

# Global Day of Prayer for Burma

2018

Since 2012, in a campaign of ethnic cleansing, the Burma Army has pushed more than 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh.

# Vengeance or Justice?

David Eubank

Christians Concerned for Burma



Dear praying friends,

Thank you for how you pray with faith and love. This past year the people of Burma have suffered many injustices: the murder, rape, and burning of villages and displacement of over 600,000 Rohingya people, the ongoing attacks against the Kachin, Ta'ang and northern Shan, the encroachment of the Burma military in ceasefire areas and the lack of care by the government for people who have been wronged.

During this time indigenous relief teams have responded in love and with help as best they can. We see relief teams bringing life-saving care to the displaced, pastors comforting their people and praying for justice and love, new medics and teachers being trained in the jungle to help their people, and the international community sounding the alarm for help for the oppressed. All these are answers to prayer in the face of evil.

In some ways Burma has improved. There is a civilian-elected government and more freedoms in some areas, but the military holds ultimate power and uses it. We pray for the military to have a change of heart and for the elected government to have the courage to stand for all who are oppressed.

In the midst of this some from Burma have also been called to help in Iraq and Syria because of ISIS attacks there. How did people from Burma get to the Middle East and what does it have to do with Burma? We were invited because people knew we could help in war zones and we went because we believe God has no boundaries to helping each other.

In the bloody crucible of Mosul, Iraq, my family, volunteers, and some of our senior FBR ethnics from Burma learned lessons that we want to share in Burma and everywhere. These are not new lessons but

they were burned into us by the desperate situations we saw, our dependency on God, and the spiritual battle we saw overarching the physical battle. In the midst of this God showed us four things.

First, wherever Jesus sends you, He goes with you. So when we are afraid we can pray and ask, "Jesus is this really your will?" Then if it is still a 'yes', go boldly in His name and use His name to overcome evil.

Second, when faced with great evil, we sinful humans cannot defeat it. But if we are following Jesus and call on His name, He comes through our weakness and brings good out of the clutches of evil.

Third, what is the difference between justice and vengeance? I believe vengeance is an attempt to get justice with a spirit of hate and retribution. When you suffer injustice, the hurt can cause you to hate the perpetrator and to equate their hurt with justice – but hate will

**Above:** Dave Eubank with Aung San Suu Kyi in 1996, a meeting that led to the creation of the Global Day of Prayer for Burma.





cripple you if you search for justice this way, and justice will elude you. Justice can only be achieved with love and mercy. This means when you are wronged you pray for love for the perpetrator and you seek justice in that love. We need God's help to love those who wrong us, to love our enemies – but when we pray and ask for this love He helps us. This may mean punishment for the person who wronged you but it will be done in a spirit of love. This spirit keeps us free and leads towards reconciliation.

Four, we experienced the power of the praying church and believe that God's power through prayer is the only way to achieve freedom, justice, reconciliation and love.

In Burma as in other places there is hate, murder, and all manner of injustice. The way forward is to pray and ask Jesus to help us love and help us know where to go, how to go and what to do. And then wherever He sends us, Jesus goes with us, so we can go humbly, boldly and in His love.

Thank you for praying with us for all the people of Burma. God bless you.

***Clockwise from top:*** Kachin women holding Gospel tracts; Eliya, a Karen medic, treats a wounded Iraqi Army soldier as part of a relief mission in January 2017; Karen medics clean the wound following abscess drainage on a young patient; heavy rains and underdeveloped roads make travel and relief work hard for FBR teams in Chin State.

# Where is God in the midst of this?

Paul Bradley  
*Free Burma Rangers*

**He has sent me to bind up the  
brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the  
prisoners,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,  
Isaiah 61:1-2**



**Above:** A Pa-Oh Ranger with Karen children during a Good Life Club program.

The digital/social media age has been upon us for many years already and with it comes an unprecedented ability to access news. Mountains of information come to us from around the globe in an overwhelming cascade.

It's easy to feel discouraged when reading about disasters, wars, economic collapse, political unrest, and acts of terrorism. If I am honest, it leaves me at times questioning, "Where is God in the midst of all of this and what can I do?"

In Isaiah 61 the prophet speaks with a clear commission from God on what he is to do in the midst of the Jewish world situation of his day. This same commission is quoted by Jesus in Luke chapter 4 as he taught in the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. What this seems to indicate is that similar world situations were present both for Isaiah and Jesus, and while the men were called to address the real physical issues (Jesus really did heal the blind), these problems reach beyond the mere physical into the spiritual condition of man.

So the ministry of physical service in setting captives free, encouraging the poor, and helping the brokenhearted has the eternal impact of announcing the Year of the Lord's favor... Redemption... Wow!

The message is pretty clear. As followers of Jesus Christ we have our commission.

"Father God, may your Spirit be upon us as it was on Isaiah and your Son, Jesus. May we walk with courage into the places where people are being oppressed and are deeply mourning. I pray that as we are blessed with the resources to provide some physical relief that we would also be willing to lay our own lives down as You did and to proclaim Your redemption. Amen"

So what can you do?

