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Chin Human Rights Organization

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September-October 2012

## ***"Threats to Our Existence":***

Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma

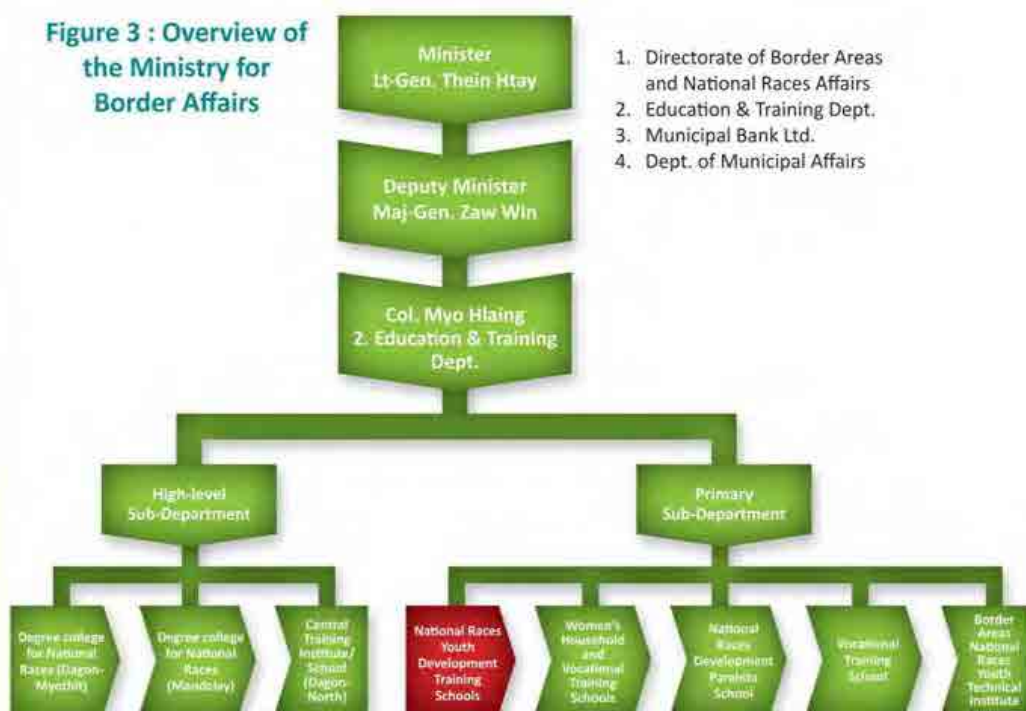


Chin Human Rights Organization

A new report published in September 2012 by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), which can be downloaded at [www.chro.ca](http://www.chro.ca)



**Figure 3 : Overview of the Ministry for Border Affairs**



1. Directorate of Border Areas and National Races Affairs
2. Education & Training Dept.
3. Municipal Bank Ltd.
4. Dept. of Municipal Affairs

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## Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

### Locals Forced to Buy Tickets for Chin State Day Celebration

07 September 2012:

**L**ocals in Falam Township of Chin State are forced to buy lucky draw tickets for the celebration of Chin State Day, an administration officer in-charge of ten houses from Haimual village reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Salaries of village administration heads, formerly known as village tracts clerks, from 74 villages were deducted in February this year for the celebration fund.

“The village administration heads

ordered village tract heads to collect the same amount of money from villagers in the month of March,” added the Chin villager.

Village Tract Administration Head of Zawngte in Falam Township collected the same salary amount from Zawngte, Ngailan, Hnahthial (A), Hnahthial (B) and Haimual villages through village heads and administration in charges of ten houses in March 2012.

“We don’t know how many lucky draw tickets are given by Township Administration Office and who won the tickets. But I did a total collection of 20,000 kyats from Haimual village by myself and submitted the total amount to Zawngte Village head on 10 April,” he said. #

“To implement Falam Township Administration office’s plan to construct golf field in Falam, each village administration heads from 74 villager tracts are told to buy 10 lucky draw tickets and their salaries for June are cut off for this purpose.”

### Money Forcibly Collected for Golf Field Construction

**13 September 2012:** Locals in Falam of Chin State have been forcibly collected money for golf field construction, a villager from Haimual Village reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

“To implement Falam Township Administration office’s plan to construct golf field in Falam, each village administration heads from 74 villager tracts are told to buy 10

lucky draw tickets and their salaries for June are cut off for this purpose. The village administration heads then collected money from villagers to cover deduction from their salary,” added the Haimual villager.

“I don’t know the total amount Zawngte Village has to contribute but we got 10 lucky draw tickets. I collected 15,000 kyats in Haimual Village according to the direction of the village tract head and submitted it to him on 10 June,” added the Chin villager. #



## Illegal Timber Tax Collected from Locals

**25 September 2012:** Mr. Ye Win Aung, Head of the Forest Department in Matupi, Chin State, has illegally collected timber tax, a Chin local informed the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

"Timber contractors in Matupi pay tax for a year and locals buy them from the contractors. I bought three tons of timber from a contractor's shop. The depart-

ment chief forced me to pay a total amount of 45,000 kyats. It actually costs me 15,000 kyats per ton," he said.

He continued: "For construction of a house in Matupi, a local needs to get permission and it will be possible only after paying tax to Township Municipal Department."

"The government tax rate is 1.51%. However, the department forcibly demands 2.51% and the locals are very disappointed." #

## Army Soldiers Killed Local Animal for Ration

**10 October 2012:** Burma Army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion No. 50 based in Gangaw Town and currently stationed in Lungler village of Thantlang Township, Chin State, killed a mithan for their ration in Lungler, a local, who asked not to be named, reported to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

On 23 September 2012, Second Lieutenant with his seven soldiers patrolled from Lungler village to Zangtlang village on border security duty and killed a mithun belonging to Mr Lian Hai, a villager from Lungler, the following day.

The soldiers then dried the meat the whole night and brought it to Lungler army camp for ration, he

added.

"The remains from the animal's body parts such as legs, skins and bones got even rotten and smelly. When the matter was reported to the battalion commander and the Second Lieutenant, the soldiers confessed to be the perpetrators," said the Chin local.

"The owner demanded 5 lakh kyats (equivalent to US \$650) in compensation but later both parties agreed with 4 lakh kyats after the mediation of the battalion commander. However, the owner was given only one lakh kyats till date."

Mr. Lian Hai was disappointed with the incident but was afraid to report the matter to the higher officials as the battalion commander warned him not to do so. As of today, no action has been taken against the perpetrators. #



Soldiers in Lungler



Mithun in Chin State

## Forced Labour

### Students Forced to Contribute Labour

18 September 2012:

**S**tudents of Pyidawtha Sub-Middle School in Kalaymyo Township, Sagaing Division were forced to carry and place sand around the school compound.

On 13 July 2012, the students, as instructed by their teacher, brought hoes and buckets from their houses and put sand around the school.

