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**Chin Human Rights Organization**

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### **SPDC SOLDIERS TARGET CHIN WOMEN FOR PORTER**

February 8, 2007: It has been learnt that Burmese soldiers of LIB 50, positioned at Rezua town in southern part of Chin state, are using more women in porter to carry their ration since the beginning of the year, the local villager reported to CHRO. The Burmese army LIB 50 battalion headquarters is in Gankaw.

During the last week of January, 2007, 18 porters were summoned by the Burmese army to carry their ration from Sawti village to Zuamang village. Most of the porters were women. Each porter had to carry a heavy load of ration for the army for a full day journey on foot.

### **CHIN CHRISTIAN WOMEN COMPEL TO DO MANUAL WORKS AT BUDDHIST MONASTERY**

January 24, 2007: Chairman of Thantlang townships Peace and Development Council in northern Chin state has summoned asked all female government servants in the town to do manual works such as cleaning and decorating a Buddhist monastery in Thantlang town on November 11, 2006. The incident was reported to CHRO by one of the local who witness and hear the complaint from the women.

The women, especially Chin Christians as most of them are, felt insult and humiliated by the authority by compelling them to do the job against their wills. However, they can not afford to refuse the order as the authority threatened them that any one who refuses to do the job will face a day worth salary cut.

The monastery is the only Buddhist building in Thantlang town with very few Buddhists. "I think calling to clean the monastery is just to humiliate us, because they can call men and the Buddhists can clean this temple by themselves. But we are afraid of being cutting our salary if we don't go", said a woman who was called to work.

### **SPDC USED CHILD LABOR IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION**

January 29, 2007: 16 villages in Cikha township were forced to repair road connecting Cikha and Tonzang town. The order to call for road repair comes directly from SPDC Tactical 1 Commander Colonel Tin Hla based in Hakha, the capital of Chin state.

The order of forced labor on road repair was convey through U Aung Kyaw Than, chairperson of Cikha Township Peace and Development Council, the local villager who was also called as force labor said.

One person from each family from 16 villages has to go for the road construction with their food and tools. The working period was one week for each village to cover 12 miles long road. The 16 villages have to take turn unceasingly working to repair the road from the end of November till today. Several under age girls and boys are among the forced laborers.

One person per family is compulsory without exception. U Kam Khan Lian, a new member of Khaicin village heads and a villager asked U Kyaw Than, chairman of Town ship Peace and Development Council to give leave as one of their close relative was died and they have to attend the funeral. But the chairman denied them, and instead slapped them for disobedience to the order, the local villager who witnessed reported.

The name of the villages who went for the road construction were Khuavum, Tuivel-zaang, Tualkhaing, Haicin, Sekpi, Selbung, Tuimai, Lingthu, Vaivet, Tuimang, Mauvom, Kansau, Khuadam, Suangzaang and Khenman village.

#### **CIVILIANS FORCE TO WORK AT ARMY CAMP**

January 12, 2007: 2nd Battalion Commander Major Khin Maung Cho from LIB 274 based in Sabawng te village, Matupi township, southern Chin state has called 72 villagers from 3 villages to repair Sabawngte army camp for 5 days, starting from November 7, 2006, without payment, the local villager who was also forced to work in the camp reported to CHRO.

In addition, Sergeant Htay Win of Sabawngte army camp has commanded the Lungmang village's chairman to send 18 workers to repair the camp bring their own foods tools to repair the fence of the army camp said U Cia Mu.

The villagers were forced to complete 100 meter long fence within 5 days. The villagers have to cut woods and bamboos and carry with their back for the camp at the place which is more than one mile from the camp. Like wise, in Lungcawi village, and Sabawng te village which were under the control of the battalion, 54 villagers were also forced to work without payment.

“While working as forced laborers for the Burmese army villagers were humiliated by the soldiers showing no respect at all as human being “ said U Cia Mu who was also participated in the forced labor.

#### **SPDC SUMMONED 7 VILLAGES FOR ROAD CONSTRUCTION**

Jan 11, 2007: Colonel San Aung, the commander of tactical No. 2 based in Matupi, southern Chin state called civilians from 7 villages for road construction between Matupi town and Lailenpi military camp which is 70 miles long without paying any wages, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Colonel San Aung instructed the 7 village headmen to contribute 20 people per village from each 7 villages. The names of the 7 villages are Tangku, Rengkheng, Amlai, Pakheng, Sumseng (A), Sumseng (B), and Tinnam, the villager added.

In the previous years the road was built by the villagers with compulsory volunteer labor, and in November 2006, the villagers have to extend to be able to drive a car from Matupi town to LaiLenpi battalion which is 70 miles away. Construction of the road is part of border area development project.

In order to build the path as a vehicle road, 140 villagers from 7 villages have to go to the place which is 10 miles far, between Tangku village and Sumseng village by bringing their own equipments and without getting any payment, the villager who was among the forced laborers said.

#### **SPDC FORCED 100 VILLAGERS TO BUILD MILITARY CAMP**

February 26, 2007: Company commander from Burma army LIB 55 (Boo-Ti-Taung based battalion), presently posted in Shinletwah village, Paletwah town ship in southern Chin state, has forced 100 villagers from 10 villages under his military control on January 27, 2007, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Commander of the company (name unknown) has gave order to 10 villages which are under his military control to send 10 villagers from each village to report on the given date to Shinletwah battalion to build army camp, said the local villager.

According the order from the company commander, 10 villagers from Para village were sent to Shinletwah area to cut bamboo and wood. The other villagers also were order to cut bamboo and wood, the villager continued.

The villagers have to cut bamboos and woods from the place which is one mile far from the village, and brought to the camp. They were also commanded to build fence for the camp within 2 days. The working time was 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, and they have to bring their own foods and equipments for work during their work days in the camp.

### **VILLAGERS FORCED TO WORK AT ARMY OWN TEA PLANTATION FARM**

February 22, 2007: Sergeant Nay Myo Aung of Burma army presently posted at Rezua army camp (LIB 50 Gan-Gaw based battalion), southern Chin state has called the local villagers to work at military owned tea plantation farm, the local villager reported to CHRO.

Nay Myo Aung has sent the order to chairman of Village Peace and Development Council to send 10 villagers from Zuamang village to Rezua army camp immediately on January 9, 2007. Unable to refuse the order, chairman of Zuamang Village Peace and Development Council has sent 8 villagers to work at the army own tea plantation farm, said the villager.

“when the villagers got to the army camp, sergeant Nay Myo Aung told us to work for 3 days. During their work the military did not provide any foods, so we have to bring our own foods and worked for free”, said the villager.

### **SPDC FORCED CIVILIAN FOR ROAD REPAIR**

February 21, 2007: Company commander Ye Kyaw Soe, presently posted at Sabawngte army camp from LIB 50 Gan-Kaw based battalion, forced civilians from 3 villages to repair Sumsem – Lailenpi mortorable road starting from December 28, 2007. Villagers were ordered to finish the job within 10 days , the local villager said.

In the order letter from the company commander, it said that Hlungmang villagers have to reach to the project site to build mortorable road between Lailepi village and Sumsem village. The villagers have to dig a road which has at least 6 feet wide.

