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Photo by: Saw Kwe Say, Burma Issues
Disaster and the refusal of the International assistance: My government that I hate

By Naw Cha Mu

“|was sitting on the roof with my three kids and my wife was holding my 14 days baby in her arm, at that moment I realized that we will be away from each other, so I asked my older son to pray, suddenly the cyclone hit us and we all fell apart. I was holding my three kids and drowning but I didn’t know where my wife and my youngest kid were. Unfortunately, my three kids did not survive with me. “Even myself had to survive very hard at that moment. In the next day I just found my wife’s dead body and I couldn’t find any of my kids’ bodies.”

Saw Wah 44 a Karen man who lives in Laputta, from the hardest-hit Irrawaddy delta, who was survive from the Cyclone Nargis but he lost his wife and his three kids due to cyclone Nagis. His family, relatives, homeland and his friends have been already wiped out by the storm and water waves. He has arrived Mae Lah Karen refugee camp which is located in Thailand, with his brother and some relatives on the 28th of May. “When we arrive there are many people visiting to encourage, and provide basic house supplies for us, so living in refugee camp is better than living in Burma.” he added.

“I feel wretched about being a citizen of Burma, because the government of Burma ignore us even when we are gravely affect by the cyclone Nargis, have nothing to eat, to wear, to live or to drink. Beside, the regime places obstacles to the relief supplies both from the foreign countries and individual.” he added.

There are million of dollars and humanitarian aid has been donated to help the cyclone victims, but hundred of thousand have been still starving. UN statistics say assistance has reached 1.3 million people out of 2.5 million affected by the cyclone. The military regime has been denying the relief supplies need of the survivors and continue to place obstacles to international humanitarian aid distribution by any means. The United States has to withdraw their ships which carrying relief supplies to help the survivors of Cyclone Nargis, after the regime refuse to allow them in their country.

In addition, the Burmese regime state that all relief groups must receive travel permission and aid distribution clearance from the authorities. The relief supplies would be handed by the military themselves directly to the survivors. Yet, the regime also arrested the activists who provided aid to cyclone survivors in the Irrawaddy delta. Burma’s most popular comedian, Zarganar, who was distributed the relief supplies to the cyclone victims was arrested by the regime. He also give an interview to the foreign media outlet concerning on the regime unreasoned to the survivors of the cyclone. He had been detained by the regime last protest in September for providing food to the Buddhist monks who were anti government.

By looking at this situation how cunning of the regime respond to the assistance to their country and its own citizen. If they don’t allow the humanitarian aid from foreign countries or private donors, do they give full assistant to the survivors? If so why people spend...
most of their time beside the road and ask for food and starving?

“We just heard from radio program of British Broadcast Corporation (BBC), Voice of American VOA and Radio Free Asian (RFA) that the relief supplies will be brough by the foreign countries to the cyclone victims, but in reality we didn’t receive any relief supplies.” Said Saw wah.

The survivors were greatly relying on private donors for their daily sustenance. In addition, some private donors have offered residents farming equipment and tools—just in time for planting this year’s paddy fields. The private donors have to sneak into the affected areas to provide assistance to the survivors secretly. If the regime knows they will be surely arrested and put in jail for the reason that they broke the law not informing the authorities working in area.

The regime neither gave any protection nor provided the safety for those people who resided in the affected areas. Instead of providing the relief emergency as the priority, the military regime has been attentively working on the constitutional referendum for the stability of their power. While millions of people are terribly suffering and need urgent assistant, the regime forcefully still conducted the referendum on May 10 as they have planed.

Even after the cyclone Nargis the survivors faced difficulty due to lack of responsibility and the ignorance by the Burmese military regime. People lost their lives due to the shortage of food and drinking water. Some people died of dysentery, diarrhea and related diseases as the results of the people had to eat wet and spoil rice.

