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Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) is legally registered as not for Profit organization in Canada with branch offices in India, Thailand and the United States

CHRO aims:

- To promote Human Rights and democratic principles among Chin people
- To empower the people, especially the victims of human rights violations, who have been suffering so long under the Burmese military regime;
- To provide accurate and reliable information about human rights situation in Chin state and western part of Burma to the international community.

In line with its aims and objectives, CHRO is available to conference (locally or internationally), Churches, or other groups large or small, for speaking engagements with an emphasis on topics such as the following, among others:

- Human rights and political situation among the Chin people and in Burma as a whole
- Religious persecution against Chin Christians in Burma
- Humanitarian aids & sustainable development among the Chin People
- Refugees
- Forced Labor

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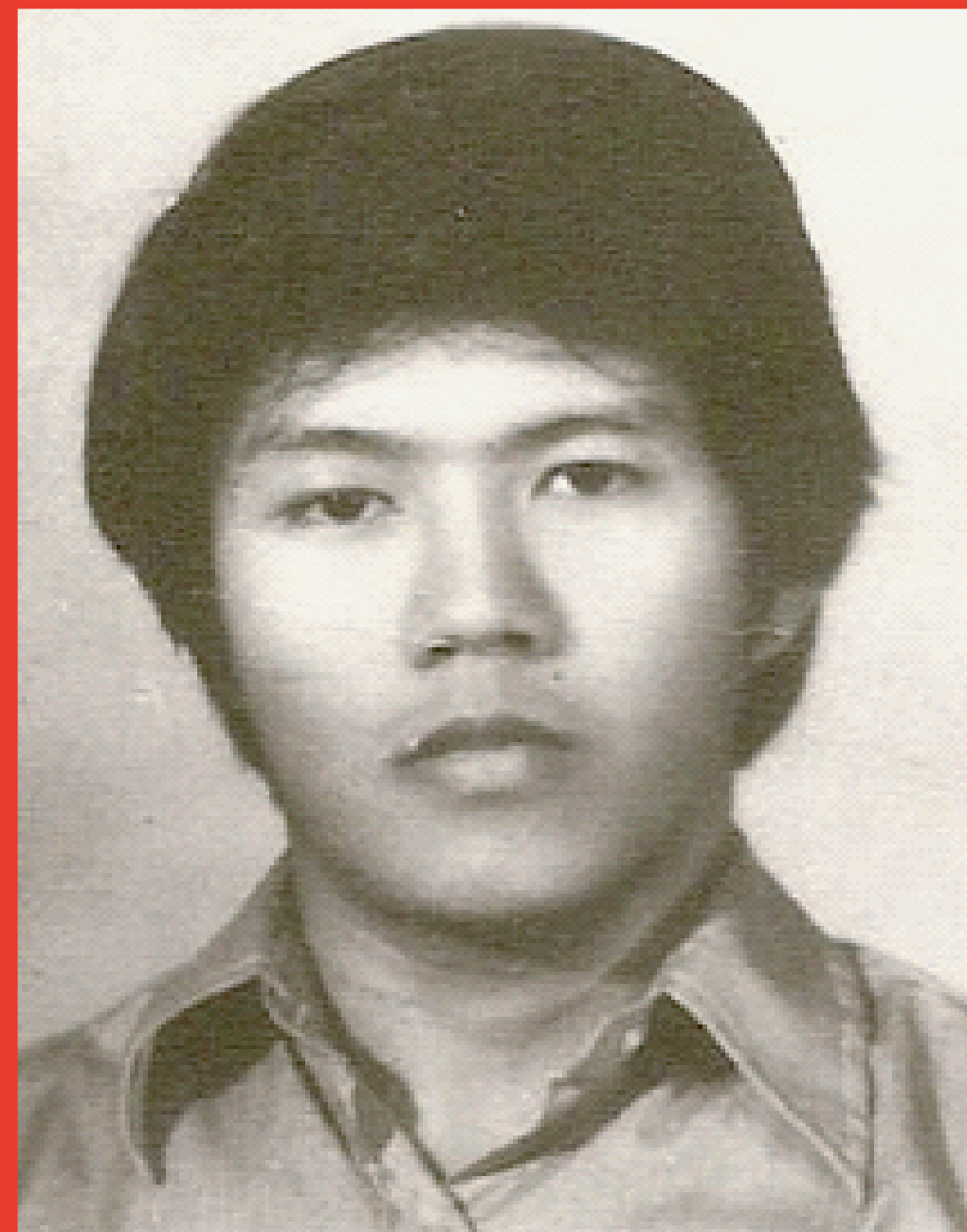
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Volume XII. No. III. May-June 2009

