

Support urged for persecuted people in Myanmar

September 15, 2023

The founding president of the 21Wilberforce human rights organization is urging Texas Baptists to sign a letter calling on Congress to provide support for persecuted people in Myanmar, historically known as Burma.



Randel Everett

Randel Everett, a former executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, sent an email Sept. 15 asking Texas Baptist leaders to [sign a letter](#) online to Rep. Kay Granger, R-Fort Worth, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, urging full funding for the Burma Act.

“As many of you know, the people of Burma, including many of our Baptist brothers and sisters in the country, have faced a brutal campaign by the military junta that has taken thousands of lives, forced millions to flee, and destroyed many church buildings in their campaign to control and suppress the people’s democratic rights and religious freedoms in the country,” Everett wrote.

Everett noted the importance of contacting Granger and other members of Congress immediately to influence the decision-making process for funding.

“The funding will provide vital aid that will help the communities affected by the violence to rebuild, promote a federal democracy, and hold accountable those responsible for the ruthless abuses of human rights and religious liberty,” he wrote.

The [letter to Granger](#) states: “We write you as Baptist leaders in Texas with the request that in reconciliation you support the adoption of the language of the Senate Appropriations bill with regards to the funding provisions for implementing the Burma Act.”

The letter notes attacks by the Burmese military on villages and towns have forced 1.3 million people to flee to neighboring countries and 1.9 million to hide in the jungles of Myanmar.

“We urge you to support them in their effort to reclaim democracy, restore their security and freedoms—including the right to freely follow one’s faith—and redress the injustices perpetrated by this unlawful regime,” the letter states.

‘Campaign of terror and violence’

Since the Burmese military—known as the Tatmadaw—seized control of Myanmar’s government on Feb. 1, 2021, human rights monitors have [verified about 3,000 civilian deaths](#), as well as the destruction of many houses of worship and homes. Considering military action in remote ethnic areas, the actual death toll likely is much higher.

On Sept. 18, 2021, Burmese [military shot dead a Baptist pastor](#) in the Chin State. Pastor Cung Biak Hum was shot while he was attempting to help a church member extinguish a fire after the man’s home was set ablaze during military attacks.

The Baptist World Alliance general council at its July 2022 meeting in

Birmingham, Ala., approved a [resolution condemning the coup in Myanmar](#) and singling out the Burmese military for waging “a campaign of terror and violence, particularly against minority religions.”

Since the coup, Burmese authorities have arrested more than 17,000 people, and at least 13,700 remain imprisoned. [Hkalam Samson](#), past president and former general secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention, is among the religious leaders who remain imprisoned in Myanmar. Samson was seized last December before he could board a flight to Bangkok, Thailand, for medical treatment.