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Chin Human Rights Organization

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Elections 2010

Government Servants Refuse to Cast Advance Ballot

5 November 2010

In a rare display of defiance, government servants in Dawn village of Thantlang Township earlier today refused to cast advance ballots, against the urging of the Village Peace and Development Council member U Khuang Lian, saying that they preferred to cast their ballots along with the rest of the voters on Sunday, November 7.

Meanwhile, in a final campaign push before the Sunday polls, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) candidate U Ngun Hram was organizing a campaign event in Dawn Village today. The meeting, attended by 29 people was facilitated by the Village Peace and Development Council staff member and Village Tract Clerk U Buang Lian.

Dawn Village is situated in a remote area of Thantlang Township, just a few miles from the Indian border.

Advance voting for government officials, especially those who are assigned for duty on Sunday, takes place across Chin State. But advance voting is also being conducted for the elderly, security personnel and those who are traveling on Election Day.

Electoral Violence and Intimidation in Tedim Township, Chin State

7 November 2010

The Chin Human Rights Organization has reported several incidents of electoral violence and intimidation in Tedim Township, northern Chin State.

This afternoon, in Buan village, close to Tedim town, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) agents in campaign uniforms stood at the gate of the polling station, checking people's voter registration documents. They asked villagers waiting to cast their votes if they intended to vote for the USDP. Those who said yes were allowed into the polling station, but those who said no were turned away by the USDP party agents.

Villagers who were refused entry to the polling station reported the incident to agents from the Chin National Party and Chin Progressive Party. The agents went to the polling station to complain, and a fight broke out.

At 5pm yesterday afternoon, USDP organizer Go Lun Mang went to the house of a local resident and told him and his family that there was no need to go to the polls, as he had already voted in favour of the USDP on their behalf. When the family objected, and said they would still vote for the party of their choice, Go Lun Mang told them that soldiers from a nearby army camp (LIB 269) would come and arrest them.

On arrival at Sakollam polling station in Tedim town this morning, the local resident and his family members found that their ballot papers had already been used. The resident reported that theirs was not an isolated incident.

On 5 November, the USDP branch in Tedim town summoned all village tract clerks in the township locality and ordered them to tell villagers in their respective areas to vote for the USDP. In Chin State, village tract clerks are government appointees who oversee all local government staff in the area.

USDP Leading in Tedim Township amidst Accusations of Intimidation and Fraud

8 November 2008

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) is leading the vote count in Tedim Township, northern Chin State, amidst accusations of intimidation and fraud.

As of 2:30 a.m this morning, the preliminary vote counts showed that the junta-backed party is leading in four of the five parliamentary seats up for grabs in Tedim Township.

With over 12,000 votes so far, USDP candidate U Pum Khan En is leading the race for the People's Parliament, while U Kham Suan Mung and U Suan Do Cin are ahead in the contest for the National Parliament. The USDP candidate for the Chin State Legislature is also leading the race in Tedim constituency (1).

However, U Zam Cin Pau a.k.a U Zozam, the Chairman of the Chin National Party (CNP) is said to be leading the race for Chin State Legislature from Tedim Constituency (2).

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) yesterday reported that USDP members in Tedim Township were engaged in voter intimidation in the days leading up to election day, as well as electoral fraud and violence on polling day itself.

According to CHRO, members of the USDP were accused of blocking the gate to one polling station in Tedim Township, and refused entry to people intending to vote for political parties other than the USDP, leading to a fight between agents of the USDP and two Chin parties.

Fraud Propels USDP to Victory in Tamu Township, Sagaing Division

9 November 2010

Electoral fraud in the form of irregular advance voting and threat tactics against voters have propelled the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) to victory in Tamu Township of Sagaing Division.

Advance voting started on Thursday, November 4 and continued through to Saturday, the eve of the November 7 polls in Tamu Township.

A polling officer working at a polling station in Tamu Township, who cannot be named for security reasons, told Chinland Guardian, "The polling officers are almost entirely from the USDP. They marked the ballot papers for illiterate, disabled and elderly voters in favour of the USDP and put them in the ballot box on their behalf."

The polling officer said that the USDP was using the influential local youth group Khawtlang Thalai Pawl (KTP) as a tool to coerce voters into voting for the junta-backed party in the Township.

"The President of the KTP went around town telling people that anyone found to have not voted in favor of the USDP will be shunned by the community."

For the tight-knit Chin community living in Tamu Township, the prospect of being shunned by the community is a big threat. One such instance of shunning could include the community not helping them in times of death in the family.

Fewer voters came out to vote on the actual day of voting on Sunday in Tamu Township.

"In the end, the USDP defeated the Chin Progressive Party (CPP) by a margin of just 300 votes," said the polling officer.

Civil Servants to be Probed for Voting against USDP

15 November 2010

The Chairman of the Chin State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) ex-Gen. Hung Ngai has ordered an investigation into how each member of the civil servants voted during the November 7 elections after the junta-backed Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) lost all contested seats in three Townships of northern Chin State.

Summoning a meeting of all department heads in Chin State's capital Hakha on November 12, Hung Ngai ordered each government department in Chin State to look into how each staff member of the civil servants had voted during the general elections.

Speaking to the Chinland Guardian, the head of a government department in Hakha who cannot be named for security reasons said, " In the case of advance votes, the ward election commission official will be responsible to look into the civil servants vote, but the heads of each department have also been tasked to investigate whether or not their staff members had voted for the USDP on election day."

Asked how the probe will be conducted, the official said, "The voter ID number on each ballot paper will be cross-referenced in the case of the advance votes. But each government staff will also be individually 'interviewed' by their respective heads of the department to ascertain which party they had voted for."

While there has been no specific mention of what kinds of penalty might be rendered against those who are found to have voted against the USDP, one official working for the Ward Peace and Development Council said, "Demotion at the very least. The USDP's loss in

Hakha and Thantlang made him [Hung Ngai] very furious. It was quite a deafening scolding we had to go through during that meeting.'

Two ethnic Chin parties had swept all contested seats in Falam, Hakha and Thantlang Township, denying junta-backed party of any parliamentary seats up for grabs in the three townships. The Chin National Party (CNP) won all contested seats in Hakha and Thantlang, while the Chin Progressive Party (CPP) did the same in Falam Township.

