

Dear friend,

I wanted to write to you about my first hand experiences of the brutal regime in Burma. It's often said that Christmas is a time for children and what I saw just a few weeks ago is not something you'd choose to read about at this time of year, or at any other time. But as you are someone who does not turn their backs on the people in Burma, I'm sure that you will want to know.

Eastern Burma is turning into the Darfur for the next decade and we need your support with a donation of £15 today to help prevent this from happening.

You can donate here:

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/donate>

I was on the Thai/Burma border to show a delegation of UK trade unionists the situation and to run some training sessions with local groups & other activists. There I also spoke to a woman, a mother, who has managed to cross the border to Thailand with her two young children and escape slavery.

Mublaw is 40 years old and is from a village in Pa an district in Eastern Burma. It was a small village with less than 40 houses and around 200 people in total. Armed supporters of the dictatorship in Burma came to their village in June this year. All the villagers were forced to go with them to carry their food and military equipment. For four nights, Mublaw was made to carry three rocket launchers on her back, whilst clutching her 6 month old baby and dragging her 3 year old toddler as they walked.

Amongst the party, children as young as nine years old were forced to carry heavy equipment to prevent them from being able to escape. Mublaw was given two small packs of low quality rice each day, which she flavoured with a little chilli powder. This was the only nutrition Mublaw and the two children received.

The soldiers forbade the children to cry. So Mublaw had to cover her baby's mouth at all times. They were also not allowed to stop, so children had to simply wet themselves as they walked. The villagers were not given any water. They had to wait for it to rain and ask permission to drink the rain as they moved.

The former villagers, who are now over the border in Thailand, are just surviving. Some of them risked their lives going back to their families in Burma.

This story of Mublaw, her children and the villagers is just part of the human rights abuses in Eastern Burma today. As the Burmese regime has increased their militarization in the last year, it has meant that at least 75,000 people became refugees and more than half a million were internally displaced in Eastern Burma.

But Mublaw and the others have not suffered the most. An alliance of 12 aid organisations stated that:

"crimes against humanity are taking place comparable to the situation in Darfur"

A report commissioned from Harvard Law School stated:

"Sforced displacement of over 3,000 villages in eastern Burma, and widespread and systematic sexual violence, torture, and summary execution of innocent civilians. YetS the UN Security Council has not moved to investigate potential crimes against humanity or war crimes in Burma, as it has in other areas of the world, including Darfur and Rwanda."

In January 2010, the Burma Campaign UK will step up this campaign. We will be calling for more aid to deal with the immediate human rights abuses. And we will be lobbying for an investigation into crimes against humanity in Burma.

We will be lobbying the UK government to support this investigation. As yet they have not admitted that these crimes against humanity are happening. We need the UK government to acknowledge this and then to call for a UN Commission of Inquiry.

And we need your support with a donation of £15 today to help us achieve this key campaign goal.

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The Burma Campaign has had significant success in 2009. We played a key role in the campaign for a global arms embargo against Burma. Together with our partners across the world we have begun to build a global consensus for a UN arms embargo against Burma, in order to help overcome expected opposition at the Security Council by Russia and China. We have 32 countries supporting the embargo, recently including the first Asian country. This has been possible due to the commitment of supporters like you.

Your support of the Burma Campaign UK does turn into positive action for the people of Burma. That's why we need you to donate £15 today so that the innocent victims in Burma - people like Mublaw, her baby and her young child - don't face abuse by the Burmese dictatorship for years ahead.

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/donate>

Many thanks for your support.

Mark Farmaner  
The Burma Campaign UK

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