As soon as the villgers got the order 20 villagers have to go to Sabawngte village with their own rations and equipments to work on the road. No one can absent for the project. The works lasted for 10 days without any compensation.

The number of the villagers who were engage in the road repair are 15 villagers from Hlungmang village, 25 villagers from Sabawngpi village, and 25 villagers from Sabawngte village. The villagers worked for 10 days for the project.

### **VILLAGERS COMPEL TO FENCE ARMY CAMP IN DAR-LIN**

February 9, 2007: Major Zaw Myint Htat, 2nd battalion commander from Burma army Battalion LIB 50 (based in Gangh-Gaw town), stationed at Dar-Lin village of Matupi town ship, southern

Chin state, had ordered the villagers in the region to fence their camp's barricade by carrying their own rations, the local villager said.

In order to implement the order of Burma army, Pintia village chairman Pu Pai Hmo had assigned U Ngun Thot, U Khain Be, U Ta Lay Che, Myo Naw Khain and Mg Nyo Mo in the construction of fencing the army camp. They had carried bamboo in the jungle which is three miles away from Dar-Lin Army camp, according to one of the victims.

“Soldiers themselves should have done this work of fencing the camp as this is their duty, but they forced us to do the job” said one of the victims. Those individual who involved in the fencing construction were called to work from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm without rest for four days without payment” added by one of the victim.

Major Zaw Muint Htat, since his appointment as commander of Dar-Lin Army camp had started enforcing the villagers in fencing, carrying water, portering and cutting bamboo. Such enforcement has been practiced more often from this year and the villagers are known to have much suffering for years without getting payment of their labor.

### **SPDC SOLDIERS CONTINUE TO USE VILLAGERS AS PORTER**

January 2, 2007: Captain Han Lin from Burmese army battalion LIB 550 based in Ponna-Kyun town of Arakan state), temporarily stationed at Shinletwah camp, Paletwah town ship in southern Chin state was patrolling the area along with his 13 soldiers. The captain and his troop was traveling village to village and they use villagers for porter on November 5, 2006 the local villager reported to CHRO.

Captain Han Lin and his troop along with 5 villagers from Hamarte village reached to Sha-Oo village. While they were in the village, all the villagers were in their farms. Taking advantage of the absents of the villagers they camped in U Pa Khaing's house while the family was absent and they shot chicken and cook the food as their will.

In the next morning captain Han Lin and the troop used another 5 villagers from Sha-Oo village as potter as they continued to Para village.

### **LOCAL VILLAGERS COMPEL TO SERVE AS GUIDE FOR BURMA ARMY**

February 17, 2007: On February 5, captain Win Zaw and his troop from Burma army LIB 268 based in Falam town, northern Chin state summoned several villagers from Indo-Burma border area to serve as guide and ensure the security of tactical commander Colonel Tin Hla and his column.

Villagers must take responsibility for the security of the Colonel and to serve guide during his travel to Tedim area during the second week of February. Colonel Tin Hla chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council and his troop were planning to travel from Falam to Teddim.

Captain Win Zaw told the chairman of Tuisen-Phai village to arrange 4 villagers to serve as porter and guide for the Colonel. 4 villagers were taken from Tuisen-Phai village to Thing-Lei village to serve as porter and guide for the soldiers.

“We have to bring rations for them and have to carry their belongings up to their battalion. We spent 2 days, but got nothing for our wages”, the local villager continued. The other villager who

was also taken as potter said that they were told to provide chicken and food during the 4 days journey to the area.

After reaching Tuisen-Phai village, other villages around the area namely; Bukphir village, Fartlang village, Dampi village, Zimpi village, Zimte village and Thing lei village have to take their turn to accompany the military officer and group till they reach Rihkhuadar battalion, the resource said.

### **SPDC SOLDERS USE PORTER**

February 8, 2007: 2nd Lieutenant from Burma army LIB 140 (based in Matupi), stationed at Satu village of Matupi township along with five soldiers had summoned Aikah villagers up to Lailente village for porter a local villager reported to CHRO.

The said mistreatment was conducted by the Burmese soldiers on January 14, 2007, and the porters have to carry armaments and they were deployed up to Lailente village which was 20 miles away from Satu village which is a day journey from Lailente. An old man (about 60 years) was also included among the porters, said one of the victims.

### **ARBITRARY ORDERS & POWER ABUSE:**

#### **PROVIDE RATION OR YOUR VILLAGE WILL BE BURNT**

February 21, 2007: Company commander Ye Kyaw Soe of Burma army and his troop from Battalion LIB 50 (Gangh-Gaw based battalion), presently posted in Sabawngte village army camp in Matupi township in southern Chin state came to Hlungmang village on January 4, 2007 from Sabawngte. The soldiers asked 3 chickens from U Nawl Hlaung, member of Village Peace and Development Council, and threatened him that they will burn his house if he refused to give, a local villager reported to CHRO.

Corporal Win Maung asked 3 chickens from U Naw Hlaung, commanding him to cook one chicken immediately and told him to make curry for tomorrow when his commander comes. Therefore, the member of Village Peace and Development Council collected 2 chickens from the villagers and give it to the solders, the local villager continued.

“Whenever the Burmese troop come we have to give them whatever they want, and it is compulsory, because they threatened us that they’ll burn our house and farms if we don’t give, and we are afraid of that”, the villager said.

Apart from taking the ration food and chicken from the villagers without compensation, 3 villagers were forced to serve as their porter. The 3 villagers were taken as potters to Sabawngte village which is 8 miles away from Hlungmang village.

#### **CULTIVATE JATROPHA PLANT OR LEAVE THE VILLAGE**

January 9, 2007: Chairman of Tedim townships Peace and Development Council told all members of Block Peace and Development Council in a monthly meeting saying that villagers must cultivate Jatropha plant or they have to leave the village.

In November 2006 meeting the chairman gave order every village in the township to plant jatropha, a tree that will produce bio-diesel, before the end of December. Any one who do not

cultivate accordance with the order must be driven out from the village, a local villager reported to CHRO.

During the meeting, the chairman instructed villager to plant one acre per house household with fences. The order is compulsory for the villagers to comply and the villagers have to buy the seeds from Township Peace and Development Council office, at the rate of 3,000/- Kyats per kilogram, added the local villager.

In November, authority from townships Peace and Development Council from Zingpi village collected 1,800/- kyats per family to buy Jett-Suu seeds. The remaining sum will be collected again in the coming month.

According to the local man the villagers from the Tedim area are afraid that the authority will drive them out from the village as they can not grow Jatropa due to lack of money to buy the seeds and several other problems they are dealing with their daily lives.

### **SPDC SOLDIERS COLLECT RATION FROM VILLAGERS**

February 7, 2007: The SPDC soldiers of LIB 140, based at Leisen village of Matupi township in southern Chin state collect ration from their provisional local villagers to rely their consumption, a local villager reported to CHRO.

In doing such, a village chairman Mr. Robem of Koe-La village of the cantonment area was in January 2007 assigned to confiscate six chickens and two cup of ration from each family. The villagers were then further ordered them to deliver the collected ration to the Leisen army camp.

Such kinds of rice and chickens confiscation have been committed every month that the surrounding villagers of Leisen areas are badly affected their livelihood as they never get the cost of their property from the military reported by the local villager.

