; and Carolyn Nash, Asia Advocacy Director at Amnesty International USA.

A special video presentation highlighted the CAM's Congressional Briefing on Burma (September 2023), shedding light on ongoing issues in the region. A powerful testimonial was shared by Reverend Stanley Cung, PhD, Senior Pastor of Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church in Wisconsin, recounting the tragic death of his brother, Pastor Cung Biak Hum, who was killed by the Tatmadaw in Thantlang town, Chin State.



Figure 2: Panelists from left to right - Fr. Peter Dee De, Associate Pastor at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Indiana; Lucky Karim, Human Rights Advocate and Director of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice; Fr. David Michael de Penha (Maung Maung Htun), Pastor at St. John Catholic Church, Kansas; Sayadaw U Eitharaya, Buddhist Monk from New York; Reverend Ah Le, General Secretary of Kachin Baptist Churches USA

Following the testimonial, the panel discussion was moderated by Ginny Farris, Policy Advisor at the Burma Research Institute, and featured Fr. David Michael de Penha (Maung Maung Htun), Pastor at St. John Catholic Church, Kansas; Sayadaw U Eitharaya, Buddhist Monk from New York; Lucky Karim, Human Rights Advocate and Director of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice; Reverend Ah Le, General Secretary of Kachin Baptist Churches USA; and Fr. Peter Dee De, Associate Pastor at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Indiana.

The session concluded with remarks from Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director of the Chin Association of Maryland, who stressed the need for continued advocacy and comprehensive policy responses to address the ongoing human rights violations in Burma, particularly against religious minorities facing severe persecution.



Duwa Lashi La – Acting President Duwa Lashi La of Myanmar's National Unity Government emphasized the persecution of religious minorities, especially Christians, under the military regime. He stated, “Religious freedom is a fundamental human right for all. Unfortunately, the people of Myanmar – especially religious

minorities like Christians – have lost this very basic human right under successive military regimes.”

He also called for continued U.S. support to restore democracy in Myanmar. Duwa Lashi La concluded by expressing gratitude for the support from the United States and urged for continued financial, material, and technical assistance in 2025 to help restore freedom, human rights, and democracy in Myanmar. *See Appendix A for the whole remark.*



Senator Chris Van Hollen, expressed his strong support for the Burmese people and the ongoing efforts to stop the atrocities committed by the Tatmadaw since the 2021 coup. He emphasized the need for accountability, diplomatic resolution, and confronting China’s role in enabling the Junta. Van Hollen stated,

“History will remember who stood up and spoke out, and who stayed silent.”

He called for full implementation of the Burma Act, including sanctions on the Junta, and urged the U.S. to prevent fraudulent elections and prioritize Burma’s future. He stressed the urgency of taking action now to end the suffering in Burma. *See Appendix B for the whole remark.*



Senator Todd Young reaffirmed his commitment to supporting Burma’s democracy and condemning the military coup that disrupted the hopes and aspirations of the Burmese people. He stated that

"I stand ready to stop those who seek to undermine the cause of peace and democracy."

He emphasized the need for humanitarian aid, accountability for military crimes, and sanctions against senior military leaders responsible for human rights violations. Senator Young highlighted the steps Congress has taken

to assist opponents of the military regime and pledged to continue working with his colleagues in Washington to support Burma's path to peace and democracy. *See Appendix C for the whole remark.*



Stephen Schneck, Chair of USCIRF, discussed religious freedom violations in Burma, particularly against Christians, since the 2021 military coup. USCIRF has recommended Burma be designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for years. Schneck emphasized, "The military's actions have escalated the persecution of religious minorities, and it is essential that the U.S. and international community hold the perpetrators

accountable." In an interview, he stated,

"The persecution of Christians in Burma is a crime against humanity, and that is my personal belief."

He called for full implementation of the Burma Act to promote religious freedom, continue U.S. sanctions on military-linked entities, and support efforts to protect religious minorities. He concluded, "USCIRF hopes for a future Burma where human rights and religious freedom are respected for all." *See Appendix D for the whole remark.*



Carolyn Nash, Director of Human Rights Advocacy at Amnesty International, addressed the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, where the military coup has led to over 28,000 arrests and at least 6,000 confirmed deaths. She emphasized the resilience of the Burmese people amidst this turmoil, while also pointing out the insufficient international response. Nash called on the U.S. and other governments to fulfill

their responsibilities, restore safety for displaced people, and support the Burma Act. She stated,

“It is now up to governments including the United States to restore paths to safety for those displaced by harm. To fulfill obligations for support including obligations outlined in the Burma Act. It shows up in the world in a way that demonstrates a basic understanding not only in how US foreign policy reflects American humanity. But also how it reflects or undermines America’s strength, credibility, and viability in an interconnected world.”

See Appendix E for the whole remark.

[*Rev. Stanley Cung*](#), a pastor from Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, shared a deeply personal and painful account of the loss of his brother, a pastor, at the hands of the Myanmar military junta. He described how on September 18, 2021, his brother was brutally shot and killed while attempting to help his community during military attacks. His brother had been dedicated to both his faith and his family, leaving behind a wife and three children.

Tragically, his newborn daughter Suzanna was born after his death. Rev. Cung also recounted how the military's atrocities led to the destruction of homes, including over 11 churches, and forced many residents, including his family, to flee their town and seek refuge in India. Rev. Cung concluded his testimony by urging the international community to take action to stop the military junta's violence. He said,

“I am not just asking for your sympathy, but I am requesting your compassionate action for justice, freedom, and democracy in Myanmar.”

See Appendix F for the whole remark.



