

Chin Human Rights Organization

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Human Rights:

Forced Labor in Magwe Division

Farmers from Kangaw township, Magwe division of Western Burma have been forced to work on the farm owned by the Burmese military North Western command, despite claims to the ILO that the practice has been eradicated in Burma.

According to U Ba Thein (name changed), 50 years old Burmese farmer from Hantha-wadi village of Kangaw township, it's been 3 months that all the villagers from Kangaw township are forced to work on the North Western command military-owned farm. The forced labour started in June and is still going on at the time CHRO interviewed U Ba Thein on August 18, 2001.

U Ba Thein was forced to work at one of the forced labour camps called " Kyu-kya " under the command of Major Thein Aung of Light Infantry Battalion LIB 309 Katha battalion. There are several forced labour camps in Kangaw township and Colonel Hla Ngwe, tactical commander of North Western Command is the supervisor of all the labour camps in Magwe division.

Despite their engagement with forced labour most of the time, villages' headmen are ordered to submit monthly report to the township Peace and Development office saying that there is no forced labour and forced porter in their village.

Racially selective settlement and relocation being implemented in Kalay-Tamu Area

The State peace and Development Council in Sagaing Division has established three new villages between Kalay and Tamu town since March 2001. In the new three villages, only Burmese Buddhists are allowed to settle, although the surrounding areas have been co-inhabited by ethnic Chin and Shan-Bama decent.

The names of the three villages are Yanmyo-Aung, Yantaing-Aung, and Yangein-Aung. The meaning of the villages name literally translates "conquest of the enemy". These names are reported to have been dubbed based on superstitious astronomical readings consulted by SPDC.

The area is mostly inhabited by Chin and Shan-bamas and there are many virgin lands and forest in the surrounding areas. The inhabitants in the area are prohibited to extend their farm or plough the virgin land. Only the Burmese Buddhists are allowed to settle in the new villages.

The SPDC persuades (Burman) people from Minkin township of Magwe division to settle in the new villages promising them that they would be sufficiently provided with whatever they need.

Since January 2001, the SPDC authority strictly collects or seizes goods and commodities, such as rice, cooking oil, bicycles, medicines and farm animals from traders and villagers. The goods they seized were provided to the new settlers from the three villages.

According to U Than Aung (name changed), 60 years old Burmese farmer from Tamu township, all the nearby villages have been working in the new three villages since March 2001 till today. The villagers have to build school, houses, digging the well, cutting wood and ploughing in the farm for the new settlers.

(Date of interview with U Than Aung, 11 August 2001)

SPDC monopolizes farming management

The State Peace and Development Council in Kangaw township have forced farmers to buy paddy seeds, corn seeds and bio-fertilizer with high price saying that the paddy seeds which they sell can produce 300 tins of rice in one acre area of land and that all the farmers should buy and sow them in their farm.

Thus, all the farmers bought the paddy seeds from the authority with a high price, 1,800 Kyats per tin and corn seeds with 80 Kyats per one pyi (one pyi is about 4 kgs) and a bottle of bio-fertilizer for 800 Kyats.

But when they actually grow the paddy seeds they bought from the SPDC authority, it produced only 60 tins per acre according to U Tha Lu, 50 years old Burmese farmer from Hanthawadi village of Magwe division. The authorities buy back the rice from farmers with the rate of 350 Kyats per tin.

"It is totally unjust. When they sold them to us, we paid 1,800 Kyats per tin and they want to buy back from us with the price of 350 Kyats per tin" said U Tha Lu.

The SPDC authority started this method in the year 2000 and they knew that it is damaging the farmers. But when the monsoon, farming season in Burma, come in June authority repeated what they did to the farmer last year.

(CHRO interviewed U Tha Lu on 9 August 2001)

Villages Headmen Must Sign: "There Is No Porter or Forced Labour"

CHRO received a report from reliable source that the SPDC in Kalay Township, Sagaing Division have ordered all the villages headmen to report that there is no porter and forced labour in their respective areas.

According to U Phu Kya (Name changed for security reason), 45 years old Burmese village council member from Ywasi-Ywatha village tract of Sagaing Division, starting from June 2001 the township Peace and Development Council ordered all the village headmen to write monthly report that there is no porter or forced labour in their village, despite the existence of the practice of forced labor on a large scale throughout the region.

Again on August 8, 2001, all the village council members in Kalay Township were summoned to the township Peace and Development Council office and forced to sign that there is no porter or forced labour in their village.

