

GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR BURMA

— 2019 —

PRAYER GUIDE

When the Burma Army came to Lahpai Nan Bang's (pictured at right in 2015) village in Kachin State, she refused to run away, along with six others. She became the only witness to their torture and execution.

"Since 1967 we have been in difficult times. Then I had to live in the jungle with only bamboo shoots to eat. I am grateful to be alive. Even though it is bad and I feel lost now also, I thank God that he has always given me life," she said.



Over 70 years of civil war have left Burma one of the poorest countries in the world. During this time, successive military dictatorships have killed thousands of their own people and displaced millions, while effectively strangling the political process in areas under their complete control.

Recent developments in the government have included allowing opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) to run and win elections.

At the same time, attacks and military buildup continue in most ethnic areas. In other areas there is ongoing laying of landmines, attacks on civilians, forced labor, destruction of civilian property and troop resupply.

Leading up to the Global Day of Prayer for Burma, we'll be praying for a different group or area every day. We hope that the information in this guide will help you learn and pray for Burma.

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Ephesians 6:12

Pictured: A village in Karen State, Burma




DAY 1

BURMA GOVERNMENT & MILITARY

- After World War II, Burma went through multiple military coups as power shifted between generals. 2015 was the first year that a civilian government was allowed to have an active part in managing the country.
- Despite winning the 2015 election, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) has limited authority. The military holds most of the power in making and enforcing government decisions. Aung San Suu Kyi, once the face of the pro-democracy movement and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, needs prayer to be a voice for the oppressed.
- The National Ceasefire Agreement was signed in 2015 with the hope of negotiating settlements between the central government and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to reach peace. However, in recent years the agreement shows signs of breaking down as the Burma Army has violated their agreement.

Lord, I pray You raise up godly leaders in Burma that recognize the importance of human life and well-being over political power and economic gain. Bring a true democracy that values the rights of all its citizens. Replace the heart of stone with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26) so that they can see what they are doing to people You made, who are created in Your image. I pray for individual soldiers within the military, that their own conscience would prevent them from hurting the innocent. From the lowest to the highest rank, begin a revival of compassion and love within the Burmese government and military. Turn their hearts toward You.



A Burma Army soldier on the move in Ler Mu Plaw, Karen State, 2018.

DAY 2

KAREN AND KARENNI

- The Karen people are one of the largest ethnic groups in Burma while the Karenni are one of the oldest indigenous groups.
- Despite signing the National Ceasefire Agreement, Karen State has seen an increase in Burma Army activity and fighting over the past year leading to displaced villagers and the murder of a Karen aid worker, Saw Oo Moo, in April 2018.
- Villagers in Karen State have had to flee again from the Burma Army as an ongoing pattern of flee-peace-return-flee again.
- Since signing the NCA, the Burma Army has built eight new bases in northern Karen State and Karenni State, including three new bases within the past year in Karenni State. The Burma Army also continues to build roads into ceasefire areas.

God, please keep the Burma Army from attacking the Karen and Karenni. Create the space needed for open communication and peace. Drive out bitterness and hatred so that healing can begin. Bring solidarity to the various organizations within each state so they can present a united vision and purpose to the government. Give them determination to continue working for freedom and help them realize the real battle is only won through You and by Your plan.



A Karen woman in Karen State, 2018.



A woman who fled Burma in September 2017 and now lives in a one-room bamboo hut with one of her sons and his family, in the middle of Kutapalong, the largest refugee camp in the world.

DAY 3

ROHINGYA

- The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim people group and one of the most persecuted populations in the world. As an unrecognized ethnic group by the Burma government, they have no citizenship, no rights, and no identity.
- In August 2017, a cleansing operation by the state-sponsored Burma Army began. Over the next four to five months, over 700,000 Rohingya would flee into Bangladesh. The operation has since been identified as genocide by the UN.
- Now in refugee camps in Bangladesh, the future of the Rohingya people remains uncertain. They cannot stay long as refugees in Bangladesh, which is already becoming overtaxed in caring for them, but they cannot return to Burma due to ongoing violence and loss of homes and land.

