



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/4/NGO/25
6 March 2007

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Fourth session
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251
OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”**

**Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-
governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 February 2007]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Myanmar/Burma: Brutal repression of ethnic minorities

The military junta of Myanmar is brutally repressing its ethnic and religious minorities. In 2006, about 82.000 people belonging to ethnic minorities had to flee from their homes in eastern Myanmar. Since 1996 more than 3.000 villages have been either destroyed or abandoned. It is estimated that one million people have been internally displaced since then, facing severe human rights violations like rape, forced labor and torture.

Aid agencies claim that 200.000 Karen people have been driven away from their homes. A further 120.000 refugees from Myanmar, who are mostly Karen and Shan, live in camps in Thailand. There have been many attacks on villages across the Karen state since September 2005. An estimated 27.000 Karen have fled since the offensive began. In the first half of 2006 alone, about 5.000 Karen villagers are known to have been taken as forced laborers. Especially Karen women suffer from systematic rape and other sexual violence, forced labor, murder, torture and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The numbers of Karen people fleeing over the border to Thailand have been increasing.

The Muslim Rohingya, another ethnic minority in Myanmar, are strongly suppressed, too. They suffer from arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, forced eviction, destruction of their homes, restrictions on marriages or restrictions on their access to food. About 20.000 Rohingya live in two border refugee camps in Thailand which is under the protection of the UNHCR. Another 100.000 are living clandestinely in Bangladesh. The Rohingya's three townships in Myanmar's northern Arakan state (Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung) officially don't even exist.

The Karen, Shan and Rohingya are just three of the many ethnic groups affected by Myanmar's attempts to "pacify" its minorities. The country's policy of "Divide and Rule" systematically pushes the minorities away and represses them. The government holds temporary alliances with some of the minority groups just to suppress the other ones even more.

Suppression of Christians and Muslims, imprisonment of Buddhist monks

There is no religious freedom in Myanmar. In January 2007, a Christian organization published a report on the suppression of Christians in Myanmar, revealing a confidential document of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The document's title is telling: "Programme to destroy the Christian religion in Burma". It contains a detailed plan on how to drive away Christians. The document already starts with the direct statement: "There shall be no home where the Christian religion is practiced."

Besides the persecution of Christians, there have been repeated reports on the repression of Muslims in Buddhist Myanmar. There are even reports on the imprisonment of Buddhist monks.

International criticism is decreasing

A resolution of the UN Security Council brought by the US and Britain calling on Myanmar's military junta to free the estimated 1.100 political prisoners, to end sexual violence by the military, and to speed up a democratic reform failed in January 2007 due to

the veto of China and Russia. Myanmar is more and more protected because of the interests of other states: Russia is seeking greater influence in the region, China and India are keen on Myanmar's vast natural resources. International criticism of the country's systematic human rights violations is, thus, decreasing dramatically.

Any meaningful attempts to democratize Myanmar have been stabbed. The ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) shows absolutely no commitment in opening a broad debate among the civil society, the ethnic nationalities, and all political forces about the perspectives of peace and democracy. The debate on a new constitution lacks credibility as long as Myanmar's most important politicians of oppositional parties are still held in prison.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to:

- condemn violations of human rights in Myanmar,
- urge Myanmar to stop the repression of ethnic and religious minorities,
- pressure Myanmar to free political prisoners, to end sexual violence by the military, and to speed up democratic reforms,
- call on the international community to pressure Myanmar to stick to human rights standards and international law.