BANGKOK POST: Junta Faces Threat Claims

Achara Ashayagachat and AFP

7 November 2010

Burma's military regime and its political proxies faced growing accusations yesterday of threats and intimidation on the eve of the country's controversial first election in two decades.

Up to 29 million eligible Burmese voters will go to the polling stations today, less than a week before opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is expected to be released from house arrest. Her National League for Democracy (NLD) has boycotted the poll.

Her youngest son, Kim Aris, who lives in Britain, planned to apply for a visa to Burma at the Burmese embassy in Bangkok tomorrow to visit Mrs Suu Kyi after the release, according to the BBC's Burmese language service. He is staying at a Chao Phraya riverside hotel.

The Burmese embassy said yesterday it was not aware of the visa application.

The junta's detention of Mrs Suu Kyi expires on Saturday. Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win said in the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Hanoi on Oct 28 that the Burmese regime will free her after the election. Mrs Suu Kyi swept her party to power in 1990 but the results were never recognised by the ruling generals.

This time, two parties aligned to the military – the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and the National Unity Party (NUP) – are together fielding about two-thirds of the total candidates.

The Democratic Party (Burma) and National Democratic Force, a splinter party of the NLD, which is contesting the election, accused the USDP on Friday of illegally collecting advance ballots by coercion and intimidation.

Signs of voter intimidation were also reported by the Chin Human Rights Organisation, which said that in a ward in Chin State, in western Burma, one of the polling stations was at an army checkpoint. "How can people feel free to vote for the party of their choice if soldiers are watching them?" said programme director Salai Za Uk Ling.

According to exile news website The Irrawaddy, two major ethnic minority parties have threatened to contest the result if concerns over alleged USDP abuses are not addressed.

The All Mon Region Democracy Party, based in Mon State in the southeast, and the Rakhine National Development Party (RNNDP), in Rakhine State in the west, have also raised complaints.

"If the USDP wins due to the influence and resources of the government, ethnic and other pro-democracy parties will boycott the election results," RNNDP chairman Aye Maung was quoted as saying.

Local authorities have allegedly helped the USDP, formed by ministers who left the military in April, to force people to vote early and for the junta party.

"We have learned that the USDP, together with ward authorities, is trying to get advance votes by cheating, bribing or threatening people," said a letter from the Democratic Party to the Union Election Commission in the capital Naypyidaw.

The ruling regime's proxy party enjoys huge advantages in the polls: a quarter of seats in the new legislature are reserved for the army, while opposition parties have suffered major obstacles.

Many people in Burma, a country where almost one-third of the population lives below the poverty line, prioritise basic needs over politics, while a lack of choice has fuelled disillusionment in the election.

In many constituencies the poll is a two-horse race between the USDP and the NUP, the successor to late dictator Ne Win's party.

Foreign election observers and international media have been barred from entering the country for the election.

European diplomats have also snubbed official polling station visits, declining an invitation to join what British ambassador Andrew Heyn has already dismissed as a "choreographed tour".

In a speech reproduced in state newspaper The New Light of Myanmar on the election eve, Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein urged citizens to vote, and not to "tarnish the image of the state".

Forced Labor & Arbitrary Measures

Burma Army Arbitrarily Detained 22 Cattle from Local Trader

03 November 2010

Burma's army Khahlahya No. 269 stationed in Daikhai village of Tonzang Township stopped and detained by force 22 cattle of Pu Luaia in Fartlang village of Tedim Township on his way to Mizoram State of India on 28 October 2010.

Pu Luaia, from Lalpanchaung village of Sagaing Division, was stopped in Fartlang village while on his journey with his flock of 22 cattle for sales in Mizoram State and taken to Laitui village by Burma's army lieutenant with his seven soldiers.

The trader was accused of trading illegally and rumoured to be taken to court in Tedim Town on 29 October 2010, according to one local from Fartlang village.

"Burma army authorities have been collecting money and extorting from local traders without giving any receipts or vouchers as an evidence for decades. Normally, we had to pay certain amount of money depending upon the Army Captain," said the local.

Government Employees Forced to Contribute Money and Labour

10 November 2010

Government employees from various departments in Hakha Town of Chin State faced 2,000 Kyats cut from their salaries and were ordered to contribute voluntary labours, CHRO's sources revealed.

The salary was deducted last month to buy 'Thit-Aye' plants and each department's staffs were forced to work in the 'Thit-Aye' cultivation today.

Township Law Officer U Than Htike was quoted as saying that, under the instructions of Chairman of Chin State U Hung Ngai, each department had to cultivate a total of 5,000 plants after purchasing from Hakha Agricultural Office.

"This is our life. We have no choice but to listen to what they say and to do what they want us to do. Our salary is cut off as they want whether you agree or not. They say this plant is good for economy but it might be just like tea and jatropa plantations. We haven't got anything from these plantations apart from tiredness," said one local government employee, who asks not to be named.

The local government employees face difficulties spending their times for forced financial contribution and labours demanded by the local authorities amid an increasing price of rice and commodities in Chin State.

Authorities Collected Money and Threatened Govt Employees for Tea Plantations

11 November 2010

Government employees from various departments and local people in Hakha Town who get engaged with state-controlled tea plantations face an increasing pressure from the authorities since the start of November 2010.

In a meeting where officials from various departments and Ward leaders of Hakha Town attended, Chairman of Chin State U Hung Ngai said that tea plantations have to be done within this month and that those who do not have any seeds for re-cultivation by June 2011 would have to pay four times the expenses of purchase this year.

Department Officials were today said of putting an increasing pressure on an immediate implementation of tea plantations and protection against harms from the cold season.

It is claimed that 1,000 Kyats is collected from local people having tea plantations and 1,500 Kyats from government employees for so-called tea plantation fees every month.

Local people and government employees are also forced to work in the plantation in the early rainy and cold seasons in order to provide protection from the rain and cold.

Freedom of Religion

Pastors Ordered To Stop Church Construction

8 November 2010

In early October, pastors from the Baptist, Gospel Baptist, and Methodist churches in Kanpalet received orders to halt the renovation and construction of three church buildings in the town, from a local officer of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Kanpalet Baptist Church is used for public gatherings whenever high level military personnel visit Kanpalet, and permission to renovate the building had been granted by General Thura Aung Ko, previously Burma's Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs, according to a local resident. U Thura Aung Ko recently retired from the military, and is standing as a candidate for the Pyithu Hluttaw (lower house) for the Union Solidarity and Development Party in Kanpalet.