I ask that You increase the global concern for the Rohingya people and their condition. Bring a solution to their current situation so that they may return home with rights and opportunities. Inspire others to help with their physical needs. Show them how valuable they are to You as people come from around the world to hear their stories and share Your love with them. I pray that while they bring physical help, Your workers will also bring the truth of Your Gospel to the Rohingya people. Let salvation and the joy that comes with it flood their lives. Let the light of Your truth shine into their situation and bring hope and relief.

DAY 4

KACHIN, SHAN, TA'ANG

- Northern Burma remains one of the most conflict-ridden areas of Burma with regular skirmishes between the Burma Army and groups like the Kachin Independence Army.
- Landmines affect everyday civilian life resulting in civilian casualties as they go into the jungle looking for safety or resources like food.
- There are around 100,000 internally displaced people living in camps along the Kachin/China border. The Burma Army has been known to attack these camps, causing deeper displacement.
- In Shan State especially, drug trafficking of substances like opium and illegal weapons trade across the China border further destabilize communities and increase opium addiction.
- Ethnic groups, like the Ta'ang, face frequent attacks and threats from the Burma Army. In July 2018, the Burma Army captured, tortured, and murdered six female Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) medics.

Lord, we pray for civilians and IDPs in northern Burma. As their leaders continue to work toward reconciliation with Burma, provide protection for their daily lives. Send help and training that can give them a legal, sustainable way to provide for themselves outside of the drug and weapons trade. We ask that they are no longer deceived and lured into evil. Show them the hope that is in Your name, the hope of new beginnings in You. With You, all things are possible.



A TNLA soldier does recon in an opium field in Kachin State, 2015.


DAY 5

ARAKAN, CHIN, NAGA

- In Chin State, around 73% of the population lives below the national poverty line, making it the poorest state in Burma. Arakan State is the second poorest, with a 43.5% poverty rate.
- In the Naga Hills of Sagaing Division, annual flooding destroys crops and villages. Because of its remote location, the area receives no government aid and no NGOs are present.
- Divisions within the Arakan and its multiple groups cause additional layers of complexity. While the Arakan groups have fought the Burma Army, they've also fought between their own groups.

Despite their remote location, Father, we ask that You bring these western areas of Burma close to Your heart. Let them see Your hope in their desperate situation. Let Your church within these areas rise up in boldness and lead the way in development and change. Send in others who can encourage them and assist them in providing sustainable resources for themselves.

We acknowledge that You are limitless and will supply all their needs according to Your riches (Phil. 4:19). We ask that You break the power of the spirit of poverty that is controlling this area of Burma. Let darkness flee as Your people within Arakan State, Chin State, and Sagaing Division shine the light of truth and hope.



Villagers attempt to travel on a road destroyed by flooding in the Naga Hills, Sagaing Division, 2018.

DAY 6

ETHNIC ARMED ORGANIZATIONS

- There are more than 135 different ethnic groups in Burma, representing unique languages and cultures.
- Many groups have their own leadership structures for governing their areas along with ethnic armies. Within the past two years, there have been at least 20 ethnic armed groups in conflict with the Burma Army.
- While the Burma Army is a common enemy of the EAOs, the groups have also been known to fight each other as well. This leads to further disunity and conflict throughout Burma's ethnic states and deep mistrust between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

God, help the Ethnic Armed Organizations throughout Burma understand their role in protecting and improving the situation of the local people. Help them overcome the differences among themselves to become a united force for love. Help them be the ones who start the process of healing and show an example of forgiveness and long-suffering to the people they serve. Replace fear with faith, replace bitterness with forgiveness, replace hate with love.

We bring these different groups to You that are in discord. We ask You to come in and remove the turmoil and disfunction within the leadership of the EAOs. Bring forgiveness and resolution. I know Your heart is to see peace in this country. Raise up strong, compassionate leaders who will actively pursue change and seek out resolution with Your guidance.



A Kachin Independence Army soldier shows two mortars in Kachin State, Burma, 2015.



Kachin IDP children study at a make-shift school at an IDP camp in Kachin State, 2015.

DAY 7

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

- According to the World Health Organization, there are only 15 skilled healthcare professionals per 10,000 people in Burma.
- While the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) for Myanmar is 178 women dying per 100,000 live births, the ethnic states see higher ratios. In Karen State, for example, the MMR jumps to 721. Neighboring Thailand has a MMR of 20.
- Only a third of households have access to electricity through the public grid; nearly 3 in 10 people lack access to year-round improved drinking water supply.
- While there has been some improvement in education over the years, the Burmese government still controls curricula and does not allow ethnic people to learn their own languages or culture.
- In Myanmar, 6 out of 10 children who start grade one drop out before the end of middle school.

