

# No Human Value

October, 2001

Man is a living animal. Man has the ability to divine what is right and wrong. Furthermore he can accomplish as his goal.

The overwhelming majority of people all over the world would agree the above sentence. Therefore, there was proclaimed, "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has been approved by all members of the United Nations. There is one nation that, As soon as it regained its independence, signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, its people have continued to be abused since that time. That country is Burma. It is it is regrettable that the international community did not take this matter seriously from the beginning. Burma has produced a former Secretary General of United Nation, who tried to stop the Vietnam War, and Nobel Peace Prize winner who is currently under house arrest.

Although Burma is a member of the United Nation, the junta doesn't respect the principle which all members must follow. Moreover its people are denied their basic human rights. Torture, rape and other human rights violations are very common through out Burma. The worst thing is the persecution of political activists who go against the junta. There are 36 prisons in Burma and of them, 20 hold political prisoners of all ages, including intellectuals. Some have been given the death penalty. Some, extremely long prison terms. We can point out a difference between Burma and international civilized societies. The military government has created a court which is totally contrary to article 10 of Universal Declaration which says " Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him". The courts in Burma are under the control of Military Intelligence and do their bidding. Some people are sentenced in absentia.

You can imagine that how bad it is for political prisoners when even ordinary citizen have no basic human rights. Prisons in Burma are horrible, like hell and one cannot find and sympathy and empathy there. As soon as you are thrown behind bar, your human dignity is taken away. Moreover there is inadequate health care, inedible food and scarce communication with your family. Defying those brutalities, political prisoners are able to hang on because of their beliefs. However, no matter how strong your spirit, you may still die because of the cruelty of Burmese prisons.

All human value is demolished when one is placed in prison. A political activist is a person who destroys the country. That ideology is passed on from the junta to the prison authorities and common criminal prisoners alike. Political prisoners may be extended arbitrarily. Before political prisoners are sent to prison, they undergo various types of torture by military intelligence. Some are killed in the interrogation center. Although some make it though the interrogations, they suffer from the psychological effects of torture, including electric shocks. As a result, some prisoners lose touch with reality. As innocent prisoners, who have not broken any law, they spend their days in prison being bullied, unable to speak out or demand their rights, Therefore, we dare say that their daily lives are full of physical and mental torture. You can imagine how much worse it is for those who are sentenced to death or given sentences of 35 or 45 years.

We would like to give you an example of how political prisoners have lost their human rights and the junta has no sympathy for them. It is an example of a political prisoner who died under this unjust system. What happen to Ko Sithu deeply affected us. He died on July 12 of this year in Tharawaddy prison. When you hear about this tragedy, it becomes clear how difficult the situation is for political prisoners. Moreover, you can see how difficult the situation is for all Burmese people.

When Sithu, also known as Ye Naing, died in prison, he was 35, living in San Chaung Township in Rangoon Division, In the 1988 uprising in Burma, he was studying at Rangoon University (Kyeemyindine Campus), majoring in Zoology, He belonged to Burmese Student Democratic Organization and was a central organizing member during the uprising. he was detained in May 1991 and was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment with hard labor by Martial Court in December 1991. Before he was sentence, he was detained for 7 months in Insein prison without trial. When you read this, you may know that our people have no rights or security under the law. All political prisoners in Burma are arrested when MI is dissatisfied with their actions, not according to the law. All are denied Article 7 of Universal Declaration which says " No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile".

When a political activist is told to go with MI, just for a while, it means that he or she will be investigated, questioned for a while, it means that he or she will be investigated, questioned for hours, or even worse, given a long prison sentence. Sometimes, the current ruling junta misuses the law when they crack down on political activists. If they cannot arrest the right person, they arrest someone else and sentence them to long imprisonment, That is really very wicked, It is sure that humanity cannot be proud that such a characteristic exists in the world.

Sithu, a thin man behaved like a gentleman and was an active participant in the pro-democracy movement, therefore, he was refused release in March 1999. Although his sentence had finished according to prison rules, Interior Minister and Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, Col. Tin Hlaing remarked that, " (Sithu is) still strong-minded an opposite political thinking to the junta." That remarked barred him from freedom. It was a brutal deed to an innocent activist. While staying away from family members and friends for years, he survived because of his strong spirit. He was not released because of this strong spirit. Military intelligence sees everyone with a strong will as guilty and Sithu was willing to give up everything for his beliefs, even if it meant staying in prison.

Tharawaddy prison is located in a malaria area and many prisoners got the virus. In February 1999, Sithu was put in the prison hospital as was suffering from malaria. Later, he got another fever, Typhoid. The health care system in prison is in name only and the hospital outside the prison is very poor. So, Sithu had to buy the medicine he needed. He tried very hard

to get permission to buy medicine and contact his family. The malaria fever continued to plague him even though he got medical treatment for months.

His health condition deteriorated and he again entered the prison hospital on November 15, 2000. His body temperature never went under 100-102 degrees F. After he requested it many times, he got a medical check-up outside the prison. After he had an ultra sound, urine and blood tests, the prison doctor remarked that Sithu had an "unknown fever". Sithu had already finished his prison sentence at that time.

After one month in the hospital, he was sent back to prison on January 10, 2001. Even in that condition, he was still detained. the behavior of military government cannot be understood. Neglecting that innocent prisoner was completely horrible. The people who grew up in a free society wouldn't be able to believe it. The military authorities are like butchers and have behaved cruelly for years.

Sithu was given medicine for tuberculosis for 6 months after he was sent back to prison by order of the prison doctor. It was unusual treatment. Later, he reportedly got HIV. No one suspected he had HIV, even though in Burmese prisons one needle is used on many prisoners and they contract communicable diseases. Many prisoners die in prison for this reason.

On June 20, during rainy season, Sithu got a cold and his health deteriorated. When he contacted the prison doctor, he got only aspirin but no more medical treatment. Four days after, his temperature rose to 103 F and he had difficulty breathing. On June 27, his temperature rose to 107 F and he was not able to eat. He became more and more dehydrated and he could not take the pain anymore. By that time, the doctor gave him a small amount of treatment. However, he just remarked that the patient's breathing was not normal and the fever might be typhoid or malaria. He was not given oxygen or an I.V. On July 6, the district doctor and a specialist checked him and changed the method of treatment. The next day, he was moved to a cell in Tharawaddy district hospital. After five days, on July 12, Sithu passed away in that cell.

By giving his life, he showed how political prisoners have suffered in notorious prisons. His family and friends tried to put an obituary in the state-run newspaper on his death, however Military Intelligence had already informed the paper not to accept the obituary for Sithu. According to our knowledge, Sithu is one of 68 political prisoners who have died in prison since 1988.

If someone heard about his terrible story, he or she would think that the political Prisoners in Burma have been suffering terribly. However, his experience is not the worst one. Sometimes, it is difficult to judge who suffers more. It is a shadow of a country under military rule.

The people in our country expect that people the world over love truth and want to stand for truth. They want to believe that the world doesn't accept the authoritarianism at all. Moreover, they want to see vividly that the rest of the world hates and denounces their mistreatment. The world today is a smaller and smaller place because of technological improvement. Time will tell whether the world will accept human rights abuses or save the lives of many people.

**AAPP**  
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