

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

RE: Urgent Call for U.S. Action Against the Burmese Military's Persecution of Christians in Burma

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We, the undersigned Christian leaders, organizations, interfaith groups, and individuals, urge you to take immediate action to protect Christians in Burma from the Burmese military's escalating and severe persecution.

On March 27, 2025, Sean K. O'Neill, then Senior Bureau Official for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, responded promptly on your behalf¹ to our letter of March 7, 2025, which urged the Administration to determine that the atrocities by the Burmese military against Christians in Burma constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.² Mr. O'Neill's letter recognized the Burmese military's atrocities against ethnic and minority groups, including Christians, since the 2021 coup. He also stated, "The Department of State remains committed to working with you to support the people of Burma." As a coalition of community organizations, church groups, and concerned individuals, we remain very grateful for your ongoing commitment to work with us to support the people of Burma.

Since March 2025, we see hopeful examples of your commitment to support the people of Burma. We applaud Congress and the Trump Administration for the \$121 million assistance for the people of Burma for FY2026,³ the President's Executive Order 14014 on Burma,⁴ and the Trump Administration policy condemning anti-Christian violence in Nigeria and Globally.⁵

¹ Letter On Behalf of Secretary Rubio responding to Letter of March 7, 2025. March 27, 2025.

<https://burmari.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/032725-Department-of-State-Response.pdf>

² Letter to Secretary Rubio from Church leaders, community organizations, interfaith groups, concerned individuals, coordinated by BRI. March 7, 2025. <https://burmari.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Letter-to-Secretary-Marco-Rubio-on-Burma.pdf>

³ Burma Research Institute (BRI). Press Release: BRI Welcomes 121 Million U.S. Assistance for Burma in FY2026 appropriation. February 4, 2026. <https://burmari.org/2026/02/04/bri-welcomes-121-million-u-s-assistance-for-burma-in-fy2026-appropriations/>

⁴ Executive Order 14014: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in and in Relation to Burma. February 6, 2026. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/02/06/2025-02405/continuation-of-the-national-emergency-with-respect-to-the-situation-in-and-in-relation-to-burma> (The order correctly states that "the situation in and in relation to Burma continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.")

⁵ "Combating Egregious Anti-Christian Violence in Nigeria and Globally" restricting visas for those who attack Christians in Nigeria. December 3, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/12/combating-egregious-anti-christian-violence-in-nigeria-and-globally/> (It is deeply

We turn now to our urgent request for the Trump Administration to protect Christians in Burma. Since the exchange of letters in March 2025 between church and community advocates with the State Department, the Burma Research Institute (BRI) has written a report that recounts a substantial number of Burmese military attacks against Christians in Burma and summarizes ten U.S. government actions that would help to pressure the Burmese military to halt their atrocities and their severe violations of religious freedom. Among other requested actions, BRI renews the recommendation made by the coalition letter of March 7, 2025, that the U.S. government determine that the Burmese military atrocities constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The new report covers events from February 2021 through December 2025. It is a compilation of almost five years of research taken from publications by BRI concerning severe violations of religious freedom, targeting Christians. For these publications, BRI relied primarily on sources on the ground from Burma who provided and/or verified the information. The report is supplemented by external reports by UN agencies, other reputable international organizations in the region, reputable U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the U.S. State Department, and reputable media sources.

Since the letter of Mr. O'Neill on March 27, 2025, the Burmese military has continued attacking Christians. The report highlights two notable examples. On April 8, 2025, the Burmese military airstrikes destroyed Christ the King Catholic Church in Falam, Chin State—less than two weeks before Easter on April 20. All church members were displaced from their homes. In the face of the atrocity, Bishop Lucius Hre Kung of the Hakha Diocese, was deeply moved by the resilience of the congregation, during a pastoral visit to the ruins after the Easter attack. “They destroyed the walls of the church, but not the faith,” he said.

The second example was on Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025, when the Burmese military airstrike destroyed the Mindat Baptist Church in Mindat Town, Chin State. Rev. Dr. Roy Medley, Executive Director of Burma Advocacy Group and General Secretary Emeritus of the American Baptist Churches, said the timing was deliberate: “Their choice of Palm Sunday—the beginning of the holiest week for Christians—was purposeful and part of their ongoing attempt to destroy the Christian faith in Burma.”

On January 29, 2026, BRI released the new report titled “Burma: Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians”⁶ at the Dirksen Senate Office Building (Room 226), with support from Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. At the BRI briefing, Senators Lankford and Grassley, President Pro Tempore, and Vicky Hartzler, Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (appointed by Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana)), delivered video remarks strongly condemning human rights violations

encouraging that “this new policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act will apply to countries beyond Nigeria.” Burma fits the criteria to be subject to this policy)

⁶ BRI. Burma: Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians. January 2026.

<https://burmari.org/reports-2/>

and attacks on Christians by the Burmese military.⁷ They called for an end to the atrocities and accountability for perpetrators.

We turn now to a summary and recap of the new BRI report, concluding with recommendations.

