

briefing

Burma

Visit to the India-Burma Border

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CHRISTIAN
SOLIDARITY
WORLDWIDE
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

PO Box 99, New Malden,
Surrey KT3 3YF

T: 0845 456 5464

E: admin@csw.org.uk

W: www.csw.org.uk

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 281836

**“We have no freedom. People always live in fear.
We are prisoners in our own country.
We urgently need democracy” –
Chin refugees from Burma**

1.	Executive Summary.....	3
2.	About Christian Solidarity Worldwide.....	4
3.	Personnel.....	4
4.	Purposes.....	4
5.	Itinerary.....	5
6.	Introduction.....	5
7.	Human Rights Violations in Chin State.....	6
7.1.	Prison Conditions.....	6
7.2.	Forced Labour.....	7
7.3.	Religious persecution.....	8
7.4.	Deliberate promotion of crude alcohol.....	8
7.5.	Interviews with victims of human rights violations.....	8
7.5.1.	Ms. M, aged 32, and her son, aged 7, from village A, Falam Township, Chin State.....	8
7.5.2.	Ms K, aged 20, from village B, Matupi township, Chin State.....	9
7.5.3.	Mr P, aged 36, from village C, Matupi Township, Chin State.....	9
7.5.4.	Mr V, aged 30, from village D, Matupi Township, Chin State.....	10
7.5.5.	Mr. Z, aged 68, village E, Thantlang Township, Chin State.....	10
7.5.6.	Mr. M, aged 45, from village E, Thantlang Township, Chin State (one of Mr Z’s sons).....	11
7.5.7.	Mr. J, aged 20, from village F, Kambat sub-district, Sagaing Division.....	11
7.5.8.	Mr R, aged 21, from village G, Kalaymyo Township, Sagaing Division.....	11
7.5.9.	Mr. L, aged 44, from village H, Matupi Township, Chin State.....	12
7.5.10.	Mr S, aged 27, from village I, Matupi Township, Chin State.....	13
7.5.11.	Mr S, aged 18, from village J, Falam Township, Chin State.....	13
7.5.12.	Mr Z, aged 41, from village K, Falam Township.....	14
7.5.13.	Mr. L, aged 28, village L, Falan Township, Chin State.....	14
7.5.14.	Mr T, aged 36, village M, Falam Township, Chin State.....	14
7.5.15.	Pastor S, aged 46, from village O, Falam Township, Chin State.....	15
7.5.16.	Ms. P, aged 23, village P, Falam Township, Chin State.....	15
7.5.17.	Mrs K, aged 47, village Q, Paletwah Township, Chin State.....	16
7.5.18.	Mr. N, from village R, Matupi Township, Chin State.....	16
8.	Humanitarian aid.....	17
9.	Chin Refugees in India.....	18
10.	India’s Policy on Burma.....	19
11.	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	20

I. Executive Summary

Burma's ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), continues to perpetrate widespread and systematic violations of human rights against its people, amounting to crimes against humanity and in some cases possible genocide. All the people of Burma are suffering, but the SPDC particularly targets the ethnic nationalities. The Chin people in western Burma are subjected to policies of forced labour, the use of rape, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, land confiscation, destruction of livestock and crops and religious persecution including destruction of places and symbols of worship. SPDC soldiers are ordered to marry Chin women, and offered the incentive of promotion if they do so, in an attempt to dilute ethnicity. The regime has encouraged the widespread sale of crude industrial alcohol, causing severe health and social problems, in an effort to destroy the Chin culture amounting to cultural genocide¹. There is no provision of free health care, and no education beyond Grade 10. As the Chin people are no longer able to offer effective armed resistance against the SPDC's military offensive, the land is now under the occupation of SPDC troops who pursue a variety of policies designed to destroy the distinctiveness of the Chin people and to subject them to brutal oppression, discrimination and violations of fundamental human rights.

During this visit, the delegation, which included two British Parliamentarians – John Bercow MP, Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma and a member of the House of Commons International Development Select Committee, and Baroness Cox, a member of the House of Lords and Chief Executive of the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART) – accompanied by representatives of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), HART, the Free Burma Rangers and the Chin Human Rights Organisation, heard numerous accounts of recent gross violations of human rights in Chin State and witnessed first-hand the desperate conditions in which Chin refugees in India live. The delegation met the Chief Minister of Mizoram and were able to discuss concerns about India's policies of arms sales to the SPDC and economic investments in Burma.

In addition to our findings regarding the human rights abuses in Chin State, the delegation were able to discuss the current situation inside Burma with a representative of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB). Since 19 August, the largest nationwide demonstrations in almost 20 years have been taking place in Burma, and the regime has launched a severe crackdown². More than 200 peaceful protestors have been arrested, including leaders of the "88 Generation Student Movement", and the regime has used proxy civilian mobs, often armed with sticks and iron rods, to harass, beat up and arrest peaceful demonstrators. In recent days thousands of monks have led demonstrations on the streets, and have refused to perform religious ceremonies for regime officials. While the situation continues to develop rapidly, and while the primary focus of the delegation's visit was on the situation in Chin State, this report should be seen in the context of wider events in Burma.

¹ As described in the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

² For more information see reports on www.csw.org.uk, www.burmacampaign.org.uk and www.aappb.net

CSW urges the international community to address the crisis in Burma as a matter of urgency. We welcome the discussion held by the United Nations Security Council on 20 September, statements from US President George W Bush, initiatives by US First Lady Laura Bush, statements from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary David Miliband, and other efforts currently underway. We strongly urge the UN Security Council to establish specific objectives and benchmarks, deadlines by which the SPDC should meet such benchmarks, and sanctions if the SPDC fails to meet such terms. Benchmarks should include the release of political prisoners, the release of Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the disbanding of civilian militia organisations and the commencement of meaningful tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, the National League for Democracy and the ethnic nationalities. Furthermore, CSW urges the Governments of India, China and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to support efforts at the UN and to use their influence with the SPDC to bring change to Burma and an end to the gross violation of human rights. CSW expresses particular concern about the policies of the Government of India, including the sale of arms and the provision of military training to the SPDC, and urges India to cease such policies until there is democratic change and respect for human rights in Burma. A full set of recommendations can be found on page 19.