“In spite of hiring labourers, the students are forced to contribute to work on it and this is, in fact, violation of human rights and child rights,” said a local, who asked not to be named.

Head of the Pyidawtha Ward ordered each household in the area to put sand across their compounds. #



### Locals Forced to Work on Matupi-Paletwa Road Construction

**26 September 2012:** The Chin government commenced construction of a road linking two towns in southern parts of Chin State, a local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Construction department used two big machines for the construction on 20 August 2012. The machines could not handle big trees and local people of the two towns are ordered to fell them down up to their township boundary.

The department planned to finish the construction in March 2013, which will connect Paletwa Township and Bawili, a border village of Matupi Township.

Matupi-Paletwa road construction was initially planned in 1974 during the Ne Win-led socialist

regime. The government had no sufficient budget and used forced labour for the construction but it did not work out.

After Matupi was made the capital of southern Chin State, Tactical Commander Lt. Colonel San Aung forced the locals for road construction in summer and winter every year but it was a complete failure.

“Initially, the bypass of this road connecting Matupi and Paletwa was located by Mr Sui Tan in 2010 upon the request of a Buddhist monk based in Matupi in order to help him spread Buddhism across the area. Today the Chin State government is implementing the construction as planned,” added the Chin local.

“The locals want this road constructed but they are worried that they would be forced again to complete the construction. And it was initially started as requested by the Buddhist monk to make his Buddhist work more successful.” #

## Freedom of Religion

### Abolish Burma's Ministry of Religious Affairs: CHRO

11 September 2012:

**T**he Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) urged the government of Burma to abolish the Ministry of Religious Affairs following the release of a new report on ongoing violations of religious freedom against Chin Christians.

The 160-page report entitled "Threats to Our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma accused the Ministry of imposing discriminatory regulations on constructing and renovating Christian infrastructure.

A Chin Christian pastor said in the report: "If you want to construct a church building, permission must be obtained from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. You will never get it even if you ask...there is no change in the religious policy in terms of constructing church buildings."

Four large Christian crosses have been dismantled or destroyed on the orders of the authorities since Thein Sein's government came to power in March 2011, according to the report.

CHRO Program Director Salai Ling said: "President Thein Sein's government claims that religious freedom is protected by law but in reality Buddhism is treated as the de-facto state religion."

"The discriminatory state institutions and ministries of previous military regimes continue to operate in the same way today. Few reforms have reached Chin State."

The report said the Ministry of Religious Affairs has been in close collaboration with the Ministry for Border Affairs in the implementation of an unwritten policy of forced assimilation through a 'Na Ta La' programme.

Na Ta La is a Burmese acronym for the Progress of Border Areas and National Races Development Affairs Programme headed by President Thein Sein under which the military runs separate school sys-

tem for the ethnic minority groups as part of a 30-year master plan for development of ethnic areas.

Military-dominated Ministry for Border Affairs is responsible for a total of 29 Na Ta La schools across the country, with Chin State having the highest numbers of schools and students.

CHRO Advocacy Director Rachel Fleming added: "These schools are designed to facilitate a forced assimilation policy under the guise of development. The schools appear to offer a way out of poverty but there is a high price to pay for Chin students. They are given a stark choice between abandoning their identity and converting to Buddhism, or joining the military to comply with the authorities' vision of a 'patriotic citizen'."

Interviewing 12 Chin students who fled the Na Ta La schools, CHRO's report said Chin Christian attendees face coercion to convert to Buddhism and other human rights violations at the schools.

A 17-year-old Chin student, who attended the Na Ta La school in Matupi township for four years, told CHRO that the headmaster Aung Myint Tun and the others threatened them saying: "If you don't want to be Buddhist, we can arrest you, we can put you in prison, and we can do anything we want to you."

Other students recalled being threatened by their headmaster, saying: "If you don't want to be a monk, you must join the military."

CHRO also called for the abolishment of the Education and Training department under the Ministry for Border Affairs and the re-allocation of those resources to the teaching of ethnic minority languages within the national curriculum.

The report documented destruction of 13 Christian crosses, construction of 15 Buddhist pagodas or monasteries using forced labour exacted from Chin Christians, and more than 40 separate incidents of torture or ill-treatment.

CHRO's report is a follow-up to its 2004 report Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma.#





Members of CHRO presenting reports at British Parliament, London, UK (Photo: CHRO)

## Chin Activists Lobby British Govt on Religious Freedom in Burma

**13 September 2012:** A delegation of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) has held a series of meetings with British parliamentarians and senior government officials in London this week, in a bid to highlight serious ongoing human rights concerns in Chin State under the new nominally civilian government in Burma.

The delegation's visit to Britain follows the release of a new report last week entitled "Threats to Our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma, which accuses the new government of pursuing many of the same policies of the previous regimes, which amount to persecution of the Chins on the basis of their religious and ethnic identity.

In a meeting hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Burma (APPG) held in the House of Commons on Tuesday, CHRO Program Director Salai Ling said: "While we welcome many of the reform initiatives by President Thein Sein's government, these reforms have not translated into improvement in human rights, including freedom of religion for Chin Christians."

CHRO accuses the Burmese government of actively implementing a policy of forced assimilation of Chin Christians by trying to undermine an integral part of their identity - Christianity - through government in-

stitutions.

It says the government-run residential school system under the Progress for Border Areas National Races Development Program (known in its Burmese acronym as Na Ta La) - part of a 30-year Master Plan for development of ethnic areas chaired by President Thein Sein - is being used to recruit, indoctrinate and coerced convert Chin Christian youths to Buddhism.

"30 years is what it takes to destroy a generation," said Salai Ling, adding: "The schools are evidently designed to facilitate the government's forced assimilation policy under the guise of development."

### Meeting with Speaker of the House of Commons

On Wednesday, CHRO delegation briefed Speaker of the UK House of Commons inside his Chamber in Westminster with specific recommendations towards addressing human rights in Chin State, especially the right to freedom of religion. A long-time Burma supporter, Speaker John Bercow MP made a visit to the Indian-Burma border to meet with Chin refugees in 2008.

### At Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The delegation also met with officials at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including representatives from the Department for International Development (DFID), and conveyed similar messages to the UK government's officials responsible for Burma.

"While we welcome many of the reform initiatives by President Thein Sein's government, these reforms have not translated into improvement in human rights, including freedom of religion for Chin Christians."  
- Salai Ling,  
CHRO Program  
Director

Hosted by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), the group briefed other individual MPs, NGOs and media, including a live television appearance on the BBC World's program. A briefing at Lambeth Palace, the seat of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, is also on the card.

