A man with a mustache and goatee, wearing a green cap with a "RANGER" patch, a green shirt, and a tan tactical vest, is smiling and holding a Nikon camera. The background is a chain-link fence.

**GLOBAL DAY
OF PRAYER FOR
BURMA**
— 2020 —

**PRAYER AND ACTION BEYOND BORDERS: ZAU SENG,
KACHIN MEDIC, VIDEOGRAPHER, AND FOLLOWER OF
JESUS, GIVES HIS LIFE IN SYRIA**

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Pictured on this page: David Eubank and Pastor Edmund baptize one of five students who asked to be baptized at the conclusion of FBR training, December 2018.

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.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Thank you for praying all these years for the people of Burma. Your prayers have made a difference: there have been ceasefires, people have been able to move around and travel a little more, and there has been more of a process of shared governance. These are some of the good things that we have seen with our eyes and experienced.

However, the military still runs the country of Burma and it is not a true democracy. Over one million Rohingya have been displaced and are not able to come home. In Arakan State this year, heavy fighting displaced over 30,000 people. In northern Burma, over 100,000 people remain displaced as fighting continues. In Karen State, the Burma Army repeatedly violates the ceasefire and displacement fluctuates from 1,000 to 3,000 with each attack. The people of Burma still need prayer.

As you read through this magazine and learn more about the current situation in Burma, please pray for its people. Please pray for the government of Burma and for the Army, even as it commits atrocities. Pray that they would see this is not a good way forward and that it is not a way that's good for their own souls.

My family has been in Burma now serving with the people for over twenty-six years; for the past five years, we've also been invited to help in other places like Sudan, Kurdistan, Iraq, and Syria. In November 2019, Zau Seng, a Kachin medic and videographer, was killed while with us on a mission in Syria. This is a great tragedy. War is everywhere and it kills indiscriminately, both those who cause it and those who would stop it, and are willing to give their lives to serve those suffering its violence.

As we see the innocent suffer and those who serve them die, it makes me ask: what difference does prayer make? I don't know all the answers, but I do know that prayer changes my heart. It shows me a way of love and shows me that even though the things of this world are fatal, they are not final. Those things we pray for, like love, remain after all else fades. This is our hope: that no matter what the circumstances are, in Burma or elsewhere, we have a way to respond in love. We believe that love is eternal and can change hearts and make a difference.

Ultimately, we hope and pray that people's hearts would soften, and they would learn to follow the way of love. For me, that love comes from Jesus who has taken the hardness in my heart, my selfishness, and even my desire for revenge, and turned it into love, hope, and reconciliation. That continues to be my prayer - that love, hope, and reconciliation will grow amongst all people in Burma. Thank you for joining us in that prayer.

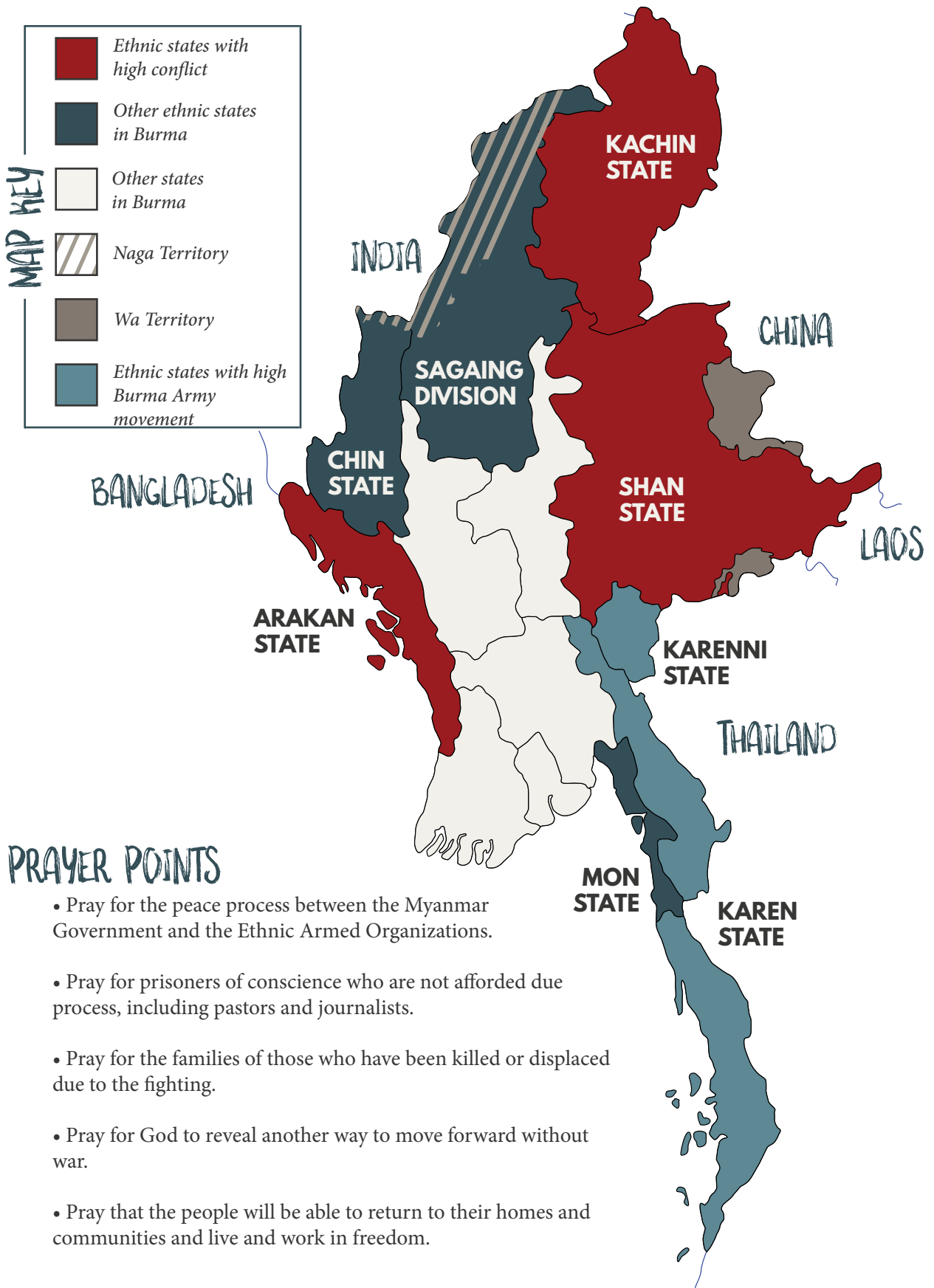
May God bless you,



David Eubank
Christians Concerned for Burma



From left to right: Peter, Suuzanne, Sahale, Karen, and David Eubank in Syria, 2019.



PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for the peace process between the Myanmar Government and the Ethnic Armed Organizations.
- Pray for prisoners of conscience who are not afforded due process, including pastors and journalists.
- Pray for the families of those who have been killed or displaced due to the fighting.
- Pray for God to reveal another way to move forward without war.
- Pray that the people will be able to return to their homes and communities and live and work in freedom.

MORE SETBACKS, LESS PROGRESS

AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA IN 2019

Over the past year, there has been little progress and many setbacks in the peace process between the Myanmar government/Tatmadaw*, and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). The Burma Army has arguably prevented Aung San Suu Kyi's and the National League for Democracy's (NLD) government from making concessions, causing stagnation in the peace process. This, and the intensification of armed conflict in the north and west of the country, reflect a failure on the part of centralized military and government to meaningfully engage with ethnic stakeholders.