[*Zo Tum Hmung*](#), President and CEO of Burma Research Institute, emphasized the urgency of action in his concluding remarks. Reflecting on the fourth anniversary of the military coup in Burma, he urged the U.S. administration and Congress to take determined action. This will send a clear message of support for the people of Burma and demonstrate that the United States stands firm against the atrocities committed by the military regime. He stated that,

“By holding the perpetrators accountable for their crimes against humanity and war crimes, we can help deter further violence.”

He also urged Congress to hold a hearing on religious freedom, as this is crucial in addressing the ongoing persecution of religious minorities in Burma."

The panelists discussed the ongoing atrocities in Burma, focusing on the persecution of various ethnic and religious groups, including the Rohingya, Christians, Kachin, Karenni, and the people of Mandalay. These communities have been targeted by the Burmese military, with the military's actions leading to widespread violence, displacement, and destruction of religious sites. The panelists highlighted the grave situation faced by these minorities, emphasizing the urgent need for international accountability and action to stop the ongoing human rights violations.



H.E. Daw Zin Mar Aung, Union Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Unity Government of Myanmar, also gave a powerful speech during the briefing, emphasizing the critical importance of unity in the face of ongoing repression in Burma. She spoke about the necessity for all ethnic and religious groups to come together, despite the overwhelming challenges posed by the military junta, to ensure a brighter future for Myanmar.

Multiple media outlets covered the event, including Vaurawng Zuunthil, RFA, and VOA. The links to their coverage are provided below:

- **RFA Burmese - Feb. 3 Briefing:** [RFA Facebook Link](#)
- **Vaurawng Zuunthil:** [Vaurawng Zuunthil Video](#)
- **VOA Burmese - Feb. 3, 2025 Briefing:** [VOA Facebook Link](#)

The briefing was both fruitful and well-organized, providing an important platform to discuss the ongoing human rights violations in Burma. We were honored to meet with Senator Todd Young and Senator Chris Van Hollen after the briefing, both of whom reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Burmese people in their fight for freedom and justice. The discussions underscored the urgent need for international accountability, the protection of religious



minorities, and greater U.S. involvement in addressing the crisis. As we continue to advocate for the people of Burma, we remain hopeful that sustained dialogue and action will lead to meaningful change and a future free from persecution for all communities in Burma.



BURMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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PROGRAMS:

HYBRID CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

BURMA: Escalating human rights and religious freedom violations, targeting minority Christians.

Date: Monday, February 3, 2025

Time: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM (EST).

Location: Dirksen Senate Office Building (**Room B48**)
50 Constitution Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002

The Hybrid Congressional Briefing will highlight that the Burmese military, also known as the Tatmadaw, has escalated human rights and religious freedom violations, targeting minority Christians since the February 2021 military coup. It will urge the U.S. Congress and the Administration to determine that the Tatmadaw has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against civilians in Burma and to hold the Tatmadaw accountable for their crimes.

Moderator: Reverend Dr. Robin Stoops, Coordinator of the Burma Refugee Commission and Associate General Secretary (retired), American Baptist Churches USA

Remarks

- H.E. Duwa Lashi La, Acting President, National Unity Government of Myanmar
- Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)
- Senator Todd Young (R-IND)
- Stephen Schneck, Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom



- Carolyn Nash, Asia Advocacy Director, Amnesty International USA

A video: The CAM's Congressional Briefing on Burma, September 2023

Testimonial: Reverend Stanley Cung, PhD. Senior Pastor, Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church, Wisconsin. His brother Pastor Cung Biak Hum in Thantlang town, Chin State, was shot to death by the Tatmadaw.

Moderator: Ginny Farris, Policy Advisor, Chin Association of Maryland

Panelists

- Fr. David Michael de Penha AKA (Maung Maung Htun), Pastor at St. John Catholic Church, Iola, Kansas and St. Joseph Catholic Church, Yates Center, Kansas
- Sayadaw U Eitharaya, (Buddhist Monk), New York
- Lucky Karim, Human Rights Advocate and Director, Refugee Women for Peace and Justice and Advocacy Manager, International Campaign for Rohingya
- Reverend Ah Le, General Secretary, Kachin Baptist Churches USA, Maryland
- Fr. Peter Dee De, Associate Pastor, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fortwyane, Indiana

Concluding Remarks: Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director, Chin Association of Maryland, Washington, D.C.

CO-HOSTED BY: Chin Association of Maryland, American Baptist Churches USA, Burma Advocacy Group, International Campaign for the Rohingya, Jubilee Campaign, Campaign for A new Myanmar, and Boat People SOS.

Speakers Short Biography:



H.E. Duwa Lashi La

Acting President, National Unity Government of Myanmar

Duwa Lashi La is a Kachin politician and lawyer, who formerly served as the president of the Kachin National Consultative Council. He was born in Mung Ji village, northern Shan State. He attended secondary school at National Christian School in Kutkhai and graduated from Lashio High School with grade B. Upon graduating from high school, he worked as a teacher at Mung Ji School in his hometown. After working as a teacher, he took the matriculation exam in St. Michael's School (now known as No. 4 Basic Education High School

[B.E.H.S]) in Maymyo. In 1970, he went to Rangoon University and studied law. He received his Bachelor of Arts (BA) in 1974 and Bachelor of Laws (L.L.B) in 1975.

After graduation, Duwa Lashi La worked as a prosecutor in Myitkyina and Lashio for two years. From 1978 to 1994, he worked as a law officer for 16 years. After retiring in 1994, he started working with various civil society organizations (CSOs). In 2001, he co-founded the School of Intensive English Program (IEP), now Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ILAS). He also took the lead in establishing the World Concern Organization (WCO) in NSS and worked on regional development of NSS. He served at the Metta Development Foundation for seven years from 2004 to 2010. Additionally, he had collaborated with various international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and worked to improve standards of living and health in vulnerable communities in NSS. He oversaw the Hope International Development Agency for four years from 2010 to 2014. In conjunction with the Transnational Institute (TNI) and UNODC, he led strict anti-drug activities and he also served as an elected president of the Kachin Literature and Cultural Organization of Northern Shan State for four years from 2014 to 2018. In 2019, he was elected as the president of the Kachin National Advisory Committee (WMR) and served until January 2021.