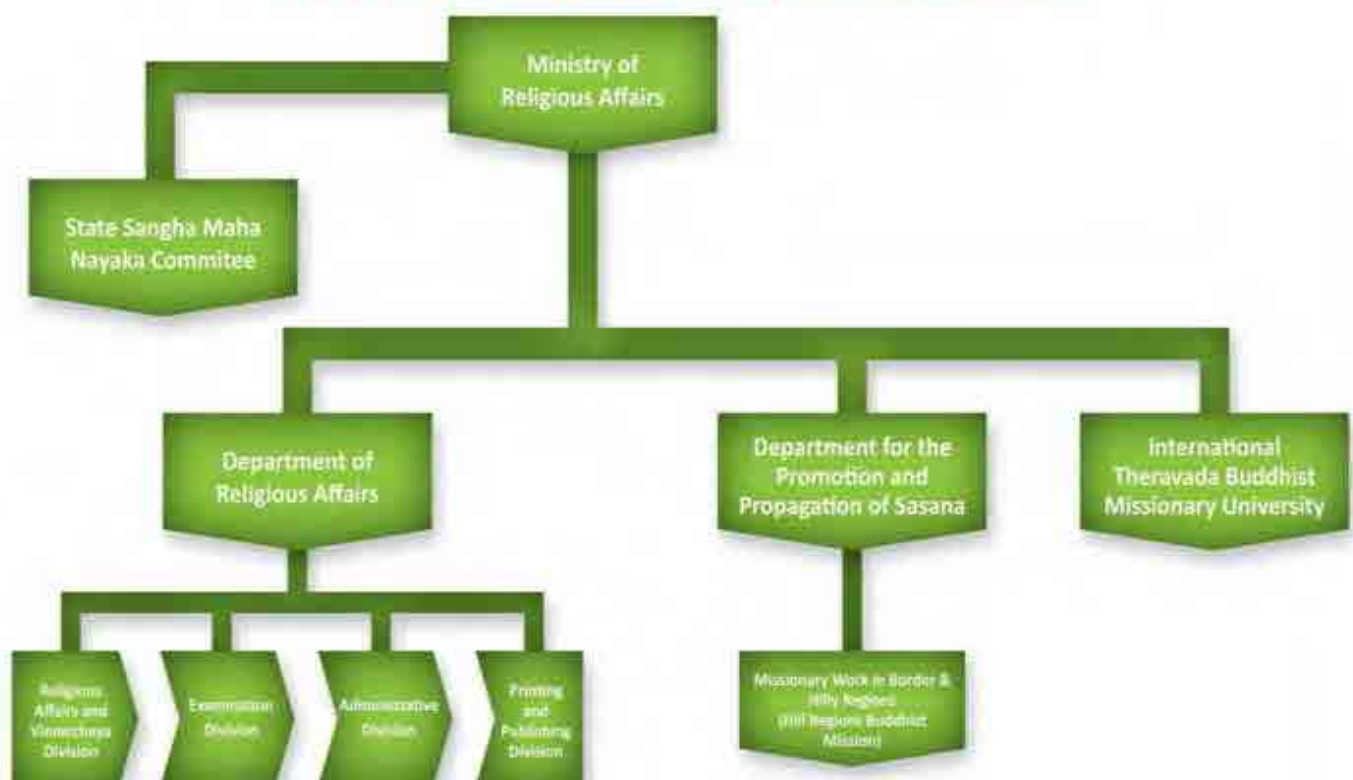
Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at CSW, who wrote the foreword to the report, said: "We are delighted to work together with CHRO to bring this very important but often overlooked issue of violations of freedom of religion or belief to the attention of policy makers and parliamentarians in Britain and in the international community. We have seen some positive and welcome steps forward towards reform in Burma in the past year, but if Burma is to be a genuine democratic society, it must stop the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities and ensure that freedom of religion or

belief, as well as other human rights, are protected and promoted."

"We particularly call on the Government of Burma to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit the country, and be allowed to travel to Chin State and other parts of the country without hindrance, and engage in a meaningful dialogue with the government, the democratic opposition, ethnic nationalities, religious leaders and civil society, to ensure that violations of freedom of religion or belief are investigated, freedom of religion or belief is protected, and inter-religious harmony is promoted."

The delegation is set to travel on to four European countries: Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium to meet with officials from governments, the United Nations and the European Union. #

Figure 2 : Overview of the Ministry of Religious Affairs







Na Ta La school in Tedim, Chin State (Photo: CHRO)

## End 'Forced Assimilation' in Burma: CHRO

**22 September 2012:** The government of Burma must put an end to ongoing implementation of an unwritten policy of 'forced assimilation' through the state-run education and training program, a delegation of Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) tells key European governments ahead of President Thein Sein's visit to the United States.

A CHRO delegation is stepping up efforts to draw the attention of policy makers and government officials in Europe to the situation of Chin Christians in Burma who face decades-long systematic discriminations on the dual basis of their religious and ethnic identity.

CHRO says the Burmese government's residential schools under the Ministry for Border Affairs have been targeting ethnic youths from Christian backgrounds such as the Chin for recruitment and coerced conversion to Buddhism.

The Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools, known locally in its Burmese acronym as Na Ta La schools, and operated by the military-dominated Ministry for Border Affairs are being run as a front for government's mass indoctrination program, CHRO says.

According to CHRO's report "Threats to our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma the Na Ta La schools target poverty-stricken Chin children of Christian background for recruit-

ment. CHRO says Chin students in the schools are regularly abused and coerced to convert to Buddhism.

Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director of CHRO, said: "What is worrying is that this alternative school system is part of the government's 30-year Master Plan for 'development' of ethnic areas. The government is essentially trying to forced-assimilate a generation of youth to undermine the Chin ethnic and religious identity."

In his report to the UN General Assembly last month the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief said: "...States must meticulously ensure that the specific authority of State agents and State institutions is not used to coerce people to convert or reconvert. One area that requires particular attention in this regard is the school which, besides being a place of learning and education, is also an institution that wields a high degree of authority over children, namely, young persons who may be particularly vulnerable to pressure from teachers or peers."

There are a total of 29 Na Ta La schools across Burma, of which a third are in Chin State and its nearby regions including Sagaing and Magway where a sizeable population of Chins live. A third of the total students are of Chin ethnicity, according to CHRO.

The Na Ta La school program is operated in six states, three regions and Naga Self-Administered Zone, with the highest numbers of schools being located in Chin State and Chin-populated areas in Burma.-continued on next page

As part of a five-nation advocacy tour in Europe, the Chin activists have met with parliamentarians, senior foreign ministry officials from Britain, Norway and Sweden. The delegation is also scheduled to brief officials from the United Nations and the European Union.

In addition to calling for the abolishment of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and the Na Ta La program, CHRO says the Burmese government must revise the National Registration Card so that it no longer identifies the bearer's ethnicity and religion - a source of sys-

temic discrimination on the basis of religious and ethnic identity in Burma.

Chin State remains a restricted area and is one of the most heavily militarized states with more than 50 military camps across Burma's poorest state despite the recent ceasefire agreement with the Chin National Front, an armed group fighting against the regimes since 1988.