The 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) remains deeply problematic. In October 2018 the two largest signatories, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Karen National Union (KNU) suspended participation in joint elements of the peace process, complaining that the NCA was not working. This means that the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is not functional, and violations of the ceasefire (mostly by the Burma Army) remain unaddressed.

The leading NCA signatory groups - the KNU, RCSS and New Mon State Party (NMSP) - are demanding reorganization of the JMC, which is presently dominated by the military, to make it more fair to EAOs. Their main demands include greater international participation in ceasefire monitoring and for the government to demonstrate a serious commitment to political dialogue and implementation of federalism. This means the peace process and political dialogue must continue beyond 2020 elections.

Increasingly, the 2020 elections will dominate Myanmar politics, sidelining the peace process and potentially marginalizing EAOs. The EAOs need commitments from the government and military before rejoining the formal peace process, but they risk losing opportunities to engage as the elections come closer - with no guarantee of continued dialogue after 2020. If the government can demonstrate sincerity, key EAOs may participate

in a Union Peace Conference (UPC) in early 2020 - which might contribute to a more credible Union Peace Accord before the elections. The risk for EAOs is that if they rejoin the peace process, they may be pressured into participating in another UPC which does not address key concerns and demands. The government has an incentive to bring NCA signatory EAOs back into the formal peace process, to prove that some elements of the peace process are still on-track in the context of renewed fighting in the north and west, and the ongoing Rohingya crisis.

In the meantime, since mid-2018, there has been renewed, sometimes intensive, fighting in northern Shan and Kachin states; civilian communities have suffered, with widespread displacement and serious human rights abuses committed by all sides (particularly the Tatmadaw). The situation is further complicated by occasional clashes between EAOs vying with each other for territorial control. In Arakan State, the Arakan Army has inflicted significant casualties on the Burma Army; at the same time in the north, attacks by two Northern Alliance members, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, in Pyin Oo Lwin at the prestigious Military Defence Academy on 15 Aug. 2019 caused significant damage, and 15 Burma Army soldiers were killed. As of Nov. 2019, the Tatmadaw has not engaged in serious ceasefire talks with the Northern Alliance groups, which also include the Kachin Independence Army and Arakan Army.

Although ceasefires with the KNU, NMSP and RCSS are mostly still holding on the ground, the Burma Army acts aggressively, for example, pushing new military supply roads into previously inaccessible areas, despite local protests. Until the government and the Burma Army show that they are willing to engage seriously with ethnic concerns and demands, it is unlikely the situation will improve.

* *Tatmadaw refers to Burma's armed forces*

TO LOVE IS TO ACT

Written by Steve Gumaer, President of Partners Relief and Development (PRAD)

Mountains, tall trees, the sunset over broad desert landscapes, a painting by Klimt, even a beautiful sculpture, all inspire me. A perfect sentence that turns my mind inward, then out and around an issue in a book is a wonder to me. A smoothly executed move climbing steep rock, the turns made descending a steep couloir on skis, and the silence felt while paddling on a mountain lake with no wind are other forms of this sublime thing. My wife when she smiles and my daughters when they stand their ground in fierce goodness are yet other angles on what my soul screams: “beautiful, absolutely beautiful.”

It may be my age. I’m 51. I’ve worked with refugees and displaced people for nearly 30 years. Through the different seasons of life I’ve felt the pull to originality, independence, and characteristics like fearlessness. But now, the thing that sets my soul on fire is beauty.

My work with refugees and displaced people has formed how people know me and even altered my sense of identity. My work has been my passion. But finally I realize that what shapes my soul is not context. War, violence, and deprivation provoke a sense of injustice and motivate me to work for restorative change; but the deeper driver is the incredible fact of people’s tenacity to thrive, to make the best out of what meager provision and resources are left to them, and to speckle the hard and terrible times with laughter and even joy.

Beauty is magnified when it grows out of the war-torn Nineveh desert; it is enhanced when it appears in remote hiding places in Karen State, and it is more arresting when it

smiles broad goodness in moments, even years, of terrible crisis.

It’s audacious. In the face of overwhelming violence and oppression, how can people be so courageous, so daringly wonderful, and so incredibly sacrificial? I’m finding answers to my deepest questions of faith by observing a loving father teaching his son to make a toy of bamboo and rubber bands, not by reading yet another book on theology.

The refugees and displaced families our team serves are not cast in a victim mold. Though victimized, the majority of those I have met are strong, resilient, loving, and self-sacrificing. They fall in love on the run; through dangerous times they build a life, a family, and exploit what possibilities exist not merely to survive, but to live a full and joyous life.

Do you want to know what it means when we say “To Love Is To Act?” Observe any displaced or refugee community. Do you wish to see beauty? Observe the poor with curious and hopeful eyes.

The collection of news and stories you hold has been assembled by a dedicated team to give you an inside look at what doing something beautiful looks like in Myanmar and other conflict zones. I’m proud to contribute to a work so congruous to what Partners Relief & Development is all about. We went to the battlefield to give, to help the displaced and poor stand against seemingly insurmountable odds. What we gained is a priceless gift. We have learned beauty, learned to pray, and are attempting to live it out.

IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION,
HOW CAN PEOPLE BE SO COURAGEOUS, SO DARINGLY
WONDERFUL, AND SO INCREDIBLY SACRIFICIAL?



SHOW ANOTHER WAY

LESSONS ON LOVE LEARNED IN CONFLICT

Burma is home to a myriad of ethnic groups and has been burdened by civil war for more than 70 years; it rarely makes it into the news, but when it does, it is hard to know what to do. How to help such a complicated situation? In contrast, Syria has been in the news regularly for many years, with each headline seeming to contest the others for increased tragedy and violence. Here, too, it is easy to feel paralyzed by the enormity and complexity of the problem.

We find the answer in love. When we ask, what would we want for our own families? We know: we would go, and be with them, and do all we could to make a new way for them.

LOVE SERVES EVERYONE

By February 2019, all that remained of ISIS's territorial holdings was a one-square mile village in Syria called Baghuz, which held the most hard-core members of ISIS - those who had survived multiple defeats and never surrendered. As coalition forces closed in on that last remnant, some 35,000 people, mostly women and children, surrendered, submitting themselves to an uncertain future.

As they were shuttled into the desert from Baghuz, they were initially detained at desert screening points, to be checked by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and U.S. forces. It was here that our team met them and provided food, medical care and relief supplies until the screening process was over, which sometimes

ISIS families in line to receive supplies after fleeing Baghuz, Syria.



Sahale Eubank gives supplies to ISIS families after they fled Baghuz, Syria.

took more than 24 hours. Once screened, the people were loaded into trucks and driven to either prisons (most of the men) or refugee camps – for many this was Al-Hawl.

As we worked to help in tangible ways, we also worked to spread a message of love and not of hate. We treated the wounded, hugged and prayed for those who allowed it, and, through translators, shared about Jesus as the source of our own hope and love.

To those who questioned why we would help ISIS, we said, “Is there any other way to change hearts? Only love does.” And, sometimes, we were gifted to see it, both on our own team and amongst the people we were trying to help.