www.chro.ca

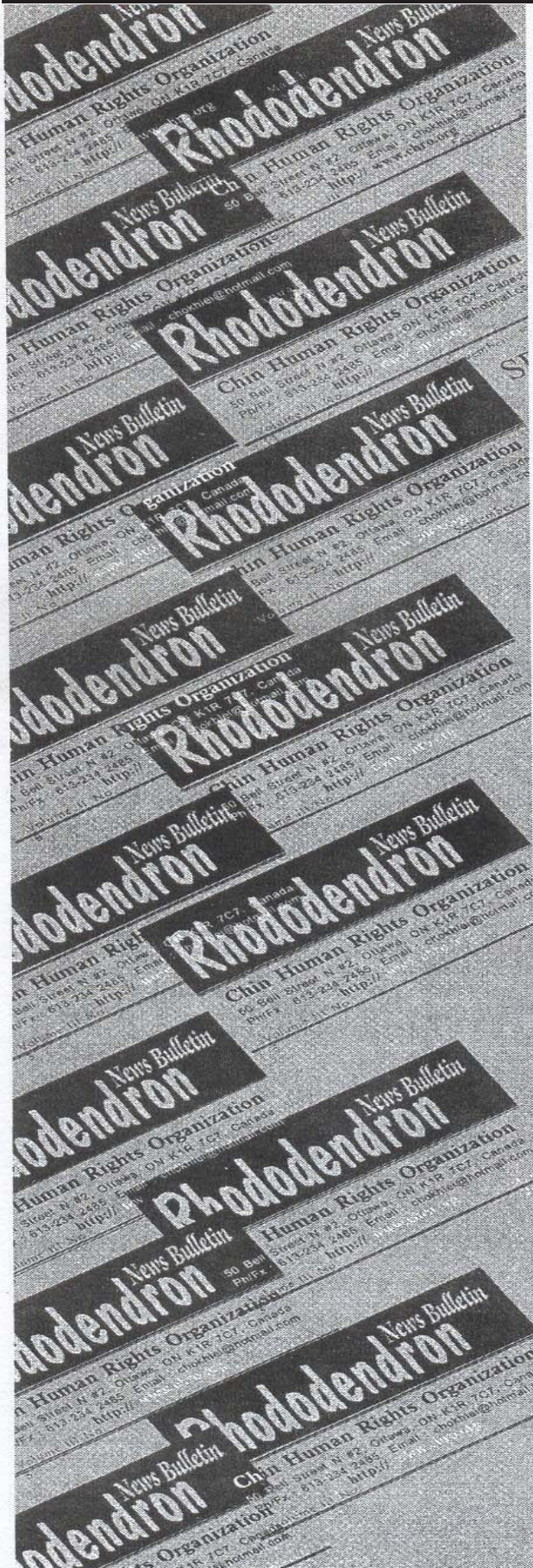
Rhododendron

Chin Human Rights Organization



Tribute to Salai Tin Maung Oo

The only student leader sentence to death by Burma's military government
A legendary hero among students, democracy and human rights lovers across Burma



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THE WORLD MUST NOT WAIT TILL THE NEXT JUNE TO ACT ON BURMA

June is a month of significance for the struggle for human rights, social justice and peace in Burma. It's the birth month of the country's pro-democracy leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi who turned 64 on the 19th inside a prison cell in Burma's most notorious Insein prison. Outrage and sympathy greeted her latest detention from world leaders across the globe. The world's only Nobel Peace Prize recipient under detention, Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for 13 of the past 19 years.

Less known but perhaps one of the most important days in Burma's modern struggle for freedom occurred on June 26, 1976 when a young student leader was secretly executed by the regime of General Ne Win. He was only 25 years old when he was hanged by Burma's Socialist regime. The only student leader and political prisoner ever to be officially executed, Salai Tin Maung Oo, a Chin by ethnicity is widely considered a martyr and the modern symbol of resistance against injustice in Burma.

For the Chin people, this year's June brought another sad but memorable event: the death of Rev. Dr. Robert G. Johnson, also widely known among the Chin as Siangbawipa, the last American missionary to the Chin Hills who helped shape the modern societal and religious landscape of the Chin people.

June 2009 also represents a significant turn in international interest on Burma. The high profile visit by the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, at a minimum, has rekindled international attention on situations in Burma. But in the absence of concrete results, the world's top diplomat's visit was widely regarded as a failure, especially in light of the fact that he was not allowed to see Burma's pro-democracy leader and most popular political prisoner Aung San Suu Kyi.

But beneath all that are immediately visible from outside the country is the continuation of widespread human rights violations, poverty, hunger, corruptions and failed policies that still serve to enslave the entire Burmese populace.

As this issue of *Rhododendron* once again shows, human rights situations in Chin State and the regions of western Burma still continue to deteriorate. Arbitrary measures such as extortion by military personnel and government officials, confiscation of private properties, prohibition of such fundamental rights as freedom of religion; the use of forced labor etc. continue unabated. The military regime is still turning a blind eye to mass starvation in Chin State that has caused tremendous suffering and exodus of hundreds of families from Chin State.

In other ethnic regions of Burma, especially in the eastern part of the country such as the Karen State, there has been an escalation in violence and military offensives that have displaced thousands of ethnic civilians, as well as allegations of continuing practice of genocide of ethnic minorities at the hands of Burmese military.

The questions of respect for human rights, good governance, poverty alleviation and development in Burma are all interrelated issues that must be addressed in a holistic manner and not separately as the military regime has long advocated.

The month of June 2009 brought both memories of the past and hopes for the future. But the dreams of the past and hopes for the future for Burma can only be realized only if there is a realization, and more importantly, a firm recognition by the international community that a fundamental change in the political system is necessary. And that future is unlikely to realize under the staged elections in 2010, which simply is a product of the widely discredited constitutional referendum of May 2008.

The world must not wait until the next June to firmly act on Burma.

ARMY ORDERED FORCED LABOR FOR STORM DEVASTATED COMMUNITY

8 May 2009: Chin villagers who were busy repairing their houses after a devastating strong wind left many houses in Vuangtu Village damaged were forced away from their work in order to repair an army camp by Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion (268).

On the night of 17 April 2009, strong winds swept through Vuangtu Village of Thantlang Township, destroying 10 houses along with an army camp in the village.

Villagers were gathering the next day to repair the damaged houses in their community when the Burma Army ordered them to repair the army camp instead.

“Villagers were forced to divide up into groups so we could rotate work between working for the army and repairing the houses that were destroyed in the community,” said a local villager.

ARMY CONSCRIPTS PORTERS AT WEDDING CELEBRATION

7 May 2009: A wedding celebration at Congthia Village of Thantlang Township was disrupted when Patrol Column Commander of Light Infantry Battalion (268) based in Vuangtu Village demanded porters to carry army supplies, a local villager told Chin Human Rights Organization.

On 8 April 2009, by order of the commanding officer (name unknown), the headman of Congthia Village quickly arranged 10 persons and 20 horses to porter military equipments and ration supplies to Hriphi Village, some 12 miles away. Ten villagers attending the wedding ceremony had to transport army goods without pay for two times.

USDA USES FORCED LABOR, SQUANDERS MONEY FROM CHARITY

5 June 2009: Local members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a civilian wing of the military junta, are accused of misusing funds donated by a charitable organization and using civilian forced labor to construct a road in southern Chin State.

A 35-mile road construction project started in early 2009 and supported by Rangoon-based charity I Love Myanmar, between Moe Ching Ding (Kanpalet Township) and Cin Dwe village (Paletwa Township) is at the center of allegations of misappropriation of donated funds and the use of civilian forced labor involving members of the local USDA.

According to residents in the area, the USDA, which was entrusted with the project by I Love Myanmar, has been forcing civilians to construct the road without pay and keeping the money intended for labor costs. The USDA reportedly hired only one bulldozer and forced civilians to clear ways for the machine.

“It was in fact the I Love Myanmar who donated the funds. But the USDA is now acting as if it were theirs. Saying that everyone has a responsibility for the development of our areas, they forced civilians to work without pay where human labor is needed,” said a local elder now engaged in the construction.

Moe Chin Ding has about 70 households and Cin Dwe has only about 50 households. The road will cut through four villages in between when completed. Groups of civilians are providing forced labor on a rotating basis.

CHILD LABOR ON THE RISE IN CHIN STATE

25 May 2009: An increasing number of Chin children have been employed as child laborers in tea shops and other business since the later part of 2008, according to a Chin man interviewed by Chin Human Rights Organization.