Duwa Lashi La has been serving as an appointed Vice-President of the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar since April 16, 2021. Duwa Lashi La is proficient in English, Myanmar, and Shan, in addition to his mother tongue Kachin and also well-versed in other Kachin tribal languages such as Zaiwa, Lachaik, and Lhaovo.



Senator Chris Van Hollen

Elected to the United States Senate by the people of Maryland in November 2016, Chris Van Hollen is committed to fighting every day to ensure that our state and our country live up to their full promise of equal rights, equal justice, and equal opportunity. Senator Van Hollen believes that every child deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams and benefit from a quality education, and that anyone willing to work hard should be able to find a good job. That's why his top priorities include creating more and better jobs, strengthening small businesses, and increasing educational and job training opportunities for individuals of all ages and in every community.

Senator Van Hollen started his time in public service as a member of the Maryland State Legislature, where he became known as a tenacious advocate for everyday Marylanders and someone who was unafraid to take on powerful special interests on behalf of working people. In 2002, he was elected to represent Maryland's 8th Congressional District. In the House of



Representatives, he served as a member of the Democratic leadership and was elected by his colleagues to be the Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee and protect vital interests like Social Security and Medicare.

A tireless fighter for the people of Maryland, Senator Van Hollen has also become known for working hard to find common sense solutions to difficult national issues. In January 2015, he released a comprehensive plan to address the problem of growing inequality in America and provide a blueprint for building an economy that works for everyone, a goal that he will continue to fight for in the U.S. Senate.

Senator Van Hollen is proud to have worked successfully with members of both parties to pass bipartisan legislation whenever possible on issues of common concern, including expanding medical research, protecting the Chesapeake Bay, fighting childhood cancer, and passing the ABLE Act to assist families with children with disabilities.

Chris Van Hollen is a graduate of Swarthmore College, the John F. Kennedy School of Public Policy at Harvard University, and Georgetown University Law Center where he attended night school. He and his wife, Katherine Wilkens, are the proud parents of three children, Anna, Nicholas, and Alexander.



Stephen Schneck
Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

A political philosopher by training, Stephen Schneck retired from The Catholic University of America in 2018, after more than thirty years as a professor, department chair, and dean. At the university he was also the founder and long-time director of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies. He received his doctorate from the University of Notre Dame. A well-known advocate for Catholic social justice teachings in public life, Schneck currently serves on the governing boards of Catholic Climate Covenant, which advocates for environmental justice and care for creation, and of Catholic Mobilizing Network, a Catholic organization working to end the death penalty and advance restorative justice. His writings appear regularly in the religious media and he is a frequent commentator on Catholic matters for national and international news services. Previously, he was the executive director of Franciscan Action Network, which promotes environmental, economic, racial, and social justice on behalf of the Franciscan communities of the United States. He served the administration of President Barack Obama as a member of the White House Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood



Partnerships.

Born and raised in Clinton, Iowa, Schneck now lives with his wife, Suzanne, on Bald Head Island, North Carolina.



Senator Todd Christopher Young

Since joining the Senate in 2017, Todd Young has developed a reputation as a bipartisan problem solver. On issues like outcompeting the Chinese Communist Party, securing the border, growing the economy, expanding affordable housing options for all Hoosiers, supporting Indiana's veterans, and harnessing the potential of artificial intelligence, Todd has offered conservative solutions to many of the biggest issues facing Hoosier families. In 2022, the CHIPS and Science Act, his landmark legislation to outcompete China and create more high tech jobs in the Heartland, became law. Vital to America's economic and national security, the law is bringing semiconductor production back to

the United States to shore up our supply chain and ensure America is never dependent on China for critical chips.

Todd's path to the Senate went through the United States Marine Corps. After graduating high school, Todd attended the United States Naval Academy, where he played varsity soccer and was elected a class officer. Todd graduated with honors in 1995 and accepted a commission in the U.S. Marine Corps. After training as a rifle platoon commander, Todd served as an intelligence officer, spending time on the U.S. southern border.

Later, while leading a Marines recruiting effort in Chicago and northwest Indiana, Todd put himself through night school at the University of Chicago, where he earned his MBA with a concentration in economics.

After serving a decade in the military, in 2000 Todd was honorably discharged as a Captain. He then spent a year in England, where he wrote a thesis on the economic history of Midwestern agriculture and earned an MA from the School of Advanced Study in London. Upon returning to the United States, he accepted a position at the Heritage Foundation and later worked as a legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate.

In 2003, Todd returned home to Indiana. He worked for several years as a management consultant, advising public and private organizations on how they could implement business



practices to provide their constituents and customers with more value, often by investing fewer resources.

Soon after returning to Indiana, Todd met his future wife, Jenny, while earning his JD from Indiana University. They married in 2005, and then worked together at a small law firm in Paoli, Indiana, that was started by Jenny's great-grandfather in 1933.

In 2010, Todd ran his first campaign for Congress, defeating a strong Democrat incumbent to represent Indiana's 9th Congressional District. He served three terms in the House before running for Senate in 2016.

Todd and Jenny and their four children currently reside in Johnson County.

He serves on the U.S. Senate Committees on Finance; Commerce, Science & Transportation; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Previously, in the House, he served on the House Armed Services Committee, the House Budget Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee.



