



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Myanmar

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 54,311,000

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 8% – **Evangelical Witness: 4%**

Buddhist: 78%

Christians in Myanmar Braces for Post-Military-Coup Policies

March 16, 2021 by Linda Lowry in Asia, Open Doors

"There is no telling how long the crisis will last."

Since February 1, when a military coup began with the arrest of civilian government officials, a reported total of more than 100 people have now died at the hands of the country's military in deadly protests; hundreds have been arrested in night raids. At least 38 civilians were killed March 3 and last weekend the country saw its bloodiest days since the military takeover with at least 51 civilian protesters killed by security forces. The military has also changed Myanmar's penal code, giving them the ability to arrest people without warrants and throw people in prison for 20 years if it's found they are acting against the State.

Partners of Open Doors have reported that protests are increasing, and the military is

brutally cracking down on the protestors using force, teargas, rubber bullets and live rounds. Many of the protestors are protesting out of a collective memory of the history of Myanmar-the country (No. 18 on the 2021 World Watch List) was ruled by a military junta from 1962 until 2011..

Brother Lwin, one of Open Door's on-the-ground partners, describes the political and economic situation as "very unstable and volatile right now."

With the growing violence, believers continue to be caught in between the military and civic protesters. "We are concerned for their safety," says Open Doors communications director for Asia, Jan Vermeer.

Because Myanmar's military supports Buddhism as the one and only religion in the country, Christians in the country are fearful. Weeks after the coup, Buddhist hardliner group Ma Ba Tha expressed its support for the military government.

"There's a very strong Buddhist nationalism [movement in Myanmar]," Brother Lwin explains. "The military is also very much a part of that. They are there to protect Buddhism in every area. If you look at the military and the Buddhist leaders from the believers' side, they are no different from the government; they are one."

Church in the time of military takeover

Min Naing, another Open Doors partner, shares that since the coup, many people could not participate in online worship. "People were disturbed by the screams and protests of the arrests," he says. "I am also disturbed because I see with my eyes that people are being arrested."

Local partner Daisy tells us that while many churches in major cities like Yangon and Mandalay have temporarily stopped all physical and online meetings, services continue in the remote areas of the Naga Hills.

"Churches in Kayah State have stopped meeting for fellowship at night because of curfew restrictions," she says. "Since the military coup, the church has closed their children's fellowship, as naturally, children weren't allowed to go outside."

Getting information to others is becoming more difficult, she says, adding that pastors are struggling to inform and reach out to their church. In many of the same ways, the coup is creating the same economic and food challenges for pastors and already-marginalized believers as the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Now, as the believers are staying home, people don't have work, businessmen are also