Khun Mar Ko Ban

Khun Mar Ko Ban was elected as a Member of Parliament for Pekon Township in the 1990 multi-party elections, representing the Democratic Organization for Kayan National Unity (DOKNU). The DOKNU is part of the Union Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD) alliance. He attended the sham National Convention organized by the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC) on 9 January 1993 as part of an elected representatives group. At the National Convention, NC procedures, by-laws, and rules for delegates concerning presentation in the convention were not distributed in advance.

To his surprise, Khun Mar Ko Ban learned of the six basic principles of the State’s objectives, namely (1) non-disintegration of the Union, (2) non-disintegration of national unity, (3) perpetuation of sovereignty, (4) emergence of a genuine multi-party democratic system, (5) emergence of democratic principles such as justice, liberty and equality, and (6) the leading role of the armed forces in the national politics of the state. This was like being force-fed a bowl of delicious biryani rice with a bottle of poison poured in. He could not accept the military’s leading role in national politics. He also found in the rules to be observed by convention delegates that frank and open discussions or suggestions could only be done inside the framework of the objectives. For instance, a delegate can only present a paper in the Convention after receiving permission from the group head. Also, topics for consideration submitted by various groups have to pass through the Convening Working Committee, as if the Committee could solve all problems. Only a paper agreed to by the Convening Committee would be presented to the Convention. As a result of this process, Khun Mar Ko Ban pointed out, the Convention is merely a “paper-reading” session.

Of the nine administrative committee members, there is one representative from each of eight groups. They are all alternative administrative committee members and only the committee member sent by the Convening Working Committee is the true president of the whole Convention. The alternative administrative committee members have to obtain permission from the president to speak. As is evident from the above-mentioned facts, the sham NC called by the SLORC is restricting and blocking freedom of discussion by means of all kinds of laws and by-laws. Khun Mar Ko Ban strongly upholds and supports the principles of DOKNU, UNLD and the Bo Aung Kyaw Street Joint Declaration of the NLD and UNLD. Since he could not accept being a historical culprit and participant in the drafting of the constitution in the sham NC, he fled to Kayan New Land Party’s revolutionary area while on the way to the second session of the NC.
He called a press conference at KNU’s Manerplaw headquarters in a liberated area on 5 April 1993 to denounce the sham NC. Now he is resolutely fighting the SLORC/SPDC’s seven-point Road Map.

Khun Myint Htun

*Khun Myint Htun* was elected as a Tha Hton Township Secretary of the National League for Democracy (NLD). In the 1990 multi-party elections, he was elected as a Member of Parliament from the Tha Hton constituency, representing the NLD. He worked as a member of the Mon State Lobbying group and a member of the Central Youth of the NLD in 1991. He attended the NC as a representative of the NLD. His assumption in attending the NC was that he could implement the NLD’s policy of genuine national reconciliation and building of a future federal union. He was detained on 20 May and, on 20 August 1996, was imprisoned for 7 years in Ka Lay Prison for failing to report to Jean Shirt Journal. He was released on 1 August 2003. Subsequently, he resumed his duties in the Mon State Lobbying Group and as a member of the NLD staff. He took responsibility for communications between the NLD and ethnic nationalities (including the CRPP).

*Khun Myint Htun* and the Parliamentary Members attended the NC try to discuss their important demands but did not receive a response. He said that, from the very beginning, the NC has been a sham. This made him decide to permanently leave the National Convention.

Khun Ti Saung

*Khun Ti Saung* was one of the leaders of Shan State Nationalities People’s Liberation Organization (SNPLO), which entered into a cease-fire agreement with the SPDC on 9 October 1994. They hoped that by entering into the agreement with the SPDC, they could build democracy, unity among the ethnic nationalities, equality and self determination. The referendum held before the cease-fire agreement was finalized indicated that the people welcomed the cease-fire and reminded their leaders not to repeat what happened in Pa-Ah-La-Pha in 1958.

No opportunities to advance their agenda have been given within the 13 years of their cease-fire with the military. In 1994, SNPLO representatives *U Khun Sein Shwe* and *U Aung Shwe Latt* attended the NC but were unable to represent their people’s voices and position since they had to read aloud the papers written in advance by the military. In 2005, representatives *U Khun Sein Shwe*, *U Aung Shwe Latt* and *U Khun Ti Saung* attended the NC. They had prepared a paper regarding eight states but they did not get a chance to present it. The SNPLO was then put under pressure by the military regime and was not invited to the 2006 National Convention.