2. About Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is an international human rights organisation specialising in religious freedom. With advocacy staff based in London, Brussels and Washington, DC, CSW has partners and affiliates in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, India, Sri Lanka, Norway, Denmark and France. CSW has been working on human rights issues in Burma for much of the past twenty years, making regular visits to the Karen, Karenni and Shan ethnic nationalities on the Thailand-Burma border. CSW has made two previous visits to the Chin on the India-Burma border, and two visits to the Kachin on the China-Burma border.

3. Personnel

The delegation included:

John Bercow MP	Co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma and member of the House of Commons International Development Committee;
The Baroness Cox	House of Lords; Chief Executive, Humanitarian Aid Relief (Trust);
Dr. Martin Panter	CSW Australia
Benedict Rogers	CSW UK
Rev. David Thomas	Project Co-ordinator, HART

We were accompanied by a representative of Free Burma Rangers and a representative of the Chin Human Rights Organisation.

4. Purposes

- To obtain up-to-date information on the political, humanitarian and human rights situation in Chin State;
- To obtain up-to-date information on the situation of Chin refugees in New Delhi and Mizoram, India;

- To express solidarity with the Chin people;
- To assess the needs of the Chin people and consider proposals for future support.

5. Itinerary

The delegation spent a day in New Delhi, visiting Chin refugees and meeting the Chin Refugee Committee. We also met representatives of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), the Euro-Burma Office, The Other Media (an NGO), and a freelance journalist. The delegation then spent three and a half days in Mizoram, including a visit to the border during which we interviewed victims of human rights violations in Chin State and visited two medical clinics and two refugee homes. The delegation had meetings in Aizawl with the Chief Minister of Mizoram State, the Chin National Council (CNC), the Women's League of Chinland (WLC), the Chin National Front (CNF) and several church leaders, and interviews with victims of human rights abuses who had travelled from the border to meet us. Some members of the delegation also met with the British Deputy Consul-General in Kolkata.

6. Introduction

Ethnic nationalities such as the Chin have suffered discrimination in Burma for many decades. Since General Ne Win seized power in a military coup in 1962, and under successive military regimes, oppression has intensified, with policies seemingly designed not only to eliminate political opposition groups but to achieve the annihilation of the cultural identity and even physical survival of non-Burman ethnic nationalities.

Political opposition has been ruthlessly suppressed, with imprisonment, torture and murder of activists. Some ethnic national groups such as the Karen, Karenni and Shan have maintained armed resistance and been fighting desperate wars to try to protect civilians, in order to enable them to continue to live in their homelands and to maintain their traditional way of life. This resistance has resulted in decades of conflict between poorly equipped and under-resourced resistance forces and the comparatively well-armed, 500,000-strong Burma Army equipped with weapons and training from China, India, Russia and other countries. Burma Army troops regularly attack and torture civilians, shooting men, women and children. Those who are not killed are forced to work as porters and human minesweepers. Rape as a weapon of war is widespread and systematic. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their villages, living in desperate deprivation in the jungles as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), without adequate food, medicine or shelter, or to escape across Burma's borders. During the last year alone, over 86,000 civilians have been internally displaced in eastern Burma, including 27,000 in Karen State. Since 1996, over 3,000 villages have been destroyed in eastern Burma. In total it is estimated that over a million people have been internally displaced by SPDC offensives and are trying to survive in conditions of intense hardship.³

Other ethnic national states which have been subdued by SPDC forces and are no longer engaged in effective armed resistance include Chin State. They are now under

³ See previous CSW Reports including Visit to the Karen and Mon Peoples on the Thailand-Burma Border, February 2007; Visit to the Thai-Burmese Border, November 2006; and reports from the Free Burma Rangers, the Karen Human Rights Group, and the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC).

complete occupation and SPDC troops are able to perpetrate systematic violations of human rights on a widespread scale. These violations include forced labour, rape, land confiscation, extortion, and looting of crops, livestock and food supplies. Civilians accused of complicity with the residual resistance army, the Chin National Front (CNF), are liable to arrest, torture and imprisonment.

Efforts are underway to unite the various pro-democracy and resistance organisations in Chin State. A Chin National Council (CNC) was established in April 2004 following a Chin Consensus Building conference. The CNC consists of four Chin pro-democracy parties, namely the CNF, the Mara Peoples' Party, the Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD) and the Zomi National Congress (ZNP), as well as the Women's League of Chinland (WLC), the Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO), seven civil society groups, five youth and student organisations and three Members of Parliament elected in the 1990 elections. In May 2006 a second Chin National Assembly was held. The CNC aims to develop Chin unity and solidarity, and to speak with "one spirit, one mind, one voice, for one demand".

Conditions in Chin State are now so bad that many Chin people have been forced to flee. According to the CNC, approximately 100,000 Chins have fled to India, 27,000 to Malaysia, 1500 to the USA and hundreds more to Europe, Australia and Canada. The total number of Chins who have left Burma is estimated to be 130,866. The Chin population remaining in Chin State is 533,140, while approximately 700,000 Chins are in other parts of Burma such as Sagaing Division, Magwe Division, Arakan State and Rangoon. The Chin people who have left Burma have done so for a variety of reasons, but primarily to escape the continuing brutal oppression, forced labour, exploitation, sexual harassment, religious persecution, rape, forced marriage, forced conscription, poverty and lack of health care, education and job opportunities. Chin State is widely regarded as the poorest and most deprived part of Burma. Forced labour, for example, not only results in cruel and degrading treatment, but causes indirect destruction of crops, as villagers are unable to farm and harvest if they are providing forced labour to the military. There is no education beyond Grade 10 (age 15), and no universities. There are 184 nursery schools, 1167 primary schools, 83 middle schools and 25 high schools, according to the CNC. There is a shortage of teachers. Often teachers spend two or three days a week working on their farms and they force the children to help them, instead of providing education in the classroom. Many people cannot afford to pay for education.