In Burma, permission forms numbers 105 and 106 have to be issued by local authorities for renovation or construction of religious -related buildings, but for Christian organizations the permission is notoriously hard to obtain. However, Buddhists can construct monasteries and pagodas without seeking prior permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The heads of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in each township are usually considered loyal to the chief abbot in the town.

Nine crosses in Chin State have been destroyed on the orders of local authorities since 1990, most recently in Mindat Township in July. 90 percent of the population in Chin State is estimated to be Christian. Religious persecution against the Chins has been widely documented, most recently by Christian Solidarity Worldwide in their 2007 report *Carrying The Cross*.

Burmese Officials Order Closure of Chin Church

Government punishes pastor for refusing to wear campaign T-shirt, amid other election abuses.

DUBLIN, November 18 (CDN) — Officials in Mergui Region, Burma, ordered a Baptist church to cease holding worship services after the pastor refused to wear an election campaign T-shirt supporting the military government's Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

The election commission summoned 47-year-old Pastor Mang Tling of Dawdin village, Gangaw township, Mergui Region on Nov. 9, two days after the election and ordered him to stop holding services and discontinue the church nursery program, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) reported yesterday.

The CHRO works against human rights abuses, including religious discrimination, for the Chin people, a minority group in Burma's northwest estimated to be 90 percent Christian.

Village headman U Than Chaung had given the pastor a campaign T-shirt to wear in support of the USDP, and when he refused to wear it, the headman filed a report with local authorities accusing him of persuading Christian voters to vote in favor of an opposing party.

Under Burmese law, religious leaders can be penalized for "engaging in politics," giving the pastor a solid legal reason to decline the T-shirt. The law also bans leaders of religious groups from voting in national elections, according to the CHRO, although lay members of those groups are able to vote.

"The election law is quite vague," a CHRO spokesman told Compass today. "One of the things we were watching out for during the election was to see if church elders or council members might be excluded from voting. But these people were able to vote. The law seems to apply only to pastors, monks and imams."

Officials interrogated Mang Tling in Gangaw until Sunday (Nov. 14), when he was allowed to return home.

Meantime, the USDP won the election amid widespread evidence of "advance" voting and other forms of voter manipulation throughout Burma.

Previously known as the Union Solidarity and Development Association, and before that the State Peace and Development Council, the USDP was formed by a ruling junta composed largely of army generals. The junta has ruled Burma without a constitution or parliament since 1998, although in 2008 they pushed through support for a new constitution that will take effect following this month's elections, according to the 2010 International Religious Freedom report released yesterday by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

The new constitution forbids "abuse of religion for political purposes," the report stated. Election laws published in March also banned members of religious orders from voting for or joining political parties and reserved 25 percent of seats in the new parliament for members of the military.

The 2008 constitution “technically guarantees a degree of religious freedom. But then, it’s Burma,” a CHRO spokesman told Compass.

Voter Intimidation

The Chin National Party defeated the USDP in three electorates in Chin state despite reports of widespread voting anomalies, some of which were outlined in a CHRO press release on Nov. 7.

In Tedim township northern Chin state, for example, USDP agent Go Lun Mang went to the home of a local resident at 5 p.m. the day before the election and told the family that he had already voted on their behalf in favor of the USDP. He added that soldiers in a nearby camp were ready to arrest them if they complained.

On Nov. 5, the local government had already ordered village officials to instruct residents to vote for the USDP. On Nov. 7, the day of the election, USDP agents in campaign uniforms stood at the gate of the polling station in Tedim and asked voters if they intended to vote for the USDP. Those who said yes were allowed into the station, while those who said no were refused entrance.

USDP agents also warned Chin voters in Thantlang town that they should vote for the USDP “while the door was open” or they would regret it, Burma News International reported on Nov. 5.

David Mathieson, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch (HRW), said the intimidation indicated that the junta and the USDP knew how unpopular they were.

Reports by the CHRO show a long history of discrimination against the majority Christian Chin, including the destruction of crosses and other Christian monuments, state-sponsored efforts to expand Buddhism, forced contributions of finance and labor to Buddhist construction projects, arrest and detention, torture and particularly harsh treatment of pastors. In addition, officials have refused construction for all new church building projects since 2003.

A report issued by HRW in January confirmed serious and ongoing abuses against Chin Christians.

One Chin pastor interviewed by HRW described how soldiers held him at gunpoint, forced him to pray in a Buddhist pagoda and told him that Burma was a Buddhist country where Christianity should not be practiced. (See “Report Documents Abuse of Chin Christians,” Feb. 20.)

Humanitarian and Food Crisis in Chinland

Ongoing Food Crisis Puts Southern Chin State on Brink of Starvation

01 December 2010

The situation resulting from the 'bamboo-and-rat-related food crisis' has seriously affected at least 60 villages in Kanpetlet Township of Southern Chin State, pushing the villagers in the remote areas on the edge of starvation.

An estimated 114 villages in Kanpetlet Township are suffering from the natural phenomenon, locally known as Mautam, and are facing acute food shortage after their crops and food storages have been completely destroyed by the rats.

A local pastor from the southern township told Chinland Guardian: "People in our area have no more food left to eat. And their crops such as paddy, corns and vegetables are being destroyed by the rats. So, they have nothing to reap from their farms. We are really in dire need of help and assistance from any possible sources, especially from our Chin brothers and sisters across the globe."

In addition, the Giri Cyclone that recently hit the Arakan coast brought destruction to crops, plants and fruits, making the ongoing mautam-affected situation in the areas worse, according to the 42-year-old Christian leader.

"As a community and a group of all Christian denominations, we have written a proposal to the local authorities for a few times. But until today, we haven't received any responses from them. Frankly speaking, we have no help from inside the country and therefore, call on the Chin communities and churches across the world for your earnest prayers," the Kanpetlet pastor told Chinland Guardian.

Since the start of the mautam-caused food crisis, the Chin villagers have tried to cope with the crisis through various ways such as by selling what they have including domestic animals such as chicken, pigs, and cows, and have now reached the devastating dead-end situation.

The total population in Kanpetlet Township is estimated to be around 20,000, with about 2,899 houses.

