



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

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*Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer  
General Secretary*

**A Declaration of Concern  
August 30, 2019**

The American Baptist Churches USA expresses our ongoing concern for the safety of the Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson, President of the Kachin Baptist Convention of Myanmar who has been summoned to appear in court on September 9, 2019 regarding a lawsuit instigated by Lt. Col. Than Htike of the Northern Command.

The lawsuit appears to be in response to the appearance of Dr. Samson at the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom hosted by United States Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. Dr. Samson was one of those present during President Trump's press conference highlighting those who have endured religious persecution.

The Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson, former General Secretary and currently President of the Kachin Baptist Convention, has long been a proponent of religious tolerance and equitable justice for all people of Burma/Myanmar. He has also been a courageous critic of those policies within his country that has led to over 100,000 Kachins being driven from their homes by military conflict, forcing them to become Internally Displaced Persons. He has consistently requested that elements of the military responsible for the destruction of over 200 churches in the Kachin State alone and who have used rape as a weapon of war and terror be brought to justice.

The American Baptist Churches USA urges that the charges be dropped against Dr. Samson and asks the civilian government leaders of Myanmar and the military to support the democratic rights of Dr. Samson and all citizens of Myanmar to the fundamental right of peaceful free speech even when it is critical of the conditions within Myanmar.

The American Baptist Churches USA pledges our on-going prayers for Dr. Samson and our continued vigilance regarding his security.

*Composed by the American Baptist Churches USA Burma Refugee Commission.*