7. Human Rights Violations in Chin State

During this visit the delegation obtained first-hand accounts from 18 victims of human rights violations, many of whom have fled Chin State across the border to India in recent months. In addition to accounts of torture, attempted rape and forced marriage, detailed in the case studies below, the violations reported included imprisonment, forced labour, religious persecution and the deliberate sale and promotion of crude industrial alcohol.

7.1. Prison Conditions

In addition to the persecution of the ethnic nationals, the SPDC has brutally crushed the democracy movement. Over 1,200 political prisoners are in jail in Burma. Conditions in prisons and prison camps in Chin State are reportedly even more inhumane than in notorious jails such as Insein, where slight amelioration, as a result of international intervention, has been reported. For example, the brutal shackling of prisoners in Chin

State prisons is worse, with the application of tighter 'irons', as there are no outsiders to witness and report this cruelty.

CSW interviewed a man who regularly visits prisons and prison camps in Burma, whose name and details cannot be disclosed for security reasons. He has visited approximately 30 prison camps over eight years. In the past year, since our previous visit to the India-Burma border, he has visited prisons in Burma twice – once in Rangoon and once in Tuante, 20 miles from Rangoon.

The conditions in Burma's prisons are terrible. According to this eye-witness, in Insein Prison in Rangoon, 150-250 people are crammed into a cell built to hold 50, with only one toilet. People are screaming due to the heat, skin disease, sickness and torture. The health situation is severe. "One man was so malnourished and thin that you could see his intestines moving, looking like worms," he said. In Hakha prison, he explained, prisoners are forced to work for the entire day and given very little food. At least one prisoner has died due to lack of food. One escapee from prison has claimed that prisoners sometimes resort to eating faeces and rats, because they receive so little food. In Bung Zung Prison camp, in Hakha, in 2006, as prisoners were about to go to work, he saw about 30 men bleeding. He did not see what had caused their injuries, but he saw them bleeding and shaking, and so he asked them how they could work. He was told that there is no health provision, and if people cannot work robustly, they will be beaten with wooden batons, and maybe tortured for several days, depending on the rules they violated.

Some prisons practice some of the worst imaginable forms of torture. In 2003, he said, in Cang El Zawl prison, Sagaing Division, soldiers invited prisoners to escape. However, it was a trick and when some prisoners tried to escape they were caught because they could not run fast due to being in leg irons. They were re-arrested, and put over a very hot fire. They were then stabbed with knives, particularly if they screamed, and then put into a tub of salt water. Most of the victims die. Villagers often find dead bodies at the nearby cemetery – evidence that many die in the prison camp.

Prisoners are yoked as oxen and used to plough fields, he claimed. In April 2007 at Cang El Zawl, prisoners were forced to plough 3,000 acres of land and then a further 1,000 acres.

International pressure is important and sometimes effective, he said. In Thawangbu prison in Mandalay, there was a severe water shortage and prisoners were denied water until international human rights groups expressed concern. On his most recent visit to that prison, he saw a water tank so prisoners could get some water. "It is very important that the international community put pressure on the SPDC because prisoners need proper treatment."

7.2. Forced Labour

Of the 18 victims interviewed by the delegation, at least seven had experienced forced labour of various kinds, particularly forced portering for the Burma Army.

7.3. Religious persecution

The Chin are a predominantly Christian people. SPDC troops have been destroying the crosses traditionally built by the Chin on hillsides and at crossroads, as well as some churches. Permission to build new churches, or rebuild, repair or extend existing churches, is usually denied. In many cases, Chin Christians have been forced to tear down crosses themselves and build Buddhist pagodas in their place. These policies have been extensively documented in CSW's report *Carrying the Cross: The military regime's campaign of restriction, discrimination and persecution against Christians in Burma*, published in January 2007, and the Chin Human Rights Organisation's report *Religious Persecution: A Campaign of Ethnocide Against Chin Christians in Burma*, in 2004.

7.4. Deliberate promotion of crude alcohol

The Chin traditionally prohibit alcohol, but the SPDC has introduced and promoted the availability and sale of crude industrial alcohol, causing addiction, alcohol-induced violence and severe health problems such as brain damage, jaundice and liver sclerosis, thus destabilizing Chin society. Alcohol-related deaths have also been reported. The policy appears to be deliberate. In Hakha, shops are ordered to sell a certain amount of alcohol per month. Licences for the sale of alcohol are provided easily, whereas in the past licences were much more difficult to obtain. Posters are widely displayed advertising this alcohol, particularly targeting young people and women. One source told CSW that she knew of four people who had died in one town alone as a result of alcohol, including one in Falam in November 2006. Teachers encourage young Chin women in school to drink alcohol, claiming that it will make them more beautiful prior to beauty contests. CSW heard similar reports in two previous visits to the Chin, and reports this time confirm that the practice is continuing.⁴

7.5. Interviews with victims of human rights violations

7.5.1. Ms. M, aged 32, and her son, aged 7, from village A, Falam Township, Chin State

Her son, now aged seven, was abducted by the Burma Army at the age of three and detained in an army camp two miles away from the village for eight hours. On 26 February 2002, the SPDC arrested her husband, accusing him of links with the Chin armed resistance. They found Chin National Front (CNF) literature in their home when they searched it after suspecting his brother of involvement in the drugs trade. He was sentenced to nine years, but escaped from prison in June 2003. Within a few hours of his escape, five soldiers came to their home, but she was not there as she was travelling to other villages. The soldiers asked her son, aged three, where his father was. They then promised to buy him biscuits if he went with them. They told him they would take him in a jeep, and as he liked jeeps he was persuaded to go. "If I had been there, they would have arrested me," she said. The boy was kept for eight hours in a cell with no windows. He cried continuously, but the soldiers told him that he would not be released until his father was found. The boy was being used as bait. However finally, that evening, they released him because they were worried he might die. He was given no food and no water during his detention.

She returned home and was informed by family members what had happened. She was warned that the soldiers would be looking for her, and so she immediately fled to the

⁴ See CSW Reports - Visit to the Chin Peoples, March 2006; Visit to the Chin and Kachin in India, April 2004

India border, four days walk away. Relatives arranged to bring the boy to the border separately, and they were reunited.

She said her son continues to suffer from the trauma of the experience. He cries out at night, and whenever he sees a blue or green car, resembling a military vehicle, he runs away and hides.