(Date of interview with U Phu Kya: 11 August 2001)

Junta disbands Christian infrastructure, restricts access to theological studies abroad

According to CHRO source, Chin Christian ministers face a limited access for their further studies in foreign countries especially in the United States. Even though the ruling military junta in Burma does not explicitly impose law on restriction on Christian ministers for their further studies, many Chin Christian ministers have had their application for passport rejected for unknown reasons.

The majority of Christian pastors who come for further studies in the United States from Burma are Chins. According to sources, Chin Christian ministers make about two third of the population among those who come to the States for further Studies in the field of theology.

The American Baptist Missionary came to Chinland in late 19th Century and majority of Chins converted to Christianity by the end of 20th century. The United States is the most favoured place for Christian ministers for further studies.

Since 1995, Christian institutions in Burma cannot get permission from the authority to build Christian infrastructure such as Church, seminary and Christian school. According to the rule and regulations imposed by the ruling military junta, any religion in the country can apply permission at the ministry of Home and Religions Affairs to build the institution's infrastructure. However, the ministry always rejects their applications.

After bribing a good deal of money to the lower level, township or district authorities, Christians institutions are allowed to repair, extend or build their infrastructure.

Furthermore, Christians are prohibited to hold worship service in their home. According to the order no. 100 (HTWE) 10/TTP-345/ KL-2000 dated 26 May 2000 released from the office of township directorate office of religious affairs in Kalay Myo, Sagaing division, there will be no more home worship service, religious meeting and training outside of the church. The order warned that anyone who does not abide by the order would be put on trial.

"No English, We are Burman"

The Burmese military regime ordered that any signboard written or named in English should be replaced with Burmese. In Chin state and many other Chin inhabited areas in Burma, the name of the street, Church and the welcome signboards such as " welcome to....." are written in English.

The directorate office of religious affairs, Kalay township, released that order with order No. 100/ HTWE (60) TTN- 226/KL -99 dated September 22, 1999. According to the order, all the English names whether a street, or a church should be replaced with the Burmese name.

The order further suggested that all the citizens of Burma should show their patriotism by using their own "Burmese names" and not to fall prey of Western pro-colonialists.

Only Burmese Names in School

Young Chin students in the plain area, outside of Chin state, are reportedly forced to change their Chin names into the Burmese ones.

The population of Chins and Burmese inhabitants are balanced in most part of Kalay and Tamu township, Sagaing division and Kangaw township of Magwe division. Chins and Burmese children go to the same school where most of the teachers are Burmese.

Chin children are told by their Burmese teachers that Chin name is difficult to call or pronounce. This make them feel uncomfortable with their Chin name among the Burmese teachers who are usually annoyed by their names. In many occasions, Chin children are forced to take the Burmese name. Thus, Chin parents are in discomfort with the situation because every Chin name has its own meaning and definition, which reflects the characteristic of their ancestor. They feel like they are being assimilated by the Burmese knowingly.

SPDC from Tidim seized goods from a Chin trader

The SPDC authority in Tedim town, northern Chinland confiscated goods from a Chin trader and demanded 800,000 Kyats.

According to Pa Thang, 37 years old trader from Kalay township, Sagaing division, he was coming back from the Indian border with his own car carrying goods such as Digene, Betnovate and Calcium tablets to sell in Burma. The total cost of the good was about 1.5 million Kyats.

When he arrived to the town of Tidim on July 6, 2001, the township Peace and Development Council stopped the car and seized all the goods. When he wrote a petition to the authority, he was compelled to pay 800,000 Kyats in order to get back his goods.

He said that all the goods he carried were legal and it is unknown why the authority did that way.

SPDC troops abduct civilian vehicles at whims

According to Khuma, one of the drivers from the "Zalat Phyu" truck association in Tahan, Sagaing Division, the Burmese troops constantly abduct their vehicles whenever they want.

" Zalat Phyu" truck association was formed with truck owners, mostly Chins from Falam and Tedim of Chin state and Tahan of Sagaing division. There are about 30 truck running every day. Since the beginning of their functioning, the Burmese military have been using " Zalat Hhyu" trucks without pay for whenever they want.

Most of the time, the truck association has to serve as porter for the Burmese army Light Infantry Battalion LIB 266 based in Haka, LIB 268 in Falam and LIB 269 in Tedim, in Chin

State. The Association has to transport army rations, arms and ammunitions and the Burmese soldiers whenever they travel.

