

Burma Refugee Commission Report for BGM June 2022

Since the military coup occurred in Burma on February 1, 2021, Burma Refugee Commission collaborated with global and national advocacy efforts with a multitude of diaspora groups pursuing a letter campaign on the Burma Act and initiated meetings with Senators who have an influence on the Burma Act and sit on the Foreign Policy Committee.

A subcommittee called Burma Advocacy Group (BAG) was formed and spearheaded by Van Kio of the U.S. Chin Coalition to launch the letter campaign. Over 20,000 signatures were collected, and the signing continues to be open. In addition, seven videos were made in different languages targeted at respective ethnic groups. The campaign letter and the videos are uploaded on BRC webpage on ABC website.

Van also initiated several meetings with the Senators (Republicans) in Indiana and Kentucky. Henry Lyann of the Peace & Justice Coalition of the Chin Baptist Churches of USA worked collaboratively with Van Kio and initiated meetings with the Senators in Florida, Kentucky, and Utah. A delegation of 4 people led by Henry just met with Senator McConnell on May 26, 2022. They handed Senator McConnell a letter written by Rev. Dr. Jeff Woods.

Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, executive minister of ABC of Nebraska went with a Burmese delegation to meet with his State Senators in Washington D.C. in April. He also joined another delegation in Kansas led by Zo Tum Hmung of the Chin Association of Maryland, and a community activist, to meet with Ambassador Sam Brownback, former Ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom.

BRC had several Zoom calls with leaders from the National Unity Government (NUG) in Burma. Dr. Jeff Woods facilitated one on April 15 with the Vice-President of NUG, Duwa Lashi La and the Prime Minister of the National Unity Government, Mahn Win Khaing Than. The purpose of the meeting is to share updates regarding the situation in Myanmar and explore new avenues of supporting the efforts for peace and humanitarian aid in Myanmar.

BRC also had a Zoom meeting facilitated by Dr. Roy Medley with the U.S. State Department, Bureau of Population, Refugee & Migration (PRM), USAID, and Bureau of Humanitarian Relief on April 21. The main conversation was on USAID grant funding and proposals, and opportunities on how ABC/BRC might leverage some of those fundings to assist the people in Burma. The funding process and management of USAID grants is a complex approach in which BRC has no capacity to take on huge public grants. Yet, BRC members are exploring NGOs and INGOs in Burma, Thailand, and elsewhere where USAID and State Department funding is allocated, and possibilities to leverage on region partners.

Dr. Jeff Wood shared the recent BGM Task Force/Commission Grants and BRC will look into it.

Below are the key leaders who involve in BAG and who have taken key roles to advocate for their people in Burma. As the diaspora leaders are becoming more actively involved, the list is an important record and is intentional to be shared here.

List of Burma Advocacy Group Members (BAG):

Burma Bill Campaign – Van Kio

Burma Bill Advocate – Henry Lyann

Burmese Baptist Churches USA – Maung Maung Htwe/Myo Maw

Chin Baptist Churches USA – Duh Kam

Chin Baptist Association of North America – Biak Lian Thang/Sanno Thuan

Chin Coalition of America – Stephen Kio

Chin Association of Maryland – Zo Tum Hmung

Karen Baptist Churches USA – Saw Ler Htoo

Kachin Baptist Churches USA – Ah Le Laking

Kachin American Baptist Association – Tu Lum Lamung

Kachin Alliance – Gum Sam Nsang

US Campaign for Burma – Myra Dahgaypaw

Young people Movement – Jan Jan Maran

Young People Movement – Terrance Htoo

Zotung Baptist Association – Mang Hau

REMC – Joan Friesen/Robin Stoops

ABHMS – Florence Li

IM – Leslie Turley

OGS – Jeff Woods; Roy Medley (G.S. Emeritus)

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