Start by reading through this magazine. Pray through each situation and listen to the Spirit. Pick one or two and research how you can help. If so moved, be willing to go. Support those who are already in action in the places or with the people the Lord lays on your heart.





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***From top to bottom:** Relief teams in training; medics in Karen State operate; a Shan Ranger distributes Good Life Club shirts in Karen State.*

# Finding Hope in the Slums

Yangon, Burma

*\*Due to security concerns, this organization asked not to be named.*



While there is conflict and conflict-induced poverty in many of the outlying ethnic areas of Burma, there is also suffering right in the heart of the country: in the slums of Yangon, the largest city and former capital. In these areas, more than 400,000 people live from hand to mouth, without proper shelter or adequate food. Access to clean water is limited, and there are no schools or community healthcare. These squatter communities have developed on the outskirts of Yangon and are comprised of relocated city dwellers, itinerant farmers, mountain people, and displaced families from Cyclone Nargis. The people live in a constant state of uncertainty, knowing they can be evicted at any time.

In one section of these slums, one small group of people, composed of two medics from Chin State and with support from two outside advisers, decided to help. In 2013, they began serving this vulnerable population, providing medical care and transport to clinics and teaching to 5-6 year-olds, with tutoring for older children. In 2017, with a staff of nine, they were operating three preschools and basic education prep schools in three villages, as well as two children's hostels for those with

nowhere else to go. They have been able to send 25 children to government schools – not simple when birth certificates and other supporting documents must be obtained, even before managing the logistics of supplies and transportation. They supply food for 80 children and also provide basic medical care as needed.

This is from one of the founders: “The aim of our team is not only to teach how to write and read but also to teach how to speak, how to respect others, how to love others. We want those children to have a bright future. We want them to be helpful and blessings for their family, community and country when they grow up. This is the reason our team is working in the slum areas. This is what we feel in our hearts to do. This is what we are meant to do.”

**“Dear children, let us not love  
with words or speech but with  
actions and in truth.”**

**1 John 3:18**

# A Hybrid Regime

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The following is written by Dr. Ashley South, an independent analyst and consultant, specialising in humanitarian, peace and conflict, and ethnic political issues in Burma/Myanmar.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in the November 2015 elections, and assumed power in May the following year. Although this was a 'hybrid regime', with the Myanmar Army retaining control of three key ministries and 25% of seats in parliament, prospects for change in Myanmar nevertheless seemed encouraging. Although the past two years have seen some reforms, many people are disappointed - not least the country's ethnic nationality communities.

To the surprise of most observers and actors, the previous U Thein Sein-led transitional regime implemented widespread reforms. These included a peace process heavy in promises, but light on substance. The inexperienced NLD government inherited this peace process from the previous regime, including a ceasefire monitoring framework dominated by the Myanmar Army, and a process of political dialogue which got underway in the last months of the previous government. Although Aung San Suu Kyi has prioritised the peace process, the two Union Peace Conferences she has so far presided over have been disappointing. Substantial participation has been limited to the eight Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) which signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) under the previous government, in October 2015. The majority of the country's EAOs have yet to join the NCA - in part due to the government and Myanmar Army's refusal to negotiate jointly with the Northern Alliance/Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee, including the Kachin Independence Organisation and United Wa State Army. Even for most of the NCA signatory EAOs, political dialogue so far has been unsatisfactory, with the Myanmar Army refusing to allow adequate discussions in Shan State and elsewhere. Partly as a result, the Union-level Union Peace

Conferences have so far resulted in agreements to only very bland generalisations - with little progress towards agreeing to a federal political settlement to resolve decades of armed ethnic conflict.

In the meantime, in those areas where ceasefires are holding - including most of the southeast - the situation on the ground has generally improved. Communities are beginning to recover from decades of armed conflict. However, there is still a long way to go, with only limited resources available to support rehabilitation. Furthermore, many communities fear the incursion of militarised state structures into previously semi-autonomous ethnic areas, and accompanying processes of natural resource extraction and land-grabbing, with few benefits to local people. Elsewhere in the country the situation is even more dire, with recent widespread fighting across northern Shan and Kachin states, where EAOs have not signed the NCA.

Myanmar has been in the international headlines over the past few months due to the security services' (and local militia gangs) appallingly heavy-handed response to a handful of Islamic militant attacks on military outposts in western Rakhine State, in the latter part of 2017. As a result, some 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, citing widespread and well-documented tales of human rights abuses, and the burning of their villages. It remains to be seen whether these people will be able to return home, and under what circumstances. At a minimum, this recent violence demonstrates that the Myanmar Army is still a powerful and violently destabilising force in the country. More fundamentally, the recent campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya illustrates the need for a re-examination of the nature of citizenship in Myanmar.



# Conflict, Development, and Complexity

The following text and images are an excerpt from *The Contested Areas of Myanmar: Subnational Conflict, Aid, and Development*, a report researched and published by The Asia Foundation.\*

Myanmar has been more deeply affected by subnational conflict than any other country in Southeast Asia. The full death toll is unclear, but after seven decades of intermittent violence involving many different armed groups, many thousands of civilians and armed combatants have undoubtedly been killed. The wider impact of the conflict on the population is still more significant: a long-term record of human rights abuses, chronic insecurity, poor living conditions, and a pervasive feeling of disempowerment among the country's ethnic minorities. Subnational conflict has adversely affected Myanmar as a whole by justifying a long-term political role for the military and holding back the country's economic potential. Conflicts continue to cause civilian casualties — Myanmar had the third highest number of people estimated to have been killed or injured by landmines from 2014 to 2016.

