

### **Burma Refugee Commission Report for BGM June 2021**

Although the Burma Refugee Commission (BRC) was formed in 2007 to respond to the increasing numbers of refugees from Burma, in recent years, it has come to pursue advocacy for the persecution of Baptist ethnic groups in Myanmar which have faced persecution by the military. This advocacy for humanitarian relief, refugee resettlement, issues of human rights and religious liberty has involved letters to our United States administration and onsite visits Burma, Thailand and Malaysia to meet with key leaders as well as working with the United Nations High Command on Refugees, US Ambassadors and other key leaders.

After the military coup on February 1st this year, advocacy became the top priority of the BRC. Frequent meetings were held to discuss strategy and letters were written to top US government leadership including the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, UN Ambassador and nearly 20 US Senators. These letters advocated for sanctions against the military government, protected status for embassy staff supporting the Civil Disobedience Movement, for the formation of a UN Security Council resolution, and to recognize the democratically elected Burma leadership and government.

Meetings were held with top leadership of the rightfully elected Burma government and Baptist leaders in Burma, as well as the Burmese representative to the UN. These meetings were organized to encourage the leaders as well as to provide needed information for the BRC.

The BRC met with the staff of US Rep. David Price of North Carolina and Senator Raphael Warnock of Georgia. Through the office of Senator Warnock, the BRC was invited to ask for appropriation for humanitarian relief.

Meetings were set up with representatives of the US delegation to the United Nations and the State Department Office of International Religious Freedom to share information and with those representing funding from USAID to ask about humanitarian relief. Some of this advocacy work has been in conjunction with the representatives of the Baptist World Alliance and with the National Council of Churches.

The BRC held a monthly prayer service on the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. eastern time.

Rev. Dr. Saw Ler Htoo and the ethnic leaders had arranged two national protests - one on April 10, "Multi-Ethnic Protest in D.C." where over 1,000 people from across the country included the Arakan, Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Lisu, Mon and Shan ethnicities gathered in front of the Embassy of the Republic of China. They marched peacefully to the Myanmar Embassy and the Military Attache' Office, and made a brief stop near the White House and ended at the Washington Monument.

The second protests occurred on May 22, "We Support the National Unity Government" where people went to the Embassy of Myanmar, in front of the White House and the Capitol.

All the conventions, associations and local churches had raised funds to assist the humanitarian relief in Myanmar. As of the end of May, over 700 people were killed and thousands were injured. Over 7,000 people were displaced, either hid in the forest or fled to neighboring countries.

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