Mautam, a cyclical phenomenon that happens almost every 50 years has prompted an increasing number of local migrations into other parts of Burma including Mandalay and Rangoon, and to Malaysia, breaking the communities and families apart, with more children dropping out of schools to help their parents find foods such as edible roots in the jungles.

In its report 'An Analysis of the Food Security Situation in Chin State' released in October 2010, the WFP (World Food Programme) said there will be a significant reduction on crop production for many households this year due to the fact that crops were damaged by rodents. The findings of the survey conclude that the food security situation in Chin State remains critical due to the reasons: i) infestation of rodents; ii) high expenditure on food; and

iii) unsustainable coping mechanisms (sale of livestock, taking food on credit, reducing meals).

The ongoing food crisis caused by the bamboo-and-rat-related natural process started in late 2006 mainly along the Indian-Burma border, hitting the bamboo-covered areas of Chin State, currently affecting the Southern Chin Townships including Kanpetlet, Paletwa, Mindat and Matupi.

WFP: Food Security Situation in Chin State Remains Critical

02 December 2010

The food security situation caused by the bamboo-and-rat natural phenomenon remains 'critical' in Chin State of Burma, according to the recent report 'An Analysis of the Food Security Situation in Chin State' released in October 2010 by WFP (World Food Programme).

Based on data collections and surveys conducted in eight of the nine townships in Chin State, the report says there will be a significant reduction in crop productions for many households this year due to infestation of rodents, high expenditure on food and unsustainable coping mechanisms including sales of livestock, taking food on credit, and reducing meals.

81 percent of the households were classified as having 'inadequate' food consumption and 87 percent taking credits and having debts just to pay for food, health and education costs.

"On average, credits were as high as 212,200 Kyats per household, with Falam (309,000 Kyats) and Tiddim (271,000 Kyats). The main reasons for taking credit were to buy food (48%), to cover health expenses (20%), and to send children to school (12%)," the report added.

A week before the assessment was carried out, 73 percent of the families admitted consuming less preferable quality of food, 52 percent purchasing food on credit, 46 percent reducing the number of daily meals, 50 percent limiting portion sizes of meals and only 7 percent skipping meals.

SPDC-ignored food crisis, locally known as mautam where the word 'mau' means bamboo and 'tam' starvation, started from the bamboo-covered areas of Chin State along the India-Burma border in late 2006, seriously ravaging the northern and central parts until early this year and now looming in the Southern remote areas.

Female-headed households are more food insecure than those by male, with an estimated 75 percent of female-headed households in Falam, 60 percent in Hakha, and 40 percent in Tiddim, according to the report.

About 24 percent of the households, the report added, at least one member of their family has migrated to work elsewhere and bring or send money back. The highest migration figures were collected from Tiddim and Hakha with 36 percent and 29 percent respectively.

The report also said that nearly 72 percent of migrants from Chin State are male.

The majority, with about 76 percent having no access to irrigation, depends on rainfall and uses their own means to get water for their crops.

WFP's Vulnerability Analysis & Mapping Unit (VAM) covered in their assessment a total of 375 households in 25 villages of eight townships such as Tonzang, Tiddim, Falam, Hakha, Thantlang, Mindat, Matupi and Kanpetlet.

The WFP admitted that Paletwa Township was not assessed due to inaccessibility. It operates in partnership with other agencies such as Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), CARE International, and Country Agency for Rural Development (CAD).

The World Food Programme (WFP) calls for providing food assistance until the next harvest, and urgent relief aids in the areas affected by the rat infestation, and exploring the possibilities of implementing 'education programme' in order to address low gross enrolment rates and high numbers of absentees in schools.

Poverty and Human Rights Violations Continue In Chin State

09 December 2010

Chin people in the western border of Burma are still suffering from continuing forced labour, acute poverty and religious discrimination, a delegation of HART (Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust) and CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide) said today.

The delegation that conducted interviews with Chin community health workers and pastors during their recent trip to the India-Burma border revealed compelling accounts of the denial of health care and education, systematic religious discrimination of Christians, poverty and widespread forced labour inflicted upon the Chin villagers by the ruling military authorities.

Chin community organizations also reported widespread intimidation, harassment and vote rigging in Chin State and Sagaing Division during Burma's recent sham elections, held on 7 November.

One Chin pastor told the delegation, "This regime has made us poor. In development, culture and psychologically we are poor. But if I stand against the military, they will catch my wife or my son or me – and so no one dares to speak out."

The release from house arrest of Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi on 13 November is widely welcomed by Chin people, but her release alone is no sign of meaningful progress. The Chin people are calling for tripartite dialogue between the regime,

the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and representatives of the ethnic nationalities. “The Burma problem is not only democracy,” one Chin representative told the delegation. “The main issue is the ethnic issue.”

Benedict Rogers said, “During our visit, just over a week after Aung San Suu Kyi’s release, we received overwhelming evidence that the severe human rights violations and chronic humanitarian needs continue to cause intense suffering in Chin State, one of the poorest and most neglected parts of Burma. We call on the international community to use every mechanism available to urge the regime to enter into dialogue with the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities, and to cease abusing its own people. We also urge the Government of India to use its influence to encourage the UN Secretary-General to facilitate a dialogue process.”

Baroness Cox said, “The humanitarian situation in Chin State is dire and desperate and requires urgent relief. We urge the international community, including governments, the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations to make it a priority to support health and education in Chin State and to provide much-needed relief for people who are dying of treatable and preventable diseases. We also urge the UN to ensure that the ethnic nationalities are included in the political process in Burma, and that the abuses, some of which amount to crimes against humanity, end immediately.”

HART is a charitable organisation committed to serving people in need, especially those who are or who have been suffering from oppression and persecution. CSW is the UK’s leading human rights advocacy organisation specialising in religious freedom, working on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs and promoting religious liberty for all.

Situations of Refugees

Malaysia to Decide on Work Permits for Refugees Soon

22 November 2010

Malaysian government will decide next month whether to allow over 90,000 refugees to work officially in the country.

Home Ministry Secretary General, Datuk Seri Mahmood Adam told a local press that the matter will soon be decided by a special Cabinet committee meeting on foreign workers.

Several non-governmental organizations and at least one political party recently proposed to the government to allow refugees in the country to work legally in sectors that required high number of foreign workers.

According to UNHCR, there are around 90,000 refugees staying in Malaysia with the majority of them coming from Burma.