In 2016, The Asia Foundation's research team identified areas affected by active or latent subnational conflict in at least eleven of Myanmar's fourteen states and regions. Each of these contested areas, which include 118 of Myanmar's 330 townships, containing almost one-quarter of Myanmar's population, hosts one or more ethnic armed organizations (EOs) that challenge the authority of the central government.

Myanmar's subnational conflicts differ in some ways from those found elsewhere. The majority of subnational conflicts in Southeast Asia occur in generally stable, middle-income countries, while, after decades of authoritarian rule, Myanmar continues to have high levels of poverty. Myanmar's subnational conflicts are characterized by the exceptional number of non-state groups that are, or have been, active, including at least twenty EOs and many other armed organizations such as government-affiliated militias. Where armed groups have made agreements with the state, or have folded, new or splinter groups have emerged. Some conflict-affected areas of Myanmar are governed by EOs, which in some cases hold territory that has never been controlled by the central government and operate parallel, state-like agencies that build roads, train teachers, and administer local justice.

[These] conflicts in Myanmar are particularly enduring. The average duration of subnational conflicts in South and Southeast Asia is 45.2 years, more than double the global average of 16.8 years. Yet the six longest subnational conflicts in Myanmar have lasted for an average of more than 66 years. Prolonged subnational conflict has justified the military's strong political role, created huge territorial challenges for the state, and massively hindered development (defined here as economic growth or improved living standards).<sup>5</sup>



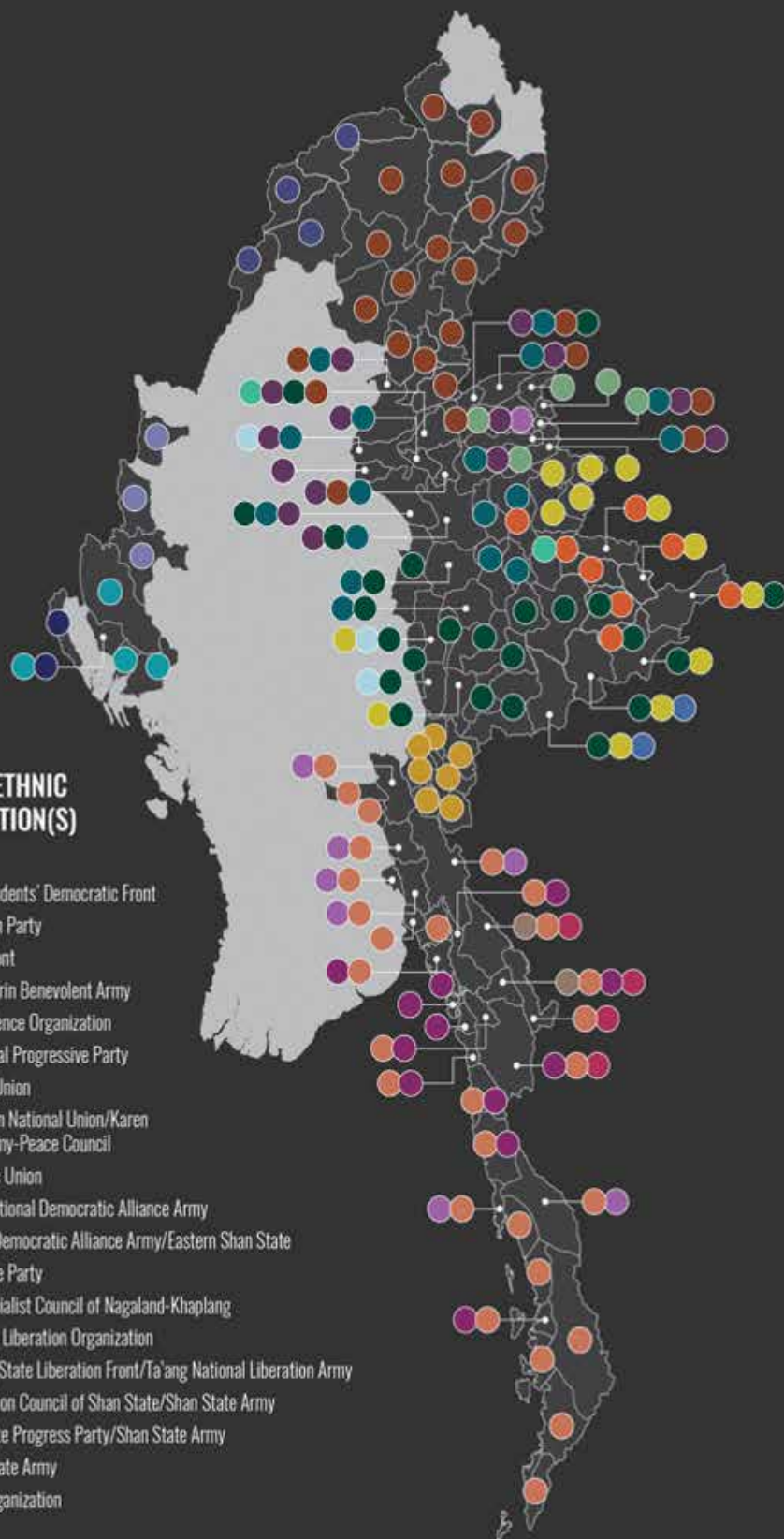
**Above:** Relief teams practice a casualty evacuation.