“If we return to Burma, we will be persecuted, arrested and tortured. Living here we are living in fear. We are afraid that the SPDC might follow us, and we are afraid of harassment by local Mizo groups. We cannot go to Delhi as we have no money,” she said.

7.5.2. Ms K, aged 20, from village B, Matupi township, Chin State

She had been studying at a boarding school in Matupi. She had to provide her own food at school. She fled her village to the India border in August 2007. The soldiers in her village said they had been ordered by their commander to marry Chin women, and had been promised promotion if they did so. When she heard this, she was very afraid and did not want to stay in the village any more. “If only one or two women travel, they can be arrested and raped by soldiers. We are living in fear constantly”.

In December 2006, the soldiers came to demand forced porters. She told the soldiers she was a student and was not able to help. The soldiers hit her and said: “Your education is not important. You have to do what we say.” She continued living in the village.

In February 2007, soldiers came and destroyed everything in the village including rice. Soldiers also tried to rape her. Her rented house is close to the commander’s house, and one night at 8pm she came back from the classroom to the house. The commander was very drunk, and arrested her and tried to rape her. She managed to escape and hide in a friend’s house in Matupi town. After one night she returned to her village, but was very afraid.

In May 2007 the SPDC ordered everyone in the village, including women, to serve in the “civil army” (‘Pi Tu Sit’). Her parents were forced to work for the army, carrying rations. As a result of forced labour, villagers were unable to grow their crops.

One of her friends married a soldier after she had been kidnapped. She was very good at taking photographs, and soldiers came one day to ask her to take photographs at the army camp of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 140. The woman’s father was very angry and went to complain to the army. Soldiers arrested him and put him in jail. The soldier who married her was promoted.

7.5.3. Mr P, aged 36, from village C, Matupi Township, Chin State

He said that forced portering was very common in his village. In May 2007, he was ordered to attend civil army (‘Pi Tu Sit’) training, and forced to clear land for the army. When villagers have to do civil army training they have to provide their own food. In June, his wife was forced to do portering, despite being pregnant. Soldiers pointed their guns at her, and beat and tortured her during portering. In July, soldiers came again and shot his pig and three other villagers’ pigs. He was ordered to join the civil army in

September, and also told that he would have to do more forced labour in October. If he did not contribute labour, he would have to give money instead. The order was issued by the local commander in a letter to the village head in June. He did not want to join the civil army, and so fled to the India border on 15 August. His wife remains in the village, with her baby and four other children. He is worried that the army will continue to force her to porter for them. His wife and children want to come to the India border but have no money. The journey from his village to the border takes five days and costs 500 Rupees.

7.5.4. Mr V, aged 30, from village D, Matupi Township, Chin State

He served as village head in 2004, appointed by the local authorities. He said there were a lot of human rights abuses in his area. In February 2004 an order was issued requiring villagers to build the army camp. There were 25 households in the village, and the army required 25 people to contribute labour. However, many of the villagers were elderly and so only 15 were able to work. Providing rice to the army is very common. The villagers were forced to give 50 tins of rice to the army.

In March 2006 another order came demanding labour to build an army camp. Only 15 people were able to go, and worked for one week. Villagers were also ordered to porter for the army, carrying rations. In December 2005, the authorities ordered the village headman to provide 10 villagers to join the civil army training. Only five villagers were able to do so, but the army said it would not accept only five.

Women are forced to do portering and forced labour. As a village headman, he felt very sad that he was unable to protect the women in the village.

He fled his village at the end of August 2007 because he did not want to join the civil army training and as he was not able to provide ten people for it, he knew he would be punished. He said he wishes that forced labour and forced portering would be stopped so that they can live their own lives in peace and freedom.

7.5.5. Mr. Z, aged 68, village E, Thantlang Township, Chin State

In December 2005, SPDC soldiers accused him of providing space for opposition students. On 28 December 2005, 14 soldiers came to arrest his son and daughter-in-law. They tied him, his son and daughter-in-law underneath the house, and tortured them for the whole night from 7pm-9am, kicking them, beating them and hitting them with their pistols. They tried to hang them upside down but the rope was too small. Instead, they beat them with their guns. His son, aged 23, is now paralysed as a result and cannot move unaided. The villagers collected money for him to seek medical treatment in Kalaymyo, but the doctor said he was unable to help. The paralysis has worsened due to lack of medical treatment, and his sight and hearing have been affected. Mr Z suffers from chronic back pain and is unable to carry heavy loads.

The soldiers ate all the food in the house. The next day, when they were released, the family was left with nothing to eat. After their release, the soldiers took Mr Z's son away at gunpoint for three nights. "I was worried they would kill him," he said. Since then, most of the villagers have left the village. Only his family has remained. Mr Z decided to flee in August 2007, following further accusations by the SPDC of links with insurgents. He arrived in India on 15 September. He had to leave his wife and son behind because

he had no vehicle and was unable to carry his son. "Please do something to tell other people about our situation," he said.

7.5.6. Mr. M, aged 45, from village E, Thantlang Township, Chin State (one of Mr Z's sons)

In 1998 he served as village head. On 28 January 1998 insurgency groups came to the village to ask for money from villagers. The SPDC came to him and asked if students were coming. He said no, but other villagers told the SPDC that students were coming, and so the SPDC arrested him. "They took me from village to village, and I was beaten and tortured," he said.

It is "routine", he said, for the authorities to demand forced labour contributions, particularly for road construction. In April 1999 the authorities demanded forced labour, and as headman he was required to organise the villagers for this purpose. He was unable to organise as many villagers as required, and so he was beaten and tortured.

In June 2003 insurgency groups entered the village again. The SPDC arrested him again, tortured him and dismissed him as village headman. He was beaten, kicked and punched. Soldiers beat him with their guns, and hit his chest, back and ears, causing his ears to bleed. They warned him that if he ever talked to insurgent groups he would be killed or sentenced to life imprisonment.

His brother, aged 30, was a member of the Chin National Army (CNA), one of the resistance or "insurgent" groups. On 5 June 2005, he went to Hakha with his father, aged 68, and they were arrested and jailed. After his father and brother were jailed, the family sold their home and all their possessions in order to provide for them, but they continue to need help.