Zo Tum Hmung - Executive Director

Zo Tum Hmung, Executive Director of the Chin Association of Maryland, Inc. (CAM), previously co-founded and served as the Executive Director of the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center-Union of Burma (ENAC), a research center that supports the peace process and development of democratic institutions in Burma. Mr. Hmung completed his master's in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School focusing on foreign policy and negotiations and also finished his

Master of Theological Studies with a concentration in Christian Faith and Public Policy from Eastern University's Palmer Seminary. He also graduated with a bachelor's in theological studies in Burma. He was born in Chin State, Burma, and currently lives with his family in Ellicott City, Maryland.



Virginia Farris

Policy Advisor, the Chin Association of Maryland

Ms. Farris became Policy Advisor of the Chin Association of Maryland

after retiring from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops where she covered Asia and human rights in their Office of International



Justice and Peace. During her almost 17 years with USCCB, she accompanied U.S. bishops on solidarity visits to a number of Asian nations, including Burma/Myanmar. Prior to working with USCCB, Virginia served as a Public Affairs Officer with the U.S. Department of State with tours in six foreign countries as well as in Washington, DC. She has a Masters in National Security Studies from the National War College as well as degrees from the University of Michigan and Michigan State University.



Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops

Transitional Lead Pastor
First Baptist Church of Topeka
Mission Resource Coordinator
Burma Refugee Commission Coordinator
American Baptist Churches USA

Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops is currently serving as the Transitional Lead Pastor of First Baptist Church of Topeka, KS. He is also working part-time with ABCUSA as the Mission Resource Coordinator, and the Coordinator of the Burma Refugee Commission.

The Rev. Dr. Robin D. Stoops has been a pastor for thirty-nine years. He served as Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska for twelve years. During his ministry he has pastored churches in South Dakota, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. Stoops is a graduate of Ottawa University, Ottawa, Kan., with a bachelor's degree in education, North American Baptist Seminary (now Sioux Falls Seminary, Karios University) with a Master of Divinity degree, and completed a doctoral degree in Missional Leadership/Contextual Theology at Northern Seminary in Lisle, Ill. He also completed a professional certificate in Negotiation and Mediation from the Naveen Jindal School of Management at the University of Texas at Dallas and received a certificate in Religious Fundraising from the Lake Institute at Indiana University. He was awarded the Pastor of the Year award in 2008 by the American Baptist Men of Nebraska.

His work with the American Baptist Churches has included preaching, pastoral searches, leadership training, conflict transformation, and consultation with churches in mission giving and development. He has also led multiple Mission Study Trips in South America, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa with pastors from ABC of Nebraska to visit missionaries and partners. Stoops has been a Special Assistant to Theological Education for Burma with International Ministries. He has also served as the Treasurer for the Regional Executive Ministers Council, one of three officer positions in the REMC. He is the founder and director of



ChurchHelp.net, a ministry working with unaffiliated churches to provide pastoral searches, leadership training and conflict transformation on a fee basis.

Stoops and his wife Kathy Stoops will celebrate 50 years of marriage in July of 2025. They have three grown children, eight grandchildren and two miniature dachshunds.



Fr. David Michael (AKA Maung Maung Htun)

Name: Fr. David Michael de Penha AKA (Maung Maung Htun)

Date of Birth: November 27, 1974

Joined the Nazareth Salesian Seminary: May 15, 1987
(Age 12 and a half)

Studied at Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, India: May 2000 to September 2005

Hold master's degree in Missiology from Universita Pontificia Salesiana, Rome.

Ordained as a Salesian Priest: January 17, 2004

Came to the USA to the Diocese of Wichita as a missionary: December 9, 2013

Became the Priest of the Diocese of Wichita: October 18, 2020

Now serving as a Pastor at St. John Catholic Church, Iola, Kansas and St. Joseph Catholic Church, Yates Center, Kansas and the Oratory of St. Martin, Piqua, Kansas, Director of Communications for BACPJ (Burmese American Catholics for Peace and Justice), President of FPB, USA (Fraternity of Priests from Burman in the USA), had served as Spiritual Director of NCBAC (National Conference of Burmese American Catholics) (2016-2024).

He is an artist (poem, painting, music). Founded Catholic Creative Artists Association in Yangon. Wrote and directed the Musical Play, 'Jesus of Nazareth' and staged it at the National Theatre, Yangon 2013.



Reverend Stanley Cung, PhD

Senior Pastor, 2019-present Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church
Greenfield, Wisconsin USA

Member, Ministers Council of the Chin Evangelical Churches
USA

Head of Religion Department, 2012-2015, 2010-2011



Liberal Arts Program, Myanmar Institute of Theology
Seminary Hill, Insein
Yangon, Myanmar
Assistant Lecturer, 2007-2011
Myanmar Institute of Theology
Seminary Hill, Insein
Yangon, Myanmar--Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), 2015-2024
Asbury Theological Seminary
Wilmore, KY 40390
USA



Fr. Peter Dee De -Fr. Peter Dee De

Fr. Peter Dee De was born in 1980 in Pruhso, Karenni State, Burma. He completed his high school education in 1998 in Loikaw, Karenni State, Burma. Pursuing his academic and spiritual interests, he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Theology in 2008 from the Philippines.

From 2008 to 2012, Fr. Peter served at St. Joseph Parish in Hoya, Loikaw Diocese. His commitment to his community extended beyond national borders, as he dedicated himself to serving Burmese refugees in the Midwest region of the United States as a chaplain from 2012 to 2024. Currently, Fr. Peter is

furthering his education and pastoral skills by undergoing an ACPE residency in the United States.