Due to ongoing decades-long patterns of human rights violations, up to 200,000 Chins have fled their native state to neighbouring countries over the past 20 years.#

**Figure 4 : Progress of Border Areas and National Races Programme**



**Note:** The Progress for Border Areas National Races Development Program (known in its Burmese acronym as Na Ta La) - part of a 30-year Master Plan for development of ethnic areas chaired by President Thein Sein as seen above.

**Figure 3 : Overview of the Ministry for Border Affairs**



1. Directorate of Border Areas and National Races Affairs
2. Education & Training Dept.
3. Municipal Bank Ltd.
4. Dept. of Municipal Affairs



Chin pastors visiting the site of Zogam Prayer Mountain Building (Photo: Tongsan News)

granted permission to continue construction of Christian buildings and churches in our land."

However, detailed information as to how re-construction of the Zogam Mountain Prayer Building will be carried out in line with legal requirements under Thein Sein's government still remains unknown.

On the 15th of this month, another meeting was held at the Siyin Baptist Church in Taingen village, where the General Secretary and Central Committee members of ZBC as well as the General Secretary of SRBA had discussions

## Reconstruction of 'Banned' Christian Building Attempted in Chin State

**26 October 2012:** The Zomi Baptist Convention (ZBC) came to a conclusion during its recent meeting, saying it will try to find ways of resuming construction of the Zogam Prayer Mountain Building, which was banned in the mid-2000s by Burma's military authorities.

ZBC's Board of Management meeting unanimously passed an agenda proposed by Siyin Region Baptist Association (SRBA) in collaboration with Yangon Siyin Baptist Church to reconstruct the building structure of Zogam Prayer Mountain near Taingen village of Tedim Township, Chin State.

The Chin Christian building designed in the shape of a cross, whose construction was started reportedly in 2005 in commemoration of the first Chin converts, Pu Pau Suan and Pu Thuam Hang following a centenary celebration of Chin Christianity held at Khuasak village in 2004.

"It was a very important memorial monument that Chin Christians would like to construct on the sacred mountain top. Unfortunately, Burma's military authorities ordered the construction to be stopped after its foundation had been laid and building structures erected," said one of the Chin pastors.

The Chin pastor, whose name is kept anonymous, added: "Now that we have a new government that embraces democratic changes, we believe we will be

sions over the reconstruction of the building structure, according to the Tongsan news.

The Tongsan news said the attendees after their meeting visited the building site on the mountain top and held a prayer service.

Meanwhile, a report released last month by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) documented evidence of the ongoing violations of religious freedom and widespread restrictions on constructing and renovating Christian infrastructure under both the previous and current governments of Burma.

As a result of human rights violations perpetrated against the Chin by the military regime, CHRO said an estimated 200,000 Chins have fled Burma over the past two decades, with about 50,000 Chin refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, 12,000 in New Delhi and as many as 100,000 living in Mizoram State of India.

Through the teaching of the American missionary couple, Rev. A.E. Carson and wife Laura with the help of Karen Christian teachers, who first arrived in Chinland in 1899, Pu Pau Suan and his wife, Kham Ciang, and Pu Thuam Hang and his wife, Dim Kho Cing, converted into Christianity as the first Chin believers in 1904.

Founded in 1953 under the leadership of Rev. S.T. Hau Go, the Zomi Baptist Convention, the largest Christian organization in Chin State, has as of last year over 200,000 members, with 899 churches, and 28 associations as well as 6 local churches based in Rangoon.#



## Govt. to Open New Na Ta La School in Paletwa

**30 October 2012:** Minister for Border Affairs Lt. Gen Thein Htay said a new 'Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training School' will be opened in Paletwa Township of Chin State next year.

The Union Minister announced plans of establishing the school, also known locally as Na Ta La, in 2013-14 during his trip to Paletwa town of Chin State last Sunday.



Union Minister Thein Htay meeting with Chin family in Paletwa (Photo: The New Light of Myanmar)

Meeting with the local people at Kimo Hall around 10:30am on 28 October, Lt. Gen Thein Htay said the school would be run as a 'free secondary level learning centre for national race youths'.

"Those [students] who have finished secondary level education are trained to get degrees or diplomas at University for Development of National Races and Nationalities Youth Resource Development Degree Colleges under the Border Affairs Ministry," said the Union Minister, according to the New Light of Myanmar today.

He also mentioned the Na Ta La school students would be 'assigned to their home regions' upon completion of the course.

Last month, a new report by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) accused the Ministry for Border Affairs of targeting poverty-stricken Chin youths for recruitment into the schools and coercing Christian students to convert to Buddhism.

Chin students, who fled the Na Ta La schools, told CHRO that they were prevented from practising Christianity and faced forced coercion to convert to Buddhism at schools via the threat of military conscription.

A 13-year-old Chin student, who attended the Na Ta La school in Matupi and fled later, said: "During the day time while were attending school, we had to wear school uniform. After school, we had to wear monks' robes. We had our heads shaved. Sometimes we Chin Christians didn't want to bow down to the monks. They beat us with rattan sticks..."

Another Chin student, who was recruited at the age of 18 to the school by soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 274, said: "At the school, we were taught Buddhism by monks. Most of the monks treated us badly; for those who didn't want to study Buddhism the punishment was severe."

However, the government claimed that students have the right to follow their chosen religion at the schools and that the schools facilitate cultural exchange between the diverse ethnic groups.

There are 29 Na Ta La schools across Burma, with one-third of trainees being ethnic Chin and more than one-third of schools located in Chin State and Sagaing region, where a sizeable population of the Chin live, according to the report.

CHRO's research reveals that the Ministries for Border Affairs and Religious Affairs work in close cooperation in the implementation of the schools programme, run as a separate residential education system.

First opened in around 1994 under the guise of a 30-year master plan for development in ethnic areas, the school programme is headed by military-dominated Ministry, with its Central Committee chaired by President Thein Sein.

CHRO's report said the Na Ta La schools arguably function as a cornerstone of the unwritten policy of forced assimilation as it called for the abolition of the Education and Training Department being responsible for the schools.—*continued on next page*

Speaking to Chinland Guardian, Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of the Chin National Party (CNP), said: "We have been closely monitoring the work of Ministries of Religious Affairs and Border Affairs especially in Chin State, and believe that we don't need a school that externally operates as a development programme but internally propagates Buddhism."

"This is of no benefits to the people as a whole and the budget spent for running the programme has been a waste. It is really unfair that government budget is used to promote Buddhism through this school system while discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities is still widespread," added Salai Thawng.

Lt. Gen Thein Htay, accompanied by Lt. Gen Hla Min of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office and Ra-

**Fast Fact:** There are 29 Na Ta La schools across Burma, with one-third of trainees being ethnic Chin and more than one-third of schools located in Chin State and Sagaing region, where a sizeable population of the Chin live, according to CHRO.

khine State Chief Minister U Hla Maung Tin, arrived by helicopter at the military base of Burma Army Battalion No. 289 in Paletwa after making a visit to Rakhine State.