7.5.7. Mr. J, aged 20, from village F, Kambat sub-district, Sagaing Division

On 12 February 2006, 40 men were selected to serve in the civil army. Before being sent for training, Mr J said he did not want to go because he was still studying in 10th Grade. However, he was forced to undergo training for a month. After the training, he returned to his village. He was given an identity card which confirmed that he had completed civil army training.

In September 2006, he was required to join firemen training. Only eight people were left in the village, and they were beaten when they could not perform as trainers. The training was supposed to be for four or five days but after 15 days some people escaped and hid in the jungle. The remaining eight people were beaten three times because people had escaped.

Those with civil army identity cards were responsible for organising forced labour. If they organised forced labour, however, villagers would be very angry. He was ordered to undertake training in February and April 2007, but in January 2007 he decided to escape to the border. "Whenever I think about Burma, I want to die. It is so depressing. There is no future for the people," he said.

7.5.8. Mr R, aged 21, from village G, Kalaymyo Township, Sagaing Division

In August 2004, about 20 soldiers came to the village and said that the CNA were in Hakha township. They said that the villagers should come with the troops as porters, to

chase the CNA. He had to walk for three days carrying very heavy loads, including ammunition. Whenever he fell, the soldiers beat him. After one week, he arrived at an army camp in Chin State.

After one week of searching for the CNA soldiers, he returned to his village. SPDC soldiers from LIB 936 were staying in the village. The soldiers ordered that all the crosses in the area be torn down. When the villagers refused, the soldiers destroyed the crosses themselves. Altogether three crosses were torn down.

The soldiers continued to stay in the village, raping women and demanding forced porters once a month. Almost all the young people have left the village. He left and travelled to Rangoon to look for a job, and then went to the India border. He left because there were no jobs in Burma for him.

7.5.9. Mr. L, aged 44, from village H, Matupi Township, Chin State

He served as village head from 1998-2005. He said he has “a lot of experience” of human rights violations. Every year, for example, the SPDC builds roads and regularly demands food from villagers. If the villagers are not around when the Burma Army soldiers arrive, they come and find them and ask why they are not greeting them.

In 2002, the commander came and asked him to collect chickens and other food for the soldiers. The commander then tried to rape Mr L’s wife. Mr L’s mother, however, intervened with a knife and the soldier ran away.

In 2002, he was called by officers to go to the army camp. He was beaten with guns and sent to hospital due to the injuries caused by torture. He lost some of his teeth as a result of torture, and has had to have dentures.

In 2005, at a football competition in Matupi town, the wife of the SPDC’s Tactical 2 Commander in Chin State, Colonel San Aung, was shot and injured. Soldiers then launched a man-hunt to find the suspects. They suspected him and accused him of involvement in the shooting, even though the villagers told the soldiers that he was not an insurgent, he was the headman. After two weeks in jail, he was released on bail, paid by villagers, of 50,000 kyats.

Following his release, he was ordered to guide an SPDC Captain for two days and two nights. He was given no food. He then resigned as headman and escaped.

Every month in his village, people are forced to work on tea plantations and castor tree plantations and to spend one week building army camps.

In 2007, army officers issued an order to villagers to build a Buddhist temple. Villagers were forced to look for wood to build the temple. On 25 May 2007, the army forced him to do portering for an army camp at Satu. Villagers had to provide 20 tins of rice and five chickens for Laesen camp. “If we are forced to do non-stop portering, we cannot look after our children.” His village is a six day walk from the border. “We are like slaves. We want to be free. Please do something to help change Burma.”

7.5.10. Mr S, aged 27, from village I, Matupi Township, Chin State

In April 1999, there was fighting between the SPDC and the insurgency groups. Due to the fighting, he and his family fled to the India border for four months, but then returned home. After an incident in 2005 in which SPDC Colonel San Aung's wife was shot at a football stadium, the authorities carried out an investigation. His brother is part of the CNA and he had heard that the parents and relatives of CNA soldiers would be jailed, so he decided to flee to India. He was studying in Falam at the time. Before fleeing to India he wanted to visit his village to say goodbye to his parents, even though his brother advised against it. As soon as he arrived there, he heard that villagers had received an order to construct a road. He was unable to find anyone who could take his place, and so from November 2006-May 2007 he had to do forced labour every day, seven days a week, from 6am until 5pm. The villagers had to bring their own food and water. He was unable to attend church because he had to do forced labour. "Men working for seven months on forced labour affects our farming," he said. "We cannot grow crops or harvest."

The villagers were refused permission to have worship services during their seven months doing forced labour. Permission to rebuild churches has been denied, as has permission to repair churches.

In 2006, his cousin, in Grade 9 (aged 15), from Matupi Township, was sent by her parents to a school in Matupi without knowing what type of school it was. She was forced to follow Buddhist teachings and meditations, and forbidden from fulfilling Christian practices.

7.5.11. Mr S, aged 18, from village J, Falam Township, Chin State

In 2005, an insurgency group attacked an SPDC camp near the village and stole some weapons. The SPDC was very angry, and asked villagers to look for the lost guns. Soldiers from LIB 268 and LIB 269 captured Mr S's father, who was the village headman, and tied him at the neck and hands and took him away. Mr S followed from a distance, to make sure they did not kill him. For two days and two nights they searched for the guns, without food. The soldiers had food for themselves but not for the villagers. They were unable to find anything, and so returned to the village. This occurred over Christmas, and all the men were taken away to look for the guns, so the village was unable to celebrate Christmas. The soldiers then took his father to Falam and put him in jail. He was imprisoned for seven months.

"Every time the Burma Army soldiers come, we have to build army camps for them and porter for them," he said. "Every time the soldiers come, they come to my father's house because he is the headman. If my father is not in, they beat, kick and slap me. We have to organise blankets and food for the soldiers, and if we cannot do so quickly, the soldiers beat us. Sometimes the soldiers would point their guns at us and say 'We will kill you'. One time they beat my father with their guns."

In 2005, his father told him to flee the village and go to India, because there were no opportunities for young people in Chin State.