They also have to carry their own food and the Burmese army does not provide anything to the driver or the truck association.

According to Khuma, he transported LIB 266 troops from Tio river, Indo-Burma border to Haka, the capital of Chin state. The military paid nothing for his service.

Khuma said that sometimes the Burmese troops abduct the truck to squeeze money from the association. In that case, the truck is usually released after letting the driver pay between 10,000 to 30,000 Kyats to the army.

Every vehicle coming from Kalay myo has to transport one quintal of sand without fail for the Buddhist pagoda being built at Lentlang, Falam township of Chin State. It is compulsory for every car. Besides, any vehicle passing through Manipur River has to donate 500 Kyats at the immigration gate.

Chin MP Arrested In Manipur State of India

September 30, 2001

The Chin Human Rights Organization CHRO received a report that Pu Thang Lian Pau, an elected MP in 1990 general elections in Burma from Zomi National Congress (ZNC) party was arrested by Indian Police in Manipur State of india on September 22, 2001.

CHRO is very much concerned about his safety. If he is deported to Burma, he will be severely tortured and sentence for long term imprisonment by the ruling military junta.

Pu Thang Lian Pau was elected from Tonzang constituency of Chin State in 1990 election.

Refugees:

[note: Lunglei in the second largest town in Mizoram State of India. There are about 50,000 Chin refugees in Mizoram State of India]

The Lunglei Times, 8th September 2001

Notification

All foreigners who live in Ramthar block without permission are hereby notified to leave the block by the end of August 2001. This is a notification from the Y.M.A, Ramthar Branch.

Defaulters cannot say anything against any possible action taken by the Y.M.A.
(Y.M.A Ramthar Branch)

DECLARATION OF SALEM Y.M.A

All house owners in Salem block are hereby informed not to lease their house to foreigners and non-Mizo who do not have Inner Line Permit.

All foreigners and non-Mizos without Inner Line Permit, who are staying in Salem block, are notified to leave Salam block by the 15th of this month.

sd/- C. Lalrimawia
Secretary, Branch YMA Salem

(Editorial Note: Young Mizo Association, YMA, is an influential and broad-based pressure group in Mizoram State, India)

Chin immigrants being evicted from Mizoram

Mizzima News

New Delhi, Sept. 27: Thousands of Chin nationals who are living in Lunglei District of Mizoram State are being asked to leave the place by the powerful local Mizo boaccording to some of them who fled from Mizoram to New Delhi.

A 48-year old Pu Pan Tu who arrived New Delhi this morning told Mizzima News that he had to leave his house in Lunglei District after local branch of Young Mizo Association (YMA) issued an eviction notice that all the "foreigners" who are staying illegally in the area have to leave their houses. He had been staying in Lunglei District for more than ten years.

In Lunglei district, five Quarters namely Ramthar Veng, Salem Veng, Electric Veng, Chanmari Veng and Farm Veng house many of the Chin nationals from Burma. Most of them survive on daily-wage odd jobs. Lunglei District is one of the eight districts of Mizoram State, which has about 400 km long international border with Burma.

On August 18 this year, Ramthar Veng Branch of the Young Mizo Association made a wide spread circular announcing that all the foreigners and non-Mizo living illegally in the locality have to leave their houses by the end of August and action will be taken against even those who receive them secretly. Mr. K. Lalhmingliana, secretary of the Ramthar Veng Branch of the YMA, signed the circular.

Similar eviction announcements were made in other adjoining localities. On September 8, Salem Branch of the Young Mizo Association made an announcement to the effect that all the foreigners and non-Mizos in the area have to leave their houses by September 15 and urged the house owners not to rent any one of those "illegal foreigners". Mr. C. Lalrimawia, secretary of the YMA Salem Branch, signed the announcement, which appeared on a daily

newspaper, Lunglei Times.

"Following the announcement, some YMA members came into our house and broke our dishes and threatened us not to dare to live anymore", recalled Pu Pan Tu who lived in Ramthar Veng with his family of five. "The worst is that YMA even does not allow us to bury those who died in the locality. We are forced to bury the body in far away villages. For us, there is no place even to bury our body after we die".

Pu Pan Tu, along with two closed friends, fled to New Delhi to seek support from their fellow countrymen, non-governmental organizations of India and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office in New Delhi for the plight of Chins in Mizoram. He worked as a joint secretary of National League for Democracy (NLD) in his San Baung Quarter in Matupi township of Chin State until March 1990 when he fled from the eminent arrest of the military authorities for his political involvement.

