



Chin Human Rights Organization

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INFORMATION RELEASE: for immediate release

Burma: Eight Chin activists convicted; fined

[Chiang Mai, Thailand] On Wednesday 23 July eight Chin activists - charged under article 18 of “The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act” with protesting without permission - were convicted in Matupi township court under presiding Judge Aung Mya, and ordered to pay fines of 30,000 kyats each the same day.

Ngun Chin Par, Sui Sui Kyi, Kaw Htwe, and Khin Khin Zi from the Zotung Women’s Organization appeared in court in Matupi on 22 July, and were ordered to appear again on 23 July. On the same day, Thang Zing (F) and Khin Thluai Par (F) of the Matupi Women’s Organization, and Maung Han (M) and Tei Mang (M) of the Matupi Youth Association also appeared in court.

One of the activists on trial reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), “The judge said we cannot avoid being charged under Article 18 and that the law has to be followed. He asked us to choose between paying the fines and going to prison. So, we chose to pay the fine.” Judge Aung Mya set the prison term at one month each, and the fine at 30,000 Kyat per person, the maximum financial penalty set out under Article 18. All eight activists unanimously chose to pay the fine rather than go to prison.

CHRO will release more detailed information when it becomes available.

Background

On 10 June, a 55 year-old woman from Rezua sub-township in the Matupi township area of Chin State was brutally beaten during an attempted rape by Burma Army soldier Private Myo Thura Kyaw from Light Infantry Battalion No. 269. It is unclear what action if any is being taken against the perpetrator.

On 15 June, activists from the Zotung Women’s Organization (ZWO) in Rezua sub-township applied to the Rezua police station for permission to hold a demonstration in protest at the incident. They then

faced threats and intimidation from local officials. Although the activists from ZWO were not granted permission to hold the demonstration, they went ahead with it on 23 June. In Matupi town, activists from the Matupi Women's Organization (MWO) also applied for official permission to hold a demonstration from their local police station, but were refused. They went ahead with their demonstration as planned on 24 June.

Shortly afterwards, the four activists from Rezua and the four from Matupi were summoned to their local police stations and charged under Article 18 of "The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act" with demonstrating without permission, which carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison. The order to file the charges reportedly came from Chin State Chief Minister Hung Ngai, a former Brigadier-General from the Burma Army.

Including this recent case in Rezua, CHRO has documented five sexual violence cases since President Thein Sein's government took power in March 2011, three of which have been committed since the initial ceasefire agreement was signed between the government and ethnic armed resistance group the Chin National Front in May 2012. All but one of the incidents were perpetrated by Burma Army soldiers. Burma signed the United Nations Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict earlier in June, but no concrete action has been taken.

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors:

1. For more detailed background information, please refer to CHRO's 15 July 2014 press release, available at www.chro.ca
2. Like the Kachin languages, Chin languages use Roman script. When Chin names are transliterated from Burmese into English, the spelling is changed significantly and this sometimes renders Chin names unrecognizable. Please refer to the English language version of the press release for the correct spelling of the names in English.
3. Matupi township (which includes Rezua sub-township) is a remote area of Chin State, with poor communications infrastructure. The area is also heavily militarized, with seven Burma Army camps in the area, including in Rezua sub-township and Matupi town. CHRO will continue to monitor the situation, and will provide updates when possible.
4. The Zotung are a sub-group of ethnic Chin who mainly live in the Matupi township area, but also in other parts of Chin State and elsewhere in Burma.

5. Of the five sexual violence cases documented by CHRO since March 2011, four were committed by Burma Army soldiers, and one murder was allegedly committed by a Meitei insurgent from Manipur in Northeast India. For details of the other four cases, please visit <http://www.chro.ca/index.php/publications/rhododendron> See *Burma Army Soldier Abducted Local Girl to Become Wife*, Rhododendron News published by CHRO, March - April 2011 edition; *Soldier Raped Chin Woman in Kyauktaw*, Rhododendron News July – August 2012 edition; *Suspect in Killing of Chin Woman Identified but Still at Large in Burma*, Rhododendron News July – August 2012 edition; and *Soldiers Attempted Rape, Threatened Villagers in Chin State*, Rhododendron News, January – February 2013 edition.