



Chin Human Rights Organization

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6 November 2010

Briefing: Election Conditions in Chin State

Elections-Related Human Rights Violations

a. Portering

During a trip to assess polling station locations and collect information to compile voter registration lists in the village tracts of Zahnak, Vanzang and Khualhring, a remote area of Thantlang township, a police chief and his subordinates from Thantlang town's police station ordered local villagers to carry their belongings. The villagers, from Ral Pel, Dawn, Lungding, Fung Kah and Zangtlang, were also forced to provide food during the trip. Two persons from each village were forced to porter for a day to the next village en route, starting from Dawn village on 7 October. The police chief also ordered local people to provide a horse for him to ride from Zangtlang village.¹

b. Forced Relocation

On 13 September, the Township Peace and Development Council in Hakha, the capital of Chin State, issued an order to 57 local government staff and their families to move out of state-owned houses in Chin Oo Si block. No new accommodation was provided and the families were given just one week to comply, or face a fine of 10,000 kyats (\$10) for every day that they overstayed past the deadline. The relocation order was apparently to make way for 40 newly-recruited staff, tasked with working on the elections.²

c. Property commandeered

On 26 September, the Director of Education, the head of the Land Registry department and the Chairman of Thantlang Peace and Development Council commandeered a jeep owned by U Pa Luai from Thantlang, without offering him any compensation. Using the jeep, they transported three ballot boxes and other election materials to Tlangpi village, where they gave training on the election.³

Freedom of opinion

a. Forced to join the Union Solidarity and Development Party

In June, A local resident reported that he was summoned to a meeting by the Secretary of his local ward council, Lawngvan. His photograph was taken, and he was issued a Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) membership card without his consultation or consent. In total, local authorities from Matupi township selected 60 residents from each ward of Matupi town, and forced them to join the USDP.⁴

Also in June, the Chairman of Falam Township Peace and Development Council issued an order that one person from every household in Falam town must join the USDP. When local people tried to defy the order, they were threatened with punishment.⁵

b. Army checkpoint designated polling station in Falam town

An army checkpoint in Cinmual ward, Falam town has been designated as a polling station, raising fears that voters will face intimidation from soldiers as they try and cast their votes on 7 November.⁶

Election Preparations

a. Inadequate number of polling stations

According to the Polling Officials' Manual issued by the Union Election Commission, one polling station should be established per 300 registered voters. In Kalay township, Sagaing Division there are 60 Chin villages, which are home to 76,000 ethnic Chin registered voters. There are another 110,000 Burmese voters, making a total of 186,000 registered voters in the area. However, there are only 151 designated polling stations, making an average of more than 1,200 voters per polling station, four times as many as issued in the UEC guidelines. In Tat Oo Thida and Buda wards in Kalay town, there are 2 polling stations to accommodate 4,079 registered voters, and in Tahan ward three polling stations for 5,604 registered voters. This raises the possibility of overcrowding and lack of secrecy on polling day.⁷

b. Arbitrary designation and punishment of polling officials

In Thantlang township local government employees, including school teachers, have been arbitrarily designated as polling officials and required to attend training without financial compensation or travel allowance. In Tlangpi village, Thantlang township, eight middle school teachers who are designated polling officials did not receive their salary in September. This was apparently as punishment because the headmaster of their school, a designated chief polling officer, failed to attend the training conducted by the township election commission.⁸

c. Advance voting

In Tedim township, polling officials recently visited the homes of elderly residents who will be unable to go to polling stations on 7 November, in order to carry out advance voting. In violation of the secret ballot, the elderly were required to inform polling officials of the party of their choice, who then marked their ballot papers accordingly on their behalf, and sealed them in an envelope.⁹

Background Information

In Chin State, nine different parties are fielding a total of 146 candidates in Sunday’s elections, for the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House), Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), and Pyine Hluttaw (State Assembly). The parties are:

Party	Candidates for the Pyithu Hluttaw	Candidates for the Amyotha Hluttaw	Candidates for the Pyine Hluttaw	Total number of candidates
Union Solidarity and Development Party	9	12	18	39
National Unity Party	8	9	17	34
Chin Progressive Party	6	11	14	31
Chin National Party	6	7	14	27
Union Democratic Party	2	3	1	6
National Democratic Force	1	2	0	3
United Myanmar Federation of National Politics	1	1	1	3

Party	Candidates for the Pyithu Hluttaw	Candidates for the Amyotha Hluttaw	Candidates for the Pyine Hluttaw	Total number of candidates
Mro (or) Khami National Solidarity Organization	1	0	1	2
National Democratic Party for Development	0	1	1	2
Totals	34	46	67	146

Economic Barriers to Participation

Chin State is one of the most underdeveloped and isolated regions in Burma, with little in the way of road infrastructure, communication systems, healthcare facilities, electricity or running water. 70 percent of the Chin people live below the poverty line; and 40 percent are without adequate food sources¹⁰. Each candidate had to pay a registration fee of 500,000 kyats (\$500) in order to be able to contest in the elections, a significant sum given that the Gross National Income per capita in Burma is around \$220.¹¹ Given the economic situation in Chin State, this fee posed a particular barrier to participation. In addition, parties were given just two weeks to register their candidates.

¹ *Rhododendron News*, Sep – Oct 2010, CHRO.

² *Families Forced to Move Out in Election Preparations*, Chinland Guardian, 29 September 2010.

³ *Rhododendron News*, Sep – Oct 2010, CHRO.

⁴ *Rhododendron News*, Sep – Oct 2010, CHRO.

⁵ *Rhododendron News*, Sep – Oct 2010, CHRO.

⁶ CHRO, 1 November 2010.

⁷ CHRO, 4 November 2010.

⁸ *Rhododendron News*, Sep – Oct 2010, CHRO.

⁹ CHRO, 5 November 2010.

¹⁰ "Humanitarian Situation UPDATE April 2007", Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Myanmar, 2007.

¹¹ UNICEF, 2008.