“Employers particularly like children because they can order them around and make them do all the work with little pay,” he said.

In “Sungseeya Teashop” in Mindat Town, for example, six children are being employed to work long hours and at the behest of the owner. They are reportedly only paid 2000 Kyats a month on top of meals.

“We get up at 4:00 in the morning and prepare everything before the baker arrives. We never have enough sleep,” says a 12 year-old worker.

The child laborer says that the employer feeds them two meals a day and they work from 4:00 in the morning till 10:00 at night. He says that if the employer punishes them by refusing them meals if they are accused of slacking during work hours. Another child worker says “If we get sick and could not work, the employer would cut our salary. And if we made a mistake he would beat us.”

Since the start of the food crisis in Chin State, children from impoverished families have taken up whatever jobs they could find, including teashops, quarries and other construction works. Some children are engaged in selling roots and vegetables they gathered from the forests.

FORCED LABOR DISPLACED 15 FAMILIES

18 June 2009: No longer unable to endure the various oppressive treatments by the Burma Army, 15 families from southern Chin State have relocated to lowland Burma in 2009, according to the head of one of the migrant families.

Most of the relocated families are from Rezua sub-Township in southern Chin State who complained of incessant forced labor, portering, confiscation of livestock and properties and various mistreatments by members of the Burma Army, as well as a severe shortage of food that hit Chin State since 2007.

“We had our livestock and properties confiscated at will in our own home, got dragged away for porter services while we struggle to survive during the times of the worst food crisis” says one of the relocated person.

But the misery continues for the 15 relocated families in the lowland.

“We sold off everything we owned in order to seek a new beginning outside of Chin State. But we still have to struggle just to make a survival all over again. There is a language barrier and we no longer have our own house to live in like we used to,” he says.

Rezua was granted a sub-township status in 2007. Since then forced labor and other oppressive treatments by the Burma Army against civilians have been daily occurrence in the area. Matupi-based Burma Army Light Infantry Division (304) is currently stationed at Rezua.

FREQUENT RENEWAL OF FAMILY REGISTRATION A RIP-OFF BY IMMIGRATION STAFF

5 May 2009: An order requiring every rural household in Thanglang Township to renew their family registration many times a year has villagers suspect a rip-off scheme by immigration staff. Each household in the nearly 90 villages in Thantlang Township is paying 500 Kyats each time a mandatory renewal is ordered on their family registration papers.

During the month of April, a team of immigration staff headed by officer Tluang Nawl visited one village after another in Thantlang Township and ordered a mandatory renewal of their family registration papers, charging 500 Kyats per household. Each Village Council is to pay for any households unable to afford the fee from money pooled together by villagers, but households must pay it back with an interest.

The latest round of renewal is the first in 2009. However, in 2008, households had had to renew their family registration two to three times, each time paying a fee of 500 Kyats. It is still unsure if there would be another renewal before the end of 2009.

The frequent renewal is having adverse economic impacts on Chin villagers who are now struggling with a severe shortage of food.

SPDC COLLECTS TAX FROM SELF-SUPPORT WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

22 May 2009: Municipal authorities in Mindat Township have been collecting tax from a community in Lalawngtui Village who had constructed a drinking water supply system in 2003 through a self-support project.

A villager who cannot be identified said that the municipal staffs are threatening the community with legal action if they did not pay the taxes. The threats include taking the community to court for ‘illegally receiving foreign funds’ to construct the project.

“It is absolutely unfair that the authorities would collect tax from a poor community like us. We built this drinking water supply system entirely on our own without any support from the government,” he complained.

“The authorities are now saying that if we failed to pay the taxes before the deadline, they would take us to court for not complying with government orders and crime against the State,” he continued.

Lalawngtui village has about 200 households. According to the residents, in the 50 years since the village founding, they never had had to pay similar taxes to the government. But only since the military regime took over power did they ever hear of municipal tax.

EXCESSIVE TOLLS COLLECTED FROM VEHICLE OWNERS

13 June 2009: Owners of vehicle owners servicing passengers on the Indo-Burma trade route of Kalay-Tio roads are being required to pay an excessive amount of money, Chin Human Rights Organization has learned.

Out of the 13 villages and one town along the Kalay-Tio Indo-Burma official trade route, there are 12 toll collection gates where vehicle owners servicing passengers and goods must pay the road toll. Payment made at each gate ranges from 1000 to a maximum of 5,000 Kyats.

“We have already paid taxes on the vehicle on top of all these so-called road tolls. But it is the police and soldiers to whom we paid the money at the entrance of almost all the villages along the route,” said one driver who cannot be identified by name. “It totals up to as much as 40,000 to 50,000 Kyats each trip,” he continued.

In early 2009, the Motor Vehicle Association in Kalay requested a reduction of toll fee to the authorities. The authorities responded by increasing the number of toll collection gates from 9 to 12.

TRAIN TRAVELERS BURDENED BY CORRUPT PRACTICE BY SECURITY PERSONNEL

15 June 2009: Widespread corruptions among police personnel responsible for train transportation security have caused increasing burdens for passengers travelling on train servicing Kalay-Gangaw-Pakokku railroads.

The Kalay-Gangaw-Pakokku train ticket is not sold by seats, but on a first-come fist-served basis. But policemen acting as security personnel have been illegal selling the seats to passengers who did not have a ticket, on a black market price. Those who paid as much as 1000 Kyats to the police are given their preferred seats by forcibly removing other passengers who took the seats first.

“I was forcibly removed from the seat that was rightfully mine according to the first-come first-served rule. But when the policeman threatened me, I had no choice but to give away my seat to the next person who had paid him money,” said one passenger.

The first-come first-serve rule was introduced in 2004 as the train usually overloaded with passengers.

The train servicing the Kalay-Gangaw-Pakokku railroads has only seven cars and the full capacity allowed is only 100 people. But it usually became overloaded with as many as 140 passengers. Five people have reportedly died due to overcrowding as of the beginning of 2009.

FARMERS FORCED TO CULTIVATE SUMMER SEASON RICE

16 June 2009: Farmers in Saw Township of Mergui Division are ordered to a type of rice that can be cultivated in the summer season or prepared to have their farmlands confiscated as State property.

A farmer in the area affected by the new order told Chin Human Rights Organization that the all farmers in Saw Township were summoned to the Township Peace and Development Council office on March 2, where the new order was announced.

“The secretary of the Township PDC said that the authorities would inspect all the farmlands to ensure compliance. He said that non-compliance will result in the farmland being confiscated as property of the State” the farmer reported.