### **MATUPI TOWN RESIDENTS COMPEL TO WATCH FOOTBALL MATCH**

February 7, 2007: Lt. Colonel San Aung, Commander of tactical command 2, based in Matupi, southern Chin state, issued an order to the local town people to watch the football match organized by the SPDC authority. As the numbers of public supporter in the Army annual football match have been declined, and warned all the absentees to be punished with force labor according to the resource person to CHRO.

The football match was preformed in first week of January 2007 at a new constructed ground field near the Burmese army Camp. For fear of the soldiers and unforeseen dangers, only few people could attend to watch the match.

As such happening, Colonel San Aung was angry and released an order that every resident of Matupi town to watch the football match. But as most the resident could not watch the match, all absentees were punished sending them to work as force laborer at the Bungtla Hydro electric project and threatening students to make them fail their examination if they are absent.

There was a brawl between the solders and the local residents in the past as the Burmese soldiers were enraged for losing the game to the local youth. Several civilians were arrested and hospitalize at that time. In last year there was shooting between the Burmese soldiers and the CNF during the football match where two young boys were killed.

### **DAR-LIN VILLAGERS HAVE TO PAY FOR ENTERTAINING THE ARMY OFFICER**

February 5, 2007: 2nd Lieutenant Moe Htit Kyaw from Burma army LIB 50 (Gangh-Gaw based battalion), presently posted in Dar-Ling village, Matupi township in southern Chin state gave order to the village elders to buy a goat by 15,000/- kyats on December 28, 2006 for the visiting battalion commander.

2nd Lt. Moe Htit Kyaw invited the leaders of the village through U Bi Ceu, chairman of Village Peace and Development Council, and gave order to buy a goat with 15,000/- kyats to celebrate the visit of battalion commander Major Zaw Myint Htit. But the battalion commander never showed up.

Since the battalion commander did not come, 2nd Lt. Moe Htit Kyaw and his troop invited chairman of Dar-Ling Village Peace and Development Council, members of Village Peace and Development Council and the leaders of village to consume the goat. Villager chairman and elders were told then that they have to bear the cost of the goat which was meant to entertain the visiting battalion commander.

### **VILLAGERS MUST BUY JATROPHA SEEDS**

February 26, 2007: Chairman of Tedim township Peace and Development Council has called a meeting to all the chairmen of Village Peace and Development Council in the township in the first week of January, 2007. The meeting was for discussion of jetropha plantation project in the area. In the meeting all village chairmen were instructed to pay their due for Jetropha seed to be planted accordance with their quota.

“During the year of 2006, while I was chairman of Village Peace and Development Council, we have started planting jetropha, but it was not successes. According to my experience I know that it won't be successes, but since it is the government's order we have to comply with the order.

Tuisenphai village and Thinglei village have submitted 35,000/- kyats to the township PDC accordance with their quota. They have to complete planting the seed by the month of March, and in the month of April, the chairman of Township Peace and Development Council himself will come and check, said the villager.

The result of the compulsory government's plan will be just wasting money, energy and just a waste for the civilians” said one of the village headmen who prefer to remain anonymous.

### **THE SPDC FINED 1,700,000/- KYATS FROM 5 CATTLE TRADERS**

February 7, 2007: Lt. Colonel San Aung, Commander of tactical command 2 for southern Chin state has accused 5 cattle merchants as illegal smuggler and fined them 1,700,000/- kyats from them. Beside, he also sentenced them for long term prison, a local villager reported to CHRO.

The 5 cattle merchants were from Hakha, led by Mr. Pakham, and they came to Paletwah township to buy cattles in the month of November. In the end of November, Shin-let-wah battalion has arrested along with 8 cows and 8 buffalos, and were sent to Lei sin battalion, and lastly reached to tactical office in Matupi.

As the cattle merchants were handed to Matupi tactical office, 3 cows were left at Lei sen battalion for ration, and 2 buffalos were left at chairman of Valangpi Village Peace and Development Council. The other died on the way, and only 6 cattle were brought to Matupi, but were left for Tactical camp's ration, the local villager said.

While the merchants were lock out at Matupi tactical camp, Colonel San Aung has fined them 1,700,000/- kyats and sentenced them for long year prison and sent them to Pa-khoke-ku prison in the midst of January, 2007, the resource said.

### **SPDC SOLDIERS EXTORT 400,000/- KYATS FROM CATTLE TRADERS**

February 8, 2007: An unknown sergeant section commander from Burma army LIB 266 (based in Hakha town), stationed at Vuangtu village, Thantlang township in northern Chin state, along with three soldiers threatened the 2 cattle traders and asked 400,000/- kyats, a cattle trader who came to the border area reported to CHRO.

The incident took place at Lung-Cawipi village, Thantlang township, in the evening of February 5, 2007. The said sergeant and his men when meeting the cattle traders had asked 500,000/- kyats for 8 cows and threatened them with gun point that they pay the full demanded amount. Then, the traders were taken to Matupi army camp. The soldiers left 3 cows at Lei-sin army camp for the Burmese solders. The other two small cows were left at Valangpi village chairman for breeding.

When they arrived to Matupi, only 6 cows remain. All of them were seized by the soldiers for their own. In Matupi, the cattle traders were fined 1,700,000/- kyats each by Colonel San Aung. Besides, the traders were sentence to serve prison term in Pakokko, Magwe division.

### **VILLAGE HEADMEN BEAR THE BURDEN OF MILITIA TRAINING**

January 11, 2007: Colonel San Aung, commander of tactical No.2 based in Matupi town, southern Chin state called 30 villagers from 9 village tracks on October 10 to attend the militias training. The local villager reported to CHRO that this training is the second batch for the local villagers to attend militia training in this year.

On August 20, 2006, 250 villagers from 9 village tracks to attend militias training as the first batch. As the second batch the SPDC demanded 30 people from Cawngthia village tracks of Matupi township. The trainee must arrive on October 10 according to the order.

Colonel San Aung demanded explanation from village headmen from Cawngthia village tracks because there were less than 30 people who could report to the SPDC on the deadline. If the explanation of the village headmen does not satisfy the Colonel, they will face severe punishment from the SPDC.

One of the participants from militias training said that most of the trainees from the first batch fled to India as they were afraid to be conscripted for the second batch.

One of the escapees said, "I was only 16 years old when they persuaded me to join the militias training. They said that when I join the training I'll be traveling to all the places and will see more things. So I joined the training, but things did not happen as they said. My family thought that I was dead. So as soon as I completed the training I fled."

### **SPDC SOLDIERS LOOTED FROM A FARMER**

January 12, 2006: A sergeant from Burma army LIB 269 based in Tedim township, Tuisenphai village, of northern Chin state accused Mr. Suan Thawn from Tuidil village as illegal Mithun smuggler, and asked 150,000/- kyats on November 7, 2006, a local villager reported to CHRO.

Mr. Suan Tawn a farmer from Tuidil village took his own 2 Mithuns to sell in Mizoram. When he reached near Thinglei, beyond Zimte village a sergeant from Burma army (name unknown) and his troop met with him and demanded Kyat 150000/- from the villager accusing him of illegal cattle smuggler.

Mr. Suan Thawn explained the soldiers that he was not the cattle trader as they accused. He was just trying to sell his own cattle to feed his family with 5 children. However, the sergeant insist that he is an illegal smuggler and he has to meet with the company commander at Zimte village.

