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Chin Human Rights Organization

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May-June 2014



Chin women protesting against rape in Matupi Township, Chin State (above),
Chin refugees demonstrating on World Refugee Day in Delhi, India (below)
(Photo: Khumi Media Group & CHRO)



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Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Farmers fined after being forced to stop shifting cultivation

15 May 2014:

More than 10 households were fined 5,000 Kyats each for continuing their shifting cultivation in Leihkung village, Paletwa Township in March 2014, according to sources from the Chin Human Rights Organization.

U Htey Myint, an officer in charge of forest, told local subsistence farmers that he would fine them instead of sending them to prison as they continued slash-and-burn farming in a struggle for their livelihood.

Farmers told CHRO that they had been forced to sign a document as a promise to stop practicing shifting cultivation while U Naw Seih, of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, visited Kinwa village tract in Paletwa Township in November 2013.

They said that about 70 households had signed the document. "According to what the locals understand, they could be jailed if they continued their farming as before. However, no one exactly knows what is written in the document as they were not given a chance to read it."

U Htey Myint has lived in Paletwa Township for about two years. #

General Admin Officer exploits villagers

24 May 2014: Yan Aung, the General Administration Officer in Tuikinwa, Paletwa Township, Chin State exploited local villagers using power in a dictatorial behaviour.

A local victim reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization that the officer had extorted money, treated them unfairly, forced them to work and used public property for his own benefits.

Last year, the government provided a budget of 10,000,000 kyats for poverty reduction and rural development for Tuikinwa village tract as part of the 6-month plan.

The local, who asked not to be named, said: "He [Yan Aung] charged an interest rate of 10 percent although the government has already set it to only 4 percent. It means that he pocketed 6 percent of the interest rate."

"Without any obvious reason, he also demanded an extra 100,000 kyats each from those who borrowed more than 1,000,000 kyats from the budget," he added.

Similarly, Yan Aung overcharged villagers for the interest rate of the government loan in 2012. Another victim said: "He made different rates for different money-borrowers. He didn't lend money to those who

were unable to afford the 10-percent interest rate."

He is also accused of cutting down trees in the forest, protected and preserved by the village, for constructing private buildings. "He built houses in the area local residents secure for water sources. He forcibly extorted 5,000 kyats from each cattle owner who was not able to tend their cattle grazing in a field," the local said.

No action has been taken against Yan Aung although reports were made to the State government authority in 2012 and 2013. #

"He [Yan Aung] charged an interest rate of 10 percent although the government has already set it to only 4 percent. It means that he pocketed 6 percent of the interest rate,"
- A local

Matupi medical doctor demands money for free birth certificate

24 June 2014 - Dr. Zaw Thein Kyaw in Matupi, Chin State demanded thousands of money for a birth certificate, which is supposed to be free of charge.

Parents said that the Burmese medical doctor extorted at least 30,000 Kyats (US\$30) per birth certificate at the Matupi hospital, according to the Chinland Post.

Mrs. Sang Lian said that she had paid 60,000 Kyats for her two children's birth certificates while Pi Hle

Par was charged more than 100,000 Kyats for three.

A local said that the amount was too much for them to pay, adding: "People are struggling for their daily survival and it is not easy for them to earn that much money."

"When people complained, he said that President Thein Sein himself has already permitted government officials to receive gifts worth up to 300,000 Kyats, and that it is not a bribe," he added.

A source from the Health Department in Chin State confirms that a birth certificate is free and that there is no charge for the issuance.#

Freedom of Religion



Pastor Zun Hlei Sum (left) and the building in his compound (Photo: CHRO)



would be charged if he failed to follow the instructions.

But Sum continued the construction, saying that he didn't violate any laws. Relevant authorities including health and fire departments inspected the compound and agreed that the construction was in line with the laws, according to an official document in October 2012.

Yesagyo Court clears Chin pastor of charge

08 May 2014: The Yesagyo Township Criminal Court came to a conclusion that Chin Christian Pastor Zun Hlei Sum was not guilty and was hence acquitted of the charge.

The charges against him under Section 188 of the Penal Code entitled 'Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant' were dropped.

Sum had been accused of illegally constructing a religious building in his compound in Yesagyo town.

The Yesagyo Township Administration Office ordered in an official letter Sum to stop the construction in January this year and threatened that he

Head of the Yesagyo Township Administration Office Khaing Htun filed a lawsuit against the Chin pastor and Sum was summoned to court in February.

The actual reason for the lawsuit was not because Sum had violated the law but because Buddhist monks and locals had raised objections about the construction of a Christian building.

Rights and Christian groups, and other Chin leading individual including Chin Affairs Minister of Magwe Region Hla Tun had raised the case to both the State and Union governments as well as to President Thein Sein.

The case came to an end after a series of court date postponements.#

Christian family evicted from village, banned from group worship

07 May 2014 - A Christian Chin and his family are not allowed to live in his native village after the eviction following their convert to Christianity.

They are also banned from holding worship services with other believers at his home, according to sources from the Chin Human Rights Organization.

The man reported that he had been told about the restriction by the village headman on the orders of the Mindat Township General Administration Office.

He wrote a letter to Tomás Ojea Quintana, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma, during his visit to the Mindat area in August last year.

In his letter to Mr. Quintana, he said that Village Headman U Law Gee and village administration members forcibly drove him out of the village and that he was not even allowed to meet his parents.

He added that he and his family lived in a temporary house outside of the village as the headman ordered his sister not to host Christians in her house.

The letter also stated that when Mindat Baptist Church pastor and youths visited him on 15 November 2012, Layman Buddhist Missionary U Gee Law, the village Buddhist abbot and other villagers told

them not to enter the village, not to have worship service and not to stay more than one night.

