

Life Under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State

Physicians for Human Rights 11 January 2011 Executive Summary Despite the November 2010 electoral exercise in Burma (also known as Myanmar), the military

junta still controls all branches of government and leverages its power to suppress ethnic nationalities, who represent approximately 40% of the population occupying 55% of the land area of this Southeast Asian country. Since 1996, over 3,600 villages in Eastern Burma are estimated to have been destroyed, forcibly relocated, or abandoned, comparable in scale to the conflict in Sudan's Darfur, forcing over 500,000 people from their homes. Forced relocation is often accompanied by widespread abuses against ethnic civilians, including confiscation of land and property, destruction of food supplies, arbitrary taxation, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture, and extrajudicial execution. Several reports have been published on the situation in Eastern Burma, highlighting the widespread and systematic nature of such human rights violations, and underlining the need for an independent, impartial, international investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

By contrast, comparatively little has been written about the situation in Western Burma. Chin State, an isolated, mountainous region in Western Burma, has poor health outcomes and lacks basic infrastructure. There is no network of roads connecting the nine major townships of Chin State; the few roads that exist are unpaved and often impassible in the rainy season. Access to Chin State is problematic from the bordering northeast Indian States of Mizoram and Manipur and the Chittagong Hill Tracts area of Bangladesh, as those areas are designated restricted zones, limiting the possibilities for cross-border humanitarian assistance to Chin State.

While the people of Chin State have not suffered the protracted 60-year conflict of Eastern Burma, rapid militarization in Chin State since 1988 has resulted in widespread human rights violations.

Since 1988, estimates place more than 75,000 displaced Chin in India, and another 50,000 in Malaysia. Decades of neglect and widespread abuses have debilitated the Chin who remain in Chin State and rendered them highly food insecure and vulnerable to the current famine.

Qualitative research has shed light on the atrocities committed by successive military regimes over the past five decades. While some quantitative research has been carried out in Eastern

Burma

, this research represents the first quantitative study on Western Burma to assess the scale and

scope of alleged crimes against humanity, defined as the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. These crimes include murder, torture, rape, group persecution, and other inhumane acts, which are committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.

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