



BURMA RESEARCH INSTITUTE

PRESS RELEASE

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Burma Research Institute Releases the Statement of President Zo Tum Hmung at the IRF Roundtable with U.S. Government

Monday, September 29, 2025

10am - 12 noon

Hart Senate Office Building (Room SH-902)
Washington, DC

Good morning, everyone!

I am Zo Tum Hmung, President of the Burma Research Institute.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about religious freedom issues in Burma. Since the Burmese military coup in 2021, the military, also known as the Tatmadaw, has escalated destroying places of worship and religious facilities, targeting minority religions – Christians.

I would like to provide two examples.

First: Saint Theresa's Church, Tananukwe Village in Demoso township, Karenni State. This Catholic church is under the Loikaw Diocese. On September 17, 2025 around 10 a.m. Burma Time, the Burmese military's fighter jets bombed and destroyed this church. The Burma Research Institute (BRI) was informed of the bombing from sources on the ground. This picture is of the church before the bombing, and these pictures are of the church after the bombing. This is not the first time the Tatmadaw has bombed places of worship. The military bombed the Catholic church because they are Christians.

Second: On Sunday, August 3, 2025, the military forces based in Hakha, the capital of Chin State, arrested about 40 Chin youth. Right before the arrests occurred, there was a combined youth church service between the churches in Hakha. On the way home from the Hakha Baptist Church where the service was held, the Tatmadaw arrested them. The Tatmadaw knew that the Chin youth were attending the church service. After this, the Chin youth became afraid to attend church services. The martial law imposed by the Tatmadaw in Hakha is still ongoing. Under martial law, a curfew has been imposed from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. the following day so people are not allowed to assemble. The Christian church services were normally held on Sunday morning while other services and church activities were held in the evening during the week. In addition, the Chin youth used to have choir practice on Saturday night for the following Sunday worship services. The curfew had stopped all of these activities. This is a systematic violation of religious freedom where almost 100 percent of the population in Hakha is Christian.

I would like to continue urging the Administration to protect religious freedom in Burma. On March 7, 2025, we, churches and community organizations, sent a letter to Secretary of State Rubio. We urged the Secretary **“to determine that the human rights abuses and systematic violations of religious freedom or belief targeting Christians in Burma constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes”**. The signatories included the Baptists, Catholics, evangelicals and others. On March 27, we received a response from the State Department on behalf of the Secretary. The response was encouraging. I call upon the Secretary to take concrete action.

I would like to state that we support the resolution introduced by Senator James Lankford (S.Res.52 - **A resolution recognizing religious freedom as a fundamental right, expressing support for international religious freedom as a cornerstone of United States foreign policy, and expressing concern over increased threats to and attacks on religious freedom around the world**). We hope that the Senate will pass this resolution soon. Thank you.



Saint Theresa's Church, Tananukwe Village in Demoso township, Karenni State before getting bombed by the Tatmadaw. Photo: BRI's local source, anonymous for security reason.



Saint Theresa's Church after getting bombed on September 17, 2025 by the Tatmadaw's fighter jets. Photo: BRI's local source, anonymous for security reason.



Saint Theresa's Church interior after getting bombed on September 17, 2025 by the Tatmadaw's fighter jets. Photo: BRI's local source, anonymous for security reason.



Hakha Baptist Church, Hakha, Chin State. Photo: BRI's local source, anonymous for security reason.

***The Burma Research Institute (BRI)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the United States that conducts research and advocacy. BRI primarily focuses on freedom of religion or belief, human rights, and protection and assistance of refugees and internally displaced people in Burma. Formerly known as the Chin Association of Maryland, BRI also empowers the local Chin community in Maryland and across the United States to successfully integrate into American society. (www.burmari.org).*