“We haven’t had much rain this year. We ran out of water in the middle of us plowing the fields. I have a 12-acre field and I don’t know what would happen to me. Without water, we would just lose all the rice seeds and labor invested in plowing the field,” he explained.

A similar summer-season rice cultivation project being implemented in Gangaw Township under the supervision of an army battalion is proved to be a total failure due to the lack of rain this year.

TOWN RESIDENTS STILL WITHOUT RUNNING WATER DESPITE HAVING PAID FEES

20 June 2009: Residents of Gangaw, Mergui Division are still without running water, three years after the Township Municipal Office had collected 5000 Kyats from each household to build a water supply system.

The Municipal Office began collecting funds from the public in 2006 in order to build a water supply system. But three years after the project had begun the people of Gangaw are still without running water. And the public is outraged that there has been no visible progress on the project so far.

“We paid 5000 Kyats so we could have running water.. It’s been three years since the Municipal Office had collected the money from us, but nothing gets done to date,” says one Gangaw resident.

Located in Mergui Division and adjacent to Chin State, Gangaw has a population of roughly 100,000 residents. Known for the scarcity of water especially during summer times, Gangaw residents rely on Myit Tha Myit River for drinking, cooking and cleaning. As a result, there are widespread diseases and skin infections among the children each year.

FUNDS COLLECTED FOR DAM CONSTRUCTION

22 June 2009: For each of the past five years, residents in Gangaw and Hti Lin Townships of Mergui Division have been paying thousands of Kyats to local authorities to support the construction of an irrigation dam on Myit Tha Myit, an area resident reported.

According to one area resident, the public is starting to wonder why the authorities are still collecting money for the last five years since the dam construction project has a state-sanctioned budget.

Residents of each ward in the two Townships have been paying 50,000 Kyats per year for the last five years towards the dam project, regardless of the size of people living in a particular ward.

“There are just over 200 residents in our ward and we still have to pay 50,000 Kyats. The public is getting tired of having to pay for something they have yet to see the results for. But of course the authorities wouldn’t care a thing about it,” said a Chairman of the Ward Peace and Development Council in Gangaw.

Meanwhile, the authorities are yet to construct a bridge near Taung Sakhan Village in Gangaw Township despite the fact that funds were collected from the public a year ago.

A five-year project, the irrigation dam on Myit Tha Myit, when completed, is projected to supply water to more than 10,000 acres of farmlands.

OIL WORKERS ASKED TO PAY TAX

24 June 2009: Oil workers in Kalay Township, Sagaing Division will now have to pay tax on their meager salaries after the Kalay Region Oil Exploration Group and SPDC authorities have passed new regulations.

According to the new regulation, each worker is to pay 1000 Kyats per month on his salary. Anyone not paying the required amount of money will not be permitted work in the oil industry in Kalay region.

“This is a new thing. We didn’t have to pay tax before. They said they will issue identification cards only to those who paid the tax,” says one worker.

He also said that oil workers in neighboring Mergui Division have been hit hard by excessive tax collected on their salaries. The Kalay Region Oil Exploration Group, a Chinese company, has a joint venture with the military junta and has been exploring oil fields elsewhere in the country.

CONSTRUCTION OF BUDDHIST PAGODA DESTROYS PADDY FIELD

17 May 2009: The construction of a new Buddhist pagoda in Mindat Township has resulted in the destruction of a farmland owned by a local Chin farmer.

U Neih Thang's paddy field has now been covered with 40 truckloads of soils dug from a nearby construction site where a Buddhist pagoda is being built by the military regime.

On March 8, 2009, U Neih Thang, concerned that his farmland was being destroyed, went to see Captain Kyaw Htun of Light Infantry Battalion 274 in order to appeal for an alternate dumping site. However, immediately upon arrival, U Neih Thang was repeatedly kicked in the rear with army boots and slapped on the face by the enraged officer.

"I went there simply to appeal for an alternate dumping site but he violently beat me up saying that the construction was being done by orders from higher authorities," U Neih Thang testified.

U Neih Thang is now unable to go outside due to severe pains he suffered from the beatings and a swelling on his face.

A father of five daughters, U Neih Thang is a resident of Kinli village and has been making his living on his paddy fields which have been his family possession for generations.

INCREASED RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN KANPALET TOWNSHIP

15 May 2009: Christians in the southern Township of Kanpalet are increasingly facing discrimination and various official restrictions.

In Chin villages across Kanpalet Township, Christians have not been permitted to construct church buildings, hold religious functions and gathering or to collect donations. Contrastingly, Buddhists in the Township enjoy the freedom to conduct all religious activities without hindrance or restriction.

A local Christian pastor who cannot be identified for his security said, "They [the authorities] said that we need to apply for permission from the local office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs each time we wish to conduct religious activities. But we get turned down most of the time."

Christians find themselves subject to discrimination even in the education system as one Grade 10 student reveals: "I go to the Basic Education High School No. (1) in Kanpalet and what I find is that if you are a Christian the teachers would not help you with your lessons when you asked them for help. Instead, they rebuke you for not listening carefully to them during the classroom lessons."

Conversion to Buddhism is a requisite for promotion in the army as well as higher position in other governmental departments.

"Only Buddhists normally get promoted in rank within the Army. They told us that we would be rewarded if we married a Christian woman and be able to convert her to Buddhism," said an unnamed Corporal currently serving in the Burma Army.

SCHOLARSHIP AS ENTICEMENT TO CONVERT TO BUDDHISM

3 June 2009: The SPDC authorities in southern Chin State, through the Ministry for Development of National Races and Border Areas, are offering scholarships to school children of Christian backgrounds to support their high school studies in Mandalay in central Burma.

The eligibility criteria, however, includes conversion to Buddhism upon acceptance of the scholarship and completion of middle school.

The scholarship is reportedly designed to target Christian children of poor family backgrounds.. School children whose parents are already Buddhists are not eligible for the scholarship.

“Those wishing to be considered for the scholarship must submit their names within the month of May. And conversion to Buddhism is mandatory. Becoming a Buddhist is an eligibility requirement,” says one resident of Kanpalet.

Under the terms of the scholarship, those accepted will continue their education at a boarding school in Mandalay in central Burma. Upon completion, which could take 2 to 3 years, the students will automatically be offered a government job. However, they will be required to repay the cost of their studies two to three times the actually amount they’d incurred.

Offers of the scholarships are being implemented in Kanpalet and Paletwa Townships.