LOVE CHANGES HEARTS

One evidence of changed hearts was a friendship that sprang up, between Sahale and Suuzanne Eubank and a girl named Raghad, who had been hit in the back by shrapnel from an airstrike, paralyzing her from the waist down. As the medics cared for her physical wounds, Suu and Sahale talked to her, gave her gifts, and prayed for her. Despite her wounds, Raghad was smiling and cheerful; a special connection

was formed between these girls with such different lives. When the time came to load Raghad into the bus that would take her to Al-Hawl, the girls cried. They didn’t know if they would ever see each other again; love sometimes hurts.

Al-Hawl camp, a sprawling, dusty tent city, held over 73,000 people, mostly ISIS families. Most (91%) of the population were women and children and 65% of the children were under the age of 12. The population represented some 50 different countries and more than 3,000 children were separated from or without any adult family members. It was the kind of situation where hearts could grow hard from grief and bitterness.

Months after the battle of Baghuz ended, we were able to visit Al-Hawl and there we found Raghad again. Her mother had obtained a phone and called Dave Eubank, saying, “We love you. You’ve shown us another way. Please come and see us here.” And so, during that visit, we were reunited.

Suu and Sahale hugged Raghad and her mother; they all cried. Raghad’s mother had procured small gifts for the team and handed them out in pink gift bags covered in hearts. It was jewelry, and the pendant on each piece was a silver, jeweled, zigzag line, like an



Raghad's mother embraces Suu Eubank during their reunion in Al-Hawl camp.

EKG line, with a heart at the end.

So we see, there are hearts that have changed and not been consumed by hate. There are families, like Raghad's, who yearn for another way, children who had no choice where they were born and are desperate for love and a new life. Yet ISIS is still alive as well, with a heart that beats for death and destruction to those who oppose it. There is still a need for the love that conquers all – however, sometimes the ultimate victory requires the ultimate sacrifice.

LOVE NEVER GIVES UP

There was a brief respite in northeast Syria after ISIS was defeated. Seven months later, in October 2019, after insisting the SDF remove their defenses and promising to protect them, U.S. President Trump ordered U.S. troops to withdraw from the border of northeast Syria and Turkey, and opened the door to a long-threatened Turkish attack on the Kurds. The Turks and their proxy, the Free Syrian Army (many of whom are former ISIS), immediately attacked, killing hundreds, wounding thousands and displacing more than 200,000 civilians.

We returned as soon as we could, to stand by our

friends, the Kurds, who had given so much to defeat ISIS. The abandoned Kurds were fighting for their lives against the armored and air attack of the Turks, supplemented by the ground attack of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

One of the first to raise his hand to come back and help was Zau Seng, one of our primary videographers, who had been with us through the entire battle of Mosul and later in Baghuz. Zau believed in the power of showing the world the truth being lived by people on the ground in the middle of conflicts; in 2013, he had captured footage of Burma Army attack helicopters and bombers attacking the Kachin. The Burma government had denied fighting was happening – until international news outlets ran Zau's footage. In these attacks, he had lost five good friends when an airstrike hit their bunker just meters from where he was filming. Yet he did not give up.

Zau was one of eleven different ethnic team members from Burma who have rotated through our missions in the Middle East. These Rangers, coming from the war zones of their homeland, come to help others out of love. They have experienced horrific war: people they know and love have been killed by the Burma Army, their homes have been destroyed and

their lives uprooted. They know what it is to feel as if the world doesn't care about their fate. They know the temptation to respond with hate, the powerful urge to seek revenge when justice is denied. And yet, they believe in something stronger: they believe in love and they go in that love.

Zau had experienced love and was grateful. He wanted to give it. "People have come to help us in Burma and so when God opens the door for us to go other places and they ask for help, we want to be able to respond," he said. Like his fellow Rangers, he had risked it all many times to respond with love to the need of others.

On Nov. 3, 2019, that risk became reality: while helping man a mobile Casualty Collection Point with our team near Tel Tamr, Syria, Zau Seng was killed by a Turkish munition that hit just seven meters from his vehicle.

Zau had just finished editing a video of a rescue under tank fire the previous day, in the middle of a proclaimed ceasefire. His video would show the world the lies of those in power and the reality for the oppressed people on the ground. But his death would show the world, and especially the Kurds – who he was there to help – what the greatest love looks like.

John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Zau had always been a great friend; as remembrances of him poured in after his death, many involved his laughter, his humor, his joy – the way he had made every situation, no matter the difficulties, easier for those around him, with laughter and joy. He had been a friend, always; and in the end he was the friend that laid down his life and showed the more excellent way.

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

Bashir, a Syrian Christian and FBR coordinator, once told us, "We are all just drops, but we are part of God's rain, and God's rain will turn into a river and flood Syria with His love." And so we believe that Zau's sacrifice was not in vain, that he is part of God's river, not just in Syria but around the world. John 12:24 says, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." And new life springs forth. Thank you, Zau, for your love that gave everything that others might live.

Written by an FBR relief team



Zau Seng hands food to ISIS children who had fled Baghuz.



NORTH STAR IN A DARK PLACE

This was originally written by Tanner Smith for Partners' "Summer of Beautiful" publication. Read the full publication at blog.partners.ngo. Photo by Chris Norman.

Hadisa began teaching school when she was 15. That makes her almost a veteran today at age 18.

Her one-room schoolhouse is packed with 34 children and teenagers, ranging in age from 5 – 13 years old. They're eager to learn, proudly carrying their colorful backpacks filled with pencils, composition books, reading texts, and math workbooks. Their blue and maroon uniforms show the world that they belong, that they have somewhere important to be, that they have a future.

These things matter when you're Rohingya, violently uprooted from your home, and trying to find your way in a new, disorienting country like Bangladesh.

Hadisa is a north star in this mess. She's a teacher. A guardian. A social worker. An advocate. Often, she's a surrogate mother – at least for a few hours each school day, and probably for many hours outside of the classroom, too. Twenty-five percent of the children in her class have lost both parents to the violence perpetrated against the Rohingya in 2017.

So, Hadisa not only teaches math and

reading, but resiliency and self-respect. Hadisa, and teachers like her, speak the language of hope. The fact that they exist, that their classrooms create a tiny slice of order out of the daily chaos of a refugee camp, means that a better future is possible. Classrooms like Hadisa's boldly declare that the lives of these children aren't going to be wasted in the slums of desperate poverty caused by the horrific consequences of genocide.

These children are worth the investment, worth teaching, worth loving, worth seeing. Schools are one of the very best ways to turn the tide of hopelessness and poverty in crisis situations like the one unfolding in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. When a humanitarian crisis, like a genocide, happens, the catastrophe escalates quickly – and multiple catastrophes converge. Orphaned children and the chaos of resettlement means that children are easy targets for exploitation by predators.

But children who are in school are hard targets because Hadisa's watchful gaze is always scanning for wolves attempting to victimize her little flock. Look at her eyes. This woman is not to be trifled with. Children are also targets of recruitment by violent extremists, but a child who goes to school has hope and a future. Hope is the ultimate antidote to the false promises of extremism. Teachers are truly the special forces of the Kingdom of God, and schools are their secret weapon.

ARAKAN STATE

ETHNIC GROUPS FACE OFF AGAINST THE BURMA ARMY

Conflict between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army escalated in recent years, with the Burma Army carrying out random executions, torture, arrests, and kidnappings against civilians. The Arakan Army, which has an estimated 10,000 soldiers and is well-trained in guerrilla warfare and equipped with Chinese military-grade weaponry, has in turn inflicted casualties against Burmese forces.

Civilians are caught in the middle of the conflicts and pay a price as well; in 2019 alone, 39,000 people have been displaced by the fighting. Due to the Burma government's strict policy against allowing NGOs and outside aid into the area, these new IDPs have little access to food, medical care, and other basic needs.