According to local people, there are over 5,000 Chin nationals from Burma living in Lunglei District alone and some NGOs estimates the total number of Burma immigrants living in the entire state to be around fifty thousands although the exact numbers are not available.

With the new drive against "foreigners" (Chins) in Lunglei District, some families have already left their homes to the far away villages and border areas in the past few days. Many of them rent new houses in villages, pretending to be Mizo nationals.

These Burma nationals who are mostly from Chin State of Burma left their native places due to deteriorating political and economic situation under the military regime.

Mizoram government officials and YMA leaders said that the overwhelming presence of the Chins in the state threatens the economic, political and societal stability of Mizoram. And it had tried several times in the past to deport these Chin immigrants to Burma but forced to stop deportation after outcry from NGOs and human rights organizations in India and abroad.

In an interview in July this year, Mizoram Chief Minister Mr. Zoramthanga once again expressed his worry over the presence of a large number of Chin nationals who are staying illegally in the state. He wants the border with Burma to be fenced to check further infiltration of immigrants into the State.

Moreover, Mizoram government claims that more than 75% of the crimes and drug-related activities in the state are being committed by people from Burma.

Facts & Arguments:

Human Rights Watch World Report: Burma

The Role of the International Community

The international community was still far from developing a common approach to continued human rights abuses in Burma. In March, fourteen governments were represented at a meeting in South Korea convened by the United Nations to discuss how to advance Burma's political development. They included the U.S., Australia, Canada, and several E.U. and

Southeast Asian states, as well as the U.N. secretariat and the World Bank, but no new and coherent strategy emerged.

United Nations

In April, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Malaysian diplomat Razali Ismail as his new special envoy for Myanmar, replacing Alvaro de Soto. Razali made his first visit to Rangoon from June 30 to July 3 when he met with SPDC officials, NLD leaders, and foreign diplomats. During his second visit on October 9-12, he met with Aung San Suu Kyi and Senior Gen. Than Shwe, the first time any special envoy had been able to do so.

The U.N. General Assembly and U.N. Commission on Human Rights passed consensus resolutions in November 1999 and April 2000, respectively, expressing concern over human rights abuses in Burma and the ongoing political stalemate. In reports in January and August, U.N. Special Rapporteur Rajsoomer Lallah focused on the lack of respect for civil and political rights, obstacles in Burma to the realization of economic, social, and cultural rights, and abuses faced by vulnerable groups. The SPDC refused to admit Lallah to Burma for the fifth year in a row.

United States

The U.S. government position on Burma did not change. On May 19, President Clinton renewed sanctions on new private investment in Burma. On June 19, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rejected a Massachusetts state law, which would have penalized companies investing in Burma, ruling that Congress had preempted it by establishing a sanctions policy. In another case brought by fifteen Burmese villagers, a U.S. federal court ruled on September 1 that Unocal corporation and its partners knew of and benefited from forced labor on the Yadana natural gas pipeline between Burma and Thailand, but that there was insufficient evidence that Unocal could control the abuses, and that the court therefore lacked jurisdiction over the case. The plaintiffs planned to appeal to the federal appeals court in San Francisco.

Two U.S. government reports sharply criticized the SPDC. In February, a Labor Department report concluded that forced labor, denial of the right to organize, and forced relocation remained pervasive, while abusive child labor was not uncommon. In September, the State Department announced that Burma was one of a number of countries that maintained serious restrictions on religious freedom.

On August 31, both Vice-President Al Gore and Secretary of State Madeline Albright publicly condemned the SPDC for its treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD members and called for the SPDC to guarantee their freedom of movement and other fundamental human rights. In his September 6 address to the U.N. Millennium Summit, President Clinton denounced the SPDC for confining Aung San Suu Kyi to her home. On September 11, the State Department released a joint statement signed by Albright and ten other women foreign ministers condemning the SPDC's violation of the basic human rights of NLD members.

European Union

The European Union (E.U.) tightened sanctions against Burma's leaders while renewing engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Burma is a member. On April 10, the E.U. strengthened its common position by prohibiting the sale, supply, and export to Burma of equipment which could be used for internal repression or terrorism, and by freezing the funds of important government functionaries and publishing their names. On September 21, the E.U. issued a statement of concern about the treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi and called for the SPDC to lift all restrictions on her freedom of movement. The E.U. went ahead, however, with plans for the first meeting of E.U. and ASEAN foreign ministers since Burma joined ASEAN in 1997, scheduled at this writing to be held in December in Vientiane, Laos. Switzerland and Liechtenstein in October placed sanctions on Burma in line with the E.U. common position. On October 6, the E.U. presidency issued a declaration in support of the U.N. special envoy's mission.