\*The report is available for download at <https://asiafoundation.org/publications>



## PRESENCE OF AN ETHNIC ARMED ORGANIZATION(S)

- **AA:** Arakan Army
- **ABSDF:** All Burma Students' Democratic Front
- **ALP:** Arakan Liberation Party
- **CNF:** Chin National Front
- **DKBA:** Democratic Karin Benevolent Army
- **KIO:** Kachin Independence Organization
- **KNPP:** Karenni National Progressive Party
- **KNU:** Karen National Union
- **KNU/KNLA-PC:** Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council
- **LDU:** Lahu Democratic Union
- **MNDAA:** Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
- **NDAA ESS:** National Democratic Alliance Army/Eastern Shan State
- **NMSP:** New Mon State Party
- **NSCN-IM:** National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muse
- **PNLO:** Pa-O National Liberation Organization
- **PSLF/TNLA:** Palaung State Liberation Front/Ta'ang National Liberation Army
- **RCSS/SSA:** Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army
- **SSPP/SSA:** Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army
- **UWSA:** United Wa State Army
- **WNO:** Wa National Organization



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF MYANMAR'S POLITICAL CHANGE AND

## SUBNATIONAL CONFLICT

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- 1947**  
The Panglong Agreement is signed, which outlines a vision for a federal Union. Shortly thereafter, Aung San who attended the talks is assassinated.
- 1948**  
Myanmar gains independence. Following the shooting of General Aung San the previous year, U Nu becomes the first prime minister of the Union of Burma.
- 1949**  
The first armed ethnonationalist conflict begins when the fighting erupts between the KNU and the Tatmadaw in Yangon.
- 1961**  
The KIO is formed. Around the same time, the first Shan nationalist insurgencies begin.
- 1962**  
General Ne Win seizes power in a coup, putting an end to parliamentary rule in Burma.
- 1963**  
Ne Win attempts the first of two rounds of unsuccessful peace talks during his rule (the second is in 1975). In 1963, the military also initiates its Four Cut strategy.
- 1974**  
Ne Win inaugurates a new constitution after widespread consultation; it establishes the structure of the seven states and seven regions which exist today.
- 1976**  
The National Democratic Front is formed, the first major profederal EAO alliance.
- 1988**  
The Socialist government collapses amidst widespread protests, which are ultimately suppressed. The military government regroups and SLORC (later SPDC) takes power.
- 1988**  
The Democratic Alliance of Burma is formed, uniting EAOs and Bamar-led prodemocracy forces.
- 1989**  
SLORC retranslates (or re-Romanizes) the name of the country to Myanmar and promises elections and economic reforms.
- 1989**  
SLORC begins signing ceasefires with EAOs, starting with new groups that splintered from the Communist Party of Burma. By the late 2010s, the SPDC recognizes 17 "major" ceasefires and 23 "others."
- 1990**  
The NLD wins national elections in a landslide, but SLORC does not accept the results.
- 1996**  
As the UWSP expands into southern Shan, Khun Sa surrenders, and the MTA splinters into multiple factions, including the group which later became the RCSS.
- 2003**  
The government releases its seven-stage roadmap to democratization.
- 2007**  
A major popular uprising known as the Saffron Revolution calls for political change.
- 2008**  
A new constitution is adopted following a widely criticized referendum.
- 2009**  
The government announces its BGF scheme for all ceasefire groups, requiring them to accept direct Tatmadaw command, with ordinary Tatmadaw officers in their ranks.
- 2011**  
The military hands power to a nominally civilian government, and an extensive reform process begins. As a result, foreign investment and aid begins to grow.
- 2011**  
The government has some early success in negotiating bilateral ceasefires in 2011 and 2012, but fighting resumes in Kachin State after a 17-year ceasefire with the KIA breaks down.
- 2015**  
In a landslide victory, the NLD wins almost 80 percent of contested seats in parliament, defeating the USDP and the 55 ethnic parties who competed in the election.
- 2015**  
Eight EAOs sign the NCA. Throughout 2015 and 2016, the number of armed battles continue to rise in the northeast.
- 2016**  
The NLD-led government is sworn in. While the NLD won the majority of seats in the upper and lower house, the military retains 25 percent of seats and controls key ministries in accordance with the 2008 Constitution.
- 2016**  
The first Union Peace Conference is held in January. After assuming power, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi chairs a second meeting, also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference, in August.



# High Alert:

## Restrictions Continue in Northern Burma

Kachin State and Northern Shan State  
*Free Burma Rangers*

As the media continues to focus on the plight of the Rohingya in Rakhine State, a larger picture of Burma Army oppression against ethnic groups in other parts of the country continues to develop. In northern Burma, persecution against the Kachin and Shan people remains largely under-reported and ignored.