Mr. Suan Thawn was then led to Zimte village. Before they reached to Zimte village he borrowed 150,000/- kyats from the church and gave the money to the sergeant. He was released after taking the money.

Mr. Suan Thawn reported the incident to CHRO saying that this kind of looting and is a common practice by the Burmese soldiers. Whenever the soldiers come to the village they demanded chicken, rice and whatever they want. It does not matter whether we give them or not, they just took it anyway.

### **A CHIN GIRL SENT HOME AND DENIED FOR HEALTH TRAINING FOR WEARING LONGPANT**

January 3, 2007: A young Chin girl was denied to attend midwife training for not wearing Burmese traditional sarong. 20 women were selected by the SPDC authority in Haka to attend health training under the supervision of National Working Committee for Women's Affairs (NWCWA) the state sponsor women organization. Chairperson of NWCWA Chin state chapter is the wife of colonel Tin Hla, chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council.

On the day of the departure for the training, officials of the NWCWA comes to the bus station to send off the trainee as a courtesy. One of the trainees, a Chin girl happen to be wearing a long pant instead of traditional Burmese sarong which reportedly is said to be a requirement for the women in the government service.

When the NWCWA chair person finds out that the girl was wearing a long pant instead of traditional Burmese sarong, she was enraged and sent the girl home immediately. She used abusive and degrading words to the girl” that’s what I said Chin girl looks loathe, go back immediately to your home.”

The girl was denied for the entire training in spite of the fact that the girl apologized for not wearing the traditional Burmese sarong, and begs her to attend the training.

### **2 SPDC POLICE REFUSED TO PAY THEIR BUS FARE**

January 4, 2007: U Tun Lin, a police officer who currently moves from Hakha to Rih and his group went to Rih from Kalaymyo on December 29, 2006. They occupied the whole front row seats but denied to pay the transportation fare, one of the travelers reported to CHRO.

In the same vehicle, women and children were given the front seats, but the 2 policemen told the driver to send them at the back side. Beside denying to pay for the bus fare, U Tun Lin also threatened the driver that the driver have to pay for their transportation fare and foods. Therefore, the driver has to give privilege at front side of the vehicle, the other traveler added.

## **INTERNALLY DISPLACED IN RANGOON**

January 4, 2007: Due to excessive militarization and several hardship brought by the civil wars between the SPDC and the CNF, several Chin families have been migrating to other parts of Burma becoming internally displaced persons.

20 households of Chin families who moved from Chin state to Yangon, old city of Burma, during the first week of December, 2006, and live in Saw Bwa Gyi Kone, Inn Sein townships were not allowed to include their family registration in those townships and they have to live with guests' registration, a local dweller reported to CHRO.

The Chin families who moved to Yangon have already brought their family registration from their respected towns, but the Block's authorities have accepted them only as guests. That means they have to report the authority every day that they come from Chin state as a guest.

## **SPDC AUTHORITY EXTORT MONEY FROM TRAVELLERS**

January 25, 2007: During the first week of December, SPDC police force who are on duty at Thantlang gate in northern Chin state asked 1,000/- kyats from each traveler who doesn't have recommendation letter from Village Peace and Development Council for going to Hakha, the local villager reported to CHRO.

For the villagers who do not have recommendation letter from Village Peace and development Council have to pay 1,000/- kyats even if they bring their national identity card. For the people who do not have national identity card were arrested at the police station which is near the Thantlang bus gate, and they have to make the identity card or get recommendation letter and were fined up to 20,000/- kyats for their carelessness.

"I have to give the fine even if I bring my identity card for going to Yangon. Some people still could not go where they want even if they pay the fine," said the local man.

"We know that this is not right, but what can we do?" complains the local man.

## **SPDC POLICE LOOTED FROM FEMALE TRADER**

January 30, 2007: Two unknown policemen from Hmawngtlang police station in Thantlang township, northern Chin state have threatened and asked 22,000/- kyats from two women cross border traders. The incident occurred at 6:00 pm on January 5, 2007 one the witness reported to CHRO.

The incident was taking place near Cawngthia village. The policemen asked 40,000/- kyats for 17 horses and threatened them that they will take all their goods along with them to the police station if they don't want to give money, and they will take action.

The 2 women beg their mercy and requested them to take 22,000/- kyats. The 2 policemen accepted the money and threatened them that they will arrest if they see next time. The source said that those 2 women are from Caungthia village, Thantlang town ship.

## **BURMESE SOLDIER STEAL CHICKEN FROM VILLAGER**

February 19, 2007: A villager from Matupi area complain to the CHRO that the Burmese soldiers are in the lose to steal food and domestic cattle from the villagers. Whenever the villager complain the case to higher commanding offer at the army, they never take action on the solder who steal and take goods from the villagers at wills.

On one particular incident, private Bo Hlaing of Burma army from LIB 50 Gangh-Gaw based battalion , at Lailenpi army camp has stolen 3 chickens from U Ki Sang, a local villager, on January 31, 2007 at 8:00 pm. U Ki Sang reported the case to the officer at the army camp.

However, the officer did not take any action, in stead 2 chickens were used as the section's ration, and one chicken was sold to at 2,000/- kyats, half the price of the current rate.

This kind of stealing from the Burmese soldiers is rampant whenever there are Burmese soldiers.

## **REFUGEE:**

### **DETAINED REFUGEES FACE POOR CONDITIONS AND POSSIBLE CANING**

3 Jan 2006 – Kuala Lumpur: Chin refugee detainees who have been placed in Pakan Nanas facility in southern Malaysia are facing poor detention conditions and are vulnerable to sickness and diseases, according to reports from relatives who visited the site yesterday.

Two weeks ago, Malaysian authorities detained 43 Chin refugees along with Rohingyas and other nationals following an immigration raid in a construction worksite in Jahor State near Singaporean border. They have since been placed in Pakan Nanas detention center where conditions are reported to be poor and overcrowded.

According to detainees who spoke to visitors yesterday, more than fifty inmates are housed in small cells with no adequate water supply and proper nutritional food. The center is reportedly infested with bedbugs and mosquitoes.

"It's been raining in Jahor the last two weeks and inmates find it very cold during the night because they have to sleep on cement floors with a single sheet of blanket," reports Kawl Lian Thang whose brother in-law is among the detainees. Detainees are provided only two meals a day and are allowed to bathe only once a day. He says that at least five inmates are sick without proper care and medical attention.

Pekan Nanas facility is located more than six hours away from Kuala Lumpur, making it difficult for relatives to visit detainees. So far, the Malaysian government has not granted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees access to the detention center, despite the fact that more than 30 detainees are recognized refugees under UNHCR. Most former detainees who spent time in Pakan Nanas facility have reportedly all been whipped after Malaysian court found them guilty of illegal entering and working in the country.

"The fear among the detainees is that they will also face caning and deportation," Thang says. "It's only a couple of weeks since their detention, but they all look very pale and weak."

## **Refugees Right to Work**

Refugees recognized under UNHCR are not legally entitled to work in Malaysia. However, most refugees find employment in 'informal sector.' Under Malaysian law, employers who employ

"illegal workers" are liable to monetary fine of up to ten thousand Ringits for each person employed.

