



# Chin Human Rights Organization

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## MEDIA STATEMENT:

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL MIDNIGHT 19 JANUARY 2011 E.S.T.**

**12PM THAILAND STANDARD TIME**

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### **CHRO: NEW EVIDENCE OF ABUSES IN BURMA'S CHIN STATE STRENGTHENS CALL FOR UN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

[Geneva, Switzerland] The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) today welcomed a new report published by Nobel Peace Prize winning organization Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), *"Life Under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State."*

Using innovative population-based methods to document human rights violations in all nine townships of Chin State, researchers found that almost 92 percent of households surveyed had experienced forced labour at least once in the year prior to interviews.

Other key issues highlighted in the report include religious and ethnic persecution, rape, torture, arbitrary detention, disappearances, and recruitment of child soldiers by the military regime. In addition, the report illustrates how pillaging, forced cultivation of inedible crops such as *jatropha* (physic nut), forced labour and portering for the Burma army all directly contribute to chronic food insecurity.

CHRO is in Geneva to call on the international community to ask tough questions of Burma's ruling State Peace and Development Council on its human rights record during the first Universal Periodic Review of Burma under the United Nations Human Rights Council. In its submission to the review process, the organization reported over seventy separate incidents of forced labour over the four-year review period, some involving orders to forty villages at a time.

"These new findings corroborate CHRO's own documentation of human rights violations over the past fifteen years in Chin State. They shed further light on the widespread and systematic nature of the abuses inflicted on the Chin people by the authorities in Burma, with complete impunity," said Salai Ling, CHRO's Program Director.

CHRO reiterated its support for a UN Commission of Inquiry into grave human rights violations in Chin State and the rest of Burma.

“A UN-led impartial, independent and thorough investigation into these crimes is essential to end the culture of impunity in Burma. It will also deter further human rights violations. Ultimately, such an investigation is not just about accountability, it’s about improving the lives of people across Burma,” continued Salai Ling.

-ENDS-

For media interviews, please contact:

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. The full individual submission by the Chin Human Rights Organization to the Universal Periodic Review of Burma is available online at <http://www.chro.ca/action-alerts/advocacy-a-campaign/366-chro-individual-submission-to-the-un-universal-periodic-review-july-2010.html>

**About the Chin Human Rights Organization**

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) is a non-governmental, non-profit advocacy organization legally registered in Canada. It was formed in 1995 on the India-Burma border by a group of Chin activists committed to promoting democracy in Burma, and documenting previously unreported human rights abuses being perpetrated against the Chin people by the Burma army and local authorities of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). CHRO is the primary rights-based advocacy organization for the Chin.

**About the Chin people of Burma**

Around 500,000 ethnic Chin live in the northwestern area of Chin State in Burma. The Chin are ethnically very diverse. The six main tribes of Aso, Cho (Sho), Khuami (M’ro), Laimi, Mizo (Lushai), and Zomi (Kuki) can be further broken up into at least 60 different sub-tribal categories. The Chin speak more than 20 mutually distinct languages. Despite such diversity, the Chin are unified through a common history, geographical homeland, traditional practices, and ethnic identity. The missions of the American Baptist Church starting in the late 1800s served to further unify the Chin people through religion. In a country that is predominantly Buddhist, the Chin are 90 percent Christian with most belonging to the American Baptist Church.