“No water to drink, just rely on the coconut fruit for two or three days. After coconut gone we have to dig a hole to get water from it. Furthermore we had no clothes and stay with the same cloth for weeks. We didn’t receive any aid relief from the government. But after one week we got some aid relief supplies from the Christian religious groups.” Said Saw Wah. “There are many survivors shelter in the monastery and fed by monks.”

Burma’s junta faced worldwide criticism after the May 2-3 storm for failing to speed up aid to cyclone survivors and initially barring foreign aid. The immediate priority of humanitarian relief need to the survivors and the regime need to remove restrictions on the distribution of international aid. The international organizations need to keep a close eye on this military regime and alert if they act improperly and interfere.

“The military regime is the canniest government and I really hate them. They just want to exist just their military community and they consider other people like us animals. I don’t want to stay under control of this government, if I continue I will never enjoy my entire live” said Saw Wah.

A regime’s Referendum without Democratic Reference:
Unacceptable regime’s referendum
by Zai Dai (Kachin)

The innocent citizens of Burma have been taken in yet again by a farcical nation wide referendum, which was held on May 10 and May 24. Just like the people of Venezuela had brought about the Green Revolution after being oppressed by despots, so also is the struggle for democratic transformation is happening in Burma (Myanmar).

The regime’s “roadmap to democracy”, sketched with the help of its sympathizers since the time of the former Prime Minister Gen. Khin Nyut, preplans enterprise regardless of the continuing social-political instability in the country. From the very beginning, the regime’s formation of a so-called democratic pattern has been formulated without democratic principle. They neglected the rights and freedom of the people, who were supposed to have fully participated in the National Convention to draft the National
Constitution, for political stability of Burma as a whole. The regime conducted the Constitutional Referendum for the approval of the draft of the national constitution to legitimize the regime’s power. It was an uncivilized referendum, without democratic reference, placing the people under the dictator’s boots and the barrel of a gun. The voters were not to actually exercise their rights freely in the referendum, and were forced to vote ‘Yes’ in the ballots across the country.

In fact, it is obvious that the regime of aristocrats have been paving the way to heaven only for themselves, to revitalize feudal bureaucracy once again in Burma. It is seen that five lakhs of military personnel are being exploited in the power building of the regime’s generals, instead of fighting to protect this country. The soldiers are not amply subsidized so that each soldier and his/her family are supported. Furthermore, in this situation the regime rudely ordered its troops to give the “right tick” (“Yes” vote), not at one’s own will, but as it was the will of the regime. It had been publicly announced by the Referendum Commission that it is an order of the regime that all troops tick “Right” without failure. This is how voting has come not from freedom of will, but as a regime’s order to military personnel.

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In the capital Myitkyina, Kachin State the government employees had been under threat to vote “Yes” in referendum as well. School teachers, government servants, teacher trainees, nursing trainees were forced to do the same. All those who put cross marks (“No” vote) could have been expelled or dismissed. For this reason, just for the sake of security, they were compelled to render tick right in the referendum. Yet, almost all medical doctors have boldly crossed the ballots (voted “No”), exercising freedom of thought.

History will pay back those sympathizers, the peace talkers, leaders of ceasefire groups, business firms collaborating with the junta, for what they have been doing for the sake of their selfish business, rather standing by the side of truth. In the realm of Christianity in Kachin Land there are two big church organizations, namely Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) and Kachin Roman Catholic Church in Kachin state. The believers of Christianity in Kachin believe it is ordained to establish the Kingdom of God by biblical word on earth as Jesus taught. With such a mission in the hearts of members, most looked to religious leaders to take a Christian stand and role in the referendum, yet oddly, there was no further direction or help from the KBC in the referendum. It is obvious then, that at present, Christian leaders are stagnant in taking active leadership in social transformation, and not acting as it is ordained that they should. This lack of leadership leads to evil for all the believers, who have been tricked by the regime’s plot, and fearful of the mounting of pressure by the state. Yet there have been faithful Christians who are persistent and perseverant in the midst of hardship and discrimination, in leading Christian lives and speaking up to unveil the truth, even under a dictatorship.