Refugees are currently unofficially permitted to do only odd-jobs in the 'informal sector', unable to access employee protection and benefits available to all employees under Malaysian laws.

Most refugees from Burma are employed in vegetable plantations, restaurants and construction sites.

By Thomas Chong

RELA Raids Refugee Neighborhood, Arrests Dozens

01 December 2010

Over 100 'illegal' migrants, including about 30 Chins were arrested in one of the biggest raids yet on a refugee neighborhood by Malaysia's RELA since the beginning of the year.

At around 1:00 a.m. last night, an army of RELA personnel rounded up the Jalan Imbi neighborhood of Kuala Lumpur, breaking locked doors and forced-entering people's houses.

"We were having a Sweet December gathering when we heard that RELA was rounding up the entire neighborhood," said a 17 year-old UNHCR-recognized Chin refugee girl who said she was initially taken away before being released about an hour later.

All but one in her house was later released after the RELA found them to have possessed UNHCR cards.

"We immediately turned off the lights and stayed quietly in the rooms. But they broke the backdoor open and forced their way inside the house anyway," she explained. She said that there were over 20 people gathering in the house for a mid-night Sweet December celebration when the RELA stormed in.

According to a representative of the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), which runs a center in the same neighborhood, the raid last night was the biggest of its kinds since the beginning of 2010. "We had some smaller-scale raids every now and then, but they were mostly conducted in late afternoon or early evenings," he said, adding that last night raid was "very unusual" for this year.

Many of the arrested refugees are being detained at an immigration processing center at Daman Sarah in Kuala Lumpur, where they remain as of late this afternoon.

Among the detainee are some UNHCR-recognized refugees who did not carry their UNHCR cards at the time of their arrest, as well as, those refugees who carried only certified copies of UNHCR card after they lost their original documents.

Other nationals rounded up in the raid included migrant workers from Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Rights Situations Worsen in Malaysia, Thailand

12 December 2010

Human rights situations in two refugee-receiving countries, Malaysia and Thailand, are deteriorating, according to different reports released in conjunction with the recently celebrated International Human Rights Day.

Suaram, a human rights watchdog, slammed Malaysian government for not doing enough to curb human rights abuse by allowing police to arrest peaceful demonstrators.

According to the report, although Malaysia Government is taking stern actions to fight human trafficking activities, it is still unwilling to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention, the key legal document that defines refugees, their rights and the states' legal obligations.

Meanwhile, the human rights situation in Thailand has been in a state of crisis since the start of the year, with emergency rule in effect in many areas of the country, according to Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

The AHRC says the use of the emergency decree has been associated with gross and widespread human rights violations in Thailand.

Malaysia and Thailand are the largest refugees receiving countries in the region of Southeast Asia but both of them never signed the 1951 Refugee Convention.

According to UNHCR, there are around 90,000 refugees in Malaysia while Thailand hosts more than three million stateless people. The majority of refugees in both countries come from Burma.

Scores of Burmese Nationals Murdered in Malaysia in 2010

17 December 2010

Dozens of Burmese nationals including refugees and asylum seekers were murdered in Malaysia since January this year although the exact figure is not yet known.

Many migrant workers and refugees from Burma lost their lives during gang-fights and robbery while some were killed in alcohol-related incidents. It is also sad to note that some of the reported murder cases were committed by Burmese nationals themselves, often under the influence of alcohol.

In early November 2010, a Burmese girl called Zin Mar Win²⁴, was murdered by her boyfriend out of jealousy. Her body was found in a pool of blood at a link house at Puchong Township, Selangor State. In the same month, another Burmese named Khaw Khaing Soe, 31, was killed by fellow countrymen in Alor Setar, northern part of Malaysia after getting involved in a fight.

In August 2010, a body of Burmese national in his twenties was found blood-bathed with severe head injury on the floor of his house in Shah Alam Township, not far from Kuala Lumpur. The victim, who was known to be sharing house with some friends from Burma, was found dead only after his neighbour noticed bad smell emanating from his house.

In April 2010, a refugee from Burma named Myint Shwe Sava, 40, was murdered and his body was squeezed into a paper box. The body was later dumped at an industrial area in Shah Alam Township. Myint Shwe, father of four and a recycle goods collector, was said to have heavy injury on his head and lost his cash and hand phone. Police believed the victim had been robbed before being killed.

In June 2010, another Burmese refugee who worked in a market in Selayang Township near Kuala Lumpur was murdered on the back lane of a restaurant. He was reportedly having a fight with two fellow countrymen, and his body was later found to be chopped into pieces with hands, head and neck separated.

In March 2010, a Burmese migrant worker working in a vegetable farm at Gua Musang in the eastern part of the country was murdered in a gang-fight with another group of foreign workers from Indonesia. The victim's body, thrown into a deep cleft in a forest, was later discovered by a local worker who was installing pipelines in the area.

In February 2010, the body of a Burmese national named Zaw Zaw Aung was found half naked at Johor Bahru, a city not far from Singapore. Police believed the victim, who was wearing only a pair of underwears when discovered, was murdered somewhere else before being dumped at the crime scene. Another refugee from Burma called Thang Kee was killed in the same month by his Burmese roommate who was said to have acted insanely under the influence of alcohol in Kuala Lumpur.

In June 2010, Malaysian Police found a naked body of Khin Su Hlaing, 24, in a river near a village at Hulu Yam. Police later detained several suspects following the casualty.

In Malaysia, there are more than 90,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Burma, according to the UNHCR.

By Thomas Chong

Events

Chin Activist Received St. Stephen's Prize In Norway

10 November 2010

Chin human rights and democracy activist, Victor Biak Lian, was yesterday awarded St. Stephen's Prize 2010 by the Norwegian Mission to the East (NMTE) in recognition of his magnificent contributions to democracy, human rights and national reconciliation in Burma in a ceremony held at the Norwegian School of Theology in Oslo, Norway.

Upon receiving the award, Victor Biak Lian said in his speech: "I am very surprised. What came to my mind immediately was the fact that it is not my individual efforts that should be recognised but rather the efforts of all my colleagues and friends who are equally committed to the cause of the disenfranchised and suffering communities of Burma."

"We will continue to press for justice and accountability for human rights violations, national reconciliation and genuine democracy. We have to remain hopeful. Change that is small and slow can quickly become big and widespread. I believe that one day this change will come and that I may return to my homeland, not as a Chin or an ethnic nationalist but as a member of a unified, free, and democratic Burma," Victor, a father of two, told the audience with his family members in attendance.