The increased pressure from the Burma Army has also taken a toll on daily life. The military has increased raids on villages and detainment of men and youth who they suspect are associated with the Arakan Army. Families of Arakan Army members are especially at risk for direct abuse from the Burma Army.

On 17 Sept. 2019, the Burma Army and Arakan Army met for peace talks with no real results. Attacks continue and show no sign of stopping anytime soon.

series of clearance operations against the Rohingya in Arakan State which were later determined to meet the U.N.'s definition of genocide. Two years later, life in Arakan State remains precarious due to ongoing conflicts between the Burma Army and ethnic groups in the state.

Accounts from Rohingya survivors attracted international attention as each survivor gave testimony of the horrific human rights violations happening against their people. These violations included the burning of villages and fields, the brutal murdering of civilians of all ages, and the gang rape of women and girls. Over 700,000 Rohingya fled to southern Bangladesh and etched out new lives inside refugee camps.

Bangladesh did a commendable job of caring for these desperate people when they first arrived on their border. However, it has proven difficult to sustain the same level of care over two years; the influx of nearly a million people into an already impoverished area, which also displaced thousands of the local population, has begun to breed hostility towards the refugees. There have been several attempts to begin repatriation but Burma has consistently failed to provide plausible guarantees of security for returnees. The Rohingya remain a people in limbo, unrecognized in their own country and dependent on billions of dollars of international aid in the Bangladesh camps.

ROHINGYA

In August 2017, the Burma Army launched a

NOTABLE INCIDENTS

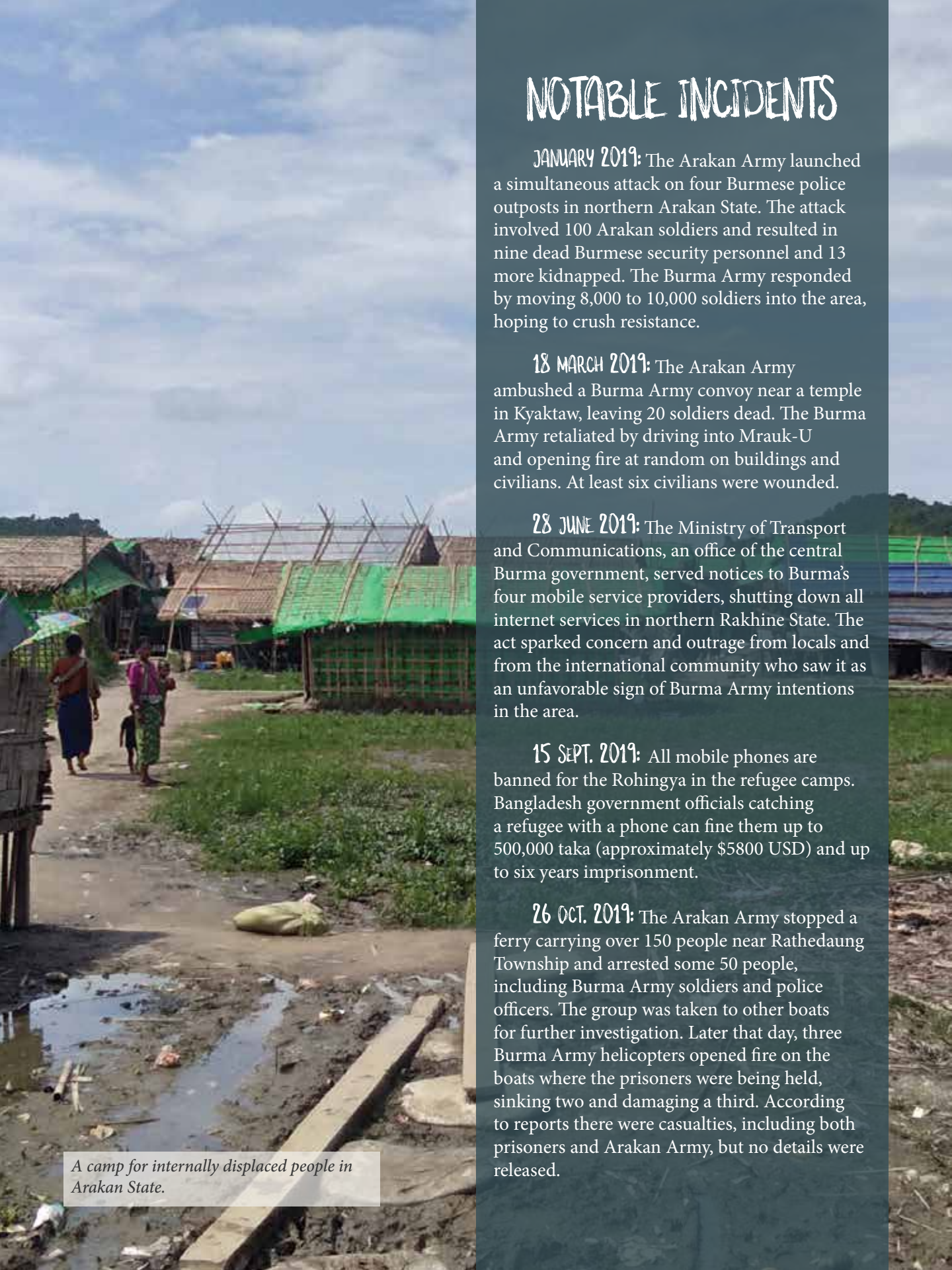
JANUARY 2019: The Arakan Army launched a simultaneous attack on four Burmese police outposts in northern Arakan State. The attack involved 100 Arakan soldiers and resulted in nine dead Burmese security personnel and 13 more kidnapped. The Burma Army responded by moving 8,000 to 10,000 soldiers into the area, hoping to crush resistance.

18 MARCH 2019: The Arakan Army ambushed a Burma Army convoy near a temple in Kyaktaw, leaving 20 soldiers dead. The Burma Army retaliated by driving into Mrauk-U and opening fire at random on buildings and civilians. At least six civilians were wounded.

28 JUNE 2019: The Ministry of Transport and Communications, an office of the central Burma government, served notices to Burma's four mobile service providers, shutting down all internet services in northern Rakhine State. The act sparked concern and outrage from locals and from the international community who saw it as an unfavorable sign of Burma Army intentions in the area.

15 SEPT. 2019: All mobile phones are banned for the Rohingya in the refugee camps. Bangladesh government officials catching a refugee with a phone can fine them up to 500,000 taka (approximately \$5800 USD) and up to six years imprisonment.

26 OCT. 2019: The Arakan Army stopped a ferry carrying over 150 people near Rathedaung Township and arrested some 50 people, including Burma Army soldiers and police officers. The group was taken to other boats for further investigation. Later that day, three Burma Army helicopters opened fire on the boats where the prisoners were being held, sinking two and damaging a third. According to reports there were casualties, including both prisoners and Arakan Army, but no details were released.



A camp for internally displaced people in Arakan State.



Chin State's lack of transportation and development makes it difficult for families to buy school supplies. Above, Chin children show their new school supplies they received from a relief team.

CHIN STATE

INTERNET CUTS, CURFEWS, AND LANDGRABS CONTINUE

As fighting has increased between the Burma Army and the Arakan Army in Arakan State, thousands of displaced civilians have fled into neighboring Chin State and are now living in camps there, with little access to outside help. In some cases, the Burma Army has explicitly forbidden any aid being sent to the camps.