Japan

Japan continued its two-track policy towards Burma, urging democratization and respect for human rights and suspending any new aid until there were "visible signs" of progress, while also maintaining political ties with Rangoon. On November 28, 1999, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi met with Senior Gen. Than Shwe at the Manila summit of leaders from ASEAN, China, South Korea, and Japan. His meeting was followed a few days later by a "personal" visit to Burma by former Japanese premier Ryutaro Hashimoto. Both leaders told the SPDC that Japan would not resume official development assistance absent visible political and economic reform. Hashimoto also recommended that the SPDC re-open all Burmese universities. In late June, Japan sponsored a two-day workshop on economic reform in Rangoon, originally scheduled when Obuchi and Senior Gen. Than Shwe met in Manila in November 1999. No new Official Development Assistance (ODA) loans or grants were announced during the workshop, though it was widely viewed as a possible step towards resuming bilateral aid. Some Japanese companies-including a fertilizer manufacturer and Toyota car dealer-pulled out of Burma during the year due to the difficulties they encountered operating there. In September, the Japanese government protested the virtual house arrest of the NLD executive committee.

In multilateral forums, Japan sought to dilute or deflect actions critical of the SPDC. It voted against the resolution on forced labor at the ILO and did not cosponsor the Burma resolution adopted by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

Australia

Australia sought to cultivate greater respect for human rights through a long-term strategy of engagement with Burmese authorities on human rights. Urging the creation of a Burmese national human rights commission, the Australian government financed two human rights workshops in July for mid-level Burmese civil servants and a third in October. On August 10, at meetings of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, the SPDC reiterated its intent to establish a commission. Not everyone within the Australian

government had confidence in the SPDC's rhetorical commitment to change, however. In a July 21 cable to Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, Ambassador Trevor Wilson wrote that the SPDC was "determined to remain in power at all cost, allowing only marginal reforms in the economy and society." The Australian government criticized Rangoon over the treatment of the NLD but did not reassess its existing policy.

Association of South East Asian Nations

Thailand broke with the ASEAN position of non-interference in the internal affairs of member nations by abstaining from the vote on the ILO resolution criticizing Burma (all other ASEAN members voted against), and, in August, by criticizing the SPDC's treatment of Suu Kyi and the NLD. Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan said Burma's actions could scuttle the planned December meeting of ASEAN and E.U. foreign ministers. In September, the Thai government called for the ASEAN troika-the association's present and immediate past and future chairpersons-to address the situation in Burma. Vietnam, the current chair, refused to activate the troika, claiming the issue was a Burmese internal affair.

World Bank

The World Bank in a report in late 1999 linked Burma's poor economic performance to poor governance. The bank continued to deny loans to Burma and refused to consider sending a high level delegation to Rangoon unless the SPDC affirmed in writing its commitment to carrying out significant economic reforms.

Source: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/06/burma0612.htm>

Chins Welcome Long-Awaited Admission To World Body

Courier News Service: July 20, 2001

THE HAGUE - Chin people throughout the world have warmly welcomed their admission to membership in the Unrepresented Nations' and People's Organization.

The decision to admit the Chins, as well as the Khmer-Krom people of Cambodia, was announced by the steering committee of the UNPO on July 15. The Chin application, under consideration for more than five years, was made by the Chin National Front, a political group based on the Chin-Mizoram border.

The UNPO, headquartered in the Netherlands, now has 52 members representing over a 100 million people worldwide. In the Asia-Pacific region alone, it claims 17 member nations including the Chins, the Karennis, the Mons, the Nagas and the Shan state peoples who live within the borders of the Union of Burma.

It is estimated that there are more than a million and a half Chins living in western Burma and scattered in exile in other parts of the world. The Chin National Front, headed by Thomas Thangno will be represented in meetings of the UNPO by (entrusted representative), Zo Tum Hmung, who said he looked forward to working closely with the international body.

The Chin people have long jealously guarded their claim to autonomy and self-rule in the area of Burma in which they live. But in 1948 their leaders joined with those of the Kachin, Shan, Karenni and the peoples of central Burma in signing the Panglong Agreement that cleared the way for the formation of the Union of Burma and independence from British rule.