In Kanpalat Township, a similar but separate program is being offered by the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a civilian face of the military regime. However, under the USDA program, a prospective scholarship recipient must travel to Mandalay for an interview on his/her own expense. But only those passing the interview will be compensated for their travels.

“Parents are in a dilemma. On the one hand it is already a struggle for our daily survival. But on the other hand, they all want their children to have an education. Nobody really wants to talk about it but some parents are being forced to make difficult decisions between their children’s educational well-being and their Christian religion,” says another Kalapalet resident.

Meanwhile, in Mindat Township, Christians are not allowed to freely practice their religion. Local authorities have not allowed construction of new churches or Christian religious functions. Regular Sunday services are regularly forced to cancel under the pretexts of security.

CHURCH RENOVATION STILL NOT PERMITTED DESPITE LICENSE

19 June 2009: Authorities in Chin State’s Falam Township has ordered the discontinuation of renovation work for a church building in Kamun Chaung Village, a local resident and church member reported to Chin Human Rights Organization.

On March 15, 2009, leaders of the “Church on the Rock” received a letter from SPDC authorities ordering them to stop renovating the church building and warning them of legal action if they failed to comply.

“The church is registered with the government and it used to be that any registered church can be allowed to renovate or build a church building,” a member of the church said.

“We only completed the roof when we received the order, and now we will have to sell the bricks that were to be used for the wall. As of now, we are using plastic sheets to cover the wall,” he continued.

Similar restrictions and prohibitions are in place for the surrounding village Tracts..

Kamun Chaung is located in Waybulah Village Tract of Falam Township and has a resident of about 40 households.

FOOD CRISIS IN CHIN STATE WORSENS AS RAINY SEASON COMES

Van Biak Thang
Chinland Guardian

30 June, 2009: The Chin villagers are bracing themselves for a worsening aftermath of the ongoing bamboo-and-rat-related food crisis in Chin State as the monsoon season sets in, according to the relief groups.

The Chin victims, suffering from severe food shortage caused by rat infestation since late 2006, are worried as the coming rainy season can interrupt deliveries of relief assistance to their areas.

Victor Biak Lian of Chin Human Rights Organisation that has been organising ‘live aid concerts’ in different countries to raise awareness and funds for the Chin victims said: “The humanitarian crisis is getting worse and far from being over in Chin State. Their [Chin villagers’] farming has been interrupted and destroyed by not only rats but also lack of rain. Chin victims are now in need of help and assistance even more.”

In addition, severe weather conditions during the cultivation period have destroyed most of the seeds sown on their farms and as a result, the villagers have no hope but a sharp decline in this year’s crop yields.

There are some NGOs and local relief groups that have been working in the affected areas but those victims in the remote jungle have not been reached as it is not accessible by vehicles.

WFP officer Siddharth Krishnaswamy told the Irrawaddy that eighty-five percent of people in Chin State are in debt to local moneylenders after taking loans to buy food and that the Chins are constantly facing food insecurity, and they are unable to pay for food, health and education as they have to pay off their debts.

In regard to difficulties in access to remote areas, Chris Kaye, WFP Country Director and Representative in Burma, said: “The remoteness of the region and the challenging operating environment in Myanmar do serve as obstacles to our operations. However, please be assured that the UN family in collaboration with our NGO partners will continue to do all we can to bring relief to those in need and will do so in accordance with humanitarian principles and following rights based approaches.”

While thanking the NGOs, local relief groups and Chin communities around the world for their contribution to the victims, Zomi Baptist Convention General Secretary Rev. M. Thawng Kam stressed bamboos are still flowering in some parts of Chin State, especially in Paletwa Township.

Mizoram-based Chin Famine Emergency Relief Committee (CFERC) said many people are surviving on boiled rice, fruits and vegetables. The WFP’s report said 75 percent of the crops in the area had been destroyed by rats and 30 percent of the villagers surveyed had been forced to abandon their fields.

About 100,000 of the 500,000 people in Chin State have been severely affected, according to Chin Human Rights Organisation, which in association with a coalition of Mizoram-based relief groups is soon to produce a report on the latest situation of food crisis in Chin State.

The food crisis has been caused by a natural phenomenon which happens about every 50 years in Chin State when the bamboo-flowering gives rise to an explosion in the rat population, which feed on the plants and crops.

Chin State, situated at an average altitude of 4,000 feet (1,250 meters) in the western part of Burma, is mountainous, isolated and SPDC-ignored. During the rainy season, communication and transportation can be severely affected and completely cut off in most parts due to frequent landslides, monsoons and huge surge of water in rivers due to heavy rains.

UNDP ACCUSED OF UNFAIR DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AID

6 May 2009: The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), one of the few international organizations permitted to operate in Chin State, has been accused by Chin villagers of unfair distribution of food aid intended to assist Chin villagers battling a severe food crisis.

Some Chin villagers alleged that the UNDP food distribution system is inconsistent in that some villages never received food assistance, but instead were offered interest-free loans to buy their food supplies. The villagers are alleging that such a system is only benefitting the UNDP staff members.

According to the villagers, the UNDP never distributed food aid in Zotung, Zophei and Lautu areas of Thantlang Township. Meanwhile, residents in Matupi Township alleged that the UNDP is now only offering interest-free loans to villagers because the aid operation is being controlled by local SPDC authorities.

“There is virtually no UNDP assistance provided to Paletwa Town despite the fact that our area is one of the areas hardest hit by bamboo flowering and rat infestations,” said a resident of Paletwa.

UNREGISTERED NGOS TO CEASE OPERATION IN CHIN STATE

17 May 2009: Any Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), including charitable and community-based organizations not registered with the SPDC will no longer be permitted to operate in Chin State, according to a recent order by Brigadier-General Hung Ngai, the head of Chin State Peace and Development Council.

The order was issued during the Southern District meeting on March 18 in Mindat, and is intended as part of security preparations for the upcoming elections of 2010, one unnamed official attending the meeting told Chin Human Rights Organization. The order applies to church-based and other charitable organizations that are providing food aid to victims of hunger in Chin State

“Under the new order, no unregistered organizations can now operate in Chin State, especially those that are operating with funding supports from abroad. Brigadier-General Hung Ngai has made it clear that now is a time for making preparations and to unite around the upcoming 2010 elections,” a senior District official said.

Mindat is one of the two District Administrative Headquarters in Chin State. According to official census, the district is home to 200, 000 residents.

PRISONERS MISTREATED

12 June 2009: Prisoners currently serving in Kalay Prison, Sagaing Division are routinely mistreated and physically abused by the prison warden, a recently released inmate told Chin Human Rights Organization.