On 21 June 2019, the Burmese government cut internet to parts of Chin and Arakan states, sending those affected into an information blackout. The Burmese military excused the blackout as a tool to impair communication within and between the Ethnic Armed Organizations. However, human rights organizations have labeled the shutdown an indirect attack on civilians, as access to information during conflict can be lifesaving. Moreover, the shutdown has

severely limited humanitarian efforts in the area.

On 9 Nov. 2019, a two-month long curfew was imposed in Paletwa Township, in southern Chin State. The curfew was announced to be from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and also banned demonstrations and campaigning by locals and gathering in groups of more than five people.

The curfew came in retaliation for the Arakan Army capturing 10 people on Nov. 3, including five Indian nationals and one Chin State MP. On Nov. 4, the Arakan Army released everyone except the MP; one other man died from exhaustion after he was taken by the group.

Aside from the fighting, locals in Chin State continue to struggle with having their land seized by the government.

NAGA HILLS

POLITICAL TENSION LEADS TO ARRESTS AND PARTY REMOVAL

Located in northwestern Burma, Nagaland remains one of the poorest, most isolated and least developed areas in the country.

On 29 Jan. 2019, the Burma Army took control of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang's (NSCN-K) headquarters in Ta Ga Village, Nanyun Township. Over 400 Burma Army troops from six battalions were involved in the takeover but no one was injured or killed. According to the Burma Army, the raid happened because the NSCN-K had trained and sheltered Indian rebels who were fighting the Indian government.

On 9 March 2019, five members of the NSCN-K were arrested by the Burma Army under the Unlawful Association Act of the Burma constitution. While

in jail, they began encouraging people to support signing the NCA. Later, in October 2019, after their release, they were again in trouble, this time with their own party: because of their actions in jail to promote the NCA, which violated NSCN-K party principles, they were removed from the party.

To date, the NSCN-K has refused to sign the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as it does not include all Naga people in Burma and northeast India. In 2012 the NSCN-K signed a bilateral ceasefire with the regional Sagaing Division government and participated in NCA talks only as observers. Since the headquarters occupation, though, the NSCN-K has completely removed itself from peace talks.



Eno Ang Kan, in the white shirt, and Eno Chaw Wang Sing, in the black shirt, were two of the NSCN-K leaders arrested in March by the Burma Army.

NORTHERN BURMA

HEAVY FIGHTING IN KACHIN AND NORTHERN SHAN STATES DESPITE A NEW CEASEFIRE

On 21 Dec. 2018, the Burma Army announced a four-month ceasefire for Kachin State and northern Shan State with the goal of resuming peace talks with members of the Northern Alliance, composed of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA). The ceasefire was eventually extended until 21 Sept. 2019 but reports throughout the year showed continual ceasefire violations.

The Burma Army planned and carried out attacks against Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) with alarming frequency throughout the year. The geographic spread of the clashes as well as their frequency and the number of units and troops involved indicated renewed military campaigning by the Burma Army.

April 2019 saw high activity as Burma Army soldiers traversed northern Shan State and Kachin State, engaging in clashes nearly every day. For example, on April 18, the KIA detonated a mine under a bridge where Burma Army soldiers were crossing. The Burma Army retaliated by sending out groups of 80 to 100 soldiers to nearby villages to find the KIA. Heavy fighting started as the KIA defended against the Burma Army's advances and the fighting continued through the rest of the week until April 24. Similar clashes between the Burma Army and the MNDAA and TNLA were reported throughout the same month.

Amidst the fighting between the armies, civilians continue to be the victims of the conflict in Kachin and Shan states. Fighting often occurs in close proximity to villages. As a result, incidents of rape, deadly wounds by Burma Army artillery, and the displacement of thousands have been reported.

On 9 Dec. 2019, two Burma Army soldiers raped 17-year-old Dashi Hkawn Tsin, in Bhamo Township, Kachin State. She was later admitted to

the Bhamo Hospital in critical condition. The next day, in Myitkyina Township, an unknown group raped and killed a 23-year-old primary school teacher, Mya Tazin, on the road that led to her school.

On 26 Aug. 2019, Lt. Col. Than Htike, of the Burma Army's Northern Command, filed a lawsuit against a Kachin pastor, Rev. Hkalam Samson, for statements he made in the United States while meeting with President Trump. Rev. Samson, who is also the president of the Kachin Baptist Convention, told President Trump that he thought the then-recent sanctions against Burma Army Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing and three other senior officials were helpful. The filed charges sparked protests in Kachin State and statements from the international community, including the United States government, expressing their concern about the lawsuit and support of Rev. Samson. On 9 Sept. 2019 the charges were dropped when the Burma Army withdrew the case.

Throughout August 2019, fighting in Shan State displaced almost 8,000 people. Humanitarian groups and volunteers struggled to provide assistance as they, too, came under attack. On 17 Aug. 2019, an attack on an ambulance near Lashio, Shan State, killed one relief worker and wounded several others. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

On 31 Aug. 2019, a suspected mortar attack killed five civilians in northern Shan State. Three of those killed were children. According to the United Nations Information Center in Yangon, at least 17 civilians were killed and another 27 wounded in a span of about 20 days in northern Shan State alone.

Despite peace talks that happened in late Sept. 2019, it remains unclear whether or not 2020 will bring a true ceasefire and relief for those in northern Burma.



Top: One of many camps for internally displaced people along the Burma-China border in Kachin State.

Bottom: A relief team member hands out food to IDPs in Kachin State.

STATE

SOUTHERN SHAN



A Shan relief team member shows a Day of Prayer magazine to villagers in Shan State.

Southern Shan State is home to many people groups including Shan, Lahu, Pa-Oh and Ta-ang people. It has seen some of the most consistent conflict of any part of Burma, but often this has been between the ethnic groups as well as with the Burma Army.

The Lahu are a small, predominately subsistence farming community. The Burma Army has been known to forcibly conscript men and boys from Lahu villages for military service. Even though it's a forced conscription, the Lahu often encounter conflict with other ethnic groups for "supporting" the Burma Army. This is an example of how the Burma Army works a 'divide and conquer' strategy against the ethnic nationalities, the goal being control over territory filled with natural and human resources.

Shan State is resource-rich, but this has given rise to conflict that makes life difficult and dangerous and rarely helps the local population. Often, natural resources are shipped straight out of the country. Burmese timber is logged illegally by Chinese timber companies, who pay off the Burma government and whichever ethnic armed group (EAO) territory the timber passes through. Though the payoff isn't close to the full value of the timber sold, the money collected is used to fuel the war.

Mining and the sale of precious metals is another example of resource exploitation by the central government and Chinese companies.

In 2019, fighting amongst Shan ethnic groups was primarily between SSA-S and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). These two groups clashed often, displacing villagers and destabilizing every-day life for families in those areas. There were also clashes between the SSA-S and Burma Army, despite both being signatories to the National Ceasefire Agreement.

In April, two warring factions initiated peace talks with each other. The Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) have clashed over 150 times since 2018, displacing thousands. Still, leaders from both organizations have made moves to open peace talks. One officer from the SSPP stated, "We don't want to fight with the RCSS because both groups are Shan. We need to build trust and share information. Lack of communication led to the fighting."

The same willingness for unity amongst Shan people is only a start. Unity is required amongst the different ethnic groups to overcome the Burma Army's political and military pressure.