Rev. Ah Le

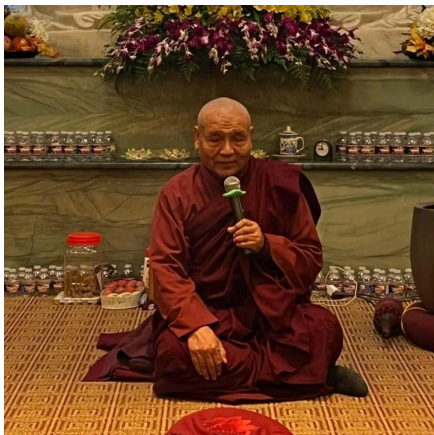
Rev. Ah Le was born and raised in Kachin State, Burma. He serves as the General Secretary of the Kachin Baptist Churches USA and is a pastor at the Maryland Kachin Baptist Church. He is married to BC Ni Chin Tial, and they currently reside in Savage, Maryland.



Carolyn Nash

Ms. Nash Carolyn Nash is the Asia Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA. Prior to joining Amnesty, Carolyn lived in Myanmar, where she managed human rights and governance programs. She has also lived and worked on human rights programming in Indonesia, East Timor, Kenya, and Uganda. She was a 2017 Pacific Delegate with the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, the 2018 Southeast Asia Fellow for Young Professionals in Foreign Policy, a 2021 Penn Kemble Fellow with the National Endowment for Democracy, and a 2023 Mansfield-Luce Asia Scholar.

Carolyn received her M.A. in International Relations and Economics with a focus on Politics and Governance from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and her B.A. in English literature from Columbia University.



Abbot U Eithareya

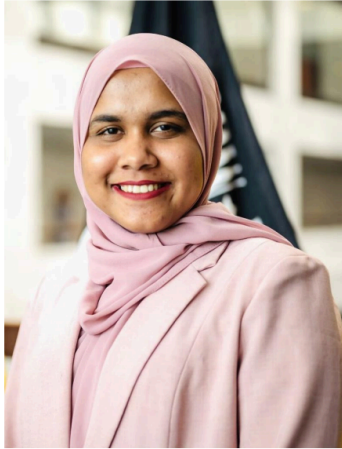
U Eithareya was born on December 15, 1955 from U Hto (Father) and Daw Taw Mying (Mother) in Tebin Village, Shwe Bo District of Sagaing Region.

He studied at the village primary school. After that he studied basic Buddhist scriptures and Tipitaka books from Ashin Pyinnyeinda Bi Wonsa, the head abbot of Khadawhmi Monastery in Moegok, Ashin Zanaka Bi Wonsa and other Buddhism monk teachers at Mahagandayon Monastery in Amarapura Township of Sagaing Region. He also studied

from monk teachers at Saku, Taungthaman, Moekaung, Khinmakan monasteries in Mandalay. He practiced Vipassana mediation under the guidance of Mahasi Sayadaw, Chanmyae Sayadaw, Moegok Sayadaw.

When he was 29, he became an abbot monk at Aung Myay Mingala Monastery, and established a monastic education school together with a basic Tipitaka School where he taught monks.

He came to the United States of America in 1995, 1999 and 2000. He established a monastery called Dhamma Wadi in Rensselaer, NY and has lived there as an abbot.



Lucky Karim

Lucky Karim is a Rohingya refugee from Burma (Myanmar) who, in August 2017, was compelled to flee her homeland amidst genocidal attacks perpetrated by the Burmese Military. Following six years of resilience in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar camp, she resettled in the United States in December 2022. Commencing her career at the tender age of 15 in 2018 within the refugee camp, Lucky dedicated herself to serving her community by collaborating with numerous international humanitarian organizations to provide vital assistance. Pioneering as one of first Rohingya women in the camps who was proficient in English and capable of bridging communication with the international community by age 17, Lucky defied odds to pursue higher education at the esteemed Asian University for Women in Chittagong. Despite childhood adversities in the refugee camp, her determination propelled her forward. Now recognized as a prominent human rights activist, Lucky collaborates closely with US government officials, stakeholders, policymakers, and UN agencies, focusing on addressing the Rohingya crisis and broader issues in Burma. Notably, at just 19 years old, she testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission at Congress in 2023, advocating for the rights of women and advising policymakers on measures to ameliorate the situation in Burma and Southeast Asia. With her influential voice resonating globally, Lucky remains a catalyst for positive change, tirelessly working to uplift her people and effect meaningful progress on the international stage. Lucky has written a memoir about her life which will be published in 2025 June 20th. Lucky Karim is also a Director at a non-profit organization called Refugee Women for peace and Justice in South East Asia including Bangladesh and Lucky works with an organization called International Campaign for Rohingya As an advocacy manager, And she is also a refugee fellow at Refugees International Washington D.C based organizations.



Appendix:

Appendix A:

Address to the Congressional Briefing on “Escalating Human Rights and Religious Freedom Violations in Burma”

by

Acting President Duwa Lashi La

National Unity Government of Myanmar

Dear Senators, distinguished guests, speakers and participants

Firstly, I would like to thank you for receiving an opportunity to address the Congressional Briefing on *Escalating human rights and religious freedom violations in Myanmar/Burma*.

Second, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Chris Van Hollen and Senator Todd Young for supporting this important congressional briefing. You have been very supportive of our people’s struggle for freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Thirdly, I also want to thank the Chin Association of Maryland, the American Baptist Churches USA, all sponsors and participants.

Religious Freedom is a fundamental human right for all human beings. Unfortunately, the people of Myanmar – especially religious minorities in Myanmar such as Christians, Hindus, and Muslims – have lost this very basic human right for several decades under successive military regimes. I know it personally, as a Kahin ethnic and a Christian.

The majority of Buddhists were not spared either. Successive military regimes have brutally repressed the Buddhists and the monks who do not share the political stands and goals of the military dictators.

It’s been getting worse since the February 2021 military coup. Almost 500 religious sites, including 147 churches, were burned or destroyed by the Myanmar military in less than four years. In addition, 266 religious leaders were killed and injured.