The 45-year-old ethnic Chin activist has been tirelessly involved in the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma for more than 22 years since the student-led 8888 uprising against the military regime. As a young student and ethnic nationalist, Victor Biak Lian actively took part in demonstrations, ending up in jail and eventually fleeing to India following the junta's ruthless crackdown on peaceful protestors across the country.

High Commissioner of OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) on National Minorities, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, who presented the award to the Chin recipient, said: "As much as I am honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to award this Prize to Victor Biak Lian today and to thank him, I am saddened that we still need these prizes to remind us and the world of human rights violations that continue to take place in many countries."

"Burma is in desperate need of change. I believe that efforts like those undertaken by today's Prize Winner, efforts to strengthen respect for religious freedom and human rights and efforts to help unite various ethnic minorities in Burma, can play a crucial role in bringing about the change needed," added Mr. Vollebaek.

The ceremony, attended by more than 120 Chin and Norwegian participants was entertained with traditional songs and dances by Norway Chin Mission Church members in their national costumes and beautiful music by Helga Botn with Real Fake Band.

Victor Biak Lian is the fourth recipient of the award in line with his three predecessors, Bishop Thomas from Egypt (2005), Doan Trung Tin from Vietnam (2007), and Tim A. Peters from the USA (2008) who works among refugees from North Korea.

The award consists of an artwork by Peter Grøstad, a diploma of Peter Mohn, and a monetary donation.

In the afternoon, Victor was giving a presentation on 'Ethnic Nationalities of Burma: What can they contribute?' alongside other key speakers including Ed Brown of NMTE; Ola Breidal from Department of Foreign Affairs; and Khin Maung Win, Assistant Director of DVB (Democratic Voice of Burma).

Highlighting an in-depth historical and current situations of Burma including the recently held 2010 General Elections, Victor Biak Lian said the military regime is not planning to give up power, adding: "United vision, different roles, diverse action is needed."

During his stay in Norway, Victor Biak Lian is set to have a series of meetings with Department of Foreign Affairs, Burma Committee, the Norwegian Baptist Union (NBU), and Burmese and Chin communities based in Norway. He is also programmed to visit and speak at Chin and Norwegian churches, and Christian seminar.

The Norwegian Mission to the East (NMTE), with its motto reading 'Together for the persecuted', is an Oslo-based Christian missions and human rights organisation, with a special focus on freedom of belief and religion. The NMTE is committed to providing support, care, and practical help for churches and individuals who are persecuted or oppressed because of their religious beliefs.

Thai University Hosts Chin Photo Exhibition

24 November 2010

A photography exhibition on the struggle of Burma's Chin people is currently on display at Chiang Mai University, northern Thailand.

Organized jointly by the Rural Sustainable Community Development and Chiang Mai University Library, the exhibit features a portfolio of 'real' unstaged photographic images by a prolific British photographer and artist whose works have been commissioned by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The photographs, taken over the course of 16 months between 2008 and 2009, portray the story of the struggle of ethnic Chin group who spread across three countries in Burma, India and Malaysia.

"Striking and illustrating," commented one viewer who walked into the exhibition hall at the main Chiang Mai University Library by chance yesterday.

Titled "Path of Perseverance: The Chin from Burma," the exhibit is the sixth times it has been displayed in Thailand, including one in Bangkok earlier this year. It is dedicated to a Chin rights activist John Tuihing who drowned in a boating accident two years ago while on a mission to document rights situations in southern Chin State.

The exhibition was inaugurated on Monday, November 22, and will be on display till December 2, 2010.

Bridging the Gap: Chin Christian Leaders Converged in Malaysia

27 November 2010

Chin Christian leaders across the globe yesterday gathered at the first Global Chin Christian Fellowship (GCCF) Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, unanimously coming to terms in principle with the fellowship formation.

The conference, jointly hosted by 10 Chin Churches in Malaysia, had more than 250 participants including Chin Christian pastors, ministers and leaders as well as delegates of Chin churches, denominations and communities of different areas from 14 different countries, with a total of 70 from Burma and 46 from others excluding attendees from Malaysia.

One of the organising committee members, Rev. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio told the conference in his opening speech: "This is a historic day for the Chin Christians, and we praise God for making this meeting possible. And because this is such a historic day, we need to heed and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, only with whose help can we make this meeting successful."

"My prayer is that the good Lord will use our feeble organization called Global Chin Christian Fellowship for His glory and for His Kingdom. And my hope is that all of us, Chins throughout the world, will be used by Him for His purpose: Our hands will become His hands to do things for His name, our feet will become His feet to go wherever He wants us to go, our mouths will become His mouth to declare His gracious gospel of salvation to every Chin, and to every creature on earth. In other words, we will be His tools in His hands," said the 75-year-old Falam Siangbawipa.

The much-awaited conference opened with a short devotional worship service followed by a series of paper presentations from various key speakers including Rev. Dr. Chum Awi on Draft Constitution of GCCF, Rev. Dr. Robert Thawng Hlei on Mission Obligation and Strategy, Rev. Dr. Hrang Hmung and Pu Sui Hingz of OCO (One Chin Organisation) on Community Development, Rev. Dr. Hla Aung on Ecology, Pi Bawi Cin on Chin Women in 21st Century and Ngun Thawng Lian on Chin Youths in 21st Century.

One of the participants from Burma told Chinland Guardian: "I felt God has answered our prayers. We all came here together and agreed to work together and made our minds to move forwards together for the Chin people regardless of where we live. I believe GCCF will make a good bridge between us in Burma and abroad."

The name GCCF (Global Chin Christian Fellowship) was collectively agreed during the Chin Christian Leader's Consultation held on 8-10 February 2010 in Pataya, Thailand by a group of 43 Chin Christian leaders from across the world.

Tragedy in Chin State: Dead Toll Rises as More Victims Succumb to Injuries

27 November 2009

17 people have died in yesterday's road tragedy, which now appears to be the single deadliest road accident ever in Chin State.

The latest information obtained by Chinland Guardian has confirmed that the dead toll has risen to 17 as of this afternoon. This includes 12 people who died instantly at the scene and five people who later succumbed to their injuries in Tedim hospital. As many as 36 people are now in Tedim hospital with serious bodily injuries.

