



INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN

response

TELEPHONE 604 504 4176

CELL 604 836 4546

TOLL-FREE 1 866 896 5599

CANADA (Head Office)

ICR, P.O. Box 10003

Mt. Lehmann Center P.O.

Abbotsford, B.C. V4X 2R5

USA

P.O. Box 759

Sumas, WA 98295-0759

MYANMAR

COUNTRY PROFILE



AREA: 667,500 sq km
POPULATION: 48.1 million
CAPITAL: Naypyadaw
ETHNICITY: Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, Other 5%
RELIGION: Buddhist 88%
Christian 6.5%
Muslim 4%

BACKGROUND

Following Japanese occupation in World War II, Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948. In 1962, the army overthrew the elected government and established an iron-fisted rule that was opposed to democratic movements. In 1988, about 3,000 pro-democratic demonstrators were killed. 1990 saw the first democratic elections in three decades. The opposition party won 85% of the seats, but the military regime refused to hand over power. The secretive military junta, the State Peace and Development Council, has turned Myanmar into a prison, with widespread human rights abuses and killings, forced labour, rape and imprisonment as tools of repression. Most of the democratic leaders have been arrested, exiled or killed. The country remains firmly under the power of the military, which strongly opposes democratic reform.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Church in Myanmar has endured 30 years of isolation. In 1966, the military regime expelled all Protestant and most Catholic missions. Praise God for foundations laid by such missionaries as Adoniram Judson, the famous American Baptist missionary, and those who followed – for on these foundations the Church has grown and become an effective missionary sending body.

Buddhism is no longer the official state religion, but the military regime actively promotes it. Theoretically, there is freedom of religion, but because Christianity is strong among the ethnic minorities there is much discrimination against Christians. There have been many cases of forced conversions to Buddhism and violence against rural Christians.



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WWW.CHRISTIANRESPONSE.ORG

MYANMAR

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (CONTINUE)

Christian believers still face church closures, major difficulties in registration, prohibition of construction of church buildings, and discrimination in the workplace. In an act of opposition to the presence of Christianity in Myanmar, government forces defaced and then destroyed a 17-metre concrete cross on a hilltop in southern Myanmar. There had been a cross at that location for two decades as a testimony to local Christians' faith in Christ. Since the mid-1990s, the government forces have destroyed at least half a dozen crosses and several churches in southern Myanmar. Many of these have been replaced with Buddhist pagodas. There have been many cases of Christians being forced to build Buddhist temples and to renounce their faith.

Despite the isolation and repression of Christians, there has been considerable growth among some ethnic minorities and a great interest in the gospel among Buddhist monks. There have been examples of outstanding miracles leading to many conversions. The military regime is seeking to marginalize and even eliminate the Church, yet growth continues. Christianity is deeply-rooted and has grown stronger in adversity. Many Christians are well-educated and are in positions of responsibility all over the country.

Help to bring about lasting change in Myanmar

- \$ 60 covers the cost for one person to attend an equipping week for church planters.
- \$ 250 enables the support of a Burmese refugee family in Thailand.

Current Projects

- Support of church planting in Myanmar.
- Rebuilding after the destruction caused by cyclone "Nargis".
- Support of Burmese refugees in the border area of Thailand.
- Education for Burmese refugee children.
- Evangelism among Burmese refugees in Thailand.



How will you respond?

www.christianresponse.org



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