In his letter to Mr. Quintana, the Chin Christian man said: "As a citizen of Myanmar, I also want to enjoy rights and the freedom enjoyed by other citizens. For this case, though I have sent a letter to the village administration, township general administration office and even to the Chin State government, there has been no inquiry and no action taken to date."

In a letter sent to the Mindat Township Religious Affairs Office in 2012, the villagers accused two Chin pastors of visiting the village without obtaining permission from the local authorities.

In response to the villagers, U Law Thang Law, Township Religious Affairs Officer, said in his letter that the two pastors were invited by the Chin Christian.

U Law Thang Law also said that the two pastors broke the customary law set up Young Loung village, which is that the village is Buddhist and would not accept other religious groups. He said that the Christian Chin should not be allowed to live in the village any longer, as he had caused problems.

Currently, the Christian Chin and his family live in a temporary house built outside of the village.#

Female Christian pastor sues Buddhist monk for physical assault

07 May 2014: A Chin female Christian missionary from Mindat Baptist Church has filed a lawsuit against Nandar Thiri, a Buddhist monk in Mindat town, for slapping her in the face.

In an interview with the Chin Human Rights Organization, she said that she had opened a case on 26 September 2013 on the basis that the monk had assaulted her and discriminated against her, and that she had been summoned to the Mindat Township Court and ordered to read her statement on 4 March 2014.

When the court asked if she had got anything to add or amend in her statement, she replied none. The

court told her that they would call her again but she has not received any response yet.

On 7 October 2013, the judge from Mindat Township summoned the pastor and the monk, and tried to persuade them to settle the matter between them so that the case could be closed. But the pastor refused, and said that she would write a letter to the Chin State government, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and President Thein Sein if the court would not take action.

How the incident happened

Buddhist monk Nandar Thiri wanted to meet with the Chin pastor who was sent by Mindat Baptist Church as a missionary to Pan-awh village in September 2013.

- continued next page

The pastor said that she would be able to see the monk after meeting with another Christian missionary and his family as the arrangement had been made. While she was praying together with the family, the Buddhist monk and some villagers came to their house waiting outside.

The monk shouted at the pastor to come out when their prayer was finished.

"When I came out of the house, he slapped me in the face. He repeatedly questioned me about who had given me permission to work in Pan Awh," the pastor told CHRO.

He told her that she was not allowed to work in Mindat or Pan-awh without an official letter from the Myanmar Council of Churches and Myanmar Baptist

Convention, adding: "He has such letter from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and is legally working in Mindat."

The Chin pastor told him that hitting a woman is a serious crime in Burma and that praying in a Christian or Buddhist way is not against the law.

To this, the monk said that he was not afraid of anyone in the government offices in Mindat and challenged that she could take him to court if she dared to do so.

In August and September 2013, Sayadaw U Nandar Thiri ordered Chin Christians to stop holding worship services in Pan-awh. He sent village administrators to threaten the Christians if they continued their services.#

Chin Christian Centenary Prayer Mountain
(Photo: globalsiynnews.blogspot.com)



Construction of 'banned' Christian building resumed

10 May 2014 - The Chin Baptist Convention has started preparation to reconstruct the Christian Prayer Centre near Taingen village, Tedim Township, which was banned in mid-2000s by the authorities.

It said that a road was constructed between the village and the building location to transport building materials in January this year and that it went ahead without obtaining permission from the authorities.

Rev. James Nang Khai, Building Committee Chairman, said: "We do not ask permission as we know they [authorities] will reject our request."

The CBC also said that the matter would be taken to Chief Minister Hung Ngai in the event of an in-

terruption to the construction.

The 120-60ft centre, designed in the shape of a cross, is expected to be completed mid next year as the required building materials have been made ready.

However, fund for water system, electricity, painting, and furniture is still needed, according to the CBC.

In 2012, an agenda to reconstruct the prayer centre was proposed by the Siyin Region Baptist Association in collaboration with the Yangon Siyin Baptist Church.

The name of the mountain was changed from Zogam Prayer Mountain to the Chin Christian Centenary Prayer Mountain following a meeting between members of CBC and Zogam Prayer Mountain Building Committee held on 29 May 2013.#



Authorities behind Sami pagoda construction

15 May 2014: Ki Khui Shing, an assistant township administration officer in Paletwa Township, said that a Buddhist pagoda in Sami town was constructed under the directive of the authorities, according to sources from the Chin Human Rights Organization.

"The construction is a direct order from high authority. However, the original letter could not be shown to you because of security reasons," he told local people at a meeting.

He also said at the meeting that they [office] had received a letter from the authority and that it said the pagoda construction had been done as demanded by the locals.

However, local residents said that they had asked the authority to move the location to another side of Sami town.

Khui Yan, of the Union Solidarity and Development Party and a Christian, had also asked Ki Khui Shing not to construct the Buddhist infrastructure in a place opposed by the majority of local people.

A petition of about 500 signatures was sent through Du Yan, Chairman of the Town Municipal Committee, to Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of the Chin State government, when he visited Paletwa in April this year.

The Assistant Township Administration Officer said that the construction kept on going although he had asked for the construction to stop. #

"The construction is a direct order from high authority. However, the original letter could not be shown to you because of security reasons."

- Ki Khui Shing

Burma urged to scrap religious conversion law

13 June 2014

More than 80 civil society organizations from 26 countries around the world have called on the government of Burma to scrap its proposed religious conversion law, published in state-run media last month.

The statement released yesterday by the Chin Human Rights Organization stressed that the legislation 'would unlawfully restrict the right to freely choose a religion' in the country.

"If adopted, this law would violate fundamental human rights and could lead to further violence against Muslims and other religious minorities in the country," it added.