During the Sunday meeting in Paletwa, the Union Minister avoided answering questions raised by the Chin locals regarding problems with electricity, water and poverty, according to the Khumi Media Group.#



Na Ta La school in Sagaing Region  
(Photo: CHRO)

**Fast Fact:** First opened in around 1994 under the guise of a 30-year master plan for development in ethnic areas, the school programme is headed by military-dominated Ministry, with its Central Committee chaired by President Thein Sein.

Na Ta La school in Kanpetlet (Photo: CHRO)



*Students at Na Ta La schools are ordered to shave their heads and wear monks and nuns robes; prevented from practising Christianity; forced to follow Buddhism; and beaten when they can't recite Pali scriptures on demand*



## Other Human Rights Violation

### Authority Issued New Alcohol License

10 September 2012:

**C**hin State government, in accordance with state procedures, re-issued alcohol licenses in Matupi town of Chin State, a Matupi resident who received a new license reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The resident, who asked not to be named, said the official license was issued earlier this year and seven individuals shared the license with a payment of 17 lakh kyats for the first six months as license fees.

“We don’t know how much more

needed to be paid for the second six months,” added the Chin resident.

The township administration usually sells the license at the price of 25 lakh kyats for a year in order to avoid auctioning.

“These seven individuals have been dealing with this business before anti-alcohol campaign by all religious denominations in the town,” added the license co-owner.

“According to the state government rules, alcohol selling time is between 10am and 6pm. It is illegal and restricted to sell to a person under the age of 18, and effective action will be taken against anyone, apart from those seven license holders, who sell alcoholic drinks.”

Religious groups in Matupi Town-

ship intentionally bought and retained the license in an attempt to combat alcohol-related social issues after making a payment of 25 lakh kyats for a yearly fee.

Teenagers between aged 16 and 18 are said to have been worst-affected victims of alcohol in the areas with a range of problems including untimely deaths, according to a 2004 survey.

The religious denominations have actively campaigned against trading and selling of any alcoholic drinks in the area since 2009. However, due to financial constraints, they could afford for only three years.

Local people have expressed their grave concern that the new issuance of alcohol license by the authorities will lead to destruction of youths again. #

### Villagers Unfairly Lured to Join USDP

**16 September 2012:** The chief political campaigner and executive committee member of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has offered villages in Lairal Hill area of Falam Township development incentives during his campaign trips.

“He stopped at Zawngte and Haimual Village for a night on 2 August 2012 and persuaded the people to be members of USDP saying the party would make sure drinking water would be provided throughout the year from a stream at Tlangkhua village in Thantlang Township if

they join his party. His party is the current ruling government and the villagers would get the drinking water all seasons as early as possible,” added he.

The Chin campaigner said the first requirement is that the village head had to be from USDP party, adding: “If the village head is from USD Party, then development projects will be accomplished for the villagers.”

“No development projects will be successful if the village head is not from the party. This is because we prioritize only our party members,” the Chin campaigner was quoted as saying by a local from Lairal Hill Area. #

### Unfair Election Preparation for Village Administration Heads

**22 September 2012:** Locals in Zawngte Village Tract (Lairal Tlang) in Falam Township, Chin State have been preparing for election of Village Administration heads, a former village administration member reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The election will be made from among locals in six villages of Zawngte Village Tract in late September 2012. A letter from Township Administration Office mentioned

that the village administration head must be an MA or BA degree holder.

And if there is no graduate from the village, the candidate must pass matriculation and the elected candidate must have a moderate social living standard, according to the letter.

The government will pay 1 lakh and 20,000 kyats for a monthly salary to each elected village administration head and 50,000 kyats will be put aside for village fund from the salary, he added.—*continued onto next page*



Chief political campaigner for Lairal Tlang from Union Solidarity and Development Party from Falam Township mentioned that the village development projects will be successfully implemented only if the

village administration head is from USDP party.

The villagers are disappointed with the election campaign message by the Chin political campaigner. #

## Chin Student Killed in Search of Firewood for Monastery Donation

**23 October 2012:** A young Chin female student died after a tree fell down on her while she was looking for woods demanded by her village school teachers in Kyindwe village, Kanpetlet Township, Chin State.

On 27 September 2012, Ma Htet Soe San, a seventh grade class student, succumbed to her injuries in the jungle while making an attempt to collect firewood, which were to be donated to the Buddhist monasteries.

A local said a tree trunk being held up in other trees

by a web of hems and stems accidentally fell on Ma Htet Soe San.

The village elders mediated the case and the teachers gave 500,000 kyats (equivalent to US \$650) to the victim's father Lance Corporal Thang Ki from the Police Force.

Students from village tracts in Kanpetlet Township have been asked to assist their school teachers in domestic chores such as pounding rice, hewing logs to make firewood and other necessary helps.

"It has become like a routine practice for the students now," added a member of a civil society network of Kanpetlet Township. #

## Complaints against Burmese Midwife over Medical Charges in Chin State

**28 October 2012:** Villagers in Mualbem of Tedim Township, Chin State, has accused a Burmese midwife, Daw Myint Myint Than, of demanding an enormous amount of money from the local patients.

Daw Myint Myint Than, a government employee at the Sub-Health Centre in Mualbem, charges 50,000 kyats per patient for her medical service of midwifery, according to local sources.

A Chin patient from Mualbem was quoted by the Voice of Chindwin as saying that the Burmese midwife not only treated unfairly but also overcharged the villagers, adding: "She asked a total of 50 thousand kyats for delivering a baby."

In the surrounding villages, patients would give a fair amount of money or other things such as chicken and a viss (1.633 kg) of sugar as a sign of gratitude to the nurse or midwife for their medical services, according to the Chin World Media.

One of the community leaders from Tedim Township told Chinland Guardian: "This kind of complaint is not new. Since the government health system is under-

funded and unreliable, the villagers understand that service fees must be given to medical staff for their services."

As of today, no action has been taken against Daw Myint Myint Than regarding the complaint.

A Chin medical doctor, whose name is kept anonymous, said delivering a baby at hospital should be free of charge and it should be the same for everyone in the country.

Although health care in Burma is nominally free, according to the government, patients in reality have to pay for medicine and treatment at hospitals and public clinics.

Burma's poorest Chin State is known as a region to which government employees are intentionally transferred as a form of punishment or penalty by their respective departments.

The Ministry of Health was allocated only 43 percent (\$4.8 million) of what had been requested during the second session of the Pyithu Hluttaw in August last year.

The budget bill for health for 2012-13 in Burma is proposed at 2.93 percent of the total budget, up from 1.3 percent, according to Xinhua Net News. #

## 73 Chins to be Repatriated by Mizoram Govt.

**31 October 2012:** India's Mizoram government said it will soon send 73 persons of 11 households, identified as foreigners, residing in Saikhumphai village of Champhai District back to Burma.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Champhai District with other government officials made a decision at a meeting held yesterday, saying 11 out of a total 52 households in the village are Burmese nationals and therefore be pushed back to their own country.