7.5.12. Mr Z, aged 41, from village K, Falam Township

An army camp (LIB 266) was stationed near the village, with at least 50 troops. The army regularly requires porters, and villagers are forced to carry ammunition for the army. As there are no main roads in the area, they have to travel through the jungle on footpaths. “We cannot use torchlights or even cigarette lights so if we travel at night, it is totally dark,” he said. “If we stumble, the soldiers kick us. We have to carry very heavy loads.” When the soldiers arrive in a village, they ask the people to prepare food for them – but the porters have to find their own food.

In Chin State water is very scarce, and has to be fetched from a distance. Twice a week one person from each family has to carry water to the army camp, one kilometre away on the top of the mountain. Whenever army rations are delivered by jeep, the rations are delivered at the village because the jeep cannot go up the mountain, and then villagers, including women and children, are forced to carry the rations. Sometimes 10 year-old children have been taken as porters.

The army camp is surrounded by three fences, but the soldiers never closed the gate and so villagers’ pigs, cows, oxen and other livestock would wander into the camp. The soldiers would just shoot the animals and take them to eat, without any compensation or consideration to the villagers.

7.5.13. Mr. L, aged 28, village L, Falam Township, Chin State

In December 2005, Burmese police came to the village and stayed in his house. Insurgents came to the village and abducted the police. The authorities came to investigate the case, and accused the family of letting the insurgents in. The soldiers hung Mr L upside down for a whole night, hitting his body against a pillar. They then pointed their guns simultaneously at three parts of his body – his left side, right side and back – and ordered him to go with them to other villages to look for the insurgents. They tied his hands together. Finally at 3am one night, he asked if the soldiers could untie his hands so he could urinate, and one soldier accompanied him. He fought the soldier and managed to escape, and fled from one village to another. He returned to his village at night to rescue his wife and baby, and they fled to the India border. He said that since the torture, he has lost some of his memory.

7.5.14. Mr T, aged 36, village M, Falam Township, Chin State

On 5 November 2005, Burma Army soldiers from LIB 268 came to his village and accused him of supporting the insurgents, failing to support the SPDC and failing to inform the SPDC of insurgent groups entering the village. They arrested him and tortured him. More than 20 soldiers were present, and they selected seven to punch and kick him in turn. He fell to the ground several times, and the soldiers picked him up again and continued to kick and beat him. He fell unconscious once. The beating continued for two hours. Then a soldier pointed his gun at him and said “I’ll kill you if you do not report on the insurgents”. In fact the insurgents had not come to that village. He asked them to kill him instead of torturing him. The soldiers then took a big stick and beat him on the head. He was wounded in five places, including his ears, arms and legs.

The soldiers then took him to the army camp 15 km from his village, and handed him over to the police, accusing him of supporting insurgents. He was jailed for eight days. In prison, relatives came to bring him food twice a day, but the soldiers never gave him the

food. He was then sentenced to six months in jail in Falam. His aunt followed him to Falam and although she was not allowed to see him, he was allowed to receive the food she had delivered. After his release from prison he fled immediately to the India border. He continues to suffer from chronic back pain and is unable to work regularly due to the torture.

7.5.15. Pastor S, aged 46, from village O, Falam Township, Chin State

In March 1995, the authorities came to collect 50 kyat per person from his village, for the construction of a Buddhist temple. He refused to pay. The police and soldiers came three times to his home to order him to pay, but he said “I am a Christian. I am not going to give money to you – even if you kill me.” The soldiers replied: “We are army, we have orders, we can kill you.” The pastor told them: “You can kill me. What you are asking me to do is against my religious beliefs.” Eventually, the soldiers gave up and let him go.

Christians face constant restrictions and harassment. For example, permission to organise or attend Christian conferences is often delayed for a long time, or denied. An orphanage and bible school in the village continuously receive threats from the SPDC that they will be closed down. Soldiers regularly come to demand bribes, threatening to remove the licence if they do not pay. Permission to build churches is often denied – or the soldiers demand a bribe. “The SPDC’s policy is to abolish Christianity in Burma, by using different tactics,” he said.

Soldiers regularly loot and steal chickens and other food and livestock. “They do not respect the villagers and their right to protect their belongings,” he said. “In other countries people see the army as protecting the country. In Burma, when we see the army we think they will arrest us, torture us, beat us.”

7.5.16. Ms. P, aged 23, village P, Falam Township, Chin State

In March 2003, she fled to the India-Burma border because Captain Kyi Soe Linn from the nearby Burma Army camp tried to marry her and she refused. She had just completed high school and returned to her village. The Captain noticed her as she was very attractive and could speak Burmese. He came to her house and told her father that he wanted to marry her. “I told him I was still studying, and did not want to marry soldiers who torture people.” The Captain was very angry, and used insulting words against her and her father. A few days later soldiers came to her family’s farm and took her and her father away. “If you don’t allow me to marry her, your whole family will suffer,” he told them. The next day she escaped and hid in the cemetery for the whole day, waiting for her father to send a message. Ten soldiers stayed in her home. Her father eventually sent a message to tell her to run to another village. While waiting in that village, she received another message from her father telling her to flee Chin State if she did not want to marry the Captain. Her father said: “Even if they arrest me, it is ok.” She decided to go back to the village and marry the Captain, and so she sent a message to her father that she was coming back. She met her father in another village, and he told her to run away. After she had escaped, the soldiers forced her father to spend two days helping them look for her. They did not torture him, however. She said: “I have lost my education. I wanted to be an educated person but now I cannot. I am illegal in Mizoram. I do not have a permanent job. I am very frustrated and angry at the SPDC.”

7.5.17. Mrs K, aged 47, village Q, Paletwah Township, Chin State

In June 2006, the CNA was collecting contributions from villagers. The authorities knew that the CNA were in the area, and so they ordered her husband to attend a meeting in another village. He brought chickens and food to the meeting, but when he arrived he was arrested. He was imprisoned in Matupi army camp. She does not know what has happened to him, but other people have told her that he has been killed. Later, soldiers came to her house and asked her where she kept guns, weapons and bombs for the CNA. Each time they came, they killed and looted pigs and chickens. On one occasion, soldiers abducted her 24 year-old son and put him in prison, but he subsequently escaped. In July 2007, she decided to flee her village, having realised that her husband had been killed and that the SPDC would probably try to kill her son and daughter too. She arrived on the India-Burma border in August.