The law requires any person willing to convert from one religion to another to obtain an official permission from a board of township-level officials, which will determine her or his suitability for the change in belief.

Section 7 of the draft law indicates that the applicant will be interrogated by at least four members of the board and will be granted the new conversion certificate after successfully passing a series of other requirements.

It also sets out that the issuance of the certificate - the official recognition of the conversion - will be conducted in accordance with rules set out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The statement also said that the applicant could, if found to be intent on 'insulting or destroying a religion', face a penalty of imprisonment up to two years.

It added: "Compelling an individual to convert to another religion through 'undue influence or pressure' could carry a one-year jail penalty."

The statement was initiated by the CHRO, and endorsed by other 11 Chin groups, including Chin Baptist Churches USA and the Global Chin Christian Fellowship.

CHRO's Advocacy Director Rachel Fleming said: "This proposed law has been widely condemned by human rights activists in Burma and around the world.

The government must pay attention and scrap it immediately, or it risks undermining the democratic reforms process."

The Ministry of Religious Affairs was responsible for drafting the law under the direction of President Thein Sein and Thura Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament.

According to the statement, the Ministry has also been implicated in imposing restrictive and discriminatory measures on minority religions.#

"This proposed law has been widely condemned by human rights activists in Burma and around the world. The government must pay attention and scrap it immediately, or it risks undermining the democratic reforms process."

- CHRO's Advocacy Director Rachel Fleming

Chin political party adds voice to growing calls to scrap controversial law on religion

22 June 2014 - A leading Chin political party has said that Burma's proposed religious conversion bill, if enacted into law, would violate the 2008 constitution, as well as fundamental human rights guaranteed under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

An official statement released by the Chin National Democratic Party (CNDP) on Sunday, said the current bill directly violates Article 43 of the 2008 Constitution, which guarantees an individual right to religious freedom.

It also slammed the Inter-Marriage Law, one of the four proposed laws packaged under the 'Race and Religion Protection Bill', introduced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as unacceptable in a country characterized by its multi-faith and multi-ethnic society.

"It is simply unacceptable to limit the individual rights to choose a religion or to somehow restrict marriage between people from different religious backgrounds. What this law would do is to further restrict what little freedom there exists in this country," says Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, CNDP leader.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng was recently recognized by Washington DC-based National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US Congressionally funded organization, as one of 30 individuals under 30 years of age around the world who have made meaningful contribution to the progress of democracy.

The Religious Conversion Bill,

alongside the three other bills proposed under the 'Race and Religion Protection Bill' package have received fierce criticisms from civil society organizations, human rights groups and religious groups from around the world since the draft bills were first publicized on state-run Burmese-language dailies. Led by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), the coalition said the measure will put religious minorities at further risks.

"This new piece of draft legislation appears to legitimize the views of those promoting hate speech and inciting violence against Muslims and other minorities, and if adopted, will further institutionalize discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities. We urge the Government to scrap the proposed 'Religious Conversion Law'," said a coalition of 81 groups from different corners of the world in their joint statement last week.

"In a country characterized by its ethnic and religious diversity, it is most appropriate for this country to adopt policies based on a secular state and to abolish the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as well as do away with constitutional provisions relating to religion, specifically Article 361, 362 and 363 respectively," reads the statement issued by the CNDP.

Meanwhile, Chin Christian churches in Hakha and Thantlang Townships have held prayer meetings in protest of the religious conversion bill. #

"It is simply unacceptable to limit the individual rights to choose a religion or to somehow restrict marriage between people from different religious backgrounds. What this law would do is to further restrict what little freedom there exists in this country,"

- Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, CNDP leader.

Other Human Rights Violations

Three Chin girls raped in Paletwa Township

15 May 2014 -

Three girls were raped in two separate incidents in Sami Sub-township, Paletwa Township, Chin State in the months of April and May.

A villager reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization that a 14-year-old girl was raped by Hla Tun, a 52-year-old astrologer, on 14 May.

On 13 May, Hla Tun arrived in the village and stayed at the house of the girl's family as a guest. "The next day when the family members went to work in the farm, the astrologer gave her what was believed to be sleeping pills and later raped her," the villager added.

When the girl's elder sister got home, she saw her crying and asked her what had happened to her. The girl told her about what their guest had done to her in detail. Her sister reported the case to the Paletwa Police Station straight away.

The perpetrator was later arrested on 14 May by Police Officer Soe Moe Aung and his men and detained in the Paletwa Police Station.

In another incident taking place on 21 April, two Chin girls, 16 and 17 years of age, were raped near a stream in Paletwa Township while they were trying to catch fish.

They were raped by two Rakhine identified as Maung Min Htey and Maung Bo Che, both believed to be around 30, according to an interview conducted by the Chin Human Rights Organization.

CHRO learned that the two perpetrators grasped them, closed their mouths and took them to different places. One of the girls was raped at knifepoint by Maung Bo Che.

Local villagers found the 17-year-old girl naked and unconscious near the stream whereas the 16-year-old victim was brought to the village.

The perpetrators were later arrested by the villagers and taken to the police station the following day. The Rakhine Police Officer asked them to compensate 1,500,000 Kyats each to the victims.

However, the police officer gave only 1,200,000 Kyats each to the girls after pocketing 300,000 Kyats for his own use.

"When two perpetrators compensated, they gave some cash and gold, which is worth 580,000 Kyats. The victims' families found out that the receipt of the gold was re-written and the original receipt was only 280,000 Kyats," the interviewees told CHRO.

The Paletwa Town Police Station was informed of the situation on 25 April 2014. The victims ran away from the village on the same day reportedly because of social stigma.

Maung Min Htey and Maung Bo Che arrived in Paletwa Township from Kyauktaw and Sittwe by separate private boats, according to the interviews.

