



TAKE ACTION GUIDE

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP **IN BURMA**

UUSC partners with more than twenty grassroots organizations to support democracy, international justice, and accountability in Burma. We collaborate with members of directly impacted communities who are advancing their self-determination and human rights in the face of extreme violence by the Burmese military.



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

UUSC is one of the few international agencies providing funding directly to civil society organizations on the ground in Burma. Help us by getting involved individually or with your congregation!



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OUR RESPONSE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many people live in Burma and where is it located?

Burma is a Southeast Asian nation bordered by Bangladesh and India to the west, China to the north, Laos to the east, and Thailand to the south. As of 2021, the population is 53.8 million people.

Is it Burma or Myanmar?

The past military regime changed the country name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989, after brutally suppressing a pro-democracy movement. While the country is known as “Myanmar” around much of the world and is recognized as such by the UN, many of its citizens — as well as democratic forces including the U.S. — do

not endorse the legitimacy of the military-imposed name due to lack of input and consent by its people, and officially refer to the country as “Burma.”

What happened to the democratically elected government?

On February 1, 2021, the Burmese military attempted a coup d’état against the country’s democratically elected government, arbitrarily detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders. Following the attempted coup, those who escaped detention established the shadow “National Unity Government” while in exile, launching a country-wide movement to resist the junta that continues to this day.

CONTEXT

Beginning in 2016, the military junta perpetrated state-sanctioned murder, rape, and torture of the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority from Rakhine State in western Burma. The genocide killed over 9,000 people and forced more than one million to flee the country — most of whom are still living in the world’s largest refugee camp in Bangladesh to this day.

Simultaneously, ethnic minorities across Burma are experiencing some of the harshest military brutality due to the ongoing attempted coup, facing almost daily airstrikes, mortar shelling, and landmines. The country continues to experience inadequate humanitarian aid distribution and a severe lack of international support for resistance against the military junta.

UUSC is helping our partners pursue their vision for an inclusive, democratic, and peaceful Burma. Our work in the region includes:

- Delivering cross-border humanitarian aid to address basic needs at internally displaced peoples’ camps.
- Providing healthcare, maternity care, and psychosocial support for women and children.
- Facilitating youth trainings around peace building, gender-based violence prevention, and community leadership development.
- Distributing school supplies and stipends for teachers working in camps with children whose education was eliminated due to military violence.
- Promoting feminist leadership to end oppression against women and girls.
- Running a “scholars at risk” program to support fellowships and scholarships for Burmese academics who are in danger or unable to continue their work in Burma.
- Engaging in regional and international advocacy to pass critical legislation and increase sanctions on the military and military-controlled enterprises.
- Conducting and releasing collaborative research reports that document human rights abuses and mass atrocities by the military junta.

Camp leaders in Daw Nu Ku refugee camp, Karenni State.



Nearly a million refugees from Burma reside in Bangladesh camps.



UUSC-BURMA TIMELINE

- 1995** UUSC begins support in Burma, rooted in empowering local activists and communities after brutal military attacks on a pro-democracy movement in 1989.
- EARLY 2000s** UUSC's partnerships promote women's leadership and mobilization among refugee populations at the Thai-Burma border.
- MID-2000s** In response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, and Cyclone Nargis in 2008, UUSC expands its partnerships to provide disaster relief.
- 2012** Following Burma's state-sanctioned "ethnic cleansing," UUSC and partners deliver emergency aid, document abuses, and foster peace building between persecuted minorities.
- EARLY 2017** UUSC testifies before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission regarding atrocity and war crimes against the Rohingya, prompting the co-chairs to send a letter to the Secretary of State urging support for a Commission of Inquiry.
- LATE 2017** The Burmese military perpetrates sexual violence, burnings, drownings, torture, and murder of the Rohingya Muslim minority. UUSC backs the peacebuilding movement, supporting partners and allies to deliver critical emergency aid.
- 2018** After a year and a half of campaigning by advocates including UUSC, the UN Human Rights Council releases the results of a fact-finding mission that documents human rights violations and assesses alleged crimes by the Burmese military.
- 2021** The military launches an attempted coup against the country's elected government, detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratically elected leaders. UUSC's partners and allies are a part of launching a nationwide pro-democracy revolution.
- EARLY 2022** The U.S. government issues a formal determination that the Burmese military committed genocide against the Rohingya, agreeing with the position put forward by UUSC, our partners, and members.
- LATE 2022** The BURMA Act is passed, the product of years of advocacy by Burmese diaspora and activist coalitions, including UUSC. The act authorizes humanitarian assistance, supports civil society, and imposes sanctions on the military.
- 2023** A joint report by UUSC's partners, "How can we survive in the future?" is released, documenting the multiple atrocities and crimes committed against civilians and calling for action by the international community.



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