"The government said members of the 11 households are from Burma and they haven't got any proof of evidence that shows they are Indian citizens. They came to Mizoram State on their own will and they can be sent back or driven away anytime," said a source close to Champhai DC.

Only members of 41 households are recognized as Indian citizens. However, 73 individuals, who have lived in Saikhumphai village for over 10 years are not even accepted as refugees, let alone Indian citizens, according to the source.

On the other hands, members of the 11 households are officially known to be holders of Mizoram family 'ration card', issued to them by Mizoram government.

Concerns have been raised for safety and security of 73 Chins who have no Burmese national identity cards if they are repatriated to Burma.

"Now they are not accepted in India and they don't have any documents to prove that they are Burmese nationals either. They are in a very difficult situation," said one of the community leaders based in Mizoram.

In the past, the government of Mizoram State had expelled them two times, according to the leader, whose name is kept anonymous.

Mizoram government said 180,000 rupees have been set aside to support relocation of members of the 41 households to a nearby village of Vaiphai bordering Falam Township of Chin State, Burma.

In addition, the families would also be provided 48 roof tiles for their new houses in Vaiphai and other necessary assistance would be given, according to sources from the government.

Earlier this year, dozens of Chin villagers took refuge in the jungle near the Indo-Burma border following destruction of their houses in Saikhumphai on the direct orders of Mizoram authorities. #

"Now they are not accepted in India and they don't have any documents to prove that they are Burmese nationals either. They are in a very difficult situation,"

## Event



(Photo: CSO Malaysia)

### Chin Communities Maintain Traditional Celebrations

**23 October 2012:**

A series of traditional celebrations have been organized in their residing countries by Chin communities across the globe to mark the end of the harvest season in their culture.

The Chin harvest festival, which falls in the month of October with no designated date, was held in Burma, Australia, Malaysia and across Europe, with more celebrations to take place in North America and elsewhere in Asia next week.

With a variety of traditional dances, shows and performances in the programme, the event attracted more than 500 people in Melbourne, Australia, and about 800 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia last week.

One of the Chin refugees in Malaysia, who participated in the event, said they were proud to be able to celebrate the Chin traditional harvest celebration, adding: "This kind of traditional event reminds us of our uniqueness and Chin identity even though we are in a foreign land."

In Hakha, the capital of Chin State, Burma, a celebration was held on a grand scale at the Carson Hall last Saturday, with Chief Minister of Chin State government Pu Hung Ngai and other ministers as well as government officials.

Rev. Shwekey Hoipang, a Christian pastor and leader from the Dai-Chin community in southern parts of Chin State, told Chinland Guardian: "The harvest festival is traditionally a significant celebration that unites the whole village as well as community in sharing what they have. It is even more important that we, the Chin Diasporas, maintain this traditional values in our residing countries as our cultural identity."

Historically, the celebration was organized as a special occasion in a village when the farmers with their families returned home at the end of the harvest season after spending months on their fields.

The name of the festival varies in different Chin dialects such as Khuado in Tedim and Tonzang, Fanger in Falam, K'Thai Ei in Mindat and Kanpetlet, On Hu Saung Thar Ei Pwe in Asho, Taai Cha Nai in Paletwa, Cang Zom in Matupi, Khai Mdeh in Dai, Kut or Chavang Kut or Pawl Kut in Thado, Kuki and Mizo, Ku in Mara, and Tho in Hakha #





## Chin Women Organization Formed to Promote Rights

**27 October 2012:** A team of women volunteers held a meeting in Hakha, Chin State yesterday, forming a community-based group called 'Chin Women Organization (CWO)'.

The new civil society organization of Chin women, believed to be the first of its kind in the Chin capital, aims to work for the protection and promotion of issues related to women.

Pi Van Thla Cer Hniang, a newly elected chairperson of CWO, said of the need for the establishment of a civil society organization that focuses on social and secular issues of Chin women.

"CWO will make an effort to get engaged in activities, including empowering women's capacity, promoting women's rights and equality, and strengthening unity among Chin women, in order to make collective contribution towards building peace and our land," added CWO's chairperson.

The Hakha meeting took place at the house of Pu Chan Hrem, whose supports have been instrumental in the practical implementation of setting up the new organization of Chin women, added Pi Van Thla Cer Hniang.

Furthermore, one of the main objectives of CWO is also to make an effort in promoting and encouraging women's involvement in politics, according to Pi Van Thla Cer Hniang as quoted by the editor of Hakha Youth Organization newsletter.

Participation and encouragement by Dr. Maureen Darlang, a Chin medical doctor working for the United Mission for Nepal, who is making a short visit to Hakha, has been attributed to the actual formation of the new organization.

Members of CWO are set to hold meetings in the near



future with community, church and political leaders including Dr. Salai Lian H. Sakhong and Victor Biak Lian, prominent Chin activists visiting their native places after spending over two decades in exile.

Ms Nun Sang Hnem, CWO Secretary, said: "As a new organization, we have a lot of work to do and will have a series of meetings and discussions in days to come. We will need inputs from various organizations and individuals."

Leaders of the new organization said of their willingness and the necessity of extending network and collaboration with other women organizations from both inside and outside of the country.

Out of Burma, the Women League of Chinland (WLC), an umbrella body of ten different organizations formed on 4 December 2004, has been actively involved in working for Chin women since 2005.

Exile-based WLC also focuses on capacity building for Chin women from Burma through workshops, training programs, safe houses and income generation.

In March 2007, WCL published a report entitled Un-safe State: State-sanctioned sexual violence against Chin women in Burma, documenting 38 cases of sexual violence committed by Burma's military soldiers. #

**"CWO will make an effort to get engaged in activities, including empowering women's capacity, promoting women's rights and equality, and strengthening unity among Chin women..."**

## Humanitarian Situation

### Chin Woman Died, 12 Houses Destroyed by Storm

**11 October 2012:** Strong winds and rains hit Kyar Inn village in Kalaymyo Township of Sagaing Division yesterday, destroying about 12 houses including rice storage and cottages.

Around 2am in the morning, a big taramind tree fell down and smashed Pu Tluang Pum's house, killing his wife, Pi Par Hluan, 45.

"The tree actually hit them [the Chin couple] both but Pu Tluang Pum eventually escaped in the middle of

the night," a reporter from Kalaymyo told *Chinland Guardian*.

The severe weather pulled down many big trees and damaged several electric power lines in Kyar Inn with about 520 houses, most populated by the Chins.

A funeral service for Pi Par Hluan, mother of one daughter and Mission Leader of Kyar Inn Baptist Church, was held in the village cemetery at 3pm yesterday.

Sources confirmed that other nearby villages were also hit by strong winds and rains but no major casualties have been reported.#

## Situation of Refugees

### Blood Donation Made for Chin Refugees in New Delhi

**15 September 2012:**

Over 50 volunteers last Thursday made blood donation for Chin refugees in New Delhi, India in an event organized by the United Pentecostal Church's youth group in partnership with the Lion Club International.