Bawi Uk, a Chin prisoner who was recently released on March 18 said that the warden is regularly beating up the prisoners and use them for his personal ends. He said that he is siphoning off money by cutting on the prisoners' meals, confiscating foods, money and other items sent in by family members from outside.

"We did not receive meals regularly and we never received all of the items that our family members sent us," he said. Similarly, inmates at a jail in Chin State's capital Hakha are regularly forced to eat only rice after the guards eat off curries and other more nutritious meals sent in by family members.

Kalay Prison is one of the most disciplined correctional facilities in the country where conditions are one of the best, according to government data. The facility is housing only 40 prisoners.

SOLDIERS BRUTALIZED BROTHER TRYING TO DEFEND HIS SISTER

26 June 2009: A Chin man from Mindat who tried to intervene when his little sister was teased and humiliated by two drunken Burmese soldiers on the street was brutally beaten, Chin Human Rights Organization has learned.

The incident took place on 28 April when the two siblings were followed by two drunken Burmese soldiers. When the soldiers approached the girl and verbally teased her in inappropriate manner, the brother told the soldiers to back off as they were intoxicated.

Infuriated, the drunken soldiers brutally beat the brother. Steven was rushed to a nearby clinic where he was treated for severe swellings in the face with two broken front upper teeth.

"I was terrified. My brother Steven was just doing what any brothers would do for their little sister," says Ms. Ngai Es, who is the daughter of U Neih Ung. The assailant soldiers belong to Light Infantry Battalion (274).

"We reported the assault to their Battalion and asked for compensation for Steven's medical treatment, but they simply said there was no money. At this point we simply can't do anything," she adds.

UNLIMITED LOGGINGS IN LANDS ANNEXED FROM CHIN STATE

7 June 2009: Widespread logging activity is being reported from vast teak forests annexed to Mergui Division from Chin State last September during a forced re-demarcation of inter-state borders.

According to one resident of the area, the ruling State Peace and Development Council has begun harvesting the teak woods in February 2009, just five months after the land was confiscated from Chin State. The authorities also reportedly collecting taxes from Chin residents building houses in the area.

The local resident said that the planting of teakwood was started in 1992 and hundreds of Chin civilians were engaged in the project. He estimates the number of teak planted to be as many as a million trees.

"We now see as many as 20 trucks transporting the logs out everyday. The government has apparently sold the entire area to logging companies who could pay the money."

Similarly, in neighboring Sagaing Division, SPDC authorities are allowing unlimited loggings for companies in exchange for millions of Kyats. At the same time, residents who purchased woods to build their houses have had an exploitative amount of taxes exacted by the authorities.

**A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BURMA'S STUDENT LEADER
SALAI TIN MAUNG OO**

Van Biak Thang
Chinland Guardian

You can kill my body but you can never kill my beliefs and what I stood for. I will never kneel down to your military boots! - Salai Tin Maung Oo

26 June 2009: It was at 4pm early in the morning 33 years ago today that Burma's student leader, Salai Tin Maung Oo, was hanged inside the notorious Insein Prison in Rangoon by the Ne Win-led military authority called Burmese Socialist Programme Party.

Salai Tin Maung Oo, an ethnic Chin leader, was the first student in Burma to be officially hanged to death for organizing and leading student protests against the military regime. Remembered as Burma's first student martyr, Salai Tin Maung Oo was sentenced to death on 26th June, 1976 at the age of 25 for his political beliefs and selfless fight for democracy, justice and peace in Burma.

A true Salai, as described by his pal Salai Kipp Kho Lian, Tin Maung Oo, a Zoology student of Rangoon Arts and Science University, got actively involved in student movements and activities. Among many activities, he was best-known for leading two famous demonstrations: U Thant's funeral uprising on 5 December 1974 and the Shwedagon Strike on 6 June 1975.

While organising another uprising known as "Hmine Yar Pyih" (100th anniversary of the revolutionary Thakin Ko Daw Hmine), he was arrested on 22 March 1976 and killed within 3 months on 26 June 1976 without any fair trial and without any lawyer. Salai Tin Maung Oo's last words included: "Comrades, they are killing me secretly!"

His last words to the executioners remain famous and echo till today: "You [the military regime] can kill my body but you can never kill my beliefs and what I stood for. I will never kneel down to your military boots!"

The Chin student leader was forced to apologise for what he was doing to General Ne Win in exchange for clemency but he refused and was subsequently hanged at Insein Prison, according to Moe Thee Zun of All Burma Students' Democratic Front in Cries from Insein published in 1996.

Mai Po Po, Salai Tin Maung Oo's sister, recalled: "Ko Tin Maung Oo was in his early teenage years when he began to express his grief regarding the dynamite explosion of the Students' Union building in 1962. As he grew up, he became more aware of the injustices surrounding him, particularly those caused by the Burmese military government. Evidently he felt strongly compelled to do something about these injustices."

"Thus, when he became a 1st-year university student in 1971, majoring in Zoology, he became actively involved in the Students' Underground Movement," added his sister who, along with her parents and two brothers, was also arrested and imprisoned in Insein Prison from 1976 until 1980.

For the 1974-1975 academic year, Salai Tin Maung Oo was elected General Secretary of CLCC (Chin Literature and Cultural Committee) after being introduced at the meeting by his prison cellmate and at that time a medical student Dr. Za Hlei Thang and giving a moving speech on the importance of unity especially during critical times.

Ko Kyaw Zwa of Burmese Muslim Association, whose father Maung Maung Lwin was not only a cellmate of Salai Tin Maung Oo in Insein Prison but also a close friend until his death, said: "Salai Tin Maung Oo is a symbol of the students fighting for injustice in Burma. Brave and determined, he was one of our heroes who paved the way in our fight for democracy and freedom against the military regime."

Salai Tin Maung Oo had been described as being 'brave, courageous, focused, kind, caring and peace-loving' by his friends, colleagues and many writers. Mai Po Po said one of his most outstanding qualities was his insatiable generosity, and he was such a giver and would help others including any friends and family members.

Due to his activities with the Students' Underground Movement, Salai Tin Maung Oo would quite often come home late, according to his sister, who added: "I still recall one day in particular when he came home late and my mother talked to him very seriously saying, 'My son, I worried about you so much and even shed tears for you.'"

"My brother Ko Tin Maung Oo replied, 'I am really sorry that I made you worry and cry for me. Mom, there are many mothers who also shed tears for their sons and daughters who will never come home because the military government killed them. Some sons and daughters are in prison, too. I want to wipe the tears away from the eyes of those mothers.' I remember, every time he came home late, he would pick two wild flowers from the backyard and give them to my mother. I guess he did this to comfort my mom."