Another issue that the Kachins regret is the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and its armed wing Kachin Independence Army (KIA). KIO/A’s full support in the referendum, by hosting it and ticking right on ballots at Laiza, (KIO/A Headquarters) on May 10, 2008 by the order of Central Standing Committee (CSC). It is concluded that KIO/A has resolved its own problem of insecurity and danger by their own means, instead of leading, protecting, and standing by the people of Kachin Land, and the citizens of the country. By this, it is obvious that KIO/A is declaring worldwide that it denies the democratic principled politics of the Kachins and Kachin State citizens, except
in playing social security politics. Only its top-
most leaders, including peace makers and a
handful of bilateral business groups are reflected
in its deed and decision.

We know this referendum was declared to be
supported because of advance voting. If the
ballots of the voters on that day were scruti-
nized under transparent commissions, surely the
cross tick ballots (“No”) would surpass the
“Yes” votes. So, the military junta (or the so
called State Peace and Development Council)
officers at every level were enforced to rear-
range all ballot votes within 12 hours after vot-
ing started it was over everywhere.

In the 1990 election vote in Kachin State,
Kachin State National Congress for Democracy
(KNCD) party, (barred by the regime), won three
seats and has really stood for the Kachins and
Kachin State citizens. The KNCD with Duwa
Bawm Lang as a public leader, once again are
revitalizing its service by providing the long-
leaderless, pro-democratic Kachins and Kachin
State citizens with awareness and the funda-
mental principles for democracy. The KNCD has
been playing its role as an action group, stand-
ing up before the Kachins and Kachin State citi-
zens for a smooth, democratic transition in
Burma.

In fact, right ticked ballots have been defeated
in many areas (for instance in Waingmaw dis-
trict, Njang Dung village in Myitkyina) though
under attack, because pro-democratic civilians
have voted “No”, not just because of the de-
sire to exercise one’s freedom of right, but also
in the fight for the truth. Even in this context
of threats and pressures, pro-democratic Kachins and Kachin State citizen have voted “No”!

By this referendum Kachins have declared
themselves to enter the war of democracy,
where the judge will be always the truth. Their
half-century long armed history has taught
them that the public are the only ones respon-
sible for democratic change. The political wings,
as well as the armed groups are playing their
roles in armed politics, yet there will be no
help from those with power until and unless
pro-democratic citizens themselves labour to-
wards the goal of freedom they dream for.

In the military referendum, I should say the
regime won. Yet in a public referendum the
citizens won, as rationalized above. Therefore
this referendum is a referendum without demo-
cratic principles, where a pseudo-democratic
regime announced a landslide victory for its
own longevity and security. Yet the spirit of
one’s ballot, which can represent oneself or
one’s state, as a fight against an unjust and
undemocratic centralized bureaucracy, will ul-
timately lead us to victory by democratic
means. But this means more than just voting
for democracy (since no one can issue you
democracy) you must live for it. Thus, though
the regime conducted referendum was alleg-
edly supported by more than 92.4 per cent
voters, in truth the regime was shamefully de-
feated in the recent referendum on the basis
of democratic reference.

Brandon

Revolutionary thinking and Faith:

By Eh Doe Doh Moo

The beginning of my revolutionary:

I was born in a very terrible situation in a civil
war zone in Burma. The living condition is very
poor. My father was a revolutionary soldier of
the Karen National Union (rebel) and fought
against the Burmese military regime. My mom
always took care of our family and our daily
life was full with fear, suffering and painfulness.
When I reached the age of ten, my fa-
ther was killed in the battle field and it was a
darkest day for our family.

For this reason, my mom didn’t want her chil-
dren to join revolutionary group because loos-
ing her beloved husband in fighting was a bit-
ter experience and very painful so she didn’t
want to loose her son again. In those days,
most of the Karen people think that to be a revo-
lutionary you have to be a soldier, you have to
hold arms and fight for freedom and self-deter-
mination. There are no other alternative ways to
get liberation without arm struggle.