KARENNI STATE

In Jan. 2019, the Burma Army finished building new bases in four townships in Karenni State, even though the military had previously initiated a unilateral four-month ceasefire that included Karenni State. Burma Army officials also failed to notify the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) about the construction, despite have a long-standing agreement to notify them of construction in areas where the KNPP is active. The construction also violates the National Ceasefire Agreement between the Burma Army and ethnic groups that includes the KNPP. Historically, the building and supplying of bases has served as an indicator the Burma Army is getting ready to attack ethnic populations.

Other projects, such as building a statue of General Aung San in Loikaw in February, have also resulted in increased tension between the state government and local population. For many in Karenni State, the statue symbolizes unmet promises of ethnic inclusion amidst a Burmese-dominated national government.

In August, the Loikaw Township Court charged six Karenni youth with slander, for statements against state leaders calling them traitors to the Karenni people for supporting the statue. The statements also accused the government of using road and telecommunications funding for the statue instead of for improving state infrastructure. In early November 2019, the six youths were sentenced to six months in prison, including hard labor.

Poverty continues to be a problem in Karenni State. Rich in natural resources, locals work in dangerous mining conditions throughout the state and receive little pay in return for their labor. Mine workers have to give what they mine to companies that work for the Burma government, who then sells resources, like uranium, to China.



A mining town leading up to the Mawchi mine, one of many mines with poor conditions in Karenni State.

WA STATE

UPDATES ON RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN WA STATE

The truck stopped and the soldiers jumped out. They were looking for three young men. Rumors were out these men were gathering people to pray and worship Jesus. These three young men are special because they are former child soldiers and now devoted followers of Jesus. Just days before, one of them, Cam, had passionately argued with his mentor that God was sending him into the Wa region. His mentor was adamant it was too dangerous but reluctantly acquiesced. These men were captured and thrown in prison. It is illegal for any Wa to share about Jesus or pray in a group in Wa State. When word trickled out that Cam was arrested, Cam's mentor was heartbroken.

Of course we asked many people to pray and to our great joy, these young men were released after six days in confinement. I actually heard from Cam a few days ago, and joy and faith are bursting from him because of this experience. Persecution is often what invites God's glory into His church because it forces our hearts to really choose a side. We pray these three young

men become like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who faced the fiery political wrath of a king but encountered God in the process.

Choosing not to bow down is not easy though: many pastors in Wa State signed papers saying they would not preach the Words of Life after many days of prison. Now their hearts are convicted and there is a groundswell of spiritual hunger in this region. It's a wonderful time for us to pray with the Wa Church as it adjusts to the new realities.

We should especially pray for the Wa government. There are God-fearing men and women in positions of influence but it is very dangerous to confess Jesus publicly. There are many pastors whose hearts bleed for their flocks and they are learning how to lead in what is now a deeply communist and anti-God system. Also there are many young people who are hungry for something more. Let's pray God breathes upon this younger generation. Thousands of children have been conscripted into the United Wa State Army. Pray for expressions of God's justice and peace to be manifest in this unique part of Myanmar.

Written by Marcus Young of Divine Inheritance.

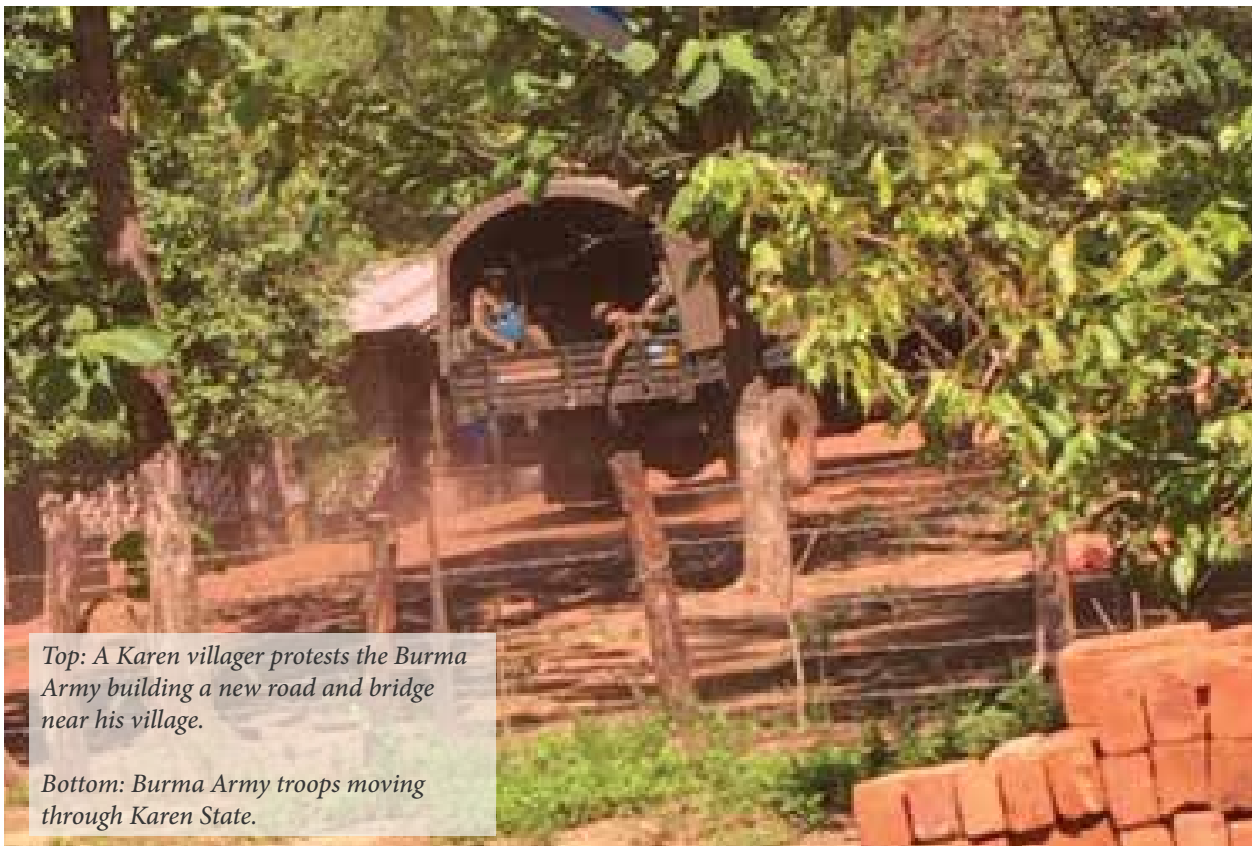
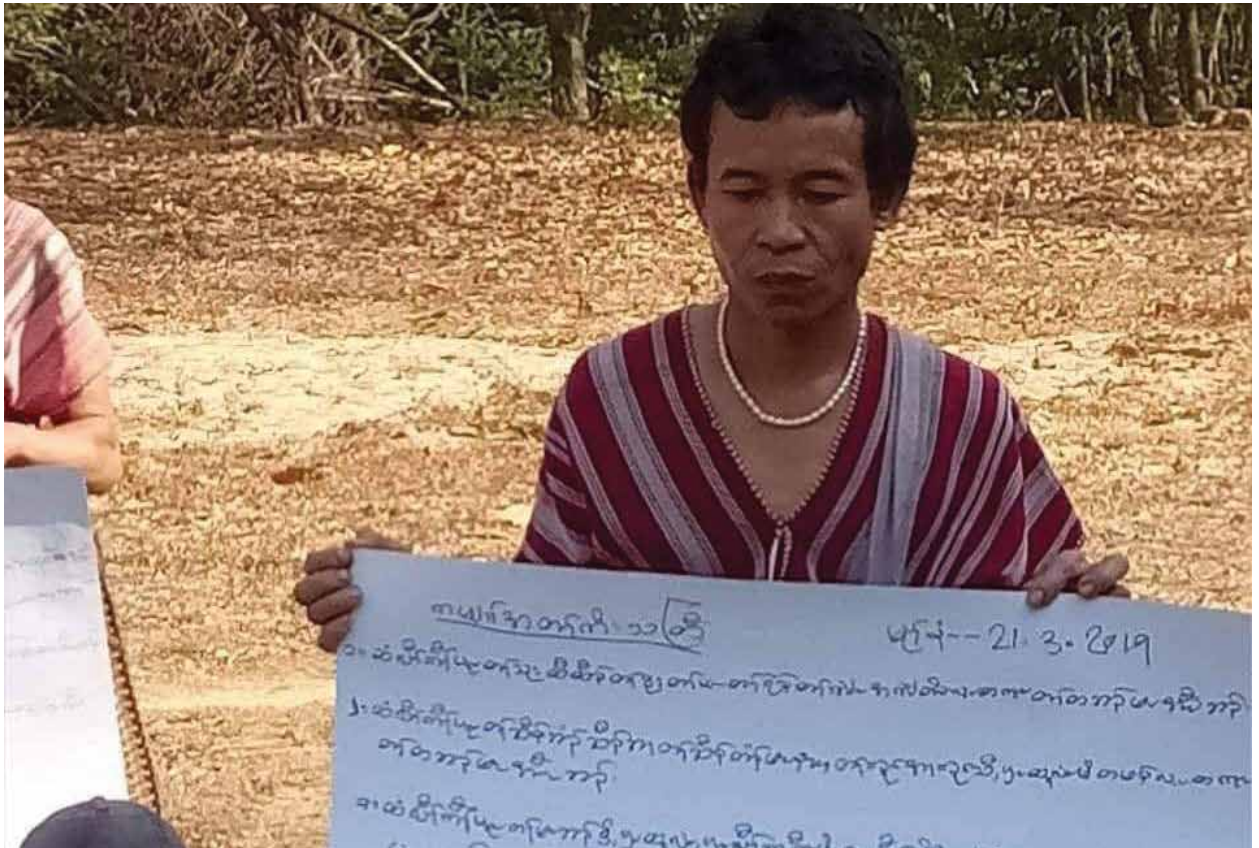