Throughout 2017 the Burma Army maintained a campaign of fear in northern Burma in order to subjugate the population for the control of resources and land. Human rights abuses against civilians are a daily occurrence and many attacks only serve the purpose of instilling fear.

Daily life in Kachin and Shan states requires civilians to be on alert for the next Burma Army patrol or checkpoint. Civilians are forced into serving as route guides for military maneuvers, a strategy amounting to using

human shields as the civilians risk stepping on landmines and being caught in the middle of battles.

Checkpoints are very common on rivers and roadways and regularly exploit villagers by demanding fees to pass. "All engine boats run legally. They have already paid money (taxes) to authorities for permission to run," said La Sang, a Kachin soldier. "But a corruption of bribe-taking from civilians is common to Burma Army. When Burma Army soldiers have no money, they do like this. When they have got money from owners of engine boats, they let them go."

Unprovoked attacks against civilian populations occurred repeatedly throughout the year. In August, the Burma Army attacked Kasung Village, Myitkyina Township, displacing villagers in the area for months. No ethnic militia bases were

in immediate proximity to the village and no ethnic soldiers were present during the attack, which left one person dead, more wounded, and more than 1000 people displaced for months.

Danai Township suffered displacement when the Burma Army sought to take Maisong Post, in Kachin State, from the Kachin Independence Army in June. After the Burma Army assaulted and secured Maisong Post they mortared nearby N-ga Ga Village and caused the displacement of villagers to Nam Byu Village. The villagers sought refuge at the KBC Church compound in Nam Byu until the Burma Army began mortaring the church and village, which forced the villagers to flee to Danai City. In total the four villages of N-ga Ga, Nam Byu, Htang Bra and Kawng Ra were attacked and 409 people were displaced.



# Voices from Burma



**Name:** Saw Doh Say  
**Age:** 50  
**Village:** Maw Chee, Karenni State

“In 2004, I was helping internally displaced people fleeing the Burma Army. They were carrying big loads and very afraid... even afraid to build a fire [to get warm]... I felt very hopeless.... Then I went up the hill to the top of the mountain and prayed for the Burma Army. I prayed that God would touch their hearts and make them leave these villagers alone and not attack them. That is the first time I ever prayed for my enemies.

True peace only comes from God. So, I want all the people of Burma to know God so they can have peace. Fighting will always happen but true peace everyone can have from God.”



**Name:** Naw Tereasa  
**Age:** 25  
**Village:** Law Kee Der, Close to the Salween river

“My village is in the mountains and very hot. It’s built between two streams. There are paddy fields and also people farm on the mountains. When the Burma Army was not there, we could start school. At the beginning of the school year my mother would buy me a new dress. I loved wearing that new dress to school! I want my people to get a good education and hope they won’t have to run from the Burma Army. I pray our leaders will have knowledge and wisdom and that there will be peace.”



**Name:** Naw Ester  
**Age:** 28  
**Village:** Nya Yo Hta, Luthaw Township, Muthraw District

“Because the Burma Army attacked my village many times my father sent me to the refugee camp. I didn’t want to stay there but I stayed for 10 years. I want to have a stable village that does not have to flee from the Burma Army. Now, the area where my village is is improving as new roads are built to help villagers move supplies and food. We can use more machines for farming, too. The Burma Army has not attacked our village in many years so we feel safer. I hope others can leave the camps near my area and go back home. Pray that the Burma Army will never come to my village again and for peace.”



**Name: Saw James Po**  
**Age: 28**  
**Village: See Phyu Kaw, Karen State**

“I remember we were harvesting grass and a column of the Burma Army passed and kidnapped me. They took me to their camp and were planning on making me a porter for the Burma Army but while they were not looking I escaped. That day was Sunday and many people were at the local market. Then the Burma Army came and took all the villagers from the market to their camp [as punishment]. All of the villagers managed to escape from the Burma Army.

I want to see everyone live in peace and [pray] that we will have even more freedom in Burma than we have now.”



**Name: Naw Gul Weh**  
**Age: 32**  
**Village: Paw Na Moo Loo, Close to the Salween river**

“My village is on a hill [and] a small stream runs through it. All the villagers are farmers. One time my mother took us [to see] a bright full moon. It was beautiful and I was happy that night. [Another time] there was a traditional Karen ceremony, but the Burma Army came and we couldn’t return to the village. I hope that I will be able to live free in Burma with my family and all the people of Burma. I pray my leaders will listen to God, hear him and rely on him, and that God would give [them] wisdom.”



**Name: Saw Kwee Po**  
**Age: 26**  
**Village: Kaw Poe Play, Bilin Township, Karen State**

“[In my village] we do Sweet December every year to celebrate the Advent time of year. Christians and Buddhists participate in the celebration.

In 2005 the DKBA came to our village, caught one of the KNU medics and locked him in a house. He escaped and the family [who owned the house] had to pay four cows which is the custom. We were always afraid of the DKBA and the Burma Army. I hope that my people will have true peace and freedom to travel and work as they please. Pray for Burma to have peace and love and help each other.”