While current conditions are extremely difficult, God I thank You that You are inspiring people to help improve the standard of health among the ethnic people of Burma. Continue to provide Your people with ideas and resources that can bring needed healthcare and health education. Call dedicated teachers that can restore hope to children within the villages. I ask that each child would have the opportunity to learn and receive the blessing of education. Thank you that You care about each family and each individual in these remote locations.

GROWING UP IN BURMA

Hser Nay Paw (at right) is a 17-year-old medic from Karen State. She joined a Free Burma Rangers' training to learn more about medicine so that she can return to her village, where there is no medical clinic, to share and apply her knowledge. She also hopes to help educate the children in her village and put on Good Life Club programs for them. Here, she shares stories of how the civil war has affected her life.

"When there was fighting, the Burmese military shelled big mortar to my village. A big mortar hit half of my house. My house and village burned. It was the evening. My mom was tired from farming all day so she was taking a nap. I was having my dinner when I heard the mortars but I grabbed a pack and ran. I didn't know what it was I just grabbed it and ran. I ran to the other side of the village.

My brother jumped into the bushes to hide and get away from the fighting and fire. Since then I haven't seen him. I don't know if he is alive or not. I lost my mom because while she was sleeping the mortar shells hit my house and burned [it] with my mom inside. My mom was burned alive.



I have had to run because of fighting four times. The serious instances - four times. The most memorable was when I was eight-years-old, when I lost my mom. Many other times I have had to run when there was very serious fighting. Now the fighting is still going on but it is not as serious, just ongoing.

During the fighting many villagers have died, some got injuries, and some women and girls get raped. Surrounding my village there are lots of landmines. [Even] now when the villagers go into the jungle to find vegetables and food they step on landmines. The villagers know there are landmines. They set the surrounding areas on fire so that the landmines will explode. Not every landmine explodes. There are some that remain and often cows and buffalos will step on the landmines and explode. The villagers don't dare go around areas they know Burma Army have hid landmines.

[Because of] landmines, when we run from fighting we cannot run to the front of our village because they are covered with landmines. We cannot run to the back of the village because there is a militia. If we run to the west side the Burma Army is waiting there and will kill us. We can only run to certain parts. But if we run to the Thai border, the Thai police will arrest us. Sometimes we have no choice. No place to run. I was fast and quick to get to the Thai border but some people got caught crossing and the Thai police arrested them.

When the Burma Army comes into my village they rape girls and women. This happened when I was eight. My cousin got raped by the

Burma Army. My cousin was shot in the head during fighting so the Burma Army caught her and raped her. She got raped and after she passed away. One of my aunts got raped, too. She became mentally crazy. My cousin who was raped and then died was only 12 years old. She was my mom's sister's daughter. I was 8, she was 12. I asked her to run but she didn't. She said it would be fine. That's why she didn't run. She thought everything was going to be okay. That's why she didn't run.

A [Burma Army] soldier arrested my grandfather once. They poured hot water through my grandfather's nose and ears and pulled all of his fingernails. The Burma Army tortured my grandfather in front of me. I was hiding in a hole under the house. I could see all of the terrible things happening to my grandfather."

Her message to others:

"I want to be with my family. I want the fighting to stop, I don't like war. I want to reunite with my family again. I want to help kids have a chance to go to school. I want help.

I want the soldiers not to come to my village anymore, and I want to be with my family together again. I want to have my village- a village like before. And I don't want any more war."

The above is an excerpt from Hser Nay Paw's story. For the full version, please visit www.freeburmarangers.org/category/fieldreports

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BURMA

1824-1886 - Burma becomes part of British India after fighting three wars with Great Britain over 62 years.

1941-1945 – World War II; ethnics fight on the Allied side, while the Burmans fight on the Japanese side.

1947 – After negotiating with the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), Great Britain agrees to give Burma its independence. AFPFL leader Aung San is assassinated in July. U Nu is asked to head the AFPFL and the government.

1948 – Burma gains independence from the United Kingdom and U Nu becomes prime minister.

1949 – Rising tensions between the Burman and Karen erupt in full blown conflict. This date marks the start of the civil war in Burma.