At that time, to my understanding I also thought
that arm struggle was the only way to get free-
dom. In my mind I want to revenge the Burmese
soldiers. My father was killed, my uncle was
killed, my cousin was killed, my friends were killed
and my people were killed by the civil war, tor-
tures, abuse and rape. Without you scarify your
blood, you don’t free from slave and I have learned
from the elders that “without sacrificed your
blood, you won’t be freed from slave”. Fighting
means for me to protect my family, my village, my territory and my people. When I was 14 years old, I accompanied my uncle to the battle field and I saw fighting, death bodies, injury, pain and suffering. I had no idea but this experience has motivated me to be a freedom fighter.

When I grew enough, I joined the Karen revolutionary group but my mom didn’t want me to join and she just wanted me to finish my high school in the refugee camp. My mom gave up as she couldn’t stop me and let me in and she just prayed for me to be saved from all forms of dangerous situation. I served as a freedom fighter for two years in the jungle. Living in poor condition, no good food, no shelter, hard work and some nights I have had bad dreams but this difficulties didn’t let me down and I have learned a lot of lessons from this experience. After our territory was occupied by the Burmese army, I came back to the refugee camp and finished my high school.

Changing but still revolutionary man:

My life has changed, I am changing and I am not like before but I still commit myself as revolutionary man. I want a big change in my community and my people to gain freedom, self-determination, and justice, respect of our human rights and life security. Arm struggle is not an only solution and I am shameful for the revenge. I don’t mean that I hate arm struggle, for I understand that fighting is to protect our families, our children and our people and our territory. The most important thing is need have revolutionary thinking skills, understand the root cause of the conflict and building up a new vision for our justice and peaceful society.

When I finished grade ten in Tham Hin refugee camp I met with my old friend who work in Bangkok and he asked me to come with him to Bangkok for a two month training course. I was very happy to get out of the camp and I thought it would be a great opportunity for me even though I have no idea of what training course would be.

I came to Bangkok with three other friends for the training. The training was about the community organizing training. The training taught us about thinking skills, structural analysis and community organizing skills. This training course gives me many new ideas. I have learned that arm struggle is not the only way to gain our rights, freedom and justice. We read about life history of Ghandi and Nelson Mandela and these stories gave us a lot of new ideas and thought. We have not learned about these kinds of stories when we were in school. This kind of study was not popular in school at that time. I dare to say that I have learned a lot of new ideas and this training course have change a lot of my thoughts and gave me new vision for struggling for peace and justice. I have developed my knowledge to struggle for building peace and justice in the society of Burma.

Two months ago my mom left to USA for the resettlement. She called me and she is worrying for my future. Many people said that Internally Displaced People and refugee people have no future. As I am her son, she does not want me to be in trouble and getting old without life insurance and she said, “Come to American and you will become American citizen, you will earn money and you can go back to Burma and start you work again (What do you thinking about it?). You stay in Thailand without any legal document to travel and any time Thai police can arrest you and it will be difficult for your future and I worry for you so much”

I understand my mom very well and I know she loves me very much. I just want to say that, “Mom don’t worry for me” American citizenship can’t give me my life insurance, I have faith in God He is the only God who can give me life insurance. I don’t know what will happen tomorrow but now I have to work here and serve my people and running to my dream that can give guarantee build a certain future for my people.

I said to my mom not to worry for my future even though I don’t know how my future is
look like. My future is not have properties and nor living a luxury life. My future is to against any forms of injustice, oppression, live in harmony with our environment and build up a peaceful society. I truly understand that I have friends who will support my will. The only important thing is I have to show them and make sure they clearly understand my will.