After evaluating their situation and their experiences, they realized that this sham NC aims to last longer the military regime’s power and end the democratic movement. *Khun Ti Saung* has no faith in the SPDC’s sham National Convention and knows that the military regime has no interest in restoring democracy in the country.
Saw Eddie Htwe

Saw Eddie Htwe was one of the nine representatives of Karen State attending the National Convention from January 1993 to 1996. He served in the Township Working Group at different levels of the People’s Council until 18 September 1988. During the convention there were different topics for group discussion but they were never conducted in a democratic way. It was a centrally-controlled system like the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) structure. The discussion was based on prepared papers and consisted of merely reading the papers instead of discussing them. Before discussing a topic the group had to get chair’s permission. Since they were forced to agree against their will, drafting the basic principles in the National Convention was not a democratic process. There were no open discussions, evaluation, debates, criticism or recognition of the minority groups. The agenda and outcome of the NC are predetermined. Most of the representatives now attending the NC are in one way or another connected to the regime and their reason for attending is to protect their own interests so they can get business permits. Saw Eddie Htwe says that the effect of the 104 basic principles of the SPDC is to forcibly obtain the people’s vote and continue to lie to the world. The military regime will continue to oppress simple farmers and the people of Burma. The real reason for creating the convention is for the military to last longer in power. The lawyers had to put together the military dominated convention that protects the regime. If the military had no weapons, a result approximating justice, truth, and equality would emerge from discussions in the Convention. The opinions of ex-army personnel are different from the ideas they had when in power. Now they sympathize with the people.

Saw Eddie Htwe served the dictatorship for nearly four decades and used his power in committing wrongs against the people. His remaining power should be used to further the emergence of true democracy, tripartite discussions and bravely revealing the truth. He does not recognize the legitimacy of the sham National Convention.

U Khu Shay Reh

U Khu Shay Reh was a representative of a farmer’s group participating in the National Convention. He was appointed the Chair of the Executive Committee Secretariat of Kaya State Cooperative Association from 1989 to 1992 by the SLORC. In 1993, he served on the Organizing Commission of the Kaya State National Convention for one month. Based on the topics of the National Convention, he had prepared a paper to present in the Convention. Because he was not allowed to discuss or express the contents of the paper widely and independently, however, from a practical point of view he was prevented from presenting the paper. The paper was repeatedly edited until it was in line with the National Convention’s objectives. Although the Chair said that the participants could openly discuss issues, in practice they had to merely read out the prepared papers. As a result, the Convention became a “paper-reading convention”. U Khu Shay Reh believes that the National Convention does not represent the best of the country, especially the ethnic nationalities. He submitted a resignation letter to the National Convention, but the authorities refused to accept his letter and threatened him in different ways. In 1997, he left the country for the Thai-Burma border looking for a safe place. He served as a high school headmaster in Karenni Camp No.
1 from 2000 to 2004. He was then assigned as an Education Officer by his mother organization in 2005. At the same time, he became one of the Members of Parliament in the Karenni government. In 2006, he was the people’s representative of the refugee camp. At present he is serving as the Chairman of the Karenni Refugee Committee.

Saw Ta Ru Too

Saw Ta Ru Too became a Member of Parliament for Phar Saung Township in the 1990 multi-party elections, representing the Ta-Sa-Nya Party.

The Karenni State was designated a black area as it is a place where the resistance movement began. The State also suffered from civil war even after Burma became independent. Under the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP), he served as a Secretary of the Township Security Committee (TSC). Under the People’s Council, he served as the Chair of the Township Council for three terms, for a total of twelve years. He was chosen as a Chair of the BSPP party unit in 1985 and thus attended the National Convention in 1985 until the 1988 Uprising as a representative of BSPP. The system used by BSPP is centralized. He entered the 1990 election as a representative of the BSPP and won the election due to his commitment to the people and what he had done for them for seventeen years. Saw Ta Ru Too stated that the present National Convention has been held for fourteen years and still has not finished. He believes that the Convention is like ‘speaking from paper’. It does not respect the people’s desire.

Saw Ta Ru Too disagrees with the Ta-Sa-Nya Party’s policy and does not want to be historically infamous for contributing to the Convention. Thus, for his safety he traveled to the Karenni refugee camp in 1997.

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