Summary

The Burmese military attacks on churches and Christian communities in Burma constitute systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom or belief. Christians face persecution due to overlapping ethnic, political, and ideological factors. Many belong to minority communities, such as the Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Karenni, who are seeking autonomy from the Burmese military. The Burmese military employs “Burmanization” policies promoting Buddhism while restricting Christian church construction and portraying Christianity as a negative sign of Western influence.

Key Statistics Since the 2021 Coup

<i>Churches destroyed:</i>	343 Christian churches/buildings damaged or destroyed
<i>Christians killed:</i>	149 for faith-related reasons
<i>Christians imprisoned:</i>	218 for faith-related reasons
<i>USCIRF Victim List:</i>	Two Chin pastors
<i>Attacks on worship/shelter:</i>	32 incidents involving attacks against churches at the time they were sheltering civilians or hosting worship

Notable Incidents from the BRI Report

St. Peter Baptist Church, Kanan village, in the Sagaing Region (January 7, 2024): Airstrikes during Sunday worship killed 17 people, including 9 children. Amnesty International described this as a likely war crime.

Thantlang Town, Chin State destruction (Starting in September 2021 over the next year): 21 of 22 churches destroyed; entire population of 10,000 forced to flee; approximately 1,300 homes and businesses destroyed; Pastor Cung Biak Hum murdered attempting to save his church.

Christmas Eve massacre near Mo So village, Hpruso township, Karenni (Kayah) State (December 24, 2021): At least 35 people killed including two Save the Children staff, with bodies burned.

Catholic churches targeted in multiple states: Major attacks on Christ the King Cathedral (Karenni State) on November 26, 2023; St. Patrick’s Cathedral (Kachin State) on March 16,

⁷ Press Release: Burma Research Institute Releases New Report Documenting Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians in Burma. February 1, 2026. <https://burmari.org/2026/02/01/burma-research-institute-releases-new-report-documenting-severe-violations-of-religious-freedom-against-christians-in-burma/> (this link provides the video remarks of Senators Lankford and Grassley and of USCIRF Chair Hartzler)

2025; and the 129-year-old Church of Our Lady of the Assumption (Sagaing Region) on January 15, 2023.

Attack on Christian holy days (Easter, Palm Sunday, Christmas): The Burmese military bombed Christ the King Catholic Church in Falam, Chin State (before Easter, April 2025) and Mindat Baptist Church in Mindat, Chin State (Palm Sunday, April 2025). In Kachin State, the military forced churches to hold Christmas celebrations before December 25, 2025, so they wouldn't interfere with December 28 elections.

Legal Assessment from the New BRI Report

BRI believes that Burmese military attacks constitute severe violations of religious freedom of Christians in Burma. In other words, the Burmese military's actions meet the criteria for being designated as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC).

Burma was designated a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act from 1999 to 2023. Despite 24 years of CPC status, the U.S. has not taken meaningful action to stop the Burmese military's persecution of Christians and violations of religious freedom or belief.

We are hopeful the Trump Administration will take meaningful action by redesignating Burma as a CPC country and pressuring the Burmese military regime to halt its persecution of Christians and violations of religious freedom.

BRI also believes that these attacks meet legal thresholds under international humanitarian law that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Intentionally directing attacks against civilians and religious buildings not used for military purposes is prohibited in non-international armed conflicts. The cumulative pattern of murder, persecution on religious grounds, and forcible displacement reflects a widespread and systematic assault on civilian populations.

The situation continues, leading to increased instability

During December 2025 and January 2026, the Burmese military conducted sham elections. In preparation, they banned dozens of political parties from participation, including the winner of the previous elections, the National League for Democracy (NLD), its leader State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and President U Win Myint, who both remain in detention.⁸ The outcome was predetermined: the military regime will continue holding power and escalating instability in Burma.

Recommendations

In closing, please see the summary of ten recommendations to the Trump Administration from the new BRI report, calling for actions against the Burmese military regime. (Full details about the recommendations are available in the report.)

⁸ Myanmar: Elections a Fraudulent Claim for Credibility, Human Rights First, 11 16 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/16/myanmar-elections-a-fraudulent-claim-for-credibility>

1. Make a formal determination that crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed against Christians.
2. Press for the release of detained Christian pastors and other clergy and for political prisoners, including State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, and others.
3. Redesignate Burma as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) and enforce accountability, including by imposing visa restrictions and sanctions against the regime and others responsible for the atrocities.
4. Condemn and reject the sham elections of the Burmese military junta and its outcome which will only prolong the military rule.
5. Strengthen Burma's self-reliance by allowing pro-democracy groups and ethnic resistance organizations (ERO) access for non-lethal purposes to the \$1 billion in Burma funds being held at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.
6. Sustain a strong U.S. religious freedom policy.
7. Reinstate Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for people from Burma and remove the travel ban placed on people from Burma.
8. Increase resettlement of Christians and others from Burma fleeing religious and political persecution by the military junta.
9. Amplify U.S. messaging and diplomacy against Burmese military atrocities against Christians.
10. Implement the BURMA Act.