Since the February 2021 coup, the junta arbitrarily detained over 28,000 people, including almost 200 religious leaders. Almost 30,000 youths, including ethnic and religious minorities, were forcefully conscripted in 2024.

As they are losing territories, the terrorist military council steps up airstrikes on civilian targets, including religious facilities, schools, hospitals and busy markets.

Between September 2021 and November 2024, over 4,700 airstrikes were conducted by the junta. Around 70% of the airstrikes were targeted at the civilians.

To end the killing of civilians, prevent ongoing human rights violations, and halt scam operations and transnational crimes committed by the junta and allies, the National Unity Government



(NUG) is working hard in hand with ethnic resistance organizations to eradicate the root cause of the problem, the military dictatorship.

At this point, the military junta was able to control less than one third of territories in Myanmar as the resistance forces achieved tremendous military victories.

In early 2024, we announced a common political agreement among the National Unity Government and ethnic allies. We anticipate a broader political agreement in 2025 for the new Federal Democratic Union that guarantees human rights, religious freedom, sustainable peace, and stability.

With the unity and bravery of the people of Myanmar, we are destined to succeed.

I thank the United States for standing up with the people of Myanmar. We need financial, material and technical support from the United States in 2025 to restore freedom, human rights and democracy sooner in Myanmar.

Thank you very much.

Appendix B:

Hi I am Chris Van Hollen and I represent the great state of Maryland in the United States Senate. And while I regret that I can not join you in person, I am glad that I was able to secure this room for your briefing today. I want to thank you all for coming to the capitol hill. And I especially want to acknowledge the executive director of the Chin Association of Maryland Zo Tum Hmung, the Union Minister of Foreign Affairs of the National Unity Government Daw Zin Mar Aung, and Kyaw Zaw who is the spokesperson for the National Unity Government President. I also want to thank all today's panelists, participants, and sponsoring organizations including the Chin Association of Maryland, the International Campaign for Rohingya, the Burma Advocacy Group and the Jubilee Campaign. You have all struggled and sacrificed to protect the Burmese people from terrible cruelty at the hands of the Junta, the Tatmadaw. And I want you to know that I stand with you and will keep standing with you in this fight. We must not only condemn but take more action to stop the long standing persecution and ongoing genocide against the Rohingya people in which the military has burned villages, rape and murder ten of thousands and displaced over a million people. We will never forget the horrible coup of 2021 and what the Junta has done with its power. A relentless campaign against their own people, especially ethnic minorities like the Chin, the Kachin, the Karen and the Karanie have been singled out for violence. Christian have faced shocking attacks, over 300 churches have been destroyed and leading pastors and priests have been detained and killed. As you all know some of the worst atrocities have been experienced by the Christian of the Chin State. History will remember that the Junta has tried to eradicate their faith and their way of life. And then in the face of these atrocities, history will remember who stood up and spoke out and who stayed silent. Right now I am working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make sure that the United States redouble its effort to stop crimes against humanity in Burma. Here are a few of the things that we



need to do. First, we must seek accountability for the atrocities. We need to support international efforts, including the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, the ICC's ongoing criminal investigation, and Gambia's legal case against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice. And we must support civil society organizations inside and outside of Myanmar who are documenting the atrocities and protecting the victims and witnesses. We must send the Tatmadaw a clear message, you are not operating in the dark, we see what you are doing, the world is watching your every move and we will hold you accountable for the atrocities and crimes you are committing. Second, America must support a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing fighting in the region. One that finally empowers the Burmese people to decide their own fate and future. Third, we must do more to confront the Junta number one enabler on the international stage, the People's Republic of China, over this issue. For years, the PRC has prioritized its belt and road trade route over millions of human lives in Burma and blocked the international community from effectively stepping in. We can not allow them to do so anymore. America is the only nation that can effectively deter China in this matter and we need to let them know that we will. To do all of these we need to make Burma a diplomatic priority. The new Administration must fully implement the provision of the Burma Act, especially those regarding those sanctions on the Junta and the provision of the non lethal assistance to the resistance groups. The United state must have a special coordinator for Democracy in Burma to coordinate US diplomatic efforts and to interface with United Nations, ASEAN, PRC and other high level representatives on Burma. In particular, we cannot allow the Junta to hold sham elections to legitimize its tyrannical rule. And we should sanction those who organize fraudulent elections. We need to do all of these and more. And we should have done more starting long ago. But the next best time to begin is now. So I will end in the spirit I began. Thanking you, all of you for your relentless advocacy and action because of your courage I know we will one day realize a world where no one in Burma lives in fear.

Appendix C:

Since February 2021, It's been heartbreaking to sit with fellow Hoosiers and hear how families and loved ones had their hopes and dreams for the future disrupted by the coup today we remember the thousands of lives, lost to violent oppression and we have not forgotten that millions of Burmese people are currently in need of humanitarian aid. I stand ready to stop those who seek to undermine the cause of peace in democracy. Burma has made great strides toward Democratic governance and while this crew is a setback. It will not be the end of the story since the military coup. I've been on the forefront of the United States Senate action and support of Burma's democracy condemning the coup and calling for sanctions against senior military leaders for their gross human rights violations. Congress has taken important steps in recent years to express the need for urgent assistance to many opponents of the military government and to support accountability for the military crimes. I believe that by working with you and my colleagues here in Washington, we can bring real help to the Burmese people and their



aspirations for freedom in peace. I'm proud to stand with the people of Burma both now and in this time of crisis and in the future, thank you and God bless.