The employer for whom detained refugees worked now face possible fine of more than 200,000 Ringits in fine for harboring and employing illegal workers. Despite shortage of domestic workforce, Malaysia continues to arrest and deport "illegal workers," asylum seekers while importing documented workers from across the region. Malaysian government has not responded to calls by rights groups to grant work permits to refugees and asylum seekers already in the country.

### **CHIN REFUGEE FELL TO HIS DEATH**

10 January 2007 - Kuala Lumpur: A Chin youth working as a construction worker earlier today fell to his death from a high rise building under construction. The victim has been identified as Hram Uk, a UNHCR-recognized refugee in his early 20s. He died instantly along with a Chinese worker, while eight other workers from India and Bangladesh escaped with minor injuries.

The bodies are now being taken to hospital for post-mortem. According to the Chin Refugee Committee, the victim was recently interviewed for resettlement in a third country, pending a final decision for relocation to the United States. The victim has an elder brother in Malaysia but is currently under detention in Semenyih camp after being arrested by Malaysian immigration authorities more than three months ago.

Hram Uk is a third Chin to die in Kuala Lumpur in less than two weeks. On New Year's eve, two Chin youths were brutally stabbed to death by attackers believed to be Burmans near a crowded area where thousands of Malaysians gathered for New Year celebrations. Malaysian police are yet to apprehend the killer.

### **MALAYSIA DETAINS 176 SUSPECTED ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM MYANMAR**

*[CHRO Note: All these immigrants are Chin asylum seeker from Burma]*

AP: January 28, 2007

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia - Malaysian authorities detained 176 suspected illegal immigrants from Myanmar who set up their own village and passed themselves off as U.N.-recognized refugees, an official said Monday.

District enforcement workers and civilian volunteers on Sunday raided the immigrants' settlement, which comprised scores of tents, bathrooms and a volleyball court on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, said Suhaimi Ghazali, a state legislator for the central district of Dengkil.

Many of those detained had documents that they claimed were given to them by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, but preliminary checks with immigration authorities showed the papers were false, Suhaimi said.

The raid followed complaints by residents in surrounding areas who believed the immigrants were in Malaysia illegally, Suhaimi said. The detainees were sent to an immigration center and were expected to be deported once their illegal status is confirmed.

Malaysia has long attracted migrants, including those fleeing poverty, from Southeast Asia. Though the country relies heavily on foreign laborers for menial work, authorities regularly deport illegal immigrants, who are widely blamed for crime and social problems.

Activists have estimated that Malaysia has at least 150,000 refugees and asylum seekers - including many with no valid immigration documents - who fled violence or persecution from places such as Myanmar, Indonesia's Aceh province and the southern Philippines.

## **LOBBY & ADVOCACY**

### **BURMA DELEGATION HOLDS MILESTONE MEETING WITH UK FOREIGN OFFICE MINISTER**

by Jennifer Gold

Christian Today

Posted: Friday, January 26, 2007

Representatives from the Chin and Kachin ethnic groups in Burma met earlier in the week with the UK Minister of Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs, Ian McCartney MP.

It was the first time that Chin and Kachin representatives have met with a UK Foreign Office minister, and the meeting lasted approximately an hour.

The delegation raised concerns about religious freedom violations in Burma, and called on the British Government to urge the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to conduct a thorough investigation into the situation in Burma.

The delegation encouraged the British Government to call on the European Union to send a strong signal to the regime in Burma that the current human rights violations in the country are not acceptable, and that China and Russia's veto of a UN Security Council resolution on Burma does not give the regime a green light to commit these violations. They also called for the EU to strengthen its common position on Burma, including meaningful targeted economic sanctions, when this is reviewed in April.

The delegation urged the British Government to put pressure on China, India and ASEAN to use their influence on the regime to progress towards a peaceful solution for the country.

Sexual violence in Chin State, forced labour and the situation in Kachin State were also discussed.

Victor Biak Lian, from the National Reconciliation Programme of the Union of Burma, says: "The overwhelming message from our delegation was the need for meaningful tripartite dialogue between the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the National League for Democracy and the ethnic nationalities, but we need the international community to put pressure on the SPDC if we are to achieve this.

"We are therefore privileged to be given this time with the Minister and we thank him for his efforts in helping to bring Burma to the UN Security Council's agenda. We hope the UK Government takes forward our proposals to help secure a peaceful future for Burma."

Benedict Rogers, CSW's Advocacy Officer for South Asia and author of the recent report *Carrying the Cross*, said: "The military regime's campaign of restriction, discrimination and persecution against Christians in Burma, says: "Today's meeting was very positive and we found the Minister engaging and sympathetic. The UK supported the proposed UN Security Council resolution on Burma. We therefore call on the UK to use its diplomatic influence to continue to build international efforts for change in Burma."

### **ACTIVISTS INCREASE PRESSURE AS EU LOOKS TO REVIEW COMMON POSITION ON BURMA**

By Salai Za Uk Ling  
www.chinlandguardian.net

5 February 2007 – Berlin: Activists from Burma have stepped up effort to shore up support from Europe as the most powerful regional bloc prepares to review its common position on Burma. A delegation of Chin and Kachin and representatives from the National Council of the Union of Burma and the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma met with German Foreign Ministry in Berlin to persuade the German government to increase pressures on Burma 's military regime. A separate meeting was held in the Parliament with a group of German legislators.

Germany currently occupies the European Union presidency and Burma 's pro-democracy activists see it as an important opportunity to influence the European regional policy on Burma . The joint delegation updated current political situations in Burma and pressed Germany to lead effort to strengthen EU common policy on the Southeast Asian country. According to EU officials, the common position is composed of three major focuses: Sanction, critical dialogue and assistance.

Earlier in the week, the Chin and Kachin delegation met with EU officials and lawmakers in the European Parliament and raised several concerns including issue of religious freedom in Burma and the need to strengthen the regional common position. "A strong message from the EU is essential to signal to the military regime the world doesn't accept its behavior," the delegation told the German Foreign Ministry. They said that the military regime should not be allowed to receive the wrong message after two of the world's super power vetoed a proposed UN Security Council resolution on Burma last month.

The activists proposed changes to the current language in the EU common position to reflect formal recognition of the role of the ethnic nationalities in the political process in Burma . They also asked the European Union to increase humanitarian assistance and funding for the democracy and human right movement as part of its commitment towards democratic change in Burma .

The Chin and Kachin delegation, which has traveled to London , Brussels and Berlin , is heading to Washington D.C for advocacy in the United States where they will meet with senior Congressional and Senate members and representatives from the State Department and the Commission of International Religious Freedom.

The delegation is represented by members from the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), Women's League of Chinland (WLC) and Kachin Women's Association, Thailand (KWAT) and sponsored by UK-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

### **BURMA'S PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS PLEA CASE IN HIGHEST U.S. HEARINGS**

By Michelle Vu  
Christian Post Reporter  
Mon, Feb. 12 2007

WASHINGTON - A delegation of Chin and Kachin activists from Burma was the first of its kind to meet with top U.S. officials to testify against "gross" human rights violations by Burma's military regime against the country's Christian minority, indicated a report.