WHERE CHRISTMAS IS BANNED*

In northern Wa State (see map on page six), celebration of Christmas is not allowed and people are having to worship in secret at home. 200 churches have now been shut down in northern Wa State. Amidst churches being closed and worship prohibited, pastors are being arrested, with five pastors currently being held. They've been told they will not be released until they renounce their faith. The main church in Pangsang, the Wa capital, was closed and desecrated. A witch doctor was brought in to throw blood in the church and curse it to drive out the spirit of Jesus. In southern Wa State, which is under different leadership, worship is still allowed and there are over 70 churches there now.

**This update was provided by a Wa pastor whose name is withheld for security purposes.*

Photo: A Wa soldier in Wa State. Photo credit: Bryon Lippincott, sharingdots.org



Top: A Karen villager protests the Burma Army building a new road and bridge near his village.

Bottom: Burma Army troops moving through Karen State.

KAREN STATE

NEW BURMA ARMY CAMPS AND CONTINUING CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS THROUGHOUT 2019

Throughout 2019, locals documented the Burma Army moving supplies and building up army bases in Karen State. In January 2019, locals observed that the Burma Army had doubled troop numbers at their camps. Typically, such action has been a precursor to more fighting.

Multiple skirmishes broke out between Karen soldiers and the Burma Army in 2019. The Burma Army continues to build roads and bridges throughout Karen State without permission, directly violating the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Fighting broke out Feb. 19, 20, and 23 between armed groups as a direct result of the building projects. Villagers have voiced their concerns and opposition to the construction by posting signs and holding protests around the construction areas.

Besides violating the NCA, the ongoing construction by the Burma Army has disrupted the daily lives of villagers. In April 2019, road construction disrupted seven villages in the Muthe area, displacing around 1,000 people into the jungle. The same construction caused water problems for 42 farms in the area. Roads and bridges have destroyed irrigation ditches that the villagers rely on for watering, ploughing, and planting.

The arrival of the Burma Army increases villagers' fears on a regular basis. They're scared to travel and scared to forage in the jungle for food, and scared to farm.

"We dare not work in our farms," said villagers in April 2019. "We're worried for the next year of our food because now the time is close to prepare for our farming."

On March 27, fighting broke out between Karen soldiers and the Burma Army east of Muthe Village after the Burma Army had patrolled beyond their area, almost reaching a Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) outpost. Two Burma Army soldiers died in the clash. The same day, another clash broke out on the border of Mu Traw and Kler Lwe Htoo districts. Three Burma Army soldiers were wounded in the clash.

On April 5, seven civilians, including a 9-year-old and a 3-year-old, were murdered in Win Ye Township, Doo Playa District, by two Burma Army soldiers from Battalion 339. The soldiers had run away from their base and gone to a local house around 3 a.m. to get a motorbike. When the owners wouldn't give the motorbike to the soldiers, a quarrel broke out and ended with the soldiers shooting the motorbike owners and other villagers.

On April 30, Burma Army soldiers shot a villager, Saw Ko Wah Loo, who was looking for his buffalo over 200 meters beyond the car road in the Pa Kaw Ta area. According to ceasefire agreements, Burma Army soldiers are not allowed to patrol beyond 100 meters on either side of car roads in Karen State.

By July 2019, reports showed that five new Burma Army camps had been built in Karen State, with troop and commander movements to match. Civilian homes had been hit with mortars, livestock had been killed, and some villagers had been wounded by the Burma Army. The rest of 2019 continued in a similar pattern with more construction and fighting despite villagers' active but nonviolent push against Burma Army advancement and actions.

VOICES FROM BURMA

AN 18-YEAR-OLD MEDIC FROM KAREN STATE SHARES HER EXPERIENCE GROWING UP IN A CONFLICT ZONE

Hser Nay Paw is an 18-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 mortars at 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 ran slowly with my pack by myself to the Thai side because I was near the Thai-Burma border. There is a Thai flag waving on the Thai side.

I ran to the flag. If you are on a motorbike it takes 30 minutes. It took me two hours. Many other people had to run to the flag, too. Late at night my grandfather arrived. I saw four families on the Thai side that had also run from my village. As soon as my grandfather arrived, we moved to a refugee camp.

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. 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

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 TO HELP.

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 afterwards she died. 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.

Before this we had to hide under the house from mortar shells. Sometimes when we are hiding we see a militia coming into the village. We help them too and let them hide or help in any way possible. Sometimes the militia soldiers stand in front of our hiding place. We tell them to move because we are scared the Burma Army will see the militia soldiers and try to shoot more mortar shells at them and hit me and my family, too. So we tell them to move and go fight somewhere else.

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.

Whenever we hear gunshots, we jump into the hole with rice and everything. No matter where we are if we hear gunshots we have to run and

jump into the hole under our house. Sometimes the Burmese military comes near where I live. They shoot where I live very often. They shoot from the top of the mountain into where I live. They don't come into my village but they shoot from far away. If the situation is serious then we have to run. My grandfather always thinks a lot and listens carefully about whether we should run or not. When the situation is bad, my grandfather will tell me to go to my aunt's village or other villages.

