



Chin Human Rights Organization

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MEDIA STATEMENT:

21 May 2011

CHRO WELCOMES ILO'S VISIT TO CHIN STATE

[Chiang Mai, Thailand] The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) today welcomes the visit this week by the International Labor Organization (ILO) to Chin State to raise awareness about the issue of forced labor with the local authorities. In a State where more than 90 percent of the people have been subjected to forced labor by the authorities¹, the ILO's visit was both timely and appropriate. CHRO considers this an important first step towards tackling the issue of forced labor in Chin State.

The ILO's awareness-raising event took place in the capital Hakha on Wednesday, 18 May– the first of such event in northern Chin State – with more than 160 officials across the State participating. They included general administrative officials, judges, police and Burma Army personnel. CHRO is encouraged to learn that the authorities have agreed to distribute the ILO complaint mechanism booklets to the wider population.

In this context, the Burmese authorities have a unique opportunity to demonstrate their commitment by taking proactive and concrete actions to crackdown on the practice of forced labor. Actions should be taken to enforce existing domestic laws that criminalize the requisition of forced labor by both civilian authorities and the military, and by taking advantage of the ILO's expertise and assistance in ending the practice of forced labor in the State.

“We hope that the ILO awareness program has positive impacts on the Chin people. On the one hand, the authorities, including the Burma Army have been clearly informed that it is both illegal to impose forced labor and to punish people for reporting forced labor incident. On the other hand, we hope that more Chin people feel empowered to exercise their right to make official complaint to the ILO against the imposition of forced labor by the authorities,” says Salai Bawi Lian Mang, Executive Director of CHRO.

In Chin State, the Burmese military is the primary institution responsible for the widespread and systematic use forced labor. The Burma Army still exacts forced labor to construct roads and military camps, and forcibly recruits civilian for porters and militia service, on a widespread basis and with complete impunity.

- Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 55 based in Sinletwa village of Paletwa Township, Chin State forced locals from a total of 13 villages to perform night sentry duty in each village from 18 February 2011.

¹ A new report released in January “*Life under the Junta: Evidence of Crime Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State*,” by Nobel Peace Prize-winning Physicians for Human Rights found that nearly 92 percent of the households in Chin State were subjected to forced labor. A full report can be viewed online at <http://burma.phrblog.org/>

- On 25 March 2011, Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 140 patrolling in Matupi Township of Chin State forcibly ordered 16 locals including a 16-year-old boy from Khuangan village to carry their military equipment.
- Starting from the third week of March 2011, over 50 civilians from Thantlang and Hakha towns were forced to undertake militia training for over two weeks.

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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, an instrument of the State authorities. CHRO is the primary rights-based advocacy organization for the Chin.
