

NLD Statement 126/2000:

National League for Democracy
No: (97/B), West Shwegonedine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon

Statement 126 (8/00) (translation)

1. On the 7th July, 2000, Chairman of the Tamu township authority Captain Khin Maung Myint and his group went to the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the village of Tin-kaya which is about 6 miles from Tamu (Sagaing Division). He summoned the village chairman U Htaung Kho Yan and other leaders including U Htan Lein (Mission School teacher) to a meeting.

After that Captain Khin Maung Myint insolently stepped up on to the pulpit with his army boots, a place that is regarded with great reverence by the Christians who normally take their shoes off as a mark of respect. He shouted rudely "With whose permission was this school opened. Where is the permit?"

The church elders very courteously explained that in 1976 together with the school for religious teaching the school to teach the basic reading and writing skills was opened.

2. Captain Khin Maung Myint refused to accept any explanation given by them. His attitude was that of an adversary. He ordered U Htaung Kho Yan and U Htan Lein to stand up in front of him and beat them both on their backs and faces with the special offertory bags used by the church.

Not content with doing that he drew his revolver out and pointed it at their heads one after the other. Then he took two bullets out boasting haughtily "These bullets are for you Chins". He went on punching and kicking them.

3. He smashed the chairs and tables and other paraphernalia (bibles and sound system) on the pulpit and spat out vile expletives against the Chin people and the Christians. The expressions he used are extremely odious that they cannot be repeated. It damages one's character and dignity. He then had both U Htaung Kho Yan and U Htan Lein arrested and locked up at the Tamu police station.

4. On 10 July 2000 he ordered the closure of all the Christian schools in the township. News of this was published in the foreign media on 15 July. This caused him to fly into a rage. U Pa Jya Kin, the pastor of the church was arrested and locked up in the police station where the torture and persecution could be compared to the fascist torture chambers.

In addition, as a punishment, all the villagers of Tin-ka-ya were made to plough the ten acres of land, which was his private property.

5. The military dictators are constantly proclaiming that there is freedom of worship, but the above clearly proves that this is not so. It also reflects their attitude towards the ethnic minority groups. They are steeped in the belief that they are superior. They lord it over all the smaller ethnic groups. This is so very transparent.

Moreover, every kind of pressure is applied to non-Buddhists and the right to freedom of worship is denied to them. This we see very clearly with our own eyes.

6. The National League for Democracy vigorously and emphatically denounces

- this behaviour and attitude of the military dictators in the treatment of the national groups,
- in the bullying tactics to bind them with fear and terror,
- in their disregard for the provisions of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 on " freedom of religion".

We urge them to take effective action as required by law against those who have no qualms about flouting the law and cavalierly brutalize others.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
7 August 2000