Appendix D:

BRIEFING ON BURMA

Escalating human rights and religious freedom violations, targeting minority Christians

Monday, February 3, 2025

12:00 – 2:00 PM

Senate Dirksen Office Building (Room B48)

Remarks for Chair Stephen Schneck

Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to thank the Chin Association of Maryland for this opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Stephen Schneck, I am the Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF. We are an independent, bipartisan U.S. government advisory body created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, or IRFA. Our mandate is to monitor religious freedom abroad using international standards, and to make policy recommendations to the U.S. President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

USCIRF has monitored conditions in Burma since 2000, consistently recommending its designation as a Country of Particular Concern, or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. Although the Department of State did not announce the 2024 designations as scheduled, Burma was last redesignated as a CPC under IRFA in December 2023 for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.²

The Burmese military and its State Administration Council, or SAC, have targeted ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians for more than two decades. The SAC violently targets all religious communities to maintain its grip on power and achieve a Buddhist nationalist vision for Burma. Unfortunately, the Christian communities in Burma continue to bear the brunt of such tactics. I would like to note a few developments that USCIRF has been particularly concerned about in recent months.

Since the 2021 coup, the military has attacked more than 240 religious sites throughout the nation. In Chin state alone, over 100 churches and monasteries were destroyed mostly from airstrikes. In May of 2024, airstrikes hit a Catholic church and a Baptist church in the town of Tonzang forcing the parish priest and parishioners to flee into the surrounding forests. This happened shortly after the military attacked two churches in Mindat a month earlier. Other



churches in Taingen, Falam, and Matupi also fell victim to such deliberate strikes. The scale of these attacks in the last three years have displaced more than 90,000 in Chin State, leaving them in desperate conditions.

USCIRF remains deeply concerned for those who have been detained or disappeared. These include ethnic Chin pastor Salai Ayla Lone Wai, a recent addition to USCIRF's Victim List, whose religious leadership role and ethnoreligious background became ground for his arrest. The SAC sentenced him to 10 years of imprisonment under defamation and terrorism charges. To date, the SAC has detained and sentenced at least 14 Christians and another 113 religious persons since the coup.

I want to note that USCIRF has consistently called out the atrocities and genocide the Burmese military has committed against the predominantly Muslim Rohingya.³ Since the coup nearly four years ago, it has become clear that the failure of the international community to fully address the Rohingya crisis has enabled the Burmese military to employ similar tactics against other religious minorities such as Chin Christians and Kayah Catholics.

In our 2024 Annual Report Chapter on Burma, we urged Congress and the Biden Administration to fully implement the Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act of 2022, known as the Burma Act, to better promote religious freedom in Burma, as these measures can better ensure justice and accountability mechanisms for Rohingya and other persecuted religious minorities. The Burma Act also authorizes the U.S. government to engage with Burma's pro-democracy opposition, including the National Unity Government and ethnic armed organizations. In addition, USCIRF also called on the administration to work with the governments of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand to assist Rohingya and other refugee communities from Burma.

Lastly, the U.S. government has sanctioned key perpetrators of human rights violations in Burma. In January of last year, the U.S. Department of the Treasury sanctioned two entities closely associated with Burma's military and its four cronies. These actors were directly or indirectly linked to attacks and airstrikes against Christians, their houses of worship, seminaries, and the villages and towns of ethnic and religious minorities. As the military is increasingly losing territories in Burma, USCIRF looks forward to the U.S. Department of the Treasury making more targeted sanctions to incapacitate the military regime. The U.S. government will also need to coordinate efforts with the international community to deter the military from attacking religious minorities.⁴

USCIRF looks forward to a new Burma that respects the principles of human rights, including religious freedom, for all the people in Burma, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Please continue



the vital work you are doing, as it is essential for all of us to work together to speak for those who cannot.

Thank you!

Appendix E:

Thank you so much for inviting me to speak today and thank you to everybody who joined us today. As you heard my name is Carolyn Nash, and I am the HI advocate director for Amnesty International. It has been four years since the Myanmar military plunged the country into a humanitarian, political and economic free fall. Since the takeover of the military has arrested more than 28 thousands people more than 21 thousand remaining. A confirmed 6,000 civilians being killed by military forces, unconfirmed estimates, placed the number closer to 30 thousands deaths. Recent UN reports indicate that 3.4 million people have been displaced internally. Many from farming communities. Along with a lack of access to seeds and fertilizer resulted in part of a greatering economy. The disruptions to farming communities have placed 15 to 22 million people at risk of food and spirit. Amnesty International has documented the military's attack in the east of the country. Where operations reflect a long standing pattern of collective punishment of civilians. The military has attacked civilians and civilian infrastructure from the air and the ground. Causing mass displacement and escalating humanitarian crisis. MDC has also documented the military's reliance on air strikes and on jet fuel to carry out these attacks. AND as further documented the failures for other countries and governments to interrupt the supply chain. In the face of waning international interests and intensifying geopolitical chaos, Myanmar people including ethnic groups, human rights defenders and pro democracy activists have rejected the military's abuses and intimidation tactics. They have persisted in a fight that very few people expected they could win or even sustain back in February 2021. Their movement predates the coup. There is a long tradition of activism of peaceful protests and of civilian led resistance movements. And it has in the past been sustained and supported by governments and Organizations around the world who believe that no one group's strength. Safety or prosperity can be entirely untethered from that of their vocal nations. It has been sustained and supported by policy that shrines elite and collective welfare. By the end of last year, more than 1.3 million people had fled Myanmar. Making it the sixth largest refugee population i n the world. In response the international community has mobilized a financial and resettlement response that is falling dangerously short of the overwhelming need. UNHCR has secured less than 180 million dollars from donor countries. Only 43% of the over \$400 million they estimate is needed to address the crisis. Between 2011 and 2023, the United States admitted more than 100,000 refugees from Myanmar. But with that, within hours of assuming office President Trump helped the Americans refugees program by executive order, forcing applicants who had already been approved for resettlement to cancel travel plans. Four years since the coup, Myanmar's crisis is no longer receiving even cursory efforts from the international community to deliver the level of political, financial or practical support necessary to provide safety to all of its people. This is



nothing to shake the convictions or the commitment of the people's resistance to military rule. It is now up to governments including the United States to restore paths to safety for those displaced by harm. To fulfill obligations for support including obligations outlined in the Burma Act. It shows up in the world in a way that demonstrates a basic understanding not only in how US foreign policy reflects American humanity. But also how it reflects or undermines America's strength, credibility, and viability in an interconnected world. Thank you again for being here.