1960 - U Nu's party faction wins decisive victory in elections, but his promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance of separatism angers the military.

1962 - U Nu's faction is ousted in a military coup led by Gen. Ne Win, forming a single-party state with the Socialist Programme Party as the sole political party.

1974 - A new constitution comes into effect, transferring power from the armed forces to a People's Assembly headed by Ne Win and other former military leaders.

1978 – Burma Army attacks the Rohingya in Arakan State. 250,000 people flee to Bangladesh.

1981 - Ne Win relinquishes the presidency to San Yu.

1982 - The Burmese Citizenship Law is adopted. This law isolates ethnic groups such as the Kachin, Karen, Chin, and Rohyinga as “associate citizens” denied the rights/relief offered to full citizens, including the right to serve in public office.

1984 – Burma Army begins “Four-Cuts” policy to destroy the Karen resistance.

1988 – Mass anti-government demonstrations take place throughout Burma. The official Radio Rangoon figure is 450 dead; the actual number is believed to be into the thousands. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) is formed. Gen. Saw Maung takes over in another military coup.

1989 – Burma changes its name in English to Myanmar and the name of the capital from Rangoon to Yangon.

1990 - The junta calls for general elections and the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) wins landslide victory. The result is ignored by the military.

1992 - Than She replaces Saw Maung as SLORC chairman, prime minister, and defense minister.



Htee Say, a 103-year-old Karen man, served alongside Karen and British troops as they fought against the Japanese in Burma in WWII. Photo 2019.

1997 - Major Burma Army offensives displace more than 500,000 people in Karen, Karenni, and Shan states.

2001-2007 - Major Burma Army offensives happen in Karen State as the Burma Army attacks villages and IDPs, rapes and murders civilians.

2003 - Khin Nyunt becomes prime minister.

2004 - Khin Nyunt is replaced as prime minister under reports of a power struggle. He is placed under house arrest.

2007 - Buddhist monks lead about 100,000 in the largest anti-government demonstrations since 1988. As protests continue, Myanmar security forces crack down - clubbing and gassing protesters and arresting as many as 200 monks.

2008 - Government publishes proposed new constitution which gives a quarter of parliament seats to the military and bans opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office. A cyclone causes utter destruction, killing more than 22,000. It is later reported by the government that 41,000 people are missing and up to one million are homeless.

2010 - The main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claims resounding victory in the first election in 20 years. Opposition groups claim widespread fraud and the election is seen as a sham.

2011 - Myanmar convenes its first parliament in more than two decades in the capital, Naypyidaw, and elects Thein Sein as president. The NLD boycotts the election, calling it a sham. Fighting erupts between the Kachin Independence Army and Burma Army

troops when government forces broke the ceasefire and attacked KIA positions along the Taping river east of Bhamo, Kachin State.

2012 - Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi wins a seat in parliament in the first multi-party elections since 1990. The EU suspends most of the sanctions it had imposed on Myanmar. Unrest breaks out in the western state of Rakhine. Religious violence leaves more than 200 dead and close to 150,000 homeless — predominantly members of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

2013 - A state of emergency is declared as ethnic clashes between Muslims and Buddhists lead to killings.

2014 - The United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Tomas Ojea Quintana, reports that the recent persecution of the Rohingya group "could amount to crimes against humanity." Myanmar presidential spokesman Ye Htut tells CNN the government rejects the remarks.

2015 - The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) begins an offensive to retake the Kokang self-administered zone in Shan State. The Burma Army launches a counteroffensive and defeats the MNDAA and their allies, displacing 40,000 to 50,000 civilians in the process and sparking a diplomatic incident after bombing the Chinese side of the Kokang border. The Burma Army and their allies also begin a coordinated assault on Ta'ang National Liberation Army positions in Shan State. The 2015 Myanmar elections end with a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy.

2016 - Present - Burma Army continues attacks against Kachin, Shan, Ta'ang, Kokang, Arakan, Rohingya, Karen, and Karenni.



Burma Army soldiers camped out under their transport in Karen State, January 2019.