"This has been the first time the Chin and Kachin people have been able to raise a voice at very high levels politically in the United States and the European Union," reflected Salai Bawi Lian Mang, director of the Chin Human Rights Organization, in a statement.

“We believe our cry has been heard and now the world must act.”

Members of the delegation, organized by U.K.-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide, finished a week-long visit to Washington, D.C. on Monday.

The delegation met with John Hanford, ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom; senior policy advisors to the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; representatives of the National Security Council at the White House; and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The activists also met with Congressional and Senate members and staffs, including Congressman Joseph Pitts (R-Pa.) and the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Burma is designated as a “Country of Particular Concern,” by the U.S. State Department for its severe religious freedom violations.

Washington was the delegation’s last stop on a tour to brief world leaders on the discrimination and persecution of the military’s regime against Christians in Burma. Other stops on the tour included London, Brussels and Berlin.

“This has been a truly historic opportunity to raise international awareness about the plight of the Chin and Kachin peoples in Burma, and to urge the international community to take action to bring an end to the suffering of all the people of Burma,” said CSW’s advocacy officer for South Asia, Benedict Rogers, who traveled with the delegation, in a statement.

The Chin and Kachin ethnic groups, in which 90 percent of the population is Christian, are severely persecuted by Burma’s pro-Buddhist military regime.

Reports have exposed that Christians are forced by the regime to tear down crosses and churches and replace them with Buddhist pagodas and statues. Christian Chin and Kachin women are raped, and children from Christian families are taken from their parents and placed into monasteries to become novice monks under the false pretense of sending the children to receive a good education. The parents are not told that their children are being sent to a monastery and in some cases the parents never see their child again.

Christians are also forced to contribute financially to Buddhist projects.

Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, recalls in a recent column that “for many years, crosses dotted the mountaintops and villages of the Chin’s homeland.” However, now there are no crosses left on the mountaintops. Instead, the Chin and other Burmese Christian have become the “preferred targets of one of the world’s most brutal regimes.”

Last month, a British newspaper reported on a secret document authored by the Burmese military regime ordering a wipeout of Christians in the country. The document, which the regime denies responsibility, gave step-by-step instructions on how to eliminate Christians, capitalizing on the fact that “the Christian religion is very gentle,” claims the Telegraph.

In addition to religious freedom, Chin and Kachin activists informed government officials about Burma’s problems with human trafficking, sexual violence and forced labor.

“We will continue to do all we can to highlight the gross violations of human rights perpetrated by Burma’s brutal military regime, including the violations of religious freedom, the use of rape as a weapon of war and other crimes against humanity,” concluded Rogers.

Delegation members included representatives of the Chin Human Rights Organization, the Women’s League of Chinland and the Kachin Women’s Association – Thailand.

### **A CHIN GIRL SPEAKS AT UN ABOUT GENDER VIOLENCE IN BURMA**

By Salai Elaisa Vahnie  
Chinland Guardian

February 27, 2007-New York: Cheery Zahau of Women League of Chinland ( WLC) spoke today at the United Nations held the panel discussion at its 51st Session of Commission on the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters building in New York. The panel discussion focused on discrimination and violence against women in Burma and Sudan. The panelists presented about rape and sexual violence in both countries where Mass Rape have been practiced as a State Sanctioned Weapon.

In her panel presentation, Cheery, coordinator of WLC, figured the total number of victims documented in several different sources of reports prepared by Women organizations in Burma to be as many as 1,859 girls and women.

“Often the rapes have been carried out with extreme brutality and in some cases resulting in the death of the victim. In one case, a woman was stripped naked and hung on a cross, in a deliberate act of mockery against her Christian religion. This indicates that sexual violence is being deliberately used as a weapon to torture and terrorize local ethnic populations into submission.

Almost half of the rapes were gang-rapes, showing that there is a collective understanding among the troops that they can rape with impunity. And about third of the rapes were committed by officers, sometimes in their own army camps. Again, this is a clear example to the troops that rape is acceptable under their command.”

“It is very sad and unacceptable that none of these criminals are prosecuted”, she told Chinland Guardian.

These crimes are committed by the SPDC officers and her troops who took power in 1988 after crushing the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi. It continued to refuse to hand over power when Suu Kyi let National League for Democracy party won a landslide election victory in 1990 fair and free election.

Cheery also expresses her sympathy with women inside Burma and wanted to send a message to them that their suffering is heard by the World.

She repeats the need for the United Nations Security Council immediate intervention in Burma crisis while calling China and Russia to reconsider their position on Burma issue. “By opposing the UNSC resolution on Burma in January 2007, China and Russia gave the wrong signal to the Burmese military regime to continue killing its own people and to rape more women and girls” she said.

Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees, U.S. Department of State's Special Representative for Social Issues, who also is a lead panelist at "Rape and Burma" criticized UN for failing to fully cooperate with the initiative.

A one and half hours long panel discussion on "State-Sanctioned Mass Rape in Burma and Sudan" was organized by the US-UN Office and moderated by the Ambassador Patricia Brister, US Representative to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CHRO CONCERNED BY REMARKS OF MALAYSIA'S HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER**

8 February 2007

CHRO is deeply concerned and dismayed by the recent statements made by Malaysia's Home Affairs Minister, Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, regarding United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Malaysia. CHRO urges the Minister to consider the implications of his statements in conjunction with the realities of the refugee situation in Malaysia.

On 1 February 2007, the Minister reportedly criticized UNHCR for getting in the way of the operations of agencies such as RELA and the Immigration Department. The Minister further indicated that Malaysia "accepts UNHCR's presence, but not their powers."

The statements by Minister Radzi reflect a failure to understand the importance of UNHCR's functions in Malaysia. Currently there are over 25,000 Chin people living in Malaysia who have been forced to leave their homes, friends, families, and livelihoods in Chin State, Burma. The Chin have come to Malaysia in the hopes of finding a safe refuge from the brutal military rulers that have controlled Burma through unspeakable violence and oppression for decades. The Chins in Malaysia are survivors of torture, rape, forced labor, religious persecution, and other severe violations of basic human rights. These communities rely on the effective functioning of UNHCR to protect their right to seek asylum and find refuge from their persecutors.

In addition to protecting the rights and well-being of refugees, UNHCR also exists to help governments deal with refugee populations. Under its mandate, UNHCR facilitates the resettlement of refugees to third countries as well as the voluntary repatriation of refugees back to secure homelands. During the past several years, hundreds of Chin refugees have been resettled from Malaysia to start new, productive lives in third countries. It is, therefore, in Malaysia's best interest to encourage UNHCR's operation rather than oppose it.

The Minister's statements also ignore Malaysia's obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. Although Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, there are certain basic customary rights and principles that all nations must respect and uphold. Under customary human rights law, Malaysia is required to provide certain basic protections to all individuals within its borders, including refugees and asylum seekers. The principle of non-refoulement also prevents governments from forcibly expelling individuals who are at risk of trafficking or persecution.

Malaysia has consistently and blatantly ignored desperate pleas for protection from refugees and flouted its obligations under international law. Refugees and asylum seekers live in constant fear of RELA and immigration raids that target neighborhoods where large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers live. Abuse during the raids is rampant, particularly by the untrained RELA forces which has been the subject of frequent complaints to the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). The raids result in the unwarranted arrest, detention, and deportation of hundreds

of asylum seekers and refugees each year. Moreover, Chin refugees in Malaysia are unable to work, attend school, access health or social services, or obtain adequate living accommodations.