# The Man Behind the Camera: Monkey's Story of a Rescue Under Fire

## Burma and Iraq *Free Burma Rangers*

I want to write and share what happened with God and me during our last mission in Iraq.

With every mission, after I get the call from FBR headquarters, especially for an international mission, I pray to God to make sure it is His time for me or not. It's a very simple prayer: "God, is it your call or not? If so, I will go. If not, please give me some action to stop me." I have had confidence every time I went – except during this last time in Iraq.

This time, I met very difficult situations, so that deciding to help the people in need was also difficult. I remember the time when we rescued the little girl: we saw many, many dead bodies in the main road and by the road. We also saw that some were still alive among the dead bodies. Some wounded men waved their hand for help and some children were walking, and some were playing among the dead bodies. It made me very sad, but it also made me afraid to help them. I tried to drive away the fear, thinking, 'what if it is my kids or family.' I thought of John 15:13 from the Bible, which says, "No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends." But

I said in my heart, "Lord, I am not ready for this word."

I also remembered one of the mottos that all the Free Burma Rangers must follow: "Do not be led by fear or comfort." This rule also did not encourage me to do the rescue, as I am a person with fear, and lazy. When our leader, Dave, asked me, "Who will go with me?" I said, "Zau Seng," (another FBR cameraman) instead of myself. I knew many people all around the world were praying for us but still I was weak to make the decision to go on the rescue.

When we talked about possible ways to do this rescue, we needed two things: one is the Americans to drop a smoke bomb; the other is a tank to go in front of us for our cover and to shell



**Right:** Monkey, camera in hand, in Mosul.





**Above Left:** Monkey and other members of the Iraq team take shelter behind an Iraqi tank.



**Above Right:** Dave Eubank carrying the girl during the early June rescues.

ISIS as well. I thought, if we got smoke and a tank, I might dare take part in the rescue. But I did not want to pray for the smoke and tank because I was not 100% sure I would go even then, and I had ignored answers from God many other times in my life. I could not imagine how we could get the smoke from the US Army, and the local authorities had already refused our request for a tank. But Dave did not give up. He prayed and talked to friends, and our team talked and prayed together.

Then, while we were talking about how we could do the rescue, standing in a building by the main road, a smoke bomb from the air was dropped. We stopped talking and ran down to the corner of the road. A big tank came and turned toward the main road. Dave started running and shouting, "Whoever wants to go, let's go!" and led in front.

I did not have time to think and make a decision. Only one thing I shouted in my heart, was, "This is God! He is in it."

I ran and followed the group. I could not believe that we got the smoke and a tank. The tank was even bigger than I thought. After the rescue, Toh, our medic, and Zau Seng, our other cameraman, and I stood among the Iraqi soldiers. One of them looked into my eye for a while, saying nothing, but his eyes were kind. Then he turned into the building and came back with a hat: it had 'S.W.A.T.'

on it, and he placed it on my head. "Wow, that is an honor," said Toh and Zau. I could not think too much. I was re-concentrating my mind.

That night, I reviewed what had happened and what I had done:

- 1) We did the rescue.
- 2) I refused God's word: John 15:13.
- 3) I refused the Ranger motto.
- 4) I refused my leader's call.
- 5) We got what we wanted and needed, even though I personally did not even want to pray for it.

Just think. I was a part of it because of God's mercy and faithfulness. I realized the honor is His, not mine. I do not deserve it because I refused everything to do the rescue. Only because of His mercy and faithfulness to all His creation, did I dare go. This is why I want to write and share with you, and give all the glory to Him.

He is very merciful and faithful to you, me and all.

I want to thank God for His mercy and faithfulness to all of us. I want to thank people all around the world for being in prayer for us. I want to thank our team for working together as a family. I want to thank our leader for leading us boldly and in love.





# Forgotten and Abandoned: Stories from the Rohingya

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## From Burma to Bangladesh

In 2012, interethnic violence exploded in Arakan State, in western Burma, between the Rohingya and Rakhine peoples. In October 2016 the Burma Army launched a major clearing operation against the Rohingya people in response to an attack on a military outpost. Thousands of people fled and widespread human rights abuses were reported. On August 25th, 2017, the military alleged another series of attacks on several posts in Arakan State and retaliated with another major military operation.

In the two months following August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017, over 600,000 Rohingya people have fled into Bangladesh. They're now residing in refugee camps, reliant on food distributions from international organizations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that nearly 14,000 of the families in the camps are headed by a single parent while another 3,400 families are headed by a child.

This humanitarian crisis has been building for years, an exploding of tensions going back to World War II and earlier. As an unrecognized people group in Burma, the Rohingya have no citizenship, no official identity or legal existence. While they have, at times, lived in peace with their Rakhine neighbors, both groups now live in fear of each other. Where the Rohingya want citizenship, they live in fear of continued abuse and attacks by the Burma Army

Organizations such as Partners Relief and Development, have been on the ground working since 2012 to provide aid, supplies, and help however they can. In the next few pages, they and the Free Burma Rangers share about what it's like to be in the camps, who's in the camps, and how to pray.