"At least 7 people remain in 'very critical conditions' as a result of serious loss of blood," said a local person contacted by Chinland Guardian. He added that the bodies of the victims have been transported to their respective villages.

The accident occurred near the village of Tualzaang, close to Vial Cian area located half way between Tedim and Tonzang of northern Chin State.

An 'overloaded' passenger bus serviced by a local company Chin Taungtan overturned yesterday morning in the rugged terrain of northern Chin State.

The bus was carrying Christian jubilee-goers enroute to Tedim Town to attend a centennial celebration marking the arrival of American missionary Rev. J Cope in the area one hundred year ago this month.

While the identities of the victims remain unknown, a local Tedim resident said The victims include people from Tonzang town, and the villages of Tuitum, Dui Mang, Kam Lai and An Lang.

Facts & Arguments

The Way Forward: Will Suu Kyi's Release Open up Democratic Space?

16 December 2010

With the world speculating on what might happen next in Burma with the recent release of the country's pro-democracy leader and elections, a young activist looks at the complexity of Burma's problems and asks if the recent polls will provide an opening-up of democratic space.

The release of 65-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner and Burma's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from detention overjoyed most of the Burmese people inside and outside Burma. She is freed unconditionally, but it still remains unclear about the expectation of the government over her role in Burma politics.

The legal status of National League for Democracy (NLD) and the role of its leader Aung San Suu Kyi became a big question after the party was disbanded by the ruling military junta on 6 May 2010 following its refusal to re-register the party for the elections held last month. The party split internally, with some defectors competing for the National Democratic Force (NDF) in the sham 7/11 election, arguing it made more sense to be involved in the process, no matter how flawed it was.

On 7 November, Burma went to the polls for the first time in 20 years. Widespread reports of coercion, intimidation, vote-buying and, particularly, advance vote-stuffing marred the election. The regime's proxy political party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), has unofficially claimed a sweeping victory of more than 80 percent of the votes in the elections. A total of 37 political parties stood for more than 1,100 seats up for grabs for the two houses of parliament and 14 local legislative assemblies for the seven states and seven regions. A number of opposition parties will now hold seats in the new parliament. Meanwhile, the military junta was once again playing its usual tricks by carefully timing Aung San Suu Kyi's release with the elections in order to divert attention from people's exasperation on the sham November polls.

Arranging everything on the arrest and release of Aung San Suu Kyi, Than Shwe is said to rely heavily on advice from his soothsayers. Considering the number 13 to be an unlucky number, the 77-year-old Senior General was reported to have chosen the release date of Aung San Suu Kyi to be on November 13.

"Tripartite Dialogue" which has been seen as the essential first step toward national reconciliation in Burma is now far to reach. In her first public speech after her release, Aung San Suu Kyi called for "unity" amongst all actors for change. But the challenge lies in the complex socio-economic and politics dynamics among the different groups in Burma, which makes solidarity of the people more difficult.

As the regime is unable to solve three of Burma's most intractable problems - ethnic disunity, economic underdevelopment and drugs production and trafficking, it is now upon Aung San Suu Kyi to act more as a people's leader and not just as a leader of a political party that won the 1990 elections.

In her Shwegonediang speech on 14 November 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi invited General Than Shwe for a dialogue to "sort out our differences across the table". While apparent power struggles have plagued Burma's military leadership, it might be easier said than done to solicit the political wills of the regime. While Burma's new constitution guarantees a dominant role for the military, and impunity for members of the regime, more than 12 international governments have publicly supported a commission of inquiry to look into violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws in Burma. This call has come from EU member states such as the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ireland, Estonia, Hungary, and Lithuania, as well as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The call for the second multi-ethnic Panglong Conference has sparked new hopes among the ethnic groups that this process can actually lead to genuine national reconciliation. Conversely, this idea at the same time can serve to limit the space within which Suu Kyi can make some political manoeuvrings, as this very thing can also shake the 'already consolidated' seat of Than Shwe.

Reflecting her belief in Buddhism, Aung San Suu Kyi cited 'Grudge and Fate'. Bearing no grudge on her captors, she challenged the people not only to believe in fate but to work hard towards positive change. In essence, she is trying to instil a sense of personal responsibility

in affecting real political change. In her interview with the BBC, Suu Kyi made it clear that she is just one of among many to do her part to affect change.

“Even if you are not political, politics will come to you,” is something with which Suu Kyi is trying to engage the larger public. She has mentioned that she intends to travel around the country. But there are legitimate concerns about her physical safety given the possible scenario of a second Depayin Massacre, or even worse than that of the fate of Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan who was assassinated in 2007.

As YouTube and other social networks such as Facebook and Twitter had favored Obama during his campaigns for US presidency, Aung San Suu Kyi talked about the important role of communication and media in her speech on the day of release. She once mentioned about wanting to get a Twitter account to get in touch with the younger generation after years of isolation. This would provide better network with, and effective outreach to the younger generations that can have positive impacts on the country’s political transition towards democracy.

It remains to be seen how big a political space the oppositions groups, including Suu Kyi as a figurehead of the movement will have, to be able to work effectively towards change. It is worth waiting to see how far that limited space can provide for all pro-democracy groups to work meaningfully for positive change in Burma.

By Salai Nyein Chan

Rebuilding A Peaceful Chinland: Hope of A Chin Exile

14 December 2010

When I read the scripture text on the Jew's return from the 70-year-long Babylonian captivity, I envision the picture of the Chin refugees returning from all parts of the world to the God-given land of Chin State in great numbers. I strongly hope there will be a day when the deported Chin people will find their ways home to Chinland. There will be time the runaways will be back as returnees.

Although the way the Chin people left our homeland differs from the way the people of Judah left their land, our status is the same as theirs—both of us being exiles in a foreign country. The Jewish captives were exiles and so are we. But our dissimilarity is that the Jews were deported as captives whereas we are resettled as fugitives. Our captivity also differs from the Jewish captivity. Whereas the Jews were captives out of the country, we are captives in the country.

It is apparent that we are really captives in our own land. The entire Chinland is in captivity with its people being deprived of liberty and freedom. The whole Chinland is like a prison-house in which are the people detained. The whole Chinland is like a door-locked chicken-house in which the poultry are left starved with very little food over which they are fighting one another for their lives' sake. The weaker chickens only stare enviously at the stronger ones greedily gobbling up the little food.