**My Dream**

I want to set up “Appropriate Education” for my people and give them the seed of thinking. I will find a place to implement my dream. When I went to India and studied at the School of Peace and stayed in Visthar campus I got a lot of ideas in the campus. In my campus (my dream), I will have school and training center full with trees, flowers and vegetables. Trees, flowers and vegetable will give us medicine, food, fresh air and peace of mind.

I want to bring IDP (internally displace people) children and children in war zone to come and have this opportunity to study. I have no doubt that the true change in the future is education but there are many types of education to guide your way in your life. I want my next generation to learn about the education of life, peace, equality, art, music, traditional, cultural and the ways to overcome injustice and oppression and reflect their life. Education helps our society “be peaceful, change yourself, plant peace in your heart and share your peace with others and against any kind of oppression and injustice.”

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**Ethnic Solidarity**

**Yintalia**

The Yintalia people are descendant from the Mongolian people. They migrated south, and along the Salween River and settled near Andaman Bay for a period of time, before moving north in to a place called Demowso, currently known as Karenni State. The Yintalia people built the first town in Karenni State, Bawlake along the Pon River.

Nowadays most Yintalia people live in central Karenni State along the Salween River. They mainly grow sesame and millets (small peanuts), and some other small crops. The millets are eaten as a stable food and used to produce wine for traditional festivals. Excess crops are sold at markets as a source of income.

The Yintalia mix traditional beliefs with Buddhism. They continue to celebrate two important annual festivals: the Kay Toe Boe festival and Deku festival. The Kay Toe Boe festival is usually celebrated in April before the crops are planted. The festival celebrated to honor the original Yintalia king and pray for the harvests. The Deku festival is also a harvest festival and is celebrated when the first fruit of the season is harvested. During the Deku festival other ethnic groups offer tributes to the Yintalia people in Bawlake, with the belief that in return they will have good luck and good crops.

The Yintalia have their own language and traditional dress. In the past in additionally to wearing hand woven clothes, the Yintalia wore rings around their knees and necks. Nowadays the Yintalia wear clothes that are similar to other ethnic groups from Karenni and Shan States.

Traditionally, Yintalia women are responsible for house work and raising the children, and gathering all non-meat products that the family may need (the Yintalia men are responsible for hunting). Men from these communities are responsible for hunting, farming, trade and other income generating work, for example day labouring. However, given the instability in Karenni State these roles have become blurred as survival takes precedent.
News Brief

UN to take up Burma Issues again: Briefing UN correspondents after a closed meeting of the Security Council on the agenda for July, Khalilzad, who serves as council president last month, said the current crisis in Zimbabwe and a resolution on the Burmese political crisis were two issues raised by member countries during the meeting.

“There was a discussion that there should be a briefing with regard to Burma this month,” said Khalilzad, nothing the Burmese political issues has been overshadowed by the humanitarian disaster that occurred in early May.

“We do not have a date yet agreed to with regards to the briefing on Burma,” he added.

Meanwhile, the White House said Burma would be a top priority when US president George W Bush meets with world leaders in Japan on the sidelines of the G-8 summit. As announced earlier, Special UN Envoy on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, is expected to visit Burma on July to continue his political dialogue with the military government and pro-democracy leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest. No date of the visit has been announced.

Cyclone hurt Burma rice export: The cyclone that struck Burma devastated its main rice-growing region, and could threaten exports meant to ease shortages in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the UN food agency said.

Flooding, which poured damaging salt water into paddy fields, could create long-term food insecurity for Burma and other poor Asian, world food program spokesman Paul Risley warned.

There are also long term concerns whether Burma can continue to maintain self-sufficiency and also whether they can continue commitment to other country.

The Cyclone could also threaten food supplies within Burma, because World Food Program (WFP) normally buys rice from the storm ravaged Irrawaddy river delta region to feed poor in five northern regions of the country.

Before Cyclone hit, the UN’s food and Agriculture Organization had forecast that Burma would export 500,000 tones of rice this year.

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh which will not produce enough rice to meet their own needs this year, had clinched rice deals with Burma as world prices have soared.