A community worker said: "It is a very worrying issue that girls are targeted for rape. The relevant authorities must take effective action against the perpetrators. It is very important that they are deservedly punished."#

...the police officer gave only 1,200,000 Kyats each to the girls after pocketing 300,000 Kyats for his own use.

Land confiscated for Kaladan Project in Paletwa

18 May 2014 - Plots of land owned by locals in Tetkuwa village, Paletwa Township, Chin State were confiscated by the authorities for construction of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, a venture between the governments of Burma and India.

U Hla Win told the Chin Human Rights Organization that an acre of his land was confiscated without proper compensation for construction of seaport as part of the Kaladan project implementation.

He said that he received 20,000 kyats in compensation and that the payment was not for the land but for the trees on it.

"My land was purchased from U Aung Nyo Hla in 1970 and I have paid an annual tax since then. I have the documents of Form 105 and Form 106. Now, I

should get at least 10,000,000 kyats in compensation for what would be lost forever," he added.

He also said that there were more than four subsistence farmers whose land were also confiscated without proper compensation.

U Hla Win, who retired as Township Council Chairman after the 1988 student uprising, is still an active member of the Social Development and Environment Conservation Group (SDEC), a community-based organization that monitors the Kaladan project.

The project implementation started in December 2010 and is estimated to be completed in December 2015.

Issues related to land-grabbing in the project-implemented areas still remain unsolved.#

Chin woman seriously injured during attempted rape by Burma Army soldier

23 June 2014 - A Chin woman was subjected to a brutal beating during an attempted rape by a Burma Army soldier from Light Infantry Battalion No. 269 in Rezua Sub-township, Chin State on 10 June.

The alleged perpetrator Private Myo Thura Kyaw grabbed the woman on the road between Rezua and her farm. Local eyewitnesses reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization that they came across the soldier holding the woman down and repeatedly striking her.

"She fought back as hard as she could in her struggle to get free. But she was beaten badly," said one of the eyewitnesses.

Another eyewitness said: "As soon as the soldier saw us, he ran away. I don't dare to imagine what would have happened to her if we hadn't arrived on the scene."

The victim, who is married and believed to be around 40 years of age, was immediately rushed to the hospital in Rezua and has been receiving treatment since then for serious injuries inflicted during the assault.

Private Myo Thura Kyaw was initially kept in Rezua police custody after a report on the incident was made to both the local authorities and the Chin State Administration Office. Latest reports from Rezua indicate that the soldier, from the battalion headed by Major Aung Thu Win, has been sent to Matupi Town and is waiting for an official order from the military authorities regarding the case.

On 12 June, locals from all Christian denominations gathered in Rezua football ground to hold a prayer service in protest against the incident.

Local residents said that they had witnessed other violent incidents over the past year. A Rezua local was allegedly shot dead by a police officer inside Rezua police station earlier this year, while another Burma Army soldier was reported to have attempted to rape a 14 year-old girl last year. Local residents said the attempted rape was not reported due to fear of social stigma.#



(Photo: Angelay/FB)

Women and youth leaders in Matupi Township charged over demonstration

26 June 2014 - Local women reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that women and youth leaders in Matupi Township face charges for demonstrating without permission. The demonstrations they held last week in Matupi and Rezua in protest at sexual violence against ethnic women passed off peacefully.

The protest in Matupi was led by the Matupi Women's Organization (MWO) and Matupi Youth Association (MYA) on 24th June. The next day, two women leaders and two youth leaders were summoned to the police station in Matupi town around 2pm, and charged with demonstrating without permission.

One of the women charged, Khin Thluai Par from MWO, reported to CHRO, "The district police officer Aung Min Soe told us that we have been charged under Article 18 of 'The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act' for staging a demonstration without permission. They interrogated us and told us that they will submit all the interrogations to the court and the Court will summon us next week to make a final decision on our case. He told us not to travel anywhere this week so as to be available for the court summons."

Tei Mang, the secretary of Matupi Youth Association told CHRO, "The Rocung Ward Administrator Maung Han, Thang Dik and I were summoned to the police station after they summoned the women lead-

ers. When we arrived at the police station, the police officer Phyo Aung asked about the detailed program of the demonstration, such as who gave a speech, when did you start and so on. After that we were told not to travel to any place within this week."

Another woman from MWO, who also participated in the demonstration reported, "A permission request letter was

submitted to Matupi police station five days in advance, but at first they did not allow our proposed place for the demonstration. The second time we tried, they allowed our proposed place but they did not allow marching on the street. On the day of demonstration, the police officer Phyo Aung arrived at San Bawng main road where the people were gathered at around 9 am and told the three leaders about the rules which needed to be followed. He said if they break the rules, they will be arrested and put in prison."

Khin Thluai Par said, "When we met with the District Police Officer, he told us we could be punished either by being put in prison or a monetary fine if they charge us under Article 18 of 'The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act' for demonstrating without permission. We have decided we will go to prison instead of paying the fine if they continue the case against us. There was a similar demonstration in Rezua sub-township and two leaders from Zotung Women's Organization who led that demonstration were also summoned by the police," she added.

If found guilty, the women can be sentenced to a maximum sentence of one year imprisonment or a maximum fine of thirty thousand kyat or both, according to the law.

The women added that the rationale for the peaceful demonstration was based on recent incidents which have troubled the locals. A Burmese soldier attempted to rape one woman in Rezua town earlier this month, and Dr. Zaw Thein Kyaw from Matupi Hospital has reportedly been extorting money from the locals for issuing birth certificates.#

Medical doctor accused of dumping baby after birth

27 June 2014 - A newly born baby died about 20 minutes after being dumped into a dustbin just after her birth by Dr. Zaw Thein Kyaw, Township Medical Doctor in Matupi, Chin State.

