

Burma Refugees Commission January - June 2018 Report

Three major areas are mentioned in this report:

1. Interview letters issued to diaspora immigrants by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
2. Military attacks towards the Kachin people in Burma.
3. Ambassador U Aung Lynn visited Mission Center & International Ministries.

Since January of this year, many diaspora individuals particularly the Kachin and Chin people who were resettled from Malaysia between 2009-2011 received letters from USCIS asking for an interview to verify their immigration documents include their identity information. Such letters became great concern due to the nature that they are advised to bring interpreter and/or legal attorney. Local resettlement agencies offered special sessions to help people understand the seriousness of the interview letter that contains interrogation elements. ABHMS connected with Church World Services and was given some guidelines how to response to the interviews and information was shared with the Commission members. There are individuals asked for postponement till they attained the Freedom of Information Act. Those who were interviewed had not heard back from USCIS.

The Kachin communities from Kachin State and the U.S. reported that military attacks are intensified and “out of control” as experienced by Kachin, Rohingya and Karen people. There are thousands flee fresh fighting in Kachin state, human rights violation against internal displaced persons and military using civilians as human shields to protect themselves. Joan Friesen attended the Kachin Baptist Convention in February and reported the tension in Kachin State. The Kachin leaders urged ABC to write letters to U.S. officials and UN to ask for justice. The Refugee Commission will work to schedule visits to the United Nations and the State Department officials to advocate for peace and unity.

Ambassador U Aung Lynn from the Myanmar Embassy in Washington D.C., his wife Daw Kay Thi Kyi Win and first secretary, U Swe Sett visited the Mission Center and International Ministries on May 16, 2018. An open dialogue to discuss ABCUSA’s concerns and thoughts about Myanmar. Both General Secretary Spitzer and Ambassador Lynn highlighted the unique historical ties. American Baptist leaders expressed the common hope of a more peaceful and united Myanmar and advocated for respecting the civil and religious rights of all of Myanmar’s minorities (Christian and Muslim).

Respectfully,
Florence Li
Burma Refugees Commission