Mr. Robert, chair of the organizing board committee, said the blood donated by 42 males and 9 females will be used for any Chin refugee patients who are in need of blood.

"The Chin refugees in New Delhi usually embrace big problems in search of blood for Chin refugee patients in terms of money, local transportation cost and time. The objective of this blood donation camp is to ease these constraints," said Mr. Robert.

Out of 75 volunteers, only 51 met the medical requirements for making blood donation in Janakpuri of the Indian city.

"They [blood donors] are doing on their own will and no one is forced to do so. Before giving donation, they have to sign that the organizing commit-

tee has no responsibility if any health problem occur to the donors," added Mr. Robert.

An Indian Organization called the Lion Club International, which plays the leading role in organizing the event, takes responsibility for prior medical checkups to the volunteers.

Some 24 volunteers didn't meet the standard condition for blood donation due to various reasons, mostly minor, including underweight and obesity.

"Before giving blood donation, the volunteers are provided some food by our Church and the Lion Club International also offered them some energetic food, with a photo frame as souvenirs. Now, any Chin refugee patients can get free blood through assistance from the United Pentecostal Church in New Delhi," continued Mr. Robert.

It was the first blood-donating event organized by the United Pentecostal Church run by Chin refugees in New Delhi.

More than 10,000 out of over an estimated 100,000 Chin refugees are currently stranded in New Delhi

"Chin refugees in New Delhi usually embrace big problems in search of blood for Chin refugee patients in terms of money, local transportation cost and time. The objective of this blood donation camp is to ease these constraints."





"In our daily struggle for survival, many of us have forgotten the children. We have failed to recognize the need of the children. Their daily lives and struggles are not heard. Each Drawing and Essay is a story of their lives that need to be heard. The community's effort to provide education to the children by establishing community based schools is worth praising. However, most of the schools are

## Refugee Children from Burma Provided Recreational Lessons in Delhi

**20 September 2012:** About 250 refugee children from Burma currently living in New Delhi were provided educational and recreational lessons at a playground in Vikaspuria of the Indian city last Saturday.

The one-day event included sessions of drawing and essay writing competition for children aged 12 and above on a theme entitled 'My Life in Delhi' while children under the age of 12 did on 'My Home in Delhi'.

Organized by EBO (Euro-Burma Office) Foundation in association with Burmese Women Delhi (BWD), Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) and Chin Students Union (CSU), the one-day event provided a chance for children from eight communities of the Arakan, Kachin and Chin ethnic groups to get together and improve their skills.

Dr. Achan, Director of E.B.O Foundation, said: "This program aims to bring children from different schools together with an attempt to create space for them to get to know each other and to build up relationship. It is also important to bring the children out of their congested room, at least for a day, to let them play freely with their friends. Thus, in a nutshell, by organizing this recreational program, we want to encourage the children in their education in an interesting way, express what they are going through and have fun playing with other children from different community."

limited to a particular group," added Dr. Achan.

During the program, children were divided into two groups as Junior and Senior, and they played ten different games in a team and individually.

The program ended with presentations of prizes for each competition and game. Winners of the essay writing and drawing competition received a cash prize of 1,500 Indian Rupees each, with the runner-ups and the second runner-ups getting 1,000 and 500 Indian Rupees. Children were also given prizes for ten different games.

"The children are very happy as it is a very good recreational program. The program is very educational, too. Thanks to EBO Foundation for organizing the event," said one of the volunteers from Burmese Women Delhi.

It was the first program organized for refugee children from Burma stranded in New Delhi of India, facilitated by Indian and Burmese volunteers.

Van Hmun Lian, a volunteer from CHRO, said: "These children are from informal schools and they do not have extracurricular activities and it is wonderful to see that these children have a chance to express their views and play games. Children do not lie and their writings and essays speak a lot for all the sufferings of Burmese refugees in New Delhi. It is interesting that some children still find some positive viewpoints in their lives when some adults are totally negative on their daily difficulties as refugees. We need to have such program in the future too, I think all these children forget that they are refugees for at least a day."#



## 40 Chin Refugees Rescued from Abandoned Warehouse in Malaysia

**28 October 2012, KUALA LUMPUR:** 40 refugees from Burma including five children believed to be victims of human trafficking were rescued from an abandoned warehouse at the township of Bukit Kayu Hitam, near to Malaysia-Thailand border on Wednesday night.

All of the Chin refugees, with the majority believed to be of Cho Chin tribe, previously worked in a tomato farm in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, but were sold to a syndicate who in turn supply them as cheap labors to a fruit orchard.

Cameron Highlands is well known in producing vegetable for local consumption and export. Vegetable growing in this highlands town, however, heavily depends on foreign workers including Chin refugees from Burma.

All victims including nine women and children were believed to be transported from Cameron Highlands to Bukit Kayu Hitam and 'stored' temporarily at the abandoned warehouse before they were transferred to their new employer.

They were poorly supplied as children had only an old newspaper to use as their 'mattress' when police raid the warehouse.

According to a police spokesperson, preliminary investigations showed that all the victims were granted refugee status by UNHCR and they had stayed at the warehouse for about a month.

"We believe the warehouse was a transit point for the refugees and a man from the syndicate managed to evade," he said.

It is confirmed that all of the Chin victims are refugees from southern parts of Chin State, Burma.

**Reporting by Thomas Chong**

## Opinion

### Burma's Ethnic Conflict and the Way Forward for Democracy

**31 October 2012:** Less than a month after the Burmese democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi concluded her highly decorated visit to the US, which was followed by the US announcement to ease its sanctions on imports from 'Burma, another major communal violence broke out in the western part of the country that have claimed more than 100 lives and resulted in thousands of internally displaced Rohingyas. In the north, the Burmese military continues its offensive against the ethnic armed group, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

The continued ethnic conflict in Burma reflects the nature of political crisis in Burma—deeply rooted in and prolonged by the Burman nationalistic claim that effectively utilized the world's most reclusive and successive military as a tool to accomplish its goals of ethnic cleansing agenda— which ravaged 60 million people with fear and poverty, killed thousands and produced millions of refugees.

With the recent positive developments led by President Thein Sein, something to optimistic and encourage with cautious, the international community must continue to recognize the ethnic issue is the heart of the country's problem and only when this issue has been addressed fundamentally, with the constitutional and institutional arrangement, a stable democratic state that respects human rights and embraces peaceful co-existence in diversity can be realized. That is when Burma, in real sense and substances, can be considered a democratic state that is capable of positively contributing to the regional and world peace, stability and economy.

Many may have observed the opposition party leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seemed to have changed her tone - perhaps more correctly her approach about Burma reform - from initially articulating the need for

constitutional reform as a more urgent necessary step in democratization process to maintaining the rule of law, while she had largely remained silent on the topic of continued violence in ethnic minorities areas as it was clearly seen from her speeches during her recent trip to the US.