A hospital staff member who eye-witnessed the incident reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the doctor thought the baby was born dead by Caesarean section and threw her away into the bin.

About 1pm on 17 May, a local woman heard the baby cry, picked her up from the dustbin and gave

her to one of the nurses.

"The baby was immediately given oxygen in an attempt to save her life but passed away after about 20 minutes of breathing," said the staff member.

A hospital nurse said that the life of the child could have been saved if care had been taken during the operation.

"I was trying to give an instrument to the doctor for cutting the umbilical cord of the child but the doctor refused and said it was not necessary," added the nurse.

On 24 and 26 June, Dr. Zaw Thein Kyaw was interrogated by officials from the Township and District enquiry authorities.#

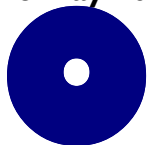
"I was trying to give an instrument to the doctor for cutting the umbilical cord of the child but the doctor refused and said it was not necessary,"

- the nurse.

Humanitarian & Development Situation

Fire victims in urgent need of relief assistance

28 May 2014 -



Over 50 family members in Hawlkawm village, Tonzang Township have been in desperate need of humanitarian assistance after their houses and belongings were burnt to ashes on 23 April.

A local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that forest fire had caught ten houses in the village and that they had been completely gutted.

"The fire destroyed five solar cells with battery boxes, five pigs, over 1,500 tins of rice, and about 300,000 Kyats," added the local.

The victims are temporarily sheltering in Singpial, a nearby village about 3 miles away. "Some have returned from Singpial and are staying in tents and church buildings," said the local.

"Currently, they are surviving on food and clothes donated by people from Tamu, Khampat and Kalaymyo towns. The authorities have not done any other things to help, apart from 700,000 Kyats contributed by the Tonzang Town General Administration Office two days after the incident."

Village General Administrator Awn Kho Thang is being treated at the Khampat hospital for his injuries from the fire. A pregnant woman named Nin Tin Lin had a miscarriage after trying to escape from the blaze, according to the local.#

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Event & Protest



(Photos by Angelay/FB & Khumi Media Group)

Protests calling for end to raping ethnic women

25 June 2014 -

Hundreds of people staged separate peaceful protests in Rezua and Matupi, Chin State on Monday and Tuesday, calling for an immediate end to sexual violence against ethnic women.

About 400 protesters in Rezua and over 200 in Matupi participated in the events, prompted by the attempted rape of a 40-year-old woman by a Burma Army soldier early this month.

Some of the placards read: 'Stop raping; We are humans, not animals. We are humans, not property.'

Pi Ngun Chin Par, a leader of Rezua women's organization, said that there had to be justice and that soldiers had to be properly controlled through strict discipline in order to ensure security for women.

Event organizing leaders from Rezua and Matupi women's organizations said that they had applied for official permission to hold a demonstration in advance but the authorities didn't give it.

"We were not given permission but we went ahead with our plans although we faced some threats from local authorities. We did this only to express our voices in ensuring safety and security for women," added Par.

On Wednesday last week, some women leaders were summoned to the Rezua Sub-township Administration Office and threatened that the authorities would not be responsible for any problems relating to the events.

As of today, no action has been taken against Private Myo Thura Kyaw, from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 269, for the attempted rape of the local woman.#

(Photo: The Chinland Post)



Salai Tin Maung Oo's 38th death anniversary commemorated

26 June 2014 - Dozens of people based in New Delhi gathered at the Burmese Christian Association hall last Wednesday, commemorating the death of Salai Tin Maung Oo.

The event, organized in the capital of India by the Chin Student Union, marked the 38th anniversary of the Chin student leader in Burma, who was secretly hanged in Insein Prison on 26 June 1976.

The memorial program started with a session where participants paid homage and laid wreaths under a photo of Salai Tin Maung Oo in respect and appreciation of his belief and courage.

All of the seven key speakers invited gave speeches and shared their views on the brutalities of Burma's successive military regimes, highlighting the fact that he would always be remembered for his determination and firm stand for his people although he had been assassinated.

U Nyu Tun, who was once in Insein Prison with Salai Tin Maung Oo, said: "He [Salai Tin Maung Oo] was secretly hanged to death at the age of 25 inside Burma's Insein Prison with these last words on his lips 'You can kill my body but you can never kill my beliefs and what I stand for. I will never kneel down to your military boots'."

"For us, a martyr emerged - one who offered his life, his blood, sweat and tears for unity, loyalty and peace. He is and will forever be a role model for the generations to come."

He was executed inside the prison walls at 4am and believed to be the first student leader assassinated by the then Burmese military regime.

U Pingia Zaw 'Tah, a Buddhist Monk who fled Burma after the 2007 Saffron revolution, said: "Salai Tin Mawng Oo was the type of individual who loved not only his parents and siblings, but also all kinds of people who were being oppressed under the rule of the military dictators in Burma."

"Even though he was killed by the military, his belief and love for freedom remain with us till today. We should follow his steps and stand for the beliefs that he died for."

Pu Bual Tawn, an elder from the Chin refugee community in Delhi, also said: "We must stand for our people bravely and fight. We should be aware of his bravery, leadership and upright beliefs."

The service was attended by participants including leaders of Chin communities and community-based organizations, former pro-democracy political activists and refugees from Burma stranded in New Delhi.

Born on 9 November 1951 to Christian parents of Salai Hla Din, of Sandoway, Arakan State, and Mai Hnin Myaing, of Toun-gup, Arakan sate, Salai Tin Maung Oo, the eldest of eight siblings, belonged to a Chin tribal group, Asho.#



"Even though he was killed by the military, his belief and love for freedom remain with us till today. We should follow his steps and stand for the beliefs that he died for."