She said: “We need safety. We need a safe place to stay. In Mizoram we have nothing. We don’t speak Mizo. Everything is owned by the Mizos. We don’t feel at home here. Work is difficult to find. In Burma, the soldiers do not have mercy on civilians. They are not like human beings. The regime is very selfish. If the Generals have enough food to eat, they do not care about others who have nothing.”

7.5.18. Mr. N, from village R, Matupi Township, Chin State

In June 2006, CNA soldiers went to the area to collect contributions from villagers. The SPDC arrested him and took Mr N to prison in Matupi town. He spent one night in prison. One of the soldiers was a friend of his, and he warned him that the soldiers were discussing whether to kill him. However, the next day they did not kill him, and instead an army officer asked him to join the Burma Army as a soldier. He was told if he did not agree, he would be imprisoned for seven years. He agreed to join and was treated well. He was sent to Matupi army camp for three weeks, and then transferred to Sagaing for two weeks for training, and then to another camp for another two weeks. On 1 August 2006, he was sent to Mandalay to begin ‘heavy’ training, and he said the conditions were very difficult. If someone was sick, and requested medical treatment, they were beaten and mocked. On one occasion, he was sick and was stripped, punched and beaten three times. The soldiers abused the Chin verbally, calling them “smelly Chin”, and hit him so hard that his ears bled and he lost some hearing.

On 1 December 2006, he completed military training and was sent to the China-Burma border for further training with LIB 364. In Kachin State, he was forced to do labour, clearing 300m by 18m of land per day, using machetes, in order to plant rubber trees and castor oil trees for the regime. The land had been confiscated from the local people.

On 23 January, 2007 he was scheduled to go to Karen State. Friends warned him they would be forced to fight Karen rebels and probably die, and so they defected and hid in the township. They travelled for three days and nights in the jungle before travelling to Sagaing Division by boat, and then escaping into a Chin township. Chin friends helped him by providing a jeep to Matupi, but on his way to his village he realized that the military already knew about his escape and would be looking for him. He therefore abandoned the jeep and walked through the jungle. He wanted to see his family, so he waited until it was dark and then met his wife in another village. She had received an arrest warrant from the authorities, and told him to run away. He agreed, and went first to Rangoon and then Arakan State, before reaching India.

He confirmed that the SPDC recruits child soldiers. He saw three child soldiers, aged 14, 15 and 16, although they had been registered as 18 (the official age for enrolment) by the SPDC. The child soldiers were given the same training as the adults, and were trained to shoot. They often showed how afraid they were by shaking and crying. He asked the boys why they were in the army at such a young age, and they simply said: “Oh, many reasons”. Children are taken from bus stops and street corners, but in some cases battalions pay parents for their children.

Morale in the Burma Army is low. “Ordinary soldiers are not satisfied,” he said. They cannot feed the soldiers with good food. They only get one piece of beef per meal. How can we resist a US invasion?” Conditions were poor – more than 250 soldiers lived in one room, and were given 15 minutes for a bath in the morning and 15 minutes for the toilet per day. The local commander however was always trying to instil in the troops not to be afraid of the US or other potential “enemies”. He regularly boasted that “the Burma Army has every kind of weapon, including nuclear weapons, and does not need to be afraid of anyone.”

He confirmed that he had heard of a policy encouraging soldiers to marry Chin women, and offering them promotion if they did so. Families were offered money and exemption from forced labour if they gave their Chin girls to be married to the Burma Army troops.

8. Humanitarian aid

Several Chin organisations work courageously to provide humanitarian assistance and development to the Chin people in extremely difficult conditions. The Women’s League of Chinland, for example, has a women’s empowerment programme. The Chin National Front (CNF)’s Public Affairs Council runs a number of projects providing vital, life-saving health and educational support to villagers in Chin State. For example:

- The Chin Backpack Health Worker Teams bravely travel within Chin State to provide basic medical assistance to villagers. There are currently 10 teams and 33 members, with two or three people in each team. One team can provide assistance to 2,000 people. Each team has a budget of 50,000 Rupees (\$1,254) for six months. At least 80 per cent of this budget is spent on medicines, leaving very little for training and stipends.
- A community-based healthcare programme with two clinics on the India border.
- A model village programme to encourage community development and provide basic agricultural assistance.
- The Chin Relief and Development Committee provides community development assistance, including micro-credit schemes for pig breeding and a “rice bank”. This initiative currently covers 60 villages in four townships. There are altogether nine townships in Chin State.
- An educational programme, providing stationary, writing instruments and teachers’ salaries for schools, and a nursery school on the border, and support for orphans’ education.

The House of Commons International Development Select Committee conducted an inquiry into the UK Department for International Development (DFID)’s aid

policies for Burma this year. Among the recommendations in the report, *DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border*, published in July, was Paragraph 76: “The Department should also look at the options for starting to fund assistance over the Indian border. Support to the Chin backpack health worker programme, operating over the Indian border, would be one step towards assisting the many IDPs facing dire poverty in Chin state.”⁵ CSW hopes that DFID will accept this recommendation and explore the possibility of providing assistance to the Chin people.

9. Chin Refugees in India

Chin refugees in India live in dire conditions. “We are suffering day by day, and the situation is getting worse,” one refugee told the delegation. There are no refugee camps, so Chin who flee into India have to rent homes and find work, but it is extremely difficult. The delegation visited two refugee homes close to the India-Burma border, and met refugees in New Delhi. One family living close to the India-Burma border has been unable to pay their rent for the past three months. Another family was unable to send their son to school, because he is severely short-sighted and they are unable to afford spectacles. In both cases the delegation was able to provide some financial assistance to them.

In New Delhi, there are an estimated 1,800 Burmese refugees, including Chin. Approximately 1,500 have been recognised by UNHCR. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no legal provisions for refugees. Those who are able to work in New Delhi are unable to earn more than 1500 Rupees (\$37) per month. Many parents cannot afford to send their children to school, because school fees cost 3,100 Rupees (\$80) per year for high school and 2,500 Rupees (\$60) per year for primary school. In 2003, UNHCR cut off refugee assistance.