Why would Suu Kyi stop any sort of pushing the constitutional reform in Burma? Has she now abandoned the ethnic minorities? There could be differing observations. However, a common agreement seems to suggest that she has shifted her traditionally held confrontational practice to a more diplomatic solution-oriented engagement with the nominal civilian government and the military for certain reasons. Will she succeed? Or would the military allow a fully democratic Burma state? It all depends.

There are two things that the military will not allow to happen easily: 1) Amending the 2008 approved constitution which reserves 25% for the military in all legislatures<sup>2</sup> and 2) Forming a United Nations commission of inquiry to investigate the possible crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the military. The Obama administration and Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi supported the UN Commission of Inquiry, which is also recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana<sup>3</sup>. In other words, these are the 'red line' for the Burmese military leadership. Something must be done before these advancements can be pushed for and achieved, or the Burmese military will come back to coup the power.

What is that something? Why is that?

Burma's ethnic conflict began during the struggle for independence in the 1940s when violence between the Burma Independence Army (BIA), a.k.a the 30 comrades, and the Karen ethnic group broke out. It is important to note that BIA members were immortalized in Burman or Bama nationalist mythology. The Karen ethnic Christian soldiers who had been part of the British army were disarmed by the BIA as the British retreated to India. The violence against the Karen ethnic minorities continued and the Karen National Union (KNU) was eventually forced into existence.

U Nu, the first prime minister of independent Burma, followed by General Ne Win, and then Sr General Than Shwe, all embraced and fostered the Burman chauvinistic agenda - the ethnic cleansing

policy that had become a state policy - that had rather successfully been carried out towards achieving their goals. In the process of implementing this policy, they committed atrocities and grave human rights violations. What happened then?

Sr. General Than Shwe and his colleagues clearly understood a pure military grip on the power will not be sustainable in the 21st century for many reasons – they know the power of the people; the 8888 style uprising could come back soon; the wave of the Arab spring could hit them, and they understand the power of technology and media. So they outsourced some smart brains to design the constitution approved in 2008 where the executive branch will impress the international community with its nominal civilian movement while the military hold all key powers, including the power of the Commander-in-Chief that can override the President's power anytime they need to.

In other words, this constitution serves as a foundation and grants the military to hold the absolute power. With such likable personality, President Thein Sein has rather been very successful in his effort in easing the pressure from both the international community and the opposition parties. In fact, he has got the US and European sanctions lifted and Ms. Suu Kyi join the parliament.

Now with 25% of the seats constitutionally taken by the military in all legislatures, a nominal civilian government installed in March 2011, Daw Suu and democratic forces will have to do two things to overcome the military's 'red line'.

With a clear understanding that the ethnic conflict and political crisis in Burma is man-made crisis and deeply rooted in the Burman nationalistic claim and the chauvinistic political culture, the majority Burman firstly have to realize and be convinced that a continuation of manipulating the military for their own political and racial purpose has been counter-productive, seen unintended consequences, and effected the whole country including ethnic groups such as Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, Shan and Bama themselves.

The Burman chauvinistic political culture has to change and reach a negotiated constitutional agreement and a consolidated political settlement in a federal democracy. The Burmese young generation must abandon the old way of racism and embrace

new ways of thinking and democratic political culture, and play an active and important role in the democratization process. This may desirably require organizing a conference in the form of the second Panglong where all eight major ethnic groups can start engaging openly, but seriously to eventually reach a negotiated agreement. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi supported this idea and also called for the 21st century style of Panglong Conference which her late father Aung San started.

Something that is even more important is all Burma stakeholders should work together toward creating a condition and political environment where the Burmese Generals' future security is guaranteed. This may include providing leeway creatively. This is for this very reason that the military must take part Burma's democratization process.

But all this will require a sincere and open engagement, an inclusive process, a serious intention to create a win-win situation - that is to establish a federalism-based democratic country, conducive to a long lasting peace, where Burman, non-Burman,

and the stakeholders together could say they have won collectively.

**By Salai Elaisa Vahnne**

*The author, Executive Director of the Burmese American Community Institute based in the US, is a longtime political and student activist for change in his native country, Burma. He holds an MPA degree in Policy Analysis and Comparative International Affairs.*

<sup>1</sup>See [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/27/world/asia/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-of-myanmar-not-bitter-about-past.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/27/world/asia/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-of-myanmar-not-bitter-about-past.html?_r=0)

<sup>2</sup>See the Burma Constitution at <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/media-room/book/constitution-republic-union-myanmar>

<sup>3</sup>See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/17/AR2010081706026.html>

## Interview

### Christian Leaders Summoned in Rangoon

08 September 2012:

**A**bout 40 Christian leaders based in North Dagon of Rangoon, Burma have been summoned around 11 am today by Township Administration Officer. The following is an interview with one of the Chin Christian leaders, whose name is not revealed due to security reasons.

**Question:** *How do you see any changes in terms of religious freedom after Thein Sein government took power? Have you been summoned like this before under the new government?*

**Chin Christian Leader:** There is a slight change since the new government took power. Before, we were told to close down our schools and stop worship services whenever someone in the neighbourhood lodged a complaint against us. We had to stop worship services for up to a month (whenever the

orders came). But now, they would tell us to conduct the service discretely after they come and check our premises.

That's the only change we have seen under the new government. But we are not still entitled to have a 'religious land ownership'. They say the law doesn't permit us to have one. This will continue to be the case in the future. We told the authorities that we bought the land as a personal ownership and run religious activities because we are not entitled to own a religious land. We told them they can prosecute and jail us, saying that we are not afraid to face any charges based on what we have done so far.

The Bible schools are required to report a list of our students as guests staying with us to the Township Admin Office every two weeks. There is no fee required, but the Christian leaders are told they can make donation during the registration.

**Question:** *Why do you think that you were summoned? Who actually issued the order?*

**Chin Christian Leader:** The order came from -



the District level authority. They (the township admin office) told us that the order came from the District Office. I think this is just to discriminate against us. The main reason they cited was that our properties including the land and buildings were not legally registered. And they said that we maintained the facilities outside the parameters permitted by law.

We responded by saying; "If that is the case, we will apply for a religious land ownership. Tell us how much we should pay for the permit legally." We asked them if they will grant us the permit. But they said they won't grant us the permit.

**Question:** *What did they say after you submitted your report to them (financial account, activities, no of students etc)? And what do you think would happen?*

**Chin Christian Leader:** They called me on the

phone after I'd submitted my report. They said the financial accounts were not clear. There were no threats uttered at me. At this point, we don't know what will happen to us. Because only Christians seem to be targeted for this, we think that they are using the pretext of 'religious land issues' to take action against us to close us down. There are several Buddhist monasteries around our neighbourhood. The monasteries are also located in residential areas like ours. But they made it clear to us that Christians will not get permission even if we apply for religious land ownership or permits. They say they will let us know more. I guess we will know it then.

**Question:** *How many of you were summoned?*

**Chin Christian Leader:** There were around 40 of us, of which about 30 are Chins, and the rest being Karen and Burman Christians.

#

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