Chin refugee women abused in their workplace

“He told us, ‘I don’t want to see any people from the

A number of violent assaults in recent months against people from Northeast India – who share physical characteristics with the Chin from Burma - have sparked a debate about discrimination and racism in the country.#



Chin refugee women protesting in Delhi (Photo: CHRO)

Ten-year-old Chin refugee boy slashed in New Delhi

19 June 2014 - Local Indian teenagers viciously attacked a ten year-old Chin refugee boy, slashing his abdomen while he was playing with friends near his home in New Delhi on 6 June 2014. The attack was unprovoked.

The victim told the Chin Human Right Organization (CHRO), "I was playing with my friends near our house around 6:00 pm. Three local teenagers appeared out of the blue; one of them grabbed me tightly around the neck and slashed my abdomen with blades. The other two boys did not attack me, but were with this person. I started bleeding a lot and cried out in pain. The three teenagers ran away. I have never seen them before."

The boy's mother added, "As soon as I heard my son crying, I rushed out of the house and saw him bleeding profusely from his abdomen. I was beyond shock, and in distress seeing my son so badly hurt from those slash wounds. I took him to the nearest clinic in our locality. They had to give him 18 stitches."

She continued, "This is a retaliatory attack against my

son by the locals. My son bravely testified as the sole witness against a local man from our neighborhood, who attempted to rape a Chin refugee girl in November last year. Local community leaders and the man's relatives threatened my son and the girl's family, warning us not to take the case to the authorities, but the matter had to be reported to the police to stop similar incidents from happening again. My son and I felt good that he bravely stood up to those threats, but at the same time we were also very concerned about our family's safety. We have talked to UNHCR and its implementing partners many times about our fear of being harmed in retaliation by the local community. My worst fear has been confirmed now. We have never felt safe in India but this incident has worsened our fear."

A Chin refugee community leader who has been helping the 10 year-old boy's family told CHRO, "None of us feel safe in New Delhi because of discrimination from the locals."

The mother of the 10-year-old victim reported the incident to UNHCR implementing partner the Social Legal Information Center (SLIC) on 7 June 2014. The SLIC officers told her that they will request the police to provide her family security, and that they will try to find out about the culprits. #

Over 100 Chin refugees protest on World Refugee Day in Delhi

22 June 2014 - More than 100 Chin refugees protested in front of the UNHCR Office in Delhi, India on Friday, demanding legal protection and services in the Indian city.

The rally, organized by the Delhi Chin Community Fellowship, marking the 63rd anniversary of World Refugee Day, called on the UN's refugee agency to improve services given to refugees in Delhi.

DCCF President Tin Duh Thang said: "Under the limited services of the UNHCR and lack of legal protection by the Indian government, we are subjected to all kinds of hardships for survival, discrimination, exploitation, physical assault, rape and sexual harassment."

Mr. Thang, accompanied by two interpreters, was eventually allowed to meet with UNHCR officials after making requests and convincing the police that they were not there to make violence but to let their situation be known.



Chin refugees protesting in Delhi (Photo: CHRO)

During the meeting, he urged the UNHCR to provide better security and safety services for refugee women and children, and also raised other issues including education and health care facilities.

The UNHCR said that all their demands would be considered and that they would have a meeting with leaders of the Chin refugee communities in the near future.

Currently, it is estimated that there are about 8,000 Chin refugees in Delhi. #

Sexual violence against Chin women in Delhi raised in UK Parliament

25 June 2014 - A June question-and-answer session of the British Parliament raised issues related to sexual violence against Chin refugee women and children in Delhi, India.

In an answer to a written parliamentary question asked by Valerie Vaz, a British MP and lawyer, Hugo Swire, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said that they were aware of the situation facing ethnic Chin refugees in the Indian city.

"We are committed to working with the new Indian Government and international partners to address the problem of gender-based violence, human trafficking

and child exploitation in India," added Mr. Swire.

He indicated that the British Government provided support through the Department for International Development (DFID) in an effort to tackle violence against women and girls, and to promote benefits and services to excluded and vulnerable groups.

During a peaceful demonstration on World Refugee Day this year, Chin refugees in Delhi demanded legal protection and better security services for refugee women and children.

Mr. Swire added that Mr. Hague, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, had already met with the new Indian Foreign Minister, discussing issues related to ending sexual violence.#

Press Release

Statement of the 3rd Meeting of Chin Journalist Network Hakha, Chin State, 27 May 2014

PREAMBLE

The meeting of the 3rd Chin Journalist Network was successfully held between May 21 to 27, 2014 in Hakha, Chin State.

The meeting was attended by representatives from various stakeholders, including the Speaker of the Chin State Parliament, Chin State Minister for Budget and Revenues U Nang Za Hmung, Chin State Minister for Forestry and Mining, Department of Information, the Election Commission, the United Nations Development Programme in Chin State, special invitees and over 70 journalists from 23 media organizations working in different parts of Chin State and Myanmar.