Thank you again for what you have done for Burma. We urge you further to take immediate action to protect Christians in Burma. The United States has moral obligations and strategic interests in Burma. Your action will protect Christians in Burma and reduce the Burmese military's threat to the United States. It will also advance regional stability in the Indo-Pacific and counter Chinese and Russian influence.

Additional Sources:

1. Testimony by Reverend La Kang Dau Qae (Ah Le) [Kachin Pastor]. Press Release: Burma Research Institute Releases New Report Documenting Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians in Burma. February 1, 2026. <https://burmari.org/2026/02/01/burma-research-institute-releases-new-report-documenting-severe-violations-of-religious-freedom-against-christians-in-burma/> (this link includes the testimony of Reverend La Kang Daw Qae (Ah Le) [Kachin pastor])
2. Testimony by Anonymous Christian Clergy in Burma. Press Release: Burma Research Institute Releases New Report Documenting Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians in Burma. February 1, 2026. <https://burmari.org/2026/02/01/burma-research-institute-releases-new-report-documenting-severe-violations-of-religious-freedom-against-christians-in-burma/> (this link includes the testimony of the Anonymous Christian Clergy in Burma)
3. Testimony by Anonymous Christian Clergy living in the U.S. Press Release: Burma Research Institute Releases New Report Documenting Severe Violations of Religious Freedom Against Christians in Burma. February 1, 2026. <https://burmari.org/2026/02/01/burma-research-institute-releases-new-report->

- [documenting-severe-violations-of-religious-freedom-against-christians-in-burma/](#) (this link includes the testimony of the Anonymous Christian Clergy living in the U.S.)
4. Anonymous Pastor from Chin State, Burma. Hearing of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). January 13, 2026. Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 106. <https://www.uscirf.gov/events/hearing-forb-violations-against-christians-abroad> (link includes the testimony of the Anonymous Pastor from Chin State, Burma)
 5. BRI's Written Statement. Hearing of U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). January 13, 2026. Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 106. <https://www.uscirf.gov/events/hearing-forb-violations-against-christians-abroad> (link includes BRI's Written Statement)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Organizations

1. American Baptist Churches of Greater Indianapolis
2. American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky
3. American Baptist Churches of Maine
4. American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
5. American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York
6. American Baptist Churches of Michigan
7. American Baptist Churches of Nebraska
8. American Baptist Churches of the Central Region (Kansas & Oklahoma)
9. American Baptist Churches of the Great Rivers Region
10. American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin
11. American Baptist Churches USA
12. Baptist World Alliance
13. Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
14. Burma Advocacy Group
15. Burma Research Institute (BRI)
16. Burmese American Catholic for Peace and Justice
17. Burmese Rohingya Organization UK
18. Campaign for a New Myanmar
19. Catholic Diocese of Wichita
20. Chin Baptist Association of North America
21. Chin Baptist Churches USA
22. Chin Evangelical Churches USA
23. Christian Freedom International
24. Gender Equality Network
25. General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church
26. International Campaign for the Rohingya
27. International Christian Concern
28. Jubilee Campaign

29. Kachin American Baptist Association
30. Kachin Baptist Churches USA
31. Karen Community of Minnesota
32. Karen Community of North Carolina
33. Karen Organization of America
34. Karen Organization of Utica
35. Lutuv Churches of America
36. Matu Christian Churches, USA
37. Mizo Society of America
38. Myanmar Baptist Churches USA (Southern Baptist Convention)
39. Myanmar Christian Church of Metro Chicago
40. No Business with Genocide
41. North America Mizo Christian Fellowship
42. St. John Catholic Church, Iola, KS
43. U.S. Campaign for Burma
44. United States Advocacy Coalition for Myanmar (USACM)
45. Women Advocacy Coalition-Myanmar
46. Women's Peace Network
47. Zomi Baptist Churches of America

Individuals

1. Aung Kyaw Moe, Rohingya Consultative Council
2. Cheryl Dudley, American Baptist Churches of Metropolitan New York
3. Dr. David Thang Moe, Yale University
4. Fr. Eustace Thang, St. Barnabas Catholic Church
5. Fr. Luigi Hla Shwe, St. Pius Catholic Church
6. Mehmet Saracoglu, National Council on Civil Advocacy (NCCA)
7. Pastor Gerard Muller, Hillsboro-Harrisburg Baptist Church
8. Rev. Carol McVetty, Interim Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago
9. Rev. Debbie Kelsey, Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church of Utica
10. Rev. Dr. Aaron Kilbourn, ABC of the Dakotas
11. Rev. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio, Sr Pastor of Indiana Chin Baptist Church, and Advisor of United States Chin Coalition
12. Rev. Dr. Tim Phillips, Panther Lake Community Church
13. Rev. Dr. Trisha Miller Manarin, DC Baptist Convention
14. Rev. Karen A. Mendes, First Baptist Church
15. Rev. Michael A Ware, North Shore Baptist Church
16. Tial Lian, Texas Chin Baptist Church
17. Tim Siemens, Advisor of the Burma Research Institute