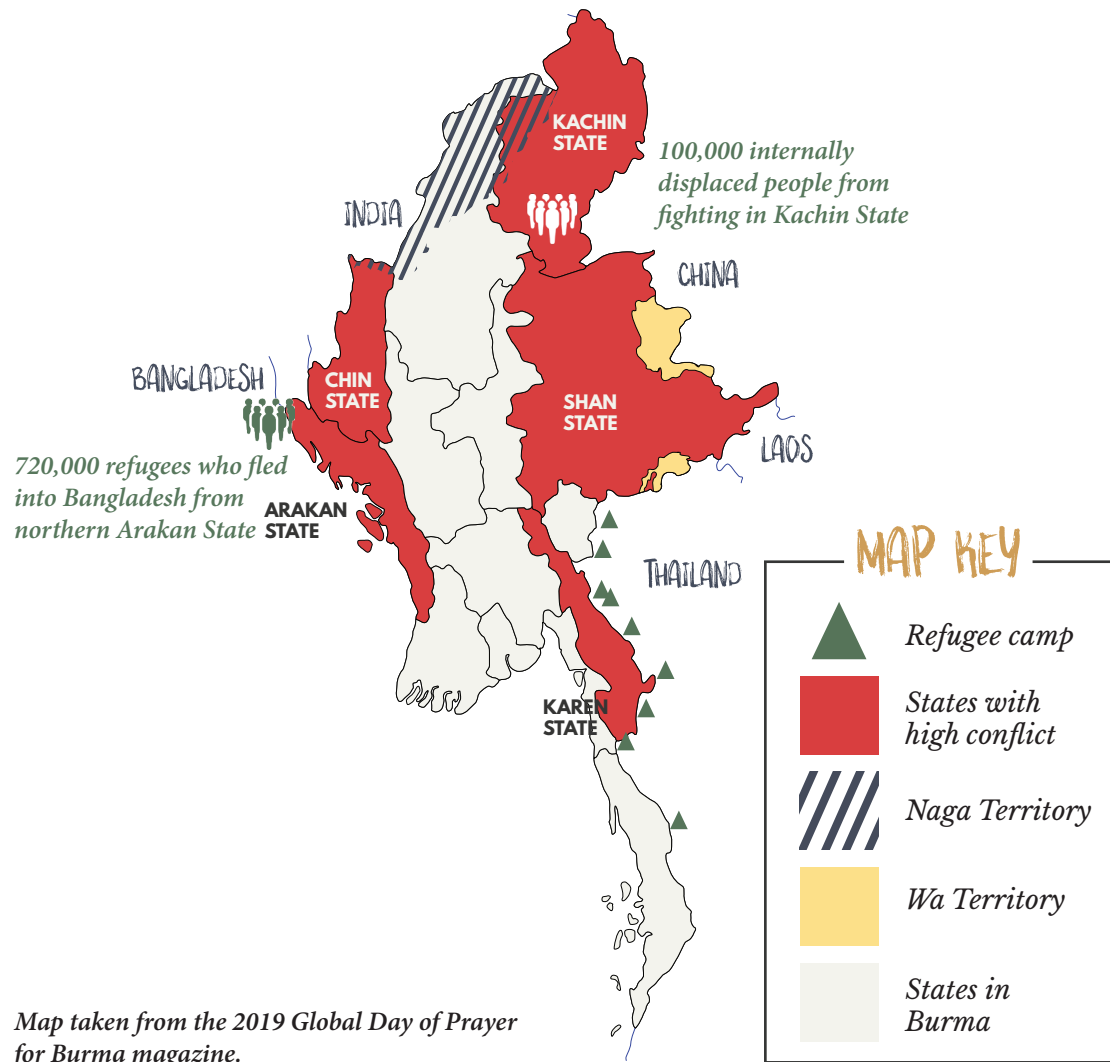
GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR BURMA

22 years ago, the Burma Army crossed the Thailand border to attack and burn the Wangka refugee camp, where thousands of Karen people had fled for safety. The same year, the Global Day of Prayer was initiated in response to attacks against the ethnic people and the oppression of all in Burma.

The Global Day of Prayer for Burma happens every year on the second Sunday of March. Please join us in praying for Burma!

As part of the Day of Prayer, Christians Concerned for Burma (CCB) publishes a magazine featuring news and stories from Burma that are often overlooked in mainstream media. To download the magazine, please visit www.prayforburma.org.

For more information, please email info@prayforburma.org.



Map taken from the 2019 Global Day of Prayer for Burma magazine.

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