CHRO urges Malaysia to uphold its commitment and responsibilities to promote and protect basic human rights of all persons within its borders. CHRO commends Malaysia for allowing UNHCR to carry out its mandate in Malaysia since 1975 and urges Malaysia to continue to promote and encourage the operations of UNHCR. CHRO also asks Malaysia to focus efforts on opposing the root causes of refugee flow, such as the illegitimate and brutal military regime of Burma, rather than exerting effort and expense against refugees themselves.

Contact: Salai Bawi Lian

### **CHRO WELCOMES THE PUBLICATION OF “CARRYING THE CROSS**

9 February, 2007

Ottawa, CANADA: Chin Human Rights Organization welcomes the publication of a new report “Carrying the Cross: the Military Regime’s Campaign of Restriction, Discrimination and Persecution of Christians in Burma” by London-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide, which provides a comprehensive analysis of issues of religious freedom under Burma’s military regime.

The CSW report complements and adds yet more evidence to existing reports of systematic denial of religious freedom and persecution of minority Christians by Burma’s ruling State Peace and Development Council. Burma remains one of the world’s worst violators of religious freedom in the United States State Department’s list.

Chin Human Rights Organization has long been concerned by the systematic discrimination, denial and persecution of Christians in Burma. In 2004, CHRO published its first comprehensive report on persecution of Chin Christians, “Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide against Chin Christians in Burma” which provided evidences of destruction of churches, crosses, torture and humiliation of pastors, abduction and forced conversion of Chins to Buddhism who constitute more than 90 per cent of the population of Chin State.

“The CSW report clearly demonstrates that persecution of Christians and other religious minorities is a nationwide phenomenon, which Burma’s military regime uses as part of its ‘Burmanization’ campaign,” says Salai Bawi Lian Mang, Director of Chin Human Rights Organization. “Persecution and discrimination of Christians are no isolated incidents but systematic. They are all manifestation of a conformist ideology of the military junta which tries to make Burma a country based on ‘One race, one language, one religion’ or Burman, Burmese and Buddhist,” he adds.

Chin Human Rights Organization also welcomes a motion that has been recently initiated in the British Parliament calling for an immediate end to persecution of Christians and other religious groups in Burma. CHRO calls on the United Nations Special Rapportuer on Religious Freedom and Belief to conduct an investigation into the issue of religious freedom in Burma.

For more information please contact:

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### **MILESTONE NEWS & EVENTS**

## **ENC GENERAL SECRETARY DR. LIAN HMUNG SAKHONG AWARDED THE 2007 MARTIN LUTHER KING PRIZE IN SWEDEN**

By Salai Za Ceu Lian  
Chinland Guardian

January 8, 2007: Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong, the current General Secretary of Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC), the largest ethnic based political coalition consistently advocating for the emergence of Tripartite Dialogue as a mean to solve the existing political impasse of the Union of Burma, is honored with the Martin Luther King Prize for 2007 in Sweden.

This Award, Martin Luther King Prize, is established in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for his historic calling and contribution for peace and harmony among human race regardless of race by the Swedish based global peace groups including the Baptist Union of Sweden, Christian Initiative for Peace (Peace Initiative), Christian Association for Combat to Racism, and Afro-Swedish Association in 2003. The prize giving ceremony is scheduled to be held in the Swedish parliament on coming January 15, which is the birthday of Martin Luther King.

The value of the prize is US \$ 25,000 and a certificate of Honour made by the committee. As a recipient, Dr. Sakhong will give a peace lecture entitled "A STRUGGLE TO BE AN AUTHENTIC HUMAN BEING AGAIN" in the official ceremony. According to the Awards giving committee, Dr. Sakhong is the third recipient of this Martin Luther King-Prize ever since the first King Prize was handed out on 15th January 2005 in the Swedish Parliament. Notably, the fact that the prize giving ceremony takes place at the Swedish Parliament is an indication of the full recognition of the prize by the Swedish government.

In the official website of the Awards committee, it reads, "Martin Luther King's strong conviction was that peace, freedom and justice is possible for all. Not only for the oppressed black in the USA, but for all people in all countries in the world. Segregation, poverty and war are humanity's greatest problems according to King. It was true in the 1960s and it is still true today. With inspiration and knowledge from the life of Martin Luther King and his work, we can see that even the most difficult situations and problems can be solved. If we do it together, if we do one piece at a time and if we have a vision...then the dream can turn into reality."

This Martin Luther King-Prize, as quoted above, was set up with a global vision to relentlessly strive for peace around the world by encouraging and acknowledging the noble works of those frontline actors like Dr. Sakhong who are unwaveringly working for peace, national reconciliation, and democratization internationally.

Because of his active involvements in the pro-democracy movement following the students led uprising in 1988, Martin Luther King Prize laureate Dr. Lian Sakhong was arrested, interrogated and even tortured by the military junta on three separate occasions between 1988 and 1990. Knowing that the Burmese Regime has made numerous attempts to re-arrest him, he fled from his country in 1990 and resettled in Sweden since 1991.

During his stay in Burma, Dr. Lian Sakhong was a General secretary of United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD), a coalition of political parties formed by the Ethnic nationalities of Burma that legitimately formed, together with its ally Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), a parliamentary bloc of 67 elected representatives of the peoples, and a also

served as a General Secretary of Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD), a party winning three parliamentary seats in the 1990 election.

For Dr. Lian Sakhong, his passion for a federal system based democratic reforms and national reconciliation in the Union of Burma never wanes even in his exile political life since 1991. Besides his ongoing political leadership as a General Secretary of Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC, [www.encburma.org](http://www.encburma.org)), he also serves as a General Secretary of United Nationalities League for Democracy liberated Area (UNLD-LA), and also as General Secretary of Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD-exile).

Fully understanding the need for every constituent State to have their own State Constitution in anticipation of the future Federal Union of Burma, he, along with the late Dr. Chao Tzang Yawngwe started the initiative of State Constitution Drafting Process in the year 2001. Currently, he is working as a General Secretary of Federal Constitution Drafting Committee in which he is one of the main drafters of the State Constitution, which was first published in April 2006. In addition, with aims of bringing about the national reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among the diverse nationalities of the Union of Burma, Dr. Lian Sakhong, along with the two ethnic Shan political leaders, the late Dr. Chao Tzang Yawngwe and Harn Yawngwe, current Euro-Burma Office director, founded the National Reconciliation Program (NRP), in which he was serving as the Research Director till 2004, and now sits as a Senior Advisor of the National Reconciliation Program.

With a full conviction of the needs to have basic principles on which the historic initiative of drafting the state Constitution should be based upon, Dr. Lian Sakhong wrote a concept paper enumerating the Basic Principles for Future Federal Union, which was adopted by 104 delegates at the historic gathering in the jungle of Thai-Burma border in 2005, representing 64 political parties and various political organizations.

Fully convinced that the restoration of a mere democracy will not solve the political conflicts confronting a country as ethnically diverse as Burma for decades, Martin Luther King Prize laureate Dr. Lian Sakhong has been vehemently calling for the establishment of a genuine Federal Union based on the principles of the Panglong Agreement, which was signed on February 12, 1947, by General Aung San, Chief Minister of the Interim Government of Burma (British colony); and the leaders of the Federated Shan States and the Frontier Areas - the Chin and Kachin Hills.

