

Burma Refugee Commission Report October 25, 2021

The work of the Burma Refugee Commission continues as we work for advocacy for Myanmar. We have been meeting with US government officials as well as with representatives of the United Nations.

Dr. Jeff Woods had convened a meeting with the American Baptist Regional Executive Ministers to encourage the executive ministers to call on their State Senators. Robin Stoops, Debbie and James Kelsey were among those who contacted their Senators. Jeff has written letters to President Biden, Vice President Harris, the United Nations Security Council, and provided sample letters for local advocacy. He had also written a letter of support to the National Unity Government (NUG) and asked the World Council of Churches to circulate a letter worldwide in regards to this.

Since the military coup on February 1<sup>st</sup> and while the military continues to attack civilians and burning villages in Chin, Karen and Kachin States, thousands of ethnic people fled to neighboring countries in Mizoram, India and to the border of Thailand. There were also many thousands who stayed in Burma and became Internally Displaced People as their homes, towns and cities were destroyed.

In the summer, Covid-19 broke out in Myanmar with over 500,000 cases and over 18,000 deaths. Many of the diaspora groups galvanized to raise fund for humanitarian aid. We are in contact with representatives of the Karen, Kachin and Chin in Burma as well as with our partner, the Myanmar Baptist Convention. With funds raised through the OGHS Myanmar Relief Project and through the generosity of those attending the Biennial Mission Summit, International Ministries has been able to assist with COVID relief for all of these groups as well as with humanitarian relief with those who are not working because of their participation in the civil disobedience movement (CDM).

- July 12-14, Florence and Leslie attended the International Religious Freedom Conference in Washington D.C.
- August 7 - Florence joined the Rally "Save Myanmar March- Recognize the National Unity Government of Myanmar" at Washington D.C.
- August 13, Florence and Leslie spoke at the Kachin Alliance annual meeting in Bristol, PA
- August 18<sup>th</sup>, several members of the BRC met with Thomas Andrews, United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in Myanmar.
- The BRC met with the Chin/Falam grass-root movement leaders, Van Kio and Peter Thawngmung who were organizing a nationwide movement for people to sign on a letter to support the Burma Bill and contact their Senators.
- The Chin Baptist Churches USA advocacy member, Zo Tum Mung meets with BRC members and gives frequent updates us about the Burma Bill.

The BRC met with representatives of the Myanmar Council of Churches. We are in the process of working with the World Council of Churches to issue a special statement in support of democracy in Myanmar which we hope will have signatories from many faith-based organizations in advance of the United Nations Security Council meeting in November. Our work with the young adult leaders and Gen Z of the US diaspora continues as we try to encourage them in their own work and advocacy. Terence Htoo is one of the leaders in the US of a worldwide network working for Myanmar.

Meetings have been held with top leadership of the rightfully elected Burma government and Baptist leaders in Myanmar, as well as the Burmese representative to the UN. These meetings were organized to encourage the leaders as well as to provide needed information for the BRC. The monthly “Pray for Burma” online prayer meeting continues the first Monday of each month and Burma Refugee Commission meetings continue nearly monthly as well.

Submitted by Leslie Turley and Florence Li