In consequence, it is reasonable that the poor weaker fowls should be struggling to get out of the house by any means. In the perspective of situational ethics, Christian or secular, the weaker fowls are justifiable to seek any possible way-out for their lives. They are just to fly out through the window. They are fair to get out through the ceiling holes. It is not guilty to create a way-out for an escape to freedom; for life is too priceless to give up to the pitiless. Likewise, freedom is too precious to entrust to the vicious. Loyalty is too invaluable to pay to the unreliable.

The situation of the Chin people is no better. The weaker poor people are deprived of their livelihood by the stronger so-called elites—the junta officers and their loyalists. I want to state my eye-witnessed unpleasant incident which was a case in this point. During one summer vacation while I was in Hakha, I planned to visit my native village. On being informed that I would go to my village, my niece, a mother of three children, kept a fattened hen for a dinner she planned to invite me to. Looking forward to my arrival, the little children frequently asked their mother, "Mum, when will uncle get to us?" It was not because they longed to see me but rather because they longed to eat chicken. (An average family in Chin State can hardly eat chicken once in two months. As for my family of three persons—my mother, my niece and myself—we could eat two chickens in a period of six years when I was in Hakha. That time, my salary was above the average person's monthly income.)

Regrettably, I delayed my travel to my village because of some reasons. In the meantime, an army officer and his men came to my village, and seized the fattened hen that the children longed to eat. Who ate the chicken? The wildcats—so to say—the junta wildcats. Now the soldiers ate up the children's meat. Thus they robbed the children's hope, joy, potential and courage. In this way, the cruelly exploitation of the junta is sapping the children of their energy, their courage, until they lose their confidence. Consequently, these children lose their holistic rights of humanity. They lose their healthiness, their physical development, their psychological development, their intellectual development. Hence, they lose the blessed life of abundance. As a result, they lose even their life expectancy.

The primary and central cause of all these problems is political chaos. The aforesaid social ills are the effects of political injustice and discrimination. The political iniquity is the original and central cause of these problems. We face with many terrible encounters in three areas of human life—political, religious and economical.

Politically, the ethnic minorities in our country are suffering from bitter racial discrimination, oppression and pressure by various means with the purpose for Burmanization of the ethnic peoples; that is, they are forced to speak Burmese only and convert to Buddhism. The junta's unwritten policy towards the ethnic minorities is both preventive and repressive. They create various means to block the development of the minority languages and identities. When the military regime took power in 1988, they eliminated the Lai language from the academic subjects in public schools. It followed that, within a period of two decades, the Chin young people can hardly read or write their own native language.

The Lai language is now in danger of extinction. We lose much of our cultural values such as traditional dances, songs, folktales along with the language which is the backbone of culture. Publication of books in minority language is strictly prohibited on pain of three-year

imprisonment¹. Literature works such as history, novels in Chin, are required to be translated into Burmese before they are published. In this way, we, the Chin ethnics, have been losing our own cultural elements in our own land. We have almost lost our own identity, our uniqueness in our own land.

Religion is a major reason that invites severe antagonism, opposition and oppression by the exclusive junta government. Simply on religious and racial bases, the Christian Chin people are treated as secondary citizens, given less opportunity for important posts in government offices. The worst of it is the government's deliberative action against church activities in all Chin State.

While writing this article, I recall an event of the authorities' preferential and partial treatments on two of my villagers who came to stay at my residence in the TABC Headquarters in Thantlang. They were from the same village. They came together. They came with their own businesses. The older man came to attend a Christian annual meeting whereas the other was to attend the government-organized People's Militia Training courses. As they arrived at the gate of our headquarters, the man with religious affair was arrested whereas the other young man, who was to join the government-conducted militia training, was freed. The police authorities attributed the curfew as the reason for the arrest, for my guests arrived during the curfew hours. But this could not be a strong reason, for they did not arrest the young man. This was a discriminative and intentional act. This was a sign of their indifference to Christian movements. This was a sign of their antagonism against Christianity; it was a creation of a hindrance to the Christian activities. Their discrimination was very evident between the two, who came from the same village, arriving at the same time, in the same town, directing to the same house. One was arrested and put into prison simply on the basis of his religious business, while the other man with government business was freed.

There are still other more instances of such cases in Chinland. Religious meetings and assemblies are required to apply for permission from regional military authorities. In the application, the name list of the participants should be appended. The application should state who will speak on which day and on which night. This is nothing but the creation of a difficulty for our religious movements. This is a violation of religion by the state. As religion should not interfere with state's affairs, the state should not interfere with religious affairs. Besides, the junta not only takes control over the church; but also intrudes into the internal affairs of Church-related organizations. While I was serving as a lecturer at a seminary, at every turn of each semester, the intelligence used to examine our academic subjects. Once, we proposed to put Chin History as an academic subject in the school's curriculum, but higher Chin officers in the government offices argued against the proposal that it might invite problems from the government.

However, in the mist of our hardships, God has heard the cries of the Chin victims with the ears of UNHCR officers and many sympathetic countries, who offer their helping hands to us. A great number of us will hopefully be resettled to countries overflowing with milk and honey. There we will receive God's blessings. We will also suck the milk of education in various fields. We will be improved and filled up with novel thoughts, ideologies, technologies, and the like. We will build a newly transformed community. We will be a new community, a community of God, a people of God, a people of righteousness, a people of

love. We will be like a company of bees, not like the butterflies that live individually. We must not be like the butterflies that suck nectar for their own enjoyment and do not bring anything home for their children, for their fellows. We must be like the bees who diligently work in cooperation for their company—the hive—that stores a lot of sweet honey that signifies helpfulness and benevolence. With the various kinds of blessings we will rebuild our land, our people. We will make our Chinland a land on the hill, a city on the hill, and our people a people of God, love and justice.

There is hope for the future that the gate of a peaceful Chinland may be open to the expatriates. Then the recorded names of the returnees and the contributors will be called out. When the roll is called then, our names will be there in the list and we will be there.

Endnote:

¹This Act, issued by the Revolutionary Council and renewed by the present government, was read to me when I was called up over to the District Peace and Development Council Officer, Falam, while I was editor of a monthly religious periodical TABC Authawng (Voice of TABC).

By Siang Nawl

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