Appendix F:

Testimonial

Rev. Stanley Cung, PhD

February 3, 2025

Good afternoon! My name is Stanley. I am the pastor of Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I'd like to express my sincere thanks to Senator Todd Young, Senator Christ Van Hollan, Acting President of National Unity Government of Myanmar, and all the organizers and responsible persons of this event. I am also grateful to Mr. Zo Tum Hmung, the Executive Director of Chin Association of Maryland, for inviting me to speak about our family story at the important event. This talk is about an advocacy for the victims of injustice, discrimination and evil acts of the military junta in Myanmar.

Everybody has some moments that we cannot forget or will never forget. For me, one moment that I will never forget is September 18, 2021 early in the morning around 6:15 Central Time. I got a phone call from one of my cousins. I thought that I'd hear bad news about my uncle because my uncle was under a cancer treatment at that time. But I was wrong. He told me that someone by the name of Biakkolh was shot dead by the army, and whether that person was my youngest brother or not. I was shocked. I sent a facebook message to my brother 'whether they are ok or not', but I got no reply for almost 10 minutes. Every time I texted him; he replied to me within five minutes. When I didn't get a reply, I called him. But he didn't pick up. It's 6:36 in the morning. That moment was one of the most painful moments in my life. I will never forget. I cried and I cried, and I cried.

My brother was a youth pastor at Thantlang Centenary Baptist Church. He was born on December 12, 1990. After my father passed away on December 9, 1999, he lived with my mom.



He was the one who took care of my mom and his family. There's no one whom my mom relied on for everything. While he was studying Civil Engineering at Technological University in Kalaymyo, Myanmar, he got married with Ms. Sui Tha Par on April 12, 2010, and they have two sons. Decided to serve God, he left his engineering university and started Bachelor of Theology (B. Th) course at Tedim Christian College in 2011 and earned his B. Th degree in March 2015. In June 2015, God granted him the opportunity to serve Him as a Youth Pastor at TCBC. He continued his Master of Divinity (M. Div) program at Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) where I taught in 2018. When he started his second year of the program, the school was closed due to COVID 19 pandemic that he returned home to Thantlang and resumed his courses via online until the military coup in February 2021.

Due to majority people in Myanmar protest the coup, the military limited the internet access, shut down several times, that his online course had to be halted. The military junta becomes crueler day after day as the military forces were sent to many places including to Thantlang town. Several residents of Thantlang town fled the town to avoid the crimes committed by brutal military force in Thantlang, they shot houses and bombarded in some places. My brother and his family along with my mother remained in town as TCBC members were severely hit by COVID 19 pandemic. Moreover, his wife Sui Tha Par was seven months pregnant. On September 18, 2021, the military forces shelling by artillery hit houses in the town and houses were on fire, spreading the flames to the next. In the afternoon of the day, my brother could not sit calm that he made phone calls to some of his friends urging them to put out the fire and hopped on his motorbike and rushed to help his members and his town. Around two minutes after he left the house, his family and my mother heard the gunshot sound and kept dialing his phone but could not be reached anymore. He never made to the scene; he was brutally shot twice on his chest by the brutal military forces, cut his ring finger to steal his wedding ring, his watch and his mobile phone were stolen as well. Because of constant gunfire and shelling by artillery, his body was retrieved only after around two hours. His remain was buried the next day morning.

Soon as the funeral service was done, my mother and my brother's family fled the town together to Mizoram, India. They rent a house in Mizoram and live together. His wife gave birth to a daughter on November 16, 2021. A daughter is a true blessing, but she was born after her father



was murdered. She was born without a father. My brother would be filled with joy if he were there when his daughter was born since he and his wife had been praying to have a baby girl. Even before the baby was born, my brother gave her a name Suzanna though he didn't know that the baby will be a girl. Now his wife and her three children decided to live together with my mother to take care of one another. In December 2021, my mother was informed that her house was burned down to ashes by the military force.

This is one story among many other stories of the people in Myanmar. In September 29, 2021 (ten days after my brother was shot dead), the brutal military force shot dead another two other civilians Pu Ral Tu and Pu Hram Cung. Because of such brutal and evil acts of the junta, all residents of Thantlang fled the town in October 2021, and take shelter at other surrounding villages and some places in Mizoram, India. Now there are about 30,000 people from Thantlang and Hakha residing as refugees/displaced in India. When the Chinland Defence Force decided to defend themselves and the people, and whenever there are shootings, the military burned down the houses in Thantlang, including religious buildings. More than 11 churches have been burned down by the military. One of them is Thantlang Baptist Church where my grandfather served as the first pastor, and where I grew up and nourished myself spiritually and mentally. It is hard, it is painful to hear and see our people are suffering, crying and dying in the other land.

So today, I humbly would like to request all of you to join us in fighting against the evil injustice military junta. If you and I are just watching what's happening in Myanmar and take no action very soon, we will hear and read so many other sad and painful stories like ours. Many children will become orphans, many women will be left as widows. Many of our young people have sacrificed their lives for the suffering people of the country. Let's join our hands to end this kind of crime against humanity, race, and religion. I am not just asking for your sympathy, but I am requesting your compassionate action for justice, freedom and democracy in Myanmar.