Besides his political activism, he is also internationally acclaimed author. He has published numerous articles on Chin history, traditions and politics in Burma, including his Ph.D. dissertation: Religion and Politics among the Chin People in Burma (Uppsala University, 2000) and his book, In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003). He also edited a series of ten books under the title of Peaceful-coexistence: Towards Federal Union of Burma (Chiang Mai: UNLD Press, between 1999 and 2006).

**A STRUGGLE TO BE AN AUTHENTIC HUMAN BEING AGAIN**  
**The Martin Luther King Prize Acceptance Speech**  
**By Lian H. Sakhong**  
**The Bååthska Hall, Stockholm, Sweden**

15 January 2007

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, and Dear Friends:

I am standing before you to accept a prize bearing the name of one of the persons I most admire, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This indeed is a great honor for me, and at the same time, I do realize that this prize is awarded not only to me but also to the peoples of Burma as the recognition of our struggle for democracy, political equality, and self-determination. Even as I speak, thousands of my compatriots are sacrificing their freedom and their well-being, and our leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as you all know, is still under house arrest. My dear friend Khun Htun Oo, a Shan leader, is still serving his sentence of 90 years imprisonment in the most notorious jail in Burma. Many more had sacrificed their lives already; on the battlefields of the on-going fifty years of civil war, on the streets of our capital and other cities when they demonstrated for democracy and freedom, in the notorious prisons in Burma when they were imprisoned without proper trials, in the jungles after they escaped from tortures and imprisonment but lost their lives to jungle diseases and enemy bullets, and in the foreign countries where they were in exile. They sacrificed their lives, their freedom and their well-being so that Burma may have the future with freedom. Now here in Sweden, a very peaceful country, you have recognized our struggle because you know that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”, as Martin Luther King said.

In this struggle, we are fighting for democracy, human rights, freedom, peace and justice. We want “freedom from fear” because we live our lives under this military regime in constant fear. We want “freedom of expression” because freedom of expression is a huge crime under military dictatorship. We have over one thousand political prisoners in Burma, who committed no crime but daring to express their free will. We want “freedom from want” because the peoples of Burma are destitute living under extreme conditions of impoverishment, hunger and disease without remedy in the land that used to be known as the “rice bowl of Asia”.

We want “peace” because the regime in Burma has been at war with its own people for more than five long decades. Yes, we want peace but the peace that we want is not just in terms of the absence of conflict but in terms of the presence of justice.

We want “justice” because there is no such thing as the rule of law under a military dictatorship. “Martial Law”, according to General Saw Maung, “is no law at all but the use of force”. In today’s Burma, law and order exist not for protecting its people but for sustaining dictators in power. We want basic “human rights” because human rights abuses have become part of the political system in the so-called “law and order restoration”, as the military junta in Burma used to call itself the “State Law and Order Restoration Council”.

Finally, what we want is we want to live with human dignity because when all kinds of rights are abused people lose their dignity, integrity and identity. And, what we want is to live just like a human being who is the image of God. So, our struggle is a struggle to be an authentic human being again.

Our struggle is not just for changing the government in Rangoon, or in Naypidaw, but for building a democratic open society and restructuring the country into a genuine Federal Union as it was agreed by General Aung San and ethnic national leaders in 1947 at the Panglong Conference, when the Union of Burma was founded at the first place. The root cause of political crisis in Burma is not just ideological confrontation between military dictatorship and democracy; it also involves constitutional problems rooted in the denial of the rights of self-determination for ethnic nationalities who joined the Union as equal partners according to the Panglong Agreement. The only solution for political crisis in Burma, therefore, is to establish a genuine Federal Union of Burma, which will guarantee the fundamental rights for all citizens of the Union, political equality for all ethnic nationalities, and the right of self-determination for all member states of the Union within the framework of federal arrangement.

In this struggle, we are opting for the “tripartite dialogue” as a means to achieve our goal. The “tripartite dialogue” means dialogue amongst the military regime, the 1990 election winning party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnic nationalities — who are the founding members of the Union, as called for by the United Nations General Assembly since 1994. The “tripartite dialogue” strategy for us is the core essence of non-violent movement, and finding the common ground between current conflict parties in Burma. Instead of fighting each other and killing each other, we want to solve our political problems through political means on a dialogue table not on the battlefields. So, what we are saying is “stop fighting”, “stop killing”; killing innocent lives will not solve the problem, denying human rights will not make the country free, and destroying human and natural resources will not make any benefit for the future of Burma. However, by finding the common ground through dialogue, negotiation and compromise, we can solve all of our problems together.

Unfortunately, the military government in Burma is still opting for violent confrontation instead of peaceful negotiation, killing and taking innocent life instead of negotiated settlement, destroying ethnic identity and abusing minority rights instead of building a peaceful country. When they implemented their policy of ethnic assimilation by force, the present military junta applied various methods: killing people and destroying the livelihood of ethnic minorities in the on-going civil war, using rape as a weapon of war against ethnic minorities, and religious persecution as a means of destroying ethnic identity, especially of the Chin, Kachin and Karen Christians. So, it seems that the current political situation in Burma looks not only unpromising but the political storm is blowing violently into undesired end.

Despite all these negative images of the country, we are confident that we will be able to turn current political situation, and change the political storm into a freedom breeze. We are quite sure that we will be able to turn the current political situation in Burma with the help of international community, including the UN, EU, USA, ASEAN, Japan, China and India, and we are hoping that we will overcome all the obstacles and we will achieve our goal of building a free Burma. The inner strength of democracy movement in Burma, of course, is the peoples of Burma. And we know that the solution of Burma’s problem will not come from outside but from inside through the unity and collective efforts of the peoples of Burma. The inner strength of this unity is what you are recognizing today, here in Stockholm.

I therefore receive this prestigious award as the recognition of our struggle for human rights, justice, peace, democracy, political equality and self-determination in Burma. I thank you for your recognition of our struggle! With all your help, and with the unity and strength of the people of Burma, “We shall over come some day”.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Martin Luther King Prize Committee for your recognition of our struggle, the people of Sweden for your support and solidarity that you have shown to the people of Burma time to time, and all of you —my dear friends in Sweden. I would like to acknowledge also to my colleagues at the Ethnic Nationalities Council, Chin National Council, United Nationalities League for Democracy, Chin National League for Democracy, Federal Constitution Drafting and Coordinating Committee, and National Reconciliation Program; and individually I would like to thank Harn Yawngwe, Jack Sterken and Sai Mawn — although they are not here today, I must say that without you guys I would not be able to survive in the jungle of Thai-Burma border. And I would like to express my love and gratitude to my wife, Aapen, and my children — David Van Lian and Laura Thachin. Without

your support, understanding and love; I would not be able to stand here, and would not be able to work for what I believe and for the oppressed people of Burma.

Thank you!

## About Us

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Covering Social and Political Issues of Chin people and Burma

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Chinland Guardian is an independent, internet-based news agency committed to providing reliable news and current issues about Chinland and Burma through a balanced, objective and professional reporting.