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 to 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.

I want girls to be protected from being raped. Even now when we go to the jungle to get foods and vegetables there are Burmese soldiers in the jungle. They chase after the girls and rape them. I want to be secure enough to freely pick fruits and vegetables.

A few months ago we were followed by a Burmese soldier and we had to run. I was with my two old aunts, we went to the forest to find fruits and we were followed by a soldier. At first we thought, what was that? But then we realized it was the enemy following us. We did not get caught. We ran really fast.

Hser Nay Paw's story and experiences, while unique, are also common throughout Burma's ethnic groups who have lost family, their homes and land, and had to flee because of the Burma Army. For over seventy years, people have been having experiences similar to those shared here, as civil war and oppression continue in Burma.

PROVIDING CARE, GIVING HOPE

A LOOK AT ONE CLINIC FILLING THE HEALTHCARE GAP IN KAREN STATE



Saw Thay Duh Gay arrived at the Jungle School of Medicine-Kawthoolei (JSMK) thinking he was coming to have his leg amputated. Two days earlier, while working on a chainsaw crew, his leg had been broken under a falling tree. It was broken in two places with one bone fragment 'floating.' A large wound over the fracture was too swollen to close (pictured above). Infection was a serious concern. These were prime conditions for amputation and medics from a local clinic referred him out with that prognosis.

However, the JSMK staff, who provide medical care to 12 villages in the area, thought it might be possible to save his leg. In a fully equipped hospital, the surgery would use a fixation device to hold the bones in place while they healed for several months. This wasn't available at JSMK; instead, under anesthesia, the team manually cleaned, trimmed and realigned the bones, thoroughly washed the wound, and started to sew the edges of the wound together.

Over the next week as the swelling improved, the sutures holding the open wound were daily 'cinched up,' bringing the edges of the wound together until it was completely closed over the bone. With antibiotic treatment for infection and complete immobilization of the leg, the patient showed great improvement and amputation seemed no longer necessary. After several weeks at JSMK, Saw Thay Duh Gay walked home.

Saw Thay Duh Gay's story is just one of many in Karen State, where things like remote locations and poverty make for a challenging healthcare situation.

Sometimes, there is no medical care within a reasonable and affordable distance for villagers' daily lives. Sometimes fighting between armed groups or attacks from the Burma Army push villagers deeper into the jungle to hide, far away from medical care. Other times, government healthcare is physically accessible, but high costs and discrimination against ethnic minorities dissuade villagers from seeking care.

This healthcare gap can be found in all the ethnic states where villagers face similar challenges and includes not only acute care needs but public health as well. For example, of the 16 other health facilities in the JSMK area, JSMK is the only one implementing a routine vaccine program. With measles and polio outbreaks in Karen State throughout 2019, the 600 kids from the JSMK vaccine program were the only ones in the area protected from the diseases. Previously, a cholera outbreak in southern Karen State and a measles outbreak in Nagaland claimed many lives and showed just how life-threatening this gap can be.

The exact scope of the problem is difficult to determine, as accurate facts and statistics about healthcare in Burma are challenging to obtain. Most available numbers reflect the population of central Burma and not the ethnic areas, where both outside aid and general access are either tightly controlled or explicitly forbidden by the central government. JSMK is just one clinic working to bridge the healthcare gap in Karen State and, for villagers like Saw Thay Duh Gay, it is one clinic that makes all the difference.

JUSTICE MOVES FORWARD

HOW THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS SEEKING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST BURMA

On 11 Nov. 2019, The Gambia filed a case against Burma in the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ), alleging Burma violated the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which Burma is a signatory to, in its attacks on the Rohingya people. The filing further urged the UN to order measures to "stop Myanmar's genocidal conduct immediately," recognizing the ongoing nature of the Burma Army's aggression.

The ICJ is the international vehicle to arbitrate disputes between nations, as opposed to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is used to file claims against individuals. It is unusual for a claim to be filed with the ICJ by a nation not specifically party to the dispute; however, under the Genocide Convention, signatory nations are allowed to go to any appropriate UN body to request action against a threat of genocide.

The UN Security Council would often be considered the most appropriate body with which to file these sorts of claims; however, it is likely that The Gambia bypassed the Security Council with the assumption that China would veto any significant action against Burma.

The ICJ filing is made possible in part by the work of a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) mandated by the UN Human Rights Council in March 2017. From March 2017 to September 2019, the FFM investigated claims of massive human rights violations by the Burma Army against the Rohingya, Kachin, and Shan populations. The primary focus was on the Rohingya and the FFM found enough evidence to label the military campaign as genocide.

In addition to its findings on attempted genocide against the Rohingya, the FFM recommendations included a call for justice for victims of gender-based violence, as well as the exposure of the strong link between the military and business and calls for targeted sanctions and arms embargoes.

The Gambia is the first nation to act on the official results of the Fact Finding Mission and take legal action. In the filing, Gambia's vice president said, "We are a small country with a big voice on matters of human rights."

In response to the lawsuit, Aung San Suu Kyi, the defacto leader of Burma's central government (though with no power over the military), said she will address the ICJ directly in defense of the military. In central Burma, people have rallied in support of her, denying claims of genocide.

Others support the lawsuit. The Worldwide Karen Community said that they were "greatly heartened by these cases at the ICJ" because "they send a clear signal to Burma Army leadership that the net of justice is closing in, and their days of impunity - for crimes against all the ethnic peoples in Burma - are numbered."

After decades of the Burma Army committing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity against the ethnic nationalities in Burma, this is a small but encouraging step towards justice. The international community is finally listening and picking up tools to help; it is to be hoped that the pursuit of justice will make it out of the courts and onto the ground in Burma.



REMEMBERING EH KLO MOO

A BRIGHT LIGHT FOR THE KAREN PEOPLE

In September 2019, Eh Klo Moo, a Karen leader, passed away during heart surgery. Eh Klo Moo was a humble, brilliant, and kind man who followed Jesus and sacrificed himself for others.

Eh Klo Moo's father, P'Doh Tha Doh Moo, is one of the most outstanding leaders of the Karen National Union and the pro-democratic ethnic forces in Burma. Eh Klo Moo helped his father serve the Karen people and all in need.

He helped build medical clinics inside Burma and wrote and produced intricate and moving guitar pieces. He made the world a more beautiful place through his music, his service, and his love for people.

REMEMBERING ZAU SENG KACHIN MEDIC AND VIDEOGRAPHER



Zau was a follower of Jesus and was always ready to go and help and film wherever attacks were happening. Zau Seng filmed a lot over his 13 years as a Ranger. He filmed Burma Army airstrikes against civilians in Kachin State. He filmed on the streets of Mosul during ISIS's final days there. And he filmed in Syria, showing the world that there was no ceasefire and that civilians were suffering the cost of the fighting.

Zau Seng joined the Free Burma Rangers as a way to stand with the oppressed for justice. He went on to become an instructor for new rangers from all over Burma and went on missions with them, helping people all over Burma and the world. He helped raise the Eubank children and was a friend to all he met.

His videos and photos from Burma to the Middle East have been shown all over the world. Zau Seng helped share the lives of people whose stories would otherwise have been buried and pushed back against those who wanted to silence the weak. He said, "I cannot do much, I can only help a little. But this is what I can do." Zau Seng helped give a voice to the voiceless and he did it with skill, fearlessness, commitment, joy, and love.