



NETWORKING THE BAPTIST FAMILY TO IMPACT THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

December 8, 2022

We are writing on behalf of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), a Christian Worldwide Communion that draws upon four hundred years of shared Baptist history in 128 countries and territories representing 176,000 churches and 51 million Baptists as well as the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF), one of the six regions of the BWA. We learned with great concern about the arrest of Rev. Dr. Hkalam Samson, a past president and former General Secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention, part of one of the 246 member bodies of the APBF and BWA. We condemn his arrest and call for his immediate release and restoration of his rights to free and full travel and personal wellbeing.

Dr. Samson has been a leading religious figure in Myanmar and relentlessly advanced religious freedom and human rights for people of all faith and all citizens of Myanmar. He has played a key role in the broader global Christian community including active participation in the Baptist World Alliance, the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation, and other multilateral Christian organizations such as the World Council of Churches. For many years, Dr. Samson has been at the forefront of delivering humanitarian aid to all people with need across Kachin State.

The unjust arrest of Dr. Samson, his detention in an unknown location, and the denial of his rights as a citizen both prior to his arrest and since his arrest jeopardize his life and are of grave concern. We call for his immediate release and full restoration of rights including free and unencumbered travel.

At a time when faith leaders can play an indispensable role in building just and lasting peace, far too many individuals continue to be imprisoned and communities of faith targeted and destroyed. We continue to echo a call for the military and government to honor the theological convictions of all people of all faiths, including that of the Baptists, and to work together with communities of faith in the establishment of the peace for which they long.

In July 2022 the BWA General Council issued a resolution about the injustices that have occurred in Myanmar since February 2021 as a continued call for peace that reads in part, "[The BWA General Council] regrets that under the military rule, civil and religious freedoms have been dismantled. The Tatmadaw has furthermore waged a campaign of terror and violence, particularly against minority religions, including Christians, the great majority of whom are Baptists. Since the coup, the military has terrorized communities in Kachin, Karen, Kayah State, Chin State, and Sagaing Region, by burning villages, destroying churches, and detaining pastors and religious leaders. [BWA] grieves that this violence displaced tens of thousands of people, and that the Tatmadaw has also disrupted humanitarian aid efforts to suffering people... The BWA calls for the establishment of a true democracy that respects the rights of religious and ethnic minorities."

The BWA stands ready to work together with you in the release of Dr. Samson and in the further establishment of just and lasting peace in Myanmar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elijah M. Brown".

Rev. Elijah M. Brown, PhD
General Secretary and CEO, Baptist World Alliance

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vesekhoyi Tetseo".

Rev. Vesekhoyi Tetseo
General Secretary, Asia Pacific Baptist Federation