The meeting:

1. Agreed on steps to carry out further cooperation to help solve ongoing problems faced by the Chin public within Chin State, improve cooperation to resolve weaknesses in regards to communications between the media and the Chin State Government and the various departments, as well as the relation between the media and the Legislative Judiciary, Executive branches of government.
2. Urged the Union Government to step up efforts to encourage the production of ethnic media and to recognize the rights of ethnic nationalities to publish in their languages when enacting laws on media freedom.
3. Agreed that the government and contractors, when it comes to environmental preservation, have the obligation to share information to the public through the media with regards to development projects in Chin State with transparency, including with regards to extractive industries.
4. Deeply believes in the need to have a federal form of union in order for the ethnic nationalities to have genuine equality and freedom of expression, following a thorough deliberation on the subjects of the current peace process in Myanmar and the need to revise the 2008 Constitution.
5. Agreed on basic principles regarding journalistic ethics, as well as the need to promote gender equality, Chin literature and culture and research with the view of preserving the Chin culture. Furthermore, it is agreed, as core principle, to promote reciprocal recognition within the Chin media groups to practice utmost journalistic ethics and freedom of expression in line with democratic principles.
6. Decided to conduct various trainings including capacity-building trainings within the various Chin media organizations, financial management workshops and other trainings for the various media organizations
7. Established the Chin Media Network by attendees of the meeting having agreed on improving the quality of the information and cooperation amongst the various Chin media organizations.
8. Deeply demands that the Government implement media freedom, access to information and freedom of expression.
9. Agrees to have an all-inclusive ethnic media organization, in order to promote the role of ethnic media in the country.
10. The statement and decisions of the Chin Journalist Conference, including the responsibilities will be declared and implemented by the participating media organizations.#

Kaladan Movement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Four years on, no clear answers on Kaladan Project

11 June 2014

[Rangoon, Burma/Myanmar] The Kaladan Movement today urges the governments of Burma and India and Indian company ESSAR Projects Ltd. to publicly answer vital questions about the implementation of the Kaldan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Kaladan Project) and address key concerns of affected communities in Arakan and Chin States.

With an estimated completion date of early 2016, the US\$214 million Kaladan Project is a combined highway and inland waterway transportation system passing through Paletwa, Chin State and connecting Mizoram State in Northeast India with a Bay of Bengal deepsea port at Site-tway, Arakan State. Indian company ESSAR Projects Ltd. is currently constructing the deepsea port at Site-tway and the smaller inland port at Paletwa Town. The highway component of the Kaladan Project is to be built by an as yet unnamed Burmese construction company, and the exact route of the highway or timeframe for its construction has never been publicly announced.

Today, a questionnaire was submitted to ESSAR Projects Ltd. by the Kaladan Movement, an alliance formed to monitor the human rights, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Kaladan Project. The Kaladan Movement urges ESSAR Projects Ltd. to take this opportunity to make public important information about the implementation of the Kaladan Project regarding its policies on human rights, indigenous rights, community consultation, environmental impact assessment, local hiring and labour conditions. Thus far the Kaladan Project has been implemented without an adequate community consultation process, and with no efforts made to achieve the Free, Prior, Informed Consent of affected communities; an important element of recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples' to be involved in decision-making regarding all development happening in the territory where they live.

During a recent assessment mission, representatives from the Kaladan Movement heard local people express hope that the Kaladan Project will raise their standard of living and contribute to economic development in the area, but that they lack information about the full scope of the project. "By sharing information and regularly consulting local residents, ESSAR Projects Ltd. will also benefit as local people are the most familiar with the area and have good ideas about how the project can be implemented efficiently and with the least possible negative social and environmental impacts," said Bawi Pi of the Chin Human Rights Organization, a core member of the Kaladan Movement. "It has been nearly four years since the Kaladan Project started but no environmental impact assessments have ever been conducted for the project area in Burma, and no details regarding the route of the planned highway have been made public. We urge the Burma and India governments to share this information with people living in the project area," he continued.

Compensation issues in Chin State

In September 2013, Burmese government officials visited Laung Ka Du village – a small farming community 12 miles south of Paletwa Town – and told residents that 16 acres of the village's riverbank agricultural land (*gaing may*) was going to be acquisitioned as a dumping-site for riverbed dredging conducted by ESSAR Projects Ltd. as part of the Kaladan Project. "Officials from Naypyidaw warned us not to cultivate our land

during the 2013-2014 growing seasons, and told us that we would be given 500,000 kyat per acre in compensation,” said one of the affected Laung Ka Du farmers. At the time, they were not given any timeframe for the payment of compensation or the commencement of the dredging work. “We were unhappy about losing our land, but we felt that we had no choice and could not refuse this government order,” continued the farmer.

The farmers then decided to push back and organize themselves to find a way to save their ancestral agricultural lands. In February 2014, the Laung Ka Du farmers together with the Paletwa-based Social Development and Environmental Conservation Group sent a letter to the relevant authorities suggesting an alternative dumping-site for the dredged materials. After a series of negotiations and a site visit by government officials, the Laung Ka Du farmers received verbal assurances that the 16 acres of agricultural land would be spared and that the dredged material would be dumped on the alternative dumping site they had proposed.

A Laung Ka Du farmer said, “We are pleased that the government negotiated with us to find a suitable alternative to the acquisition of our farm land, but as we followed their order not to cultivate the land since last September we feel that we deserve the promised compensation for our losses.” The Kaladan Movement urges the Union government to formalize the new arrangement with the Laung Ka Du farmers, and to clarify who is responsible for paying the compensation, and how and when it will be paid.

Environmental and social impact of dredging in Arakan State

300 households in Thae Hkhun, a coastal fishing village on Mray Gun Island just off the coast of Site-tway, have suffered negative environmental and social impacts from the Kaladan Project. Thae Hkhun village is located at the point where the Kaladan River meets the Bay of Bengal, and the riverbed just off the shores of the village has been dredged consistently since ESSAR Projects Ltd. began work on the deepsea port in early 2011. As a result of the dredging the village shoreline has been advancing quickly making it necessary for 50 houses and a monastery to be dismantled and rebuilt further inshore to avoid being washed away. The villagers have never been consulted about the implementation of the project. “Thae Hkhun villagers had no idea the dredging would lead to the loss of coconut trees and force them to rebuild their homes in a safer location,” said Ko Twan Hlaing, Coordinator of Arakan Rivers Network, another core member of the Kaladan Movement. “The primary school is now under threat, and the villagers want to be informed of any future dredging plans and to work with ESSAR to ensure that there is no more loss of land.”

There are clear benefits to be gained from a more transparent development process with regularly-scheduled community consultations, information-sharing and negotiations between the implementing company, the government and the local community. The Kaladan Movement urges the governments of Burma and India and Essar Projects Ltd to publicly answer vital questions about the implementation of the Kaladan Project and address community concerns without further delay.

To arrange an interview please contact:

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Photographs for media use are available at <http://www.kaladanmovement.org/index.php/kmmedia/photos>

Background on the Kaladan Project:

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Kaladan Project) will see the construction of a

combined inland waterway and highway transportation system connecting Mizoram State in Northeast India with a Bay of Bengal deepsea port at Site-tway, Arakan State in western Burma. The deepsea port is being constructed on 48,000 square metres of new land created through dredging an estimated 560,000 cubic tonnes of soil from the riverbed surrounding the port site, and will transfer cargo from large container ships to smaller 300-tonne ships that will ply the 160 km inland waterway transportation system along the Kaladan River, which will require significant riverbed dredging at four locations to be passable by large ships during dry season. From the currently under construction port complex at Paletwa Town in Chin State, cargo will be transferred to trucks and driven on a yet to be built 130 km highway connecting to a new Land Customs Station at Zorinpui on the southern-most tip of the 1,634 km India-Burma border. The Kaladan Project, classified as Indian development aid to Burma, is a cornerstone of India's "Look East Policy" aimed at expanding Indian economic and political influence in Southeast Asia. The estimated US\$214 million cost of the Project is being financed by the Development Partnership Administration department of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, with the ownership and management of the infrastructure to be turned-over to the Burma government once construction is complete. Latest reports from construction workers at the Sitetway deepsea port and Paletwa inland port are that both will be operational by early 2016 (this is in contradiction to public statements of a June 2014 completion date made by ESSAR Projects Ltd. in December 2013). The construction of the Paletwa to Mizoram highway has yet to begin, and there are a number of outstanding questions regarding which Burma-based company holds the construction contract, as well as the exact route the highway will take.

Background on the Kaladan Movement:

The [Kaladan Movement](#) is an alliance of civil-society organizations concerned about the human rights, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project for local residents. The core members of the Kaladan Movement are the [Arakan Rivers Network](#), the [Chin Human Rights Organization](#) and the [Zo Indigenous Forum](#).#

Media Statement

12 June 2014

Religious conversion law threatens religious freedom in Burma/Myanmar

Over 80 organizations from civil society worldwide today call on the Government of Burma/Myanmar to scrap proposed legislation that would unlawfully restrict the right to freely choose a religion. If adopted, this law would violate fundamental human rights and could lead to further violence against Muslims and other religious minorities in the country.

The draft "Religious Conversion Law", published in state-run media on 27 May 2014, sets out a process for applying for official permission to convert from one religion to another. It grants Township-level officials from various government departments sweeping powers to determine whether an applicant has exercised free will in choosing to change religion. Those found to be applying for conversion "with the intent of insulting or destroying a religion" could be punished by up to two years' imprisonment, raising the prospect of arbitrary arrest and detention for those wishing to convert from Theravada Buddhism – the faith of the majority in Burma/Myanmar – to a minority religion, or no religion at all. Compelling an individual to convert to another religion through "undue influence or pressure" could carry a one-year jail penalty. The broad wording of this provision may effectively outlaw proselytizing in the country.

The right to freedom of religion or belief is widely recognized as having customary international law status. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly states that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion includes the freedom to change his or her religion or beliefs. The 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on

Religion or Belief calls on States to rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit discrimination on religious grounds, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion.[1]

Under instruction from President Thein Sein and the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Shwe Mann, the Ministry of Religious Affairs [MoRA] drafted the law as part of a package of measures related to marriage, religion, polygamy, and family planning, based on proposals by a Buddhist organization called the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion. The draft “Religious Conversion Law” also includes a provision granting powers to MoRA to issue further directives and procedural regulations regarding the implementation of the legislation. Although MoRA lists its first objective on its website as “to allow freedom of faith”, its second objective is “for the purification, perpetuation, promotion and propagation of the Theravada Buddhist Sasana [teachings]”. [2] The Ministry has also been implicated in imposing restrictive and discriminatory measures on minority religions. [3]

This new piece of draft legislation appears to legitimize the views of those promoting hate-speech and inciting violence against Muslims and other minorities, and if adopted, will further institutionalize discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities. We urge the Government to scrap the proposed “Religious Conversion Law”, and to take the following steps:

1. Amend all other legislation to ensure that it incorporates the principles set out in Article 18 of the UDHR, which reads: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”;
2. Sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), without reservation to Article 18;
3. Sign and ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD);
4. Extend official and unconditional invitations to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to visit the country, and to travel within the country and meet representatives of different communities, political actors and civil society organizations without restriction or hindrance;
5. Study and implement the recommendations of the most recent report of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to the UN Human Rights Council, with regard to measures to address collective hate speech; [4]
6. Study and implement the recommendations of the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, which was adopted by experts including the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Rabat, Morocco in October 2012; [5]
7. Abolish the Ministry of Religious Affairs and replace it with an independent and impartial religious affairs commission with a mandate to eliminate all forms of religious discrimination;
8. Remove the requirement to list religion on the National Registration Card.

Furthermore, we call on the international community to publicly urge the Government of Burma/Myanmar to immediately scrap the proposed legislation. The international community must make concerted efforts to press the Government to implement the above recommendations as a matter of priority, in order to protect the right to freedom of religion or belief and to prevent further violence against religious minorities.

-ENDS-