Successive military regimes in Burma have since stamped out any overt sign of Chin political nationalism, locked up hundreds in prison and driven thousands more to seek exile or to join in armed revolt against Rangoon domination.

Pu Lian Uk, exiled Member of Parliament for Haka constituency, welcomed the news of UNPO membership, saying that it reached beyond the CNF to all of the Chin people. He warned that any attempt to annihilate the distinctiveness of the Chins and other minority peoples of Burma would be met with continuing resistance. Any future constitution of the Union of Burma could only succeed if it was based on genuine federalism and adherence to the articles of the Panglong Accord, he said.

The stated political objectives of the Chin National Front include the attainment of self-determination and democracy within a genuine federal republic of the Union of Burma.

Sai Wansai of the steering committee of the UNPO told the Burma Courier that the organization does not involve itself in the goal setting of national member organizations. He said the UNPO has members with political programs ranging from cultural autonomy to outright independence.

Congratulations to the Chin people

By: Lian Uk

Congratulations to the Chin people every where the world over for the admission of the Chin National Front (CNF) to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)!. The admission is not only to the Chin National Front as an organization, but it is the admission of the Chinland and its people which is for all the Chin people as a whole, the synonymous names of which in some of their native dialects are also Laimi, Zomi etc. Our exceeding thanks for this is also to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization General Assembly and their Steering Committee.

The territory known today as Chin State was an independent territory outside the Burmese kingdom till the British annexed it in the 1890s. It was directly ruled by the British governor from Rangoon through the chieftains of the territory outside the provincial government of British Burma even after its annexation until Burma independence in 1948.

When the British government was to give independence to the Burmese kingdom, the Chin territory annexed to the British empire had also a full right to become an independent sovereign state as it was not annexed as a part of the Burmese kingdom and as the Chin

people are a distinct people much different from the Burmese or Burman in language, custom, culture and in their way of life.

The Chin Chieftains who ruled the Chin territory under the British Governor signed the historic Panglong Agreement with other nationalities on February 12, 1947 to achieve speedy freedom from any colonialism including British colonialism. February 12, the day on which the Panglong Agreement was signed, has been since then, observed as the Union day every year up to this day in the whole Union of Burma.

February 20th, the day which marked the change of despotic and aristocratic ruling system to elected system in democratic process in the Chin State since 1948, has also been recognized by the successive governments of the Union of Burma as 'the Chin National Day' recognizing their distinct national identity as a people .

But the Constitution of the Union of Burma 1947 after the assassination of the founding fathers of the Union made the Burmese people of the previous Burmese kingdom replacing the British colonialism. Thus the rest of the Panglong Agreement signatory nationalities have been made colony territories of the Burmans betraying the vision of the founding fathers of the Union led by General Aung San whom with his cabinet ministers were assassinated on July 19, 1947 before completing the Union constitution.

So the constitutional government of the Union in the Union Parliament had agreed to amend the 1947 Union Constitution in federal form in early 1962 according to the vision of the founding fathers of the Union. But a group of the armed forces led by General Ne Win overthrew the constitutional government and abolished parliamentary system with the Constitution of Union of Burma 1947 in the night of March 2, 1962. Ever since General Ne Win ruled the country as a despot dictator directly or indirectly leading to all these violation of human rights causing to all sort of sufferings and misery to the population of the whole country.

The Chin people every where in the Chin State joined the pro-democracy uprising against the military regime in 1988 to end the military dictatorship and to restore democracy and justice in the whole country. The military regime therefore occupied the Chin State with military force against the will of the people in the Chin State.

It was because of the American Baptist missions since 1899 that the Chin State today with its overwhelming Christian population in it becomes the only Christian State in the 14 provinces of the Union. The Chin people therefore in their Christian organizations and institutions are practicing democracy system as their way of life. The Burmese military regime therefore accusing the Chin people being a Christian State to be pro western or pro American has made the Chin State as a military occupied territory making the situation in the Chin state to be an uninhabitable place for the Chin people by giving them all sort of troubles by killing people for no good reasons at random extra judicially, raping, looting, robing and ransacking their properties and homes; by conscripting all men and women to forced labor with out giving them enough food and drinks giving no time to work for them. Conscript Chin women to force labor are raped by the armed forces of the ruling military regime. They were arrested and tortured for no good reasons at random in many ways and treat them like animals.