Some NGOs provide assistance for health and education, but they are only able to meet a small proportion of the need. The Burma Charity Fund in New Delhi, for example, has a budget of £150 per month, and is able to assist 10-20 people with hospital fees, which cost 200-500 Rupees (\$5-7) per person. Very few NGOs visit or provide assistance to refugees in Mizoram or other border states.

In previous years, Chin refugees in Mizoram have suffered extreme discrimination, harassment, eviction and deportation at the hands of the Young Mizo Association (YMA)⁶, an influential civil society organisation. Elections for the Mizoram Assembly are due in 2008, and refugees fear there will be a new crackdown involving violence, evictions and deportation, as occurred during the previous elections.

The UNHCR began a resettlement programme for Chin refugees in 2005, to countries such as the USA and Australia, but according to Chin refugees, only those who have been in New Delhi for more than 18 months are eligible.

⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmintdev.htm>

⁶ See CSW Report, Visit to the Chin and Kachin in India, April 2004

10. India's Policy on Burma

The Government of India is currently pursuing a policy of economic investment, military co-operation and uncritical engagement with the SPDC, due to its concerns about balancing China's influence, combating insurgents within its own borders and developing its "Look East" economic policy. This includes significant trade and investment, and the provision and sale of arms and military training and co-operation.

Current Indian policy is a complete reversal of its support for the pro-democracy movement in Burma in 1988. Following the massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in 1988, India was the first country to criticise Burma's military regime. The Indian Embassy actively supported pro-democracy activists, many of whom subsequently fled to India. Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded India's Jawaharlal Nehru Award, and India openly supported democracy groups and adopted a policy of "complete disengagement" from the military regime from 1988-1990. However, this policy was reviewed during the 1990s and ultimately completely reversed. India has failed to condemn human rights violations in Burma in recent years, and refuses to be openly critical of the regime. India has donated millions of dollars worth of military equipment, including attack helicopters, naval surveillance aircraft, tanks and artillery pieces, to the SPDC as part of an aid package agreed in 2006⁷. According to a report by a group of NGOs including Amnesty International and Saferworld, India proposes to provide the SPDC with Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) containing components manufactured by EU-based companies, undermining the EU arms embargo⁸.

On 14 September 2007, the Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee refused once again to criticise the SPDC, saying that India would not "export ideologies" and that it was for the people of Burma "to decide what kind of government they want". He added: "The cardinal principle of our foreign policy is non-interference in the domestic affairs of any country."⁹

⁷ See *Burma-India Relations: A betrayal of democracy and human rights*, Burma Campaign UK, March 2007 – http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/reports/India_Briefing.pdf

⁸ See *Indian helicopters for Myanmar: making a mockery of the EU arms embargo?*, Amnesty International and Saferworld, July 2007 – <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/pm/weblog.php?id=P258>

⁹ *Indian Foreign Minister grilled on Myanmar*, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 14 September

II. Conclusions and Recommendations

The political, economic, humanitarian and human rights situation in Burma, and specifically in Chin State, remains extremely grave. The litany of human rights violations, including widespread and systematic use of forced labour, rape, torture, extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention, religious persecution, forcible conscription of child soldiers and destruction of villages, crops and livestock amount to crimes against humanity. We believe that the policies of the SPDC in Chin State amount to a form of cultural genocide. These include ordering and incentivising Burman soldiers to marry Chin women and selling crude industrial alcohol, causing severe health and social problems, designed to dilute and destroy Chin ethnicity and culture.

In view of the continuing human rights violations throughout Burma, including Chin State, and in response to the recent brutal crackdown on peaceful protestors, we urge the international community to take action to bring an end to the SPDC's brutal oppression of the people of Burma. While we welcome the recent discussions at the United Nations Security Council and statements from the US President and First Lady, the British Prime Minister and other world leaders, we urge the international community, and particularly members of the UN Security Council:

1. To propose a binding resolution at the United Nations Security Council, setting out identifiable objectives for improvements in human rights in Burma, specifying specific timescales by which the SPDC should be required to fulfil each objective, and listing specific measures to be imposed if the terms are not met;
2. To put pressure on the SPDC to disband completely the proxy civilian militia organisations such as the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) and the "Swan-Ah-Shin" which it has used to crackdown on recent protests;
3. To put pressure on the SPDC to desist from violent suppression of protests, whether by overt military or covert civilian tactics.

Furthermore, welcoming the recent statements by the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary David Miliband, CSW urges the United Kingdom:

4. To lead efforts to secure a resolution at the UN Security Council as detailed above;
5. To lead efforts within the European Union to strengthen the Common Position;
6. To strongly urge the Governments of India, China and ASEAN to use their influence with the SPDC to bring an end to the gross violation of human rights;
7. To implement the recommendations of the recent House of Commons International Development Committee report, including quadrupling British aid to Burma, providing funding for pro-democracy projects, cross-border aid to internally displaced people in eastern Burma, and cross-border aid on the India-Burma border to the Chin people.

CSW calls on the European Union:

8. To officially and collectively support a resolution at the UN Security Council;
9. To strengthen the EU Common Position on Burma;
10. To strongly urge the Governments of India, China and ASEAN to use their influence with the SPDC to bring an end to the gross violation of human rights;

CSW urges the Government of India:

11. To immediately cease providing arms and military training to the SPDC until there is a significant improvement in respect for human rights in Burma, and should reconsider its economic investments in Burma;
12. To adopt a more robust position and use their influence with the SPDC to call for an end to the systematic gross violations of human rights, and for tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, the National League for Democracy and the ethnic nationalities;
13. To provide better protection for refugees from Burma within its borders;

CSW calls on the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN):

14. To adopt a more robust position and use their influence with the SPDC to call for an end to the systematic gross violations of human rights, and for tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, the National League for Democracy and the ethnic nationalities;
15. To support initiatives at the UN Security Council to encourage meaningful tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, the National League for Democracy and the ethnic nationalities.