



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

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

ABCUSA General Secretary Urges Prayers on September 8, 2019 for Kachin Baptist Leader and Members

September 4, 2019

Dear American Baptists,

On behalf of the ABCUSA Burma Refugee Commission, I am writing to all our American Baptist churches, ministries and leaders, to share our deep concern for the safety and wellbeing of the Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson, president of the Kachin Baptist Convention of Myanmar. Dr. Samson has been summoned to appear in court on September 9, 2019 regarding a lawsuit instigated by Lt. Col. Than Htike of the Northern Command of Myanmar's military. Kachin Baptists have been subject to attack for many years.

The lawsuit appears to be in response to the appearance of Dr. Samson at the second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom hosted by US 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.

Accordingly, I am asking *all American Baptist churches to include a special time of prayer during your worship services on Sunday, September 8*, to intercede for Dr. Samson and our Kachin sisters and brothers.

In the book of Acts, when Peter and John were detained and threatened by authorities in Jerusalem, the church received their news and "raised their voices together in prayer to God." In part, here's what they prayed: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:24; 29-30).

Now, it is our turn – indeed, our responsibility – to pray with faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit!

[See <https://www.abc-usa.org/2019/08/burma-refugee-commission-releases-declaration-of-concern-for-safety-of-president-of-the-kachin-baptist-convention-of-myanmar/>]

Dr. Hkalam Samson, as former General Secretary and currently President of the Kachin Baptist Convention, has exercised his pastoral concern as the shepherd of his flock in speaking out against unjust policies, which have led to over 100,000 Kachins being driven from their homes by military conflict, forcing them to become Internally Displaced Persons. Dr. Samson is one of the few religious leaders in Burma, Christian or otherwise, to publicly advocate tolerance and equitable justice for all religions within Myanmar.

The Burma Refugee Commission and I are urging that the charges be dropped against Dr. Samson through communication with US government diplomats, United Nations officials, and Myanmar civilian government representatives. Further, we are requesting that the civilian

government leaders of Myanmar and the military support the democratic rights of Dr. Samson, Kachin Baptists, and all citizens of Myanmar, which includes the fundamental right of peaceful free speech within Myanmar.

If the military insists on pursuing these charges against Dr. Samson or harming another Kachin Baptist leader, Rev. Gam Seng (who we understand has been threatened should he return to his home village), Myanmar will continue to be a pariah among the nations who cherish freedom, democracy and basic human rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lee B. Spitzer".

Rev. Dr. Lee B. Spitzer
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA