

BURMA (MYANMAR)

“An invisible war” – this is how San Htoi of Kachin Women’s Association (Thailand) described the targeting of Christians in Burma (Myanmar).¹ Despite a genocidal campaign² being waged by the Burmese army against Kachin State’s 1.6 million inhabitants – of whom 90-95 percent are Christian (Roman Catholic or Baptist). International reports have been slow to acknowledge the Kachin people’s predominantly Christian identity.³ Kachin Christians have been killed, raped, tortured and used to “clear” landmine-peppered areas.⁴ Women and girls have been trafficked as brides to China.⁵ 3,000 villages have been burnt to the ground in the past decade⁶ and over 200 churches destroyed since 2011.⁷ The 2017 US Department of State religious freedom report called the plight of the 100,000 displaced Christians living in camps and thousands stranded in jungle terrain, “desperate and unsustainable,”⁸ while the UN branded the violence “crimes against humanity.”⁹

According to the US Department of State, minority religions in the country, including Christians, saw religious property and texts destroyed. They were also denied permits for religious buildings and renovations. Chin State “blocked Christian groups and churches from buying land in the name of their religious organisations for the purpose of worship.” Christians also experienced discrimination in employment. In Karen State, Christians were issued with identification cards from central government stating they were Buddhist despite specifying that they were “Christians” on their applications. Officials refused to amend the cards.¹⁰



JUNE 2018

Two nuns were attacked by locals in Pataekyaw Village, Ann Township. Later, a priest who reported the incident was beaten by a Buddhist mob.¹¹

SEPTEMBER 2018

A UN report noted the torture and ill-treatment of Kachin Christians by soldiers. “[O]ne Christian victim was made to imitate Jesus on a cross like the crucifixion” by military intelligence agents.¹²

SEPTEMBER 2018

200 Christian leaders were detained, churches were destroyed and severe limits were imposed on worship, teaching, and evangelization by United Wa State Army (UWSA) authorities, which control the Wa Self-Administered Division in Shan State. A UWSA spokesman subsequently confirmed the reports. Most of the detained Christian leaders were later released.¹³

DECEMBER 2018

On Christmas Eve, a mob of 50 people, including three monks in Setsi Village, Rakhine State, attacked a group of Christians during a Christmas service in a temporary shelter. One pastor was admitted to hospital with injuries sustained during the attack.¹⁴

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7. US Department of State, “Burma,” *International Religious Freedom Report 2018*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burma/> (accessed June 22, 2019).

8. *Ibid.*

9. “Myanmar: UN Fact-Finding Mission releases its full account of massive violations by military in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States,” *OHCHR*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=23575&LangID=E> (accessed June 17, 2019).

10. “Burma,” *International Religious Freedom Report 2017*, *op. cit.*; US Department of State, “Burma,” *International Religious Freedom Report 2018*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/burma/> (accessed July 1, 2019).

11. “Buddhist mob in Myanmar attacked Christians celebrating Christmas,” *Burma Human Rights Network*, January 4, 2019 <http://www.bhrn.org.uk/en/press-release/1071-buddhist-mob-in-rakhine-state-attacked-christians-celebrating-christmas.html> (accessed July 16, 2019).

12. UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*, September 2018, pp. 46 ff, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx> (accessed June 14, 2019).

13. “Burma,” *International Religious Freedom Report 2018*, *op. cit.*

14. “Buddhist Mob in Rakhine State attacked Christians celebrating Christmas,” *Progressive Voice Myanmar*, January 4, 2019, <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/2019/01/04/buddhist-mob-in-rakhine-state-attacked-christians-celebrating-christmas/> (accessed July 1, 2019).