



# Chin Human Rights Organization

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**PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release**

**Burma:**

## **Religious freedom violations continue for Chin Christians**

**[Rangoon, Burma]** A new briefing paper published today by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) highlighted violations of religious freedom for Chin Christians in Burma throughout 2013, and called on the government to put the issue at the top of its reforms agenda for 2014.

The paper draws attention to ongoing State spending on Buddhist infrastructure, while restrictions remain in place on building Christian infrastructure. It also highlights threats, intimidation, and discriminatory practices against Chin Christians by local government officials.

Salai Bawi Pi, Country Coordinator at CHRO said, “The main problem is that the government treats Buddhism as the de-facto State religion in the country. That seriously undermines religious freedom for Chin Christians.”

The briefing highlights how several events to honour visits to Chin State by high-ranking government officials like President Thein Sein and Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann were organized on Sunday mornings, at the same time as local church services. Such events require mandatory attendance by civil servants. According to CHRO, this disregard for local custom in predominantly Christian Chin State continues a decades-old pattern and violates the right to assemble for religious worship.

Salai Bawi Pi continued, “This sends the wrong message. Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. The government has promised to relax Ministry of Religious Affairs’ regulations on securing permission to build and renovate churches, but there is little evidence of that at the Chin State level. We even saw local government involvement in threats to burn down a Chin Christian village late last year.”

CHRO’s briefing also highlights positive efforts by Chin stakeholders to challenge the government on the issue of religious freedom, including at the Chin National Conference held in Hakha from 12-15 November last year. A panel discussion on freedom of religion belief drew up twelve recommendations to take forward with the authorities. Echoing those recommendations, CHRO called on the government to guarantee freedom of religious worship and assembly for all religions, and to

replace the Ministry of Religious Affairs with an independent and impartial religious affairs commission with a mandate to address issues of religious discrimination.

“Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. We urge the government to make real, tangible progress on protecting that right in 2014, by taking forward the Chin National Conference recommendations,” said Salai Bawi Pi.

-ENDS-

**Media interviews:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. The briefing paper is available to download at [www.chro.ca](http://www.chro.ca)
2. According to government statistics from 2010 obtained by CHRO and published in a September 2012 CHRO report *“Threats to Our Existence”: Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma*, 87 percent of people in Chin State are Christian. The report is available to download at [www.chro.ca](http://www.chro.ca)
3. The 12 recommendations drawn up by the panel on freedom of religion or belief at the Chin National Conference in Hakha from 12-15 November in full are:
  1. Strongly calls on the concerned authorities to restore all Christians crosses that were destroyed under various pretexts
  2. To grant land ownership rights for religious purposes, and to allow faith-based civil society organizations to freely form, function and to entitle them to receive funding from both domestic and international donors, as well as to grant them legal status without unnecessary bureaucratic red tape
  3. Calls for the immediate recognition of the validity of identity cards issued by Christian religious organizations, which identify the bearer as a Christian religious worker
  4. Calls for the removal of all references to religious teachings from the education curricula in the government / public school system
  5. Calls for the abolition of Na Ta La (Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training) schools and to institute a single education system under the Ministry of Education where all students are treated equally and without discrimination on the basis of religious and ethnic identity
  6. To give equal broadcast time for all religions in State broadcast media such as TV and Radio
  7. Calls for the replacement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs with an independent and impartial religious affairs commission in order to eliminate all kinds of religious discrimination in the Union of Myanmar
  8. To review and appropriately revise/remove provisions in the 2008 Constitution which provide for religious discrimination

9. To enact new legislation protecting the rights of religious minorities
  10. Calls for the State to maintain a neutral role in all matters relating to religion
  11. To eliminate the identification of a person's religious affiliation on the National Registration Card (NRC), and for the Chin, to identify any Chin person only as a Chin on the NRC
  12. To guarantee freedom of religious worship, assembly and proselytizing
4. Like the Kachin languages, Chin languages use Roman script. When Chin names are transliterated from Burmese into English, the spelling is changed significantly and this sometimes renders Chin names unrecognizable. The following is a list of names and place names, correctly spelled in Roman script, for use in English language articles:

### Chin State Ministers

No	Name	Position	Ministry
1	U Hung Ngai	Chief Minister	
2	U Hau Khen Kham	Speaker	
3	U Ohn Lwin	Deputy Speaker	
4	Col Zaw Min Oo	Minister	Ministry of Security and Border Affairs
5	U Nang Za Mung	Minister	Ministry of Finance and Revenue
6	U Van Thawng	Minister	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding
7	U Kyaw Nyein	Minister	Ministry of Forestry and Mines
8	U Ram Mang	Minister	Ministry of Planning and Economics
9	Ngun San Aung	Minister	Ministry for Transport
10	U Neng Naing	Minister	Ministry of Development Affairs
11	Dr. Ba Maung	Minister	Ministry of Social Affairs
12	Cin Lian Pau	Minister	Ministry of Electric and Industry

### Chin MPs

Township	Hluttaw	Name	Party
Hakha	Pyithu	Pu Ngun Mawng	CNP
	Amyotha	Pu Steven Tha Bik	CNP
	Pyine 1	Pu Ram Mang	CNP
	Pyine 2	Pu Chan Pum	CNP
Thantlang	Pyithu	Pi Za Tlem	CNP
	Amyotha	Pu Paul Thang Thai	CNP
	Pyine 1	Pu Lal Mawng Cung	CNP
	Pyine 2	Pu Robin	CNP

<b>Falam</b>	Pyithu	Pu Khuang Ling	CPP
	Amyotha 1	Pu Con Kheng	CPP
	Amyotha 2	Pu Zung Hlei Thang	CPP
	Pyine 1	Pu Nah Thang	CPP
	Pyine 2	Pu No Sum	CPP
<b>Tedim</b>	Pyithu	Pu Pum Khan En	USDP
	Amyotha 1	Pu Kham Suan Mung	USDP
	Amyotha 2	Pu Suan Do Cin	USDP
	Pyine 1	Pu Nang Za Mung	USDP
	Pyine 2	Pu Zam Cin Pau (Zozam)	CNP
<b>Tonzang</b>	Pyithu	Pu Hau Khan Mang	USDP
	Amyotha	Pu Neng Khen Pau	USDP
	Pyine 1	Pu Cin Lian Pau	USDP
	Pyine 2	Pu Hau Khen Kham	USDP
<b>Matupi</b>	Pyithu	Dr. Ro Uk	USDP
	Amyotha	Paw Lian Lwin	CPP
	Pyine 1	Pu Ohn Lwin	USDP
	Pyine 2	Pu Van Cin	ENDP
<b>Mindat</b>	Pyithu	Pu Thang Ling	USDP
	Amyotha	Pu Ha Shing Bwe	USDP
	Pyine 1	Pu Ning Naing	USDP
	Pyine 2	Pu Hung Ngai	USDP
<b>Kanpetlet</b>	Pyithu	Thura Aung Ko	USDP
	Amyotha	Pu Ma Na Naing	USDP
	Pyine 1	Pu Kui Thang	USDP
	Pyine 2	Pu Ki Thang Lum	CPP
<b>Paletwa</b>	Pyithu	Pu Paih Lin	CPP
	Amyotha 1	Pu Hoih Zing	CPP
	Amyotha 2	Salai Khuai Zing	USDP
	Pyine 1	Pu Kyaw Nyein	CPP
	Pyine 2	Pu Nang Saih	CPP