Salai Dr. Pachin, a comrade of Salai Tin Maung Oo during U Than's funeral student uprising was quoted as saying that he is truly a martyr and we must never forget that he had given his life for the cause of democracy and freedom not only for the Chins but for all the people of Burma.

An email by Htun Aung Kyaw, who worked hand-in-hand with Salai Tin Maung Oo and promised to continue the struggle until the democratic system is established in Burma, said: "He was a great hero and true 'Salai'. We must carry his legacy. He stood for his belief and kept his dignity till the end." One verse in the email read:

Salute our fallen brothers and sisters!
 Long live the spirit of 'fighting peacock'!
 The revolution of the generation will strike back again.
 Ko Tin Maung Oo will live forever in our hearts.

A memorial service and demonstration especially led and organised by Burmese students in commemoration of Salai Tin Maung Oo has long been held across the world. In his memory, an education centre was established in 2006 to provide free tuitions to Burmese refugee children in New Delhi, India.

In the history of political movement and struggle for democracy in Burma, Salai Tin Maung Oo was and will be respected and remembered as a highflying hornbill and 'big lion' for his democratic spirit and loyalty, selfless leadership and fight against injustice, and undaunted love and support for peace and freedom.

In reality, Mai Po Po continued, my brother Tin Maung Oo's last words 'You can never kill my beliefs and what I stood for' is really true. "How so? It shows in the fact there was the 1988 Uprising and the 2007 Saffron Uprising. These events show that until the dawn of true democracy in Burma, there will always be those who, like Brother Ko Tin Maung Oo, will strive for freedom and justice and peace," added the sister, who is currently living with her aging parents in Canada.

Salai Ko Tin Maung Oo was born on November 9th, 1951 in the township of Taungoo to Asho-Chin parents, Salai U Hla Din and Mai Daw Hnin Myaing. He spent his early schooldays in Thamaing. Being interested in sports, he started weight-lifting at the age of 13, won several high school swimming competitions and was selected as the best swimmer at school. Being good at judo and karate, he could also play the violin very well and was an avid reader.

INTERVIEW WITH MAI POPO

*“..Till the down of true democracy in Burma...”***Chinland Guardian**

June 26, 2009-Vancouver

[Chinland Guardian Note: Today, June 26, 2009 marked 33rd anniversary of the execution of Burma's most celebrated student hero Salai Tin Maung Oo. On the occasion of this anniversary, Chinland Guardian has a chance to interview Mai Popo, former student political prisoner and younger sister of Salai Tin Maung Oo. Salai Tin Maung Oo, a legendary hero among student activists and freedom lovers among Burma's pro-democracy movements is the only student leader sentence to death in history. Salai Tin Maung Oo memorial day is celebrated among Chin community in Europe, Asia and North America]

Chinland Guardian: It will be great for all the Chinland Guardian readers if you can kindly tell us about your original family background such as where you were born, where you went to school and who your parents are etc..

Mai Popo: To begin, I would like to tell you about my family background. My father's name is Salai U Hla Din and my mother's name is Mai Daw Hnin Myaing. Both of them are Asho-Chin. My father was born and raised in Sandaway. My father is a very brave man as evidenced by the fact that during World War II he fought against fascist Japan with the Z-Force British Intelligence Service in order to obtain Burmese independence. As for my mother, she was born and raised in the township of Taungup in the Arakan Division. During World War II, some of my mother's uncles and other close relatives were wrongfully persecuted and killed by the fascist Japanese forces. Once Burma won its independence, my father worked as a radio operator in Burma's telecommunication department until 1976. Until 1976, my mother worked as a midwife in the Thamaing township.

As for myself, I was born and raised in the Thamaing township, but later on I went to high school in the Kamayut, Hlaing township until 1976.

Chinland Guardian: How would you describe your brother Salai Tin Maung Oo?

Mai Popo: My brother Salai Ko Tin Maung Oo was born on November 9th, 1951 in the township of Taungoo. He spent his early schooldays in Thamaing. Ever since he was young, he was very bright and brave. He always took care of me in school, and he took care of his other younger brothers and sisters, as well. He loved his siblings so much. I still remember, even though he was young, he always stood up to bullies in school. Also, he was very interested in sports. He started weight-lifting

at the age of 13, and by the time he was 16 he was so strong, just like a full-grown man. As well, he seriously got into swimming, which he thoroughly enjoyed; he even won several high school swimming competitions and was selected as the best swimmer in the entire school. In regards to martial arts, he learned and became quite good at judo and karate. He could also play the violin very well and was an avid reader.

One of his most outstanding qualities was his insatiable generosity. He was such a giver and would help others including any friends and family members. My family was not very well-off, but he gave whatever he had in order to help others. I still vividly remember one time when my father had bought him a beautiful and very colourful brand new shirt. But a week later we realized that he no longer had the shirt. So, my father asked him, "Where's the new shirt that I bought for you?" Ko Tin Maung Oo replied, "I gave it away to my friend. He is so poor that he can't even afford a shirt to wear, so I gave it to him." He did this so many times. Brother Ko Tin Maung Oo had such a big heart when it came to helping poor and unfortunate people.

Chinland Guardian: While your brother was actively involved in the Students movement, did your family aware of his activities and how was your family reaction to him regarding his activities?

Mai Popo: Ko Tin Maung Oo was in his early teenage years when he began to express his grief regarding the dynamite explosion of the Students' Union building in 1962. As he grew up, he became more aware of the injustices surrounding him, particularly those caused by the Burmese military government. Evidently he felt strongly compelled to do something about these injustices. Thus, when he became a 1st-year university student in 1971, majoring in Zoology, he became actively involved in the Students' Underground Movement. My family was aware of this and, as a result, my parents

became very worried about him because they knew there could be severe consequences if the military government ever found out about his activities.

I remember that he would quite often come home late from the university due to his activities with the Students' Underground Movement. Whenever he was late my mother worried about him and waited up for him until he got home. I still recall one day in particular when he came home late and my mother talked to him very seriously saying, "My son, I worried about you so much and even shed tears for you." My brother Ko Tin Maung Oo replied, "I am really sorry that I made you worry and cry for me. Mom, there are many mothers who also shed tears for their sons and daughters who will never come home because the military government killed them. Some sons and daughters are in prison, too. I want to wipe the tears away from the eyes of those mothers." I remember, every time he came home late he would pick 2 wild flowers from the backyard and give them to my mother. I guess he did this to comfort my mom.

