



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

*Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods
Interim General Secretary*

September 21, 2021

Calling for the Release of Pastor Rev. Thian Lian Sang and Justice for Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum

The American Baptist Churches USA, Office of the General Secretary, which serves over 5,000 congregations and 1.3 million members in the U.S, including 80,000 members of the Burma Diaspora, call for the immediate release of Rev. Thian Lian Sang.

Rev. Thian Lian Sang is pastor of Falam Baptist Church in Shwe Mandalay. On September 16, 2021, Rev. Sang was arrested by armed men in plainclothes in front of his house between 40th and 41st streets. Also present at the time of his arrest were three military vehicles and approximately 20 armed men.

Following his arrest, members of the State Administration Council (SAC) entered Rev. Sang's home. They confiscated 400,000 kyats which the family had received for the funeral of Rev. Sang's father that had been held on August 25, 2021. These members of the SAC also confiscated five cellphones, including the phones of Rev. Sang's wife and mother.

At the time of his arrest, Rev. Sang was continuing to recover from COVID-19, and the family is gravely concerned for his health and wellbeing. The location of Rev. Sang's imprisonment remains unknown.

Rev. Sang's arrest is compounded by additional troubling reports of human rights violations and the intentional targeting of religious leaders in Chin State. On September 18, over 19 houses were burned down by military forces. Baptist Pastor Rev. Cung Biak Hum attempted to help as one of the houses belonged to a member of his church. Instead, upon his arrival on the scene, he was shot and killed by military soldiers—making him the first Baptist minister to die due to the ongoing conflicts. The military soldiers also stole his cellphone, watch, and cut off his finger in order to steal his wedding ring.

We call for the immediate release of Rev. Thian Lian Sang. We also call for those who killed Rev. Cung Biak Hum to be held legally responsible, and we ask for restoration of the homes burned by the military.

With 1.7 million Baptists in Myanmar who have a continuous history of over 200 years in the country, the Myanmar Baptist family remains a key part of both Myanmar and our ABCUSA missionary partnership. While addressing these immediate injustices, we further call upon the military junta to do all that it can to restore religious freedom, human rights, and peace through dialogue across Chin State and Myanmar as a whole.

Sincerely,

Dr. C. Jeff Woods
Interim General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA