

Front Cover

Refugee child in temporary site in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. The refugees in Thailand desperately need international assistance and monitoring of their situation.

Back Cover

Universities and colleges in Burma have been closed down since late 1996 following the student demonstration. Many youth are forced to find jobs during their long closure of colleges and schools.

Child laborers inside Burma. Young children have to work odd jobs for the family survival.

Violations against the dignity,
livelihood and fundamental rights of
people in Burma perpetrated by the
military dictatorship of Rangoon

This book is dedicated to the countless citizens of Burma who have sacrificed their homes, their freedom, and their lives to lifting the veil of terror that shrouds the truth in Burma today.

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Copies of supporting documents on human rights violations are available on paper or computer disk.

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Views expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

PREFACE

By

H.E. Dr. Sein Win

Prime Minister

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The root cause of human misery under a dictatorial system stems from the mistaken belief by the wielders of state power that they alone know what is good for the country. Any opinion that diverges from their vision, however good it may be, is usually dismissed offhandedly and the people who espouse a different view to theirs are treated as enemies of the state.

This holds true for the military junta in Burma too. The fear by the generals that the country will break up without a strong centralized control by the military is in fact causing the nation to fall apart today.

The generals are obsessed with a wish to install a government under strict military control. Nothing else matters. Their vision of a “national unity” in a multi-ethnic country like Burma is make all ethnic nationalities adopt a single national identity. To realize this ambition, the generals ordered the launching of brutal offensives against the ethnic forces to crush the struggles for equal rights and destroy the will of the ethnic people. Hundreds of cases of murder, summary execution, rape, looting, destruction of villages, etc., recorded in this

book are a willful and well thought out campaign by the military to achieve that end.

Reports on brutal persecution and attacks on the National League for Democracy leaders/members, and the systematic harassment of politicians and activists -- many of the cases of which are documented in this book -- are also designed to weaken the determination of the people fighting for democracy and human rights.

Once the will is broken, the generals intend to introduce, what is known as “disciplined democracy,” or a government that is disciplined to dance to the tune of the military.

Despite the growth in the number of troops (about 400,000 today) the generals have failed to break the will of the ethnic people and the democracy movement. At the border, ethnic forces, including those forces which have signed cease-fire agreements with the Burmese military, continue to demand for freedom and equal rights. Inside the country, the National League for Democracy, in consultation with the other ethnic and non-ethnic organizations, has continued to remain active and is determined in its efforts to restore democracy and human rights.

Without the full support of the people further attempts to overwhelm the democracy and ethnic movements will also fail again. It’s about time the generals give up their absurd dream to impose military rule and think of the alternatives offered by the democracy movement.

Perhaps, then, the need to publish a Human Rights Year Book will not longer be there.

Acknowledgement

Having freed itself from the yoke of British colonialism, Burma has been able to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its independence.

Unfortunately, fifty years after independence, Burma under the military dictatorship today has obviously earned notoriety as being one of the countries with the worst human rights records, one of the countries that produces the most opium and one of the least developed countries in the world.

On January 4, 1948 - the day Burma regained her independence and sovereignty – the Burmese people had envisaged a Burma of freedom, justice, equality and prosperity.

On February 12, 1947, General Aung San and ethnic leaders met at Panlong, Shan State, and signed the historic Panlong Agreement laying the foundation for understanding, unity, mutual respect and national solidarity. Independence and national solidarity had been one and inseparable.

March 27, 1945 is a historic day in Burmese history. It marks the day the whole people of Burma, under the leadership of General Aung San, united, and rose up in resistance to free the country and themselves of fascism. Independence, therefore, is the fruit of sacrifices by the whole people of Burma and not just by the army as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) or the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) would want us and the world to believe.

However, it is very sad for the people of Burma to see that on the 50th anniversary of Burma's independence, the essence of independence and expectations that had emanated from hard-won national unity and untold sacrifices have all but dissipated.

Burma, a country with a population of 47 million, is rich in natural resources. It is blessed with a most favorable climate. In spite of these, the country has economically fallen to the lowest level. The main cause obviously is the military dictatorship which began with the coup de'tat in 1962. Democracy has, since then, disappeared from Burma. With democracy, ethnic nationalities' rights and all forms of human rights have also disappeared.

The August 1988 popular uprising took place after the Burmese people had been subjected for almost three decades to cruel and abominable military dictatorship's one party rule. Thousands of people were butchered in the streets and hundreds have died in jails. Following the uprising, the military renamed itself State Law and Order Restoration Council and continued to forcibly cling to power.

Under the military dictatorship, ethnic nationalities' rights and demand for equal opportunities continue to be suppressed. Indigenous and non-Burman ethnic lands are being invaded and occupied, the peoples uprooted and forcefully relocated en mass. Hundreds have been killed in the process. Racial amalgamation and assimilation are systematically carried out, rape being one of the vehicles to implement these. The result has been the exodus of thousands of ethnic refugees into neighbouring countries. Some incidents relating to atrocities by the SLORC/SPDC troops against the non-Burman ethnic nationalities in 1997 are documented in this book. Readers, sadly, will also find that 600 plus Shan nationals in Shan State were inhumanely murdered by the SLORC/SPDC troops.

Although SLORC had held general elections on May 27, 1990, it refuses to recognize the results following the landslide victory by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party. On the other hand, Members of Parliament elect who had won the elections are being, for one reason or another, unlawfully arrested, jailed or forced to resign. The military is brazenly antagonizing the wish of the people.

Although SLORC has changed its name to SPDC on November 15, 1997, barbarity, atrocities and suppression of human rights continue unabated. Aung San Suu Kyi, the Noble Peace Laureate and leader of the NLD herself had been physically attacked by the SPDC-sponsored mobs. This year book has also recorded the situation of the citizens and Members of Parliament who are being harassed, arrested and tortured for their belief and struggle to restore democracy in Burma.

This is the fourth book that the Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) has compiled in connection with human rights situation in Burma. Unlike other books or publications, it had been very hard this year to bring it out. There had been a time when the HRDU had to, all of a sudden, stop its work altogether. However, the desire for the world to know the truth about gross human rights abuses that are taking place in Burma, had pushed the HRDU to continue despite innumerable hardship. Portraying human rights

abuses in Burma is high-lighting to the world that wherever it might be, under an authoritarian regime that does not respect human dignity and a government that allows no room for rule of law, what happens in Burma will definitely happen there too.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Norwegian Burma Council for their unwavering support in making this Report possible. In addition, I would like to thank all the ethnic organizations and the many individuals who supported this project. Sincere thanks also to all those people who helped prepare this book for publication, and many individuals whose names cannot be mentioned but whose contribution cannot go unnoticed. The very existence of the Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) would not have been possible without the assistance of these friends of Burma. The emergence of the HRDU has given me a greatly satisfying opportunity to work closely with organizations that are noble and just and have a profound sympathy for the people of Burma. I wish to put on record my profound gratitude to the KHRG, KIC, HRFOM, MIS, SHRF, SHAN, CHRO, ABSDF, Burma Issue, Images Asia, and the Burma Relief Center for their enthusiastic assistance and cooperation for the publication of this book. I also would like to express my gratitude to the Foreign Ministry of the Royal Danish Government which generously assisted the publication of this book.

May the world continue to take heed that the people of Burma, fifty years after independence, are still living in stark fear under a military dictatorship because there is no rule of law and because gross human rights violations are being committed nationwide everyday. We feel that it is time the United Nations implemented the resolutions it has adopted in connection with Burma for several years in a row at the United Nations General Assembly.

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BURMA

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YEARBOOK 1991-98