## Pray, Work & Praise

Bangladesh

*Partners Relief and Development*

Have you ever wanted to simply curl up into a ball and hide away from everything? Those moments when everything around you feels like it is falling apart – there is nothing you can do to stop it and you can't find a way out of it. We've all had them, the days we wake up and want to pull the duvet back over our head and just stay sleeping. The days where nothing seems to go to plan. The days where the best thing we can think to do is curl up into a ball and hide away from the rest of the world. Maybe throw a good cry in there for extra effect.

Yep. That's pretty much where I'm at right now. Except the tears don't come and I haven't found the time to curl up into a ball. There is work to be done. And so I have developed a mantra: pray, work, praise.

Over 600,000 Rohingya have made the harrowing journey from persecution in Myanmar to squalid conditions in Bangladesh. The looks on the faces of the new arrivals are ashen. They are shell-shocked, aimlessly drifting from one spot

to another, trying to find some form of livelihood and normalcy for their self and their family. Staph infections, pneumonia and severe malnutrition join them on their journey. Crowds of hundreds in similar situations form a line at a known aid distribution point, but how can the distributors possible get to everyone? It's a scene where riots, pushing, shoving and shouting seem expected. Yet, there is none of this. That requires energy, which these people no longer have. Instead, listlessly, they stand in formation, hoping without much conviction that today, today they will make the cut for the precious white sack of food.

Walking through the camps, driving past the sunken faces of the new arrivals, all I can relate to what I see is from school history lessons on World War II. The term genocide has been tossed around through media networks to describe the situation. And, from what we have seen and the stories we have heard, there's no other way to describe it. This is the wanting to cry and hide in a ball part. Witnessing all this, seeing the impact on

**Above:** A Partners' team member with a grieving man (Photo: PRAD).

**Opposite Top:** Makeshift housing takes on various forms in the refugee camps. Here, a shelter consists of just a few pieces of fabric and some posts.

**Opposite Bottom:** Rohingya women waiting for food and supplies.



**“The Lord’s justice will dwell in the desert,  
his righteousness live in the fertile field.  
The fruit of that righteousness will be peace;  
its effect will be quietness and confidence forever.”  
Isaiah 32:16-17**

this whole community, it’s almost too much. Part of me wants to ignore it, curl up in a ball and wait it out. But that does not bring change. In actuality, it is that behavior that condones the events. And that is not an option. So instead, I pray. I pray for a change of heart from the persecutors, that they will be convicted. I pray they be given compassion for the people they are persecuting. I pray they realize the evil that is being committed and from this, seek forgiveness. I pray for the right organizations and people to come to Bangladesh, to Sittwe, and work to provide aid, relief and development to the Rohingya. I pray for courage to keep stepping out in faith to serve the Rohingya people, to show that they are loved, they have worth and they are not on their own. I pray we will see the Rohingya people strengthened within their community and we will be able to bring development, relief, empowerment and grace into their lives.

None of this is achieved on its own. So now, we work. We have teams coming every week to partner with our local staff on the ground. We arrange and assist in distribution of food packs, high protein food packs (for the severely malnourished), and tarpaulins to provide stronger structure to the shelters. We take interviews, photographs and film to share their stories with the rest of the world, giving their voices back. We encourage our Rohingya Community Health

students who have been receiving training for the past three years to go out, seek the sick who can’t reach an ‘established’ clinic and provide the treatment they need. We constantly re-evaluate, re-plan and re-strategize to ensure the work we are doing will empower the Rohingya people.

Where does the Praise come in? I know you are asking this. How can you find something to praise God for when this is the reality? Honestly, it is easy. God is good and his promises are true. He is constant amongst this chaos. Even living in situations where there appears no hope, people find time for genuine joy. Children gather around the strange-looking foreigners and fill the camp with laughter. Eagerly, they attempt ballet and other games we can offer. The Community Health Workers eagerly step up to assist in a clinic to serve their people, and feel exhilarated afterwards, discovering their new knowledge and skills. NGOs from all over the globe are coming together to assist the Rohingya. Local Bengalis volunteer their time to assist in providing food and items of shelter to their new neighbors. Yes, the suffering is severe. Yes, the persecution continues. Yes, we are still in the midst of the genocide. Yes, there is a whole lot of work to do. But through this, moments of joy and hope shine through. It is in these moments that I find reason to praise.

Pray. Work. Praise. And so we continue...





## Through the Eyes of a Child

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Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh  
*Free Burma Rangers*

Shamim and Rafi\* share a hospital room in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. They are almost the same age – Shamim is seven and Rafi is eight. It's not just the two of them who are staying there, though. Also there is Mahammed. He is a man, older than them – maybe the same age as their fathers. And there is another, old man, down at the end of the room. He has a little gray scruff of a beard that comes down and makes him look a little like a goat. He has a lot of family around him all the time. And of course their mothers are there.

Shamim and Rafi wear almost the exact same clothes: a very small pair of shorts. Shamim's are green and Rafi's are red. It is very warm in the hospital and they don't need to wear anything else. Except the big white cast on their legs – even that is the same for both of them! Shamim's is on his left leg and Rafi's is on his right leg. The cast is very big and hot – it goes all the way from their toes to up past their knee. It is heavy. It is not easy to move. But here in the hospital

*\* Names have been changed for security purposes.*

**At Left:** Shamim at the hospital in Cox's Bazar.

the food comes every day in two very big pots. One has rice and one has curry. The man pushes it around on a cart and puts some on your plate and you don't have to go anywhere to eat. You can just eat in your bed.