These are all the persecution launched by the Burmese military regime to drive all the Chin people from their homeland to wipe them out to their extinction as a people. So those who

could find ways fled the country in tens of thousands by all means to neighboring countries and there are now thousands of Chin refugees in the neighboring countries and around the world in Europe and in North America.

They are all stateless people and their life in neighboring countries is very miserable with no safety to be arrested by the authority concerned at random to be sent back to Burma in the hands of the Burmese military regime where they are tortured and imprisoned even to their death.

Since this persecution launched on the Chin people combine the general persecution of racial, religious and political, the individual Chin people are all the persecuted people not because any faults of their own. But they are persecuted just because they are Chin ethnic people and are Christians and believe and practice democracy in their religious organizations and institutions.

The instability of the Burmese leadership mentality in this way can not assure the other fellow union constituent ethnic nationalities for the security of each existence as a people that the Burmese or Burman are overwhelmingly majority constituent nationalities of the union to the rest of the union nationalities which make them aggressive on the nationalities of lesser number in population.

The insistence of the military regime State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) up to now to have power in the Union legislature and civil administration and the constitution to be in unitary form is a sign which is greatly dangerous for the union constituent minority nationalities to continue on to be in the same sovereign independent state with them(the Burmese) in any form.

It has been a long history now that the Burmese like this SPDC cannot trust the minority nationalities. The reason could be no other than cowardliness. As a matter of fact, several nationalities can truly be more developed than the Burmese if they are free to develop their respective own territories.

So if this Burmese majority people are ever trying to annihilate the lesser number nationalities in population to their extinction as distinct peoples like what is going on under this military dictatorship, it will be a great loss to the minorities people themselves and to the world as their distinct nationalities in their languages, culture and literature and the great contribution they could made to the world will be totally wiped out with them.

It will only be safe for all the minority union nationalities to re join the Union with the Burmese or Burman nationality only if the ethnic Burmese majority, as a guarantee to equality to all, are willing retaining secession clause for them and for other union constituencies according to the 1947 Union constitution in the future constitution of the Union of Burma to be in true federal form.

Then only will the nationalities whose populations are lesser in number than the Burmese or Burman will be safe to reform the Union with the Burmese or Burman in federal or confederate form of the union.

But the Burmese people like the SPDC who now believe getting the upper hand to the minorities will be far from this concession. It is now also the best chance for the minorities as

they are now free to establish their own sovereign independent state in their respective definite territories to be internationally recognized as there is nothing that binds them together with the Burman in the absence of the Panglong Agreement itself and the Constitution of Union of Burma 1947 which reflected the chore of the Panglong Agreement.

So it is the last resort for all the nationalities other than the Burmese at present to seek the most possible shelter to the fellow Un represented Nations and Peoples in the UNPO to which the Chin State and its people has been admitted.

Thus the admission is being most welcome and the Chin people deserves being congratulated for it.

Ethnic Groups In Burma

A peaceful and democratic Burma requires a flexible accommodation among the country's diverse ethnic groups. Without lasting resolution to questions of local autonomy and national power-sharing, rebellions that have flared and simmered in Burma's borderlands for over five decades cannot be resolved. And without peace, there is little chance for grassroots economic development that could help reduce the currently massive illicit drug production and trafficking in many impoverished ethnic minority areas.

The lack of a reliable census makes it impossible to more than roughly estimate the composition of Burma's ethnic mosaic or its total population. Some experts suggest existing population data is skewed, exaggerating the number of Burman, who are the largest single ethnic group. According to available statistics, they comprise about two-thirds of Burma's approximately 50 million people and dominate the army and government. Most of Burma's ethnic minorities inhabit areas along the country's mountainous frontiers. Karen and Shan groups comprise about 10% each of the total population, while Akha, Chin, Chinese, Danu, Indian, Kachin, Karenni, Kayan, Kokang, Lahu, Mon, Naga, Palaung, Pao, Rakhine, Rohingya, Tavoyan, and Wa peoples each constitute 5% or less of the population.

Burma has experienced a long history of migration and conflict among various ethnic groups along fluid frontiers, which were finally fixed only during British imperial rule from the 1820s to 1948. Under British control, diverse peoples far from Rangoon were brought under at least nominal central administration. Yet many areas remained effectively self-ruled, with only a thin veneer of imperial oversight. During World War II, while many Burman joined Japan's fight against British forces, many minority ethnic groups remained loyal to Britain. This reflected a genuine desire for independence on the part of both groups: Burmans struggling to be free of the British colonial yoke, and ethnic minorities wishing to escape Burman domination.

