

August 30, 2019

World Kachin Congress: Burma Army must drop unfounded charges against Reverend Dr. Hkalam Samson

The World Kachin Congress strongly condemns the filing of charges by Burma Army Northern Region Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Than Htike against Reverend Dr. Samson, accusing him of “knowingly giving false information” to US President Donald Trump, at the White House, on July 18, 2019. On that day, Reverend Dr. Samson informed President Trump that Christians in Burma were being oppressed and tortured by the Burma Army, and that they were being deprived of religious freedom.

Since 2011, over 100,000 Kachin civilians – almost all Christian -- have been forcibly displaced, hundreds tortured and killed, 199 churches in Kachin areas destroyed, and Christian pastors arrested, tortured and killed all by the hand of Burma Army. During their detainment and torture some Kachins have been forced to stand in a crucifix position and mocked for their faith. Kachin women have been tortured, gang-raped and killed in church buildings and compounds. Church services have been blocked and construction of new churches have been forbidden in some areas.

The reverend’s testimony to President Trump was thus completely truthful and is endorsed by Kachins worldwide. There is no basis at all for criminal charges to be brought against him.

In his remarks, Reverend Dr. Samson also thanked President Trump for the sanctions imposed the day before – on Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing and three other senior Burma Army officers. There is no doubt that General Min Aung Hlaing is behind these groundless charges against Reverend Dr. Samson. On August 26, 2019, the day before the charges were filed, General Min Aung Hlaing made a public donation to Christians and Muslims in Pinyinana, clearly a stage-managed attempt to fabricate a facade that the Burma Army respects religious freedom – perhaps in preparation for filing charges against Reverend Dr. Samson.

The World Kachin Congress therefore urges the following:

To the Burma Army:

- To immediately drop all charges against Reverend Dr. Samson
- To stop instigating undue tension with ethnic minority communities by persecuting human rights defenders.
- To invite the Independent Impartial International Monitoring team to validate the Army’s claim of no religious oppression in Burma.

To the NLD government:

- To support and protect people who are working for peace, justice, and ethnic equality.
- To take immediate action to bring the Burma Army under civilian control.

To the international community:

- To pressure the Burmese government to hold the Burmese military accountable for crimes against humanity and genocide.
- To impose an arms embargo on Burma.
- To impose targeted sanctions against all military businesses in Burma.

Media Contacts:

Mr. Nsang Gum San (USA)	Phone: +1 443 415 8683
Mr. Zauring Hpunggan (New Zealand)	Phone: +64 021 183 1134
Mr. Myitung Naw Ja (Czech Republic)	Phone: +420 604 220 209
Mr. John La Seng (Canada)	Phone: +1 416 910 8475