And Shamim's mother can help him with everything else. She is very strong. One time she carried him for eight days. That was when his leg was first hurt and he could not walk. He was so afraid that time. The bad soldiers had come to his village. He knew they were bad when they came. They were the same like the soldiers who had killed his father before. When he was five, just a kid, his father stopped coming home from his fishing boat. Because in his village many people fished, the river was very big there and came around on both sides of the village. His father would come home every day smelling like fish and sometimes Shamim would go to the big river with him and watch him clean his nets and he liked to touch the small, silver, slippery fish that his father would take to the market to sell. He would climb in the boat and pretend he was the fisherman. He tried to pick up the oars but they were very heavy. His father was very strong to be able to use them and catch all those fish. But one day he did not come home and later his mother told him he would not come home any more. She pointed to the soldiers who camped outside their village and said, "They killed your father." And then he knew that "killed" meant "not coming home."

So when the soldiers came to the village he knew they were bad. They were all in green clothes, the same color like leaves. They carried big guns and had big knives and looked angry. At first, they did not say anything to him, but they were all around the village. For three days they were there and they just stood around, talking to each other. But then one night they all came in yelling and shooting their guns and waving their big knives. Shamim was very afraid. He ran to his house. A soldier came in and Shamim tried to hide but the soldier found him and pointed his gun at him and shot. (As Shamim tells this part of the story

he makes hacking and shooting motions with his arms, his eyes are big and his voice animated).

*Shamim passed out. His mother came in and found him. He had been shot in the lower leg and the bullet had broken both bones. She found a cloth and used it to stop the bleeding and bandage him, then picked him up and fled. For three days she carried him and he hung onto life but stayed unconscious. Finally he woke up, asking for water.*

When he woke up, his stomach hurt so bad and he was so thirsty and his leg hurt most of all. He couldn't even walk. His mother carried him. He looked around and didn't know where he was, but there were so many trees. He couldn't see an end to the trees. But maybe it was good. Maybe the bad soldiers couldn't find them there in the trees. But there was nothing to eat. Then after walking for so long they met some other people also walking. They were also running away from the bad soldiers. These people had some food. They shared with them, just a little. And they kept walking, all together now.

Then the trees got smaller. Shamim saw more light coming down. He looked and saw a big river. It made him think of the river by his home. Many people were there. He wondered if they had more food. He heard his mother talking to the other people. "We have to cross it." "There will be a boat." "You have to pay money." "On the other side they have food and there is no Burma Army." "My cousin is there now. They have rice." "My brother went one week ago. Still they are waiting for a place."

Shamim became afraid. One word stuck in his head. Money. Did his mother have money? They had to get across the river. There, the bad soldiers couldn't get them. Surely they wouldn't follow them across the river. That place was called Bangladesh. It was a place the soldiers couldn't go. Shamim's mother set him down. Then she sat down. Shamim suddenly was so tired. His leg hurt. It started to get dark and he fell asleep.

In his sleep angry men in green clothes chased him. They had little stars on their shoulders. Their

mouths were twisted in angry yelling. They shot their gun at him and waved a big knife. He ran, screaming in terror, but only saw trees. Then he woke up. His mother's arms were around him as she shushed him, looking fearfully into the dark. They sat together like that as the light slowly came back to the sky. Shamim kept his eyes on the river, looking for a boat. Soon a big boat came. His mother picked him up again and they walked to the river bank. A big crowd of men pushed each other in front of the boat. When they saw his leg – so bloody and dirty and now it had become very big and fat and he didn't want to move it or touch it – when they saw it, they let him and his mother by. His mother had some money – Shamim was so happy! – and gave it to the boat driver. The men helped her carry him into the boat. It was a very big boat, bigger than the one his father used

to have. Shamim fell asleep again in the boat and when he woke up someone else was carrying him. A big man, wearing a blue uniform. He called for his mother and looked quickly around – and she was there. She reached and took his hand. “We are ok now.”

Shamim looked over the shoulder of the big man. There was the river and on the other side, mountains and many trees. He imagined hundreds of bad soldiers moving through the trees, with their guns and their knives. Now they could not get him. He would never go back there. The big man put him in a truck and his mother came too. And now he is in this hospital room, together with Rafi. Rafi's leg was burned when soldiers set his house on fire. But that is another story.



**Above:** Rohingya refugee camp on the Teknaf Peninsula, Bangladesh.





**Wa Pastor John Saniex (at right), and Pastor Sam Mung baptized 74 new Wa believers between October 9-16 and November 9-14, 2017, in Huay Awe District, southern Wa area inside Shan State, Burma. Pastor John translated the gospel into Wa and distributed over 10,000 Bibles to Wa children, families, and soldiers in the southern Wa area.**

**The Global Day of Prayer for Burma happens every year on the second Sunday of March. Please join us in praying for Burma! For more information, email [info@prayforburma.org](mailto:info@prayforburma.org).**

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