The Union of Burma became independent in 1948 only after extensive negotiations led by General Aung San, who convinced most ethnic minority groups to join the new union. The Panglong Agreement of 1947 outlined minority rights and specifically gave the Shan and Karenni peoples the option to secede from the union a decade after independence. Yet these constitutional guarantees were never fully respected. Almost immediately upon independence, Burma was wracked by a series of brutal ethnic wars that continue in varying intensity to this day.

The principal demands of Burma's ethnic minorities are to gain genuine autonomy for their home areas and to achieve a significant voice in the affairs of the country as a whole. Few

demand total independence as their ultimate goal. Since its 1988 coup, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (or SLORC, renamed the State Peace and Development Council in November 1997), has negotiated cease-fires with most armed ethnic opposition groups and waged fierce assaults against others. Muslim Rohingya people in southwestern Burma were targeted in 1991, and over 250,000 fled to neighboring Bangladesh. A new wave of attacks was reported in late 2000.

At least 140,000 more Karen, Karenni, and Mon people from eastern Burma are refugees in Thailand following intense Burmese army offensives since 1984. Many Shan people have been forced to flee army assaults as well. In several areas, there are massive numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), mostly villagers who have fled their homes to escape conscription as military porters or other abuses. The suffering of Burma's estimated 600,000 IDPs is often far worse than refugees in neighboring countries, who receive at least some outside aid.

In many areas, uneasy truces prevail. Among the earlier cease-fires concluded were with ethnic Wa and Kokang armies, which until 1987 served under the Burmese Communist Party. The Burmese army's agreements with these groups permit opium cultivation and the right to trade without interference. The result has been a sharp increase in heroin production and smuggling from Burma and a concurrent worldwide rise in heroin use and addiction. These groups are now also engaged in large-scale illicit manufacture of methamphetamines. Some other ethnic opposition organizations, particularly the Kachin Independence Organization and the Karen National Union, have taken strong stands against drug production and trafficking. The present junta has exploited divisions within and among ethnic groups to bolster its rule. In 2000, the relocation of thousands of Wa farmers into traditional Shan areas has raised tensions and sparked fighting between those groups. The United Nationalities League for Democracy, an umbrella group for non-Burman political parties formed after the 1988 democracy movement, was revived in January 2001 by exiled politicians. A draft constitution was ratified and executive members were elected. These parties won a combined 65 seats in the 1990 elections and have a strong claim to political legitimacy. The National Democratic Front (NDF), another coalition of ethnic groups, is also striving to promote common positions among ethnic minorities. Prospects for a democratic, prosperous, and peaceful Burma are dim without a just and amicable settlement of the country's ethnic conflicts. The junta's proposed new constitution does little to acknowledge ethnic groups' grievances. Burma's democratic opposition has urged serious efforts to address these issues, as ethnic reconciliation and cooperation will be a major challenge for any future Burmese government.

Other Section

Statement of Condolence

Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) is deeply saddened and grieved by the sudden and untimely passing of Pu John Mantling Cinzah on 3rd October 2001 at George Washington Hospital.

Pu John Mangtling Cinzah has been a member of Advisory Board of CHRO, and had been giving us unwavering support throughout the most difficult times. He had been helping us with editing Rhododendron Newsletter since its initial stage of publication.

A Secretary of Parliamentary Affairs of the Union Government of Burma, Pu John Mangtling Cinzah was one of the first Chin nationalist to courageously lead resistance against the military junta, and firmly stood to defend justice, democracy and human rights in Burma.

His uncompromising belief in freedom and justice, his revolutionary leadership, and his selfless sacrifices for freedom, democracy and human rights have inspired us, the succeeding generations to follow the path that he had laid up.

We offer our most profound respect and honor to him as a Chin nationalist, who stood steadfast in his belief in freedom until his last breath. His death is an irreplaceable loss to all of us who admire his conviction and contribution to the cause of freedom and humanity.

The example that he had set for us will always exhort and remind us to continue the struggle until we attain freedom, peace, justice and human rights to which Pu Mangtling Cinzah had dedicated his entire life.

Chin Human Rights Organization & Rhododendron News Group

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Chin Human Rights Organization

(Rhododendron News Bulletin)

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