Chinland Guardian: After he was arrested, did the family member ever visit him in jail or in detention?

Mai Popo: Due to his connection with the Underground Movement he was detained in Insein Jail for 1 year from November 1972 to November 1973. Most of his imprisonment was spent in solitary confinement. A few months before his release, he was allowed to share a cell with other political prisoners. During his entire imprisonment, our family was not allowed to visit him.

I must mention at this point that I still remember the day he was released from prison. I think that the military government expected him to be discouraged and to give up. It seems to me though, that he came out from jail more determined and stronger than ever. That evening, the entire family and many of our friends gathered together, made him a special dinner and welcomed him home. That night, everyone asked him what it was like to be in jail. His answer came in the form of 2 songs about prison life that he had composed while he was in jail. He sang those 2 songs for all of us.

Chinland Guardian: Can you please tell us about the last days of your brother Salai Tin Maung Oo?

Mai Popo: I have so much to tell about brother Ko Tin Maung Oo, but now I would like to focus more on his

last days. Of course he participated actively in the General Workers' Strike of June 6th, 1974 and in the U Thant Uprising in December 1974. He was also very much involved in the strike held on the 1-year anniversary of the General Workers' Strike. Sadly though, in March 1976 while he was planning for the Thakin Ko Daw Maing Centennial Uprising, his efforts were cut short because he was arrested on March 22nd, 1976.

A few days before his arrest, the military government arrested my whole family which included my parents and all the children ranging in age from 5-13 years old. They interrogated all of us regarding my brother Ko Tin Maung Oo. A terrible violation of human rights was committed when those military personnel beat up my 13-year old brother so badly that he fainted and fell down to the floor. They also threatened the other children in various ways. Later that same day, all of us were released except for the parents. My parents were kept in prison for the next 5 years.

Chinland Guardian: It is interesting to learn that you were in the Rangoon University campus to organize the protest after your brother was arrested? How old are you at that time?

Mai Popo: The following day after we were released, we heard the devastating news on the 8 p.m.. radio broadcast that brother Ko Tin Maung Oo had been arrested. All of us brothers and sisters were so grieved that we all sat down by our big old radio, held each other and cried. From that moment, I wiped my tears and vowed that I would carry on my brother's unfinished activities in connection with the Thakin Ko Daw Maing Uprising. I was only 18 years old.

My younger brother Ko Hla Shwe, who was only 17 years old, and I snuck out of the house the next morning at 4 a.m. to continue the Thakin Ko Daw Maing Uprising. The reason we had to sneak out of our home was because there were Military Intelligence Service personnel watching our house. We went to the Rangoon Arts and Science University. I actively participated in that uprising. I hope to tell you next time about the details of my involvement with this uprising. Because of my participation in this uprising I was arrested and sentenced to 9 years in prison, while Ko Hla Shwe was sentenced to 7 years in prison.

Chinland Guardian: Did the authority ever inform your family that your brother Salai Tin Maung Oo got a fair trial and he is going to be executed?

Mai Popo: At this point, our parents were in prison, Ko Hla Shwe and I were in prison, and so was my 2nd oldest brother. The only ones that were left behind were the youngest children, ages 5-13 years old. On June 25th, 1976, the day before Ko Tin Maung Oo's execution, I remember that I was rushed out from my solitary confinement cell, handcuffed and blindfolded, and put into the back of a military Jeep. A few minutes later they brought my mother in the same fashion into the Jeep, and we were then driven to Thayawaddy Prison. Along the way, my mother told me that she had been allowed to briefly see Ko Tin Maung Oo just before she was put into the Jeep. My mom told me that she was so happy to have seen brother Ko Tin Maung Oo alive that she cried in praise to God at the moment that she saw him. My mother told me that he looked very healthy and very fresh, and that he had told her, "Don't worry about me, please take care of yourself," and then he shed tears. The military personnel quickly rushed her out of the room away from brother Ko Tin Maung Oo and into the Jeep. Later on, I found out that my other 2 brothers were handcuffed, blindfolded and waiting in a different Jeep. At that moment, my father also had the chance to meet with Ko Tin Maung Oo in the same room that my mother had met with him. When they met each other, Ko Tin Maung Oo told my father, "I have been given the death sentence." Father replied, "Why do they have to give you the death sentence? You are not a criminal. You didn't kill anybody. You did according to what you believed. You are only a political prisoner." Brother Ko Tin Maung Oo then said to father, "There is no country in the world that hangs a student for his political beliefs. If they dare to do this, then let it be." At that moment they rushed my father out of the room and into the Jeep with my 2 brothers. From there they were taken to Taungoo Prison.

The following day they hanged my brother. Brother Ko Tin Maung Oo's last words included, "Comrades, they are killing me secretly!" Then, more directly to the executioners he said, "You guys can kill my body but you can never kill my beliefs and what I stood for. I will never kneel down to military boots!" Those were his last words.

Chinland Guardian: After 1976 people know very little about your family. What happened to your family after 1976?

Mai Popo: From 1976 until 1980, my parents, 2 of my brothers and I remained in prison. In June 1980 we were released from prison. From 1980 to 1988 we led a very difficult life under the watchful eyes of the military government. We had no privileges. We even had to inform the military government if we simply wanted to travel somewhere overnight. As you all know, in 1988 there was a nationwide uprising in which my brothers and I were actively involved. The uprising occurred in August 1988, then there was a military coup in September 1988. At that point is when my family and I escaped to Thailand where we lived for approximately 2 years. Then we immigrated to Canada. Currently, I am living with my aging parents and taking care of them.

Chinland Guardian: There are several thousands students and freedom lovers from Burma whom your brother, yourself and your family had inspired in terms of fighting for justice and freedom. I am sure there must be something that you want to tell them.

Mai Popo: When I think about it, my brother was arrested on March 22nd, 1976 and was killed within 3 months on June 26th, 1976 without any fair trial, without any lawyer. It shows how inhumane the military government is, and how blatantly they violate human rights. Till this day, they have never officially informed the family of brother Ko Tin Maung Oo's execution.

In my view, the military government believes that if they blow up a Students' Union Building, shoot and kill students, imprison students, and hang a student, that they will be able to extinguish the cry for freedom. In reality, my brother Ko Tin Maung Oo's last words, "You can never kill my beliefs and what I stood for" is really true. How so? It shows in the fact there was the 1988 Uprising and the 2007 Saffaron Uprising. These events show that until the dawn of true democracy in Burma, there will always be those who, like Brother Ko Tin Maung Oo, will strive for freedom and justice and peace.

Chinland Guardian: Thank you very much!