

News and Current Events :: Burma to become a Buddhist-only nation

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Burma to become a Buddhist-only nation

By Katey Hearth

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As reported by The Irrawaddy, Upper House parliamentarians approved two measures last week targeting religious converts and immigrants. Lawmakers supported the Religious Conversion Bill, which requires people converting to another religion to jump through a series of administrative hoops.

“The government is saying, ‘you know, you’ve got to apply and get approval from 11-person committee whether you can make that decision or not,’” says Amie Cotton, referring to people who want to follow Christ.

“They would have to provide an extensive list of personal information, answer questions, and wait 90 days for approval.”

Parliamentarians also supported a Population bill that would give state governments the power to limit birthrates of certain populations.

“We are trying to protect our religion because we are worried that other religions will influence our religion,” Khin Maung Latt from the Arakan National Party (ANP) told The Irrawaddy.

“There are some countries in the world that have been wholly converted to another religion. We need to pay heed to this. This law would not hurt anyone.”

Race and religious bills part of bigger push

The religious bill and population bill are part of a controversial legislation package that’s designed to “protect race and religion.” Opponents say the measures violate Burma’s commitment to uphold human rights.

The bills were first proposed to Parliament by an ultra-nationalist monk and his supporters back in mid-2013. Many groups have expressed concern over this legislative package, including the top U.S. human rights official, Tom Malinowski, the UN Special Rapporteur for Burma, Yanghee Lee, and a coalition of 180 groups.

“This is impacting the 16 ministries that we assist,” adds Cotton. “This greatly impacts their ability to share the Gospel and have someone come to Christ.”

Indigenous missionaries supported by Christian Aid Mission already face severe beatings, expulsion and even death for following Jesus. If the religious bill becomes law, it would make sharing the Gospel even more difficult.

Will you help these fellow believers?

“These are heroes of the faith, and we need to stand with them and pray for them, and support them where we can,” Cotton notes.

The indigenous ministries Christian Aid Mission supports in Burma range from children’s homes to Bible schools. Christian Aid Mission helps these believers in varying ways, too.

“We provide motorbikes for missionaries in Burma,” Cotton says, describing one of the ways Christian Aid Mission supports indigenous missionaries.

“The terrain is really rough there; I mean, there are villages out in remote areas where there are no roads.”

Christian Aid Mission also ships Bibles to indigenous missionaries and sends financial support in times of natural disaster.

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“There’s a lot of different hands-on ministry that we do to assist the believers there,” Cotton says in sum.

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Re: Burma to become a Buddhist-only nation, on: 2015/2/20 13:42

It's to a nation's shame when they force others to believe what they believe. Or even 'not allow' another to change their belief unless an 11-person committee agrees.

These are cultish actions.

Hopefully Burma will learn that choice/freedom is more important than force. Will pray.