

Forum on Minority Issues: Oral statement

Agenda Point 3: Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence against religious minorities

Thank you Madam Chair

I am Salai Val Thang, from the Chin ethnic minority and I am here on behalf of the CNF, the Chin National Front.

The Chin people are an ethnic and religious minority in Burma. 90% of the Chin people consider themselves Christians, whilst the majority of the Burmese people, including the government are Buddhist.

As a minority, discrimination and violence are the biggest problems that the Chin people are faced with in Burma. I have experienced this myself in my village. I will first list some violations that the Chin are faced with in Burma followed by recommendations.

- Destruction of religious symbols, artifacts and buildings. The crosses and church buildings of the Chin are being destroyed.
- Physical violence towards worshippers and religious leaders in Burma.
- Discriminatory practices towards the Chin, in some places we are unable to buy houses or land. •
- Disruption of Sunday church services.
- The obligation to ask for permission from the local government to celebrate religious holidays.

I would like to issue the following recommendations in order to safeguard the religious rights of the Chin:

- To respect the religious symbols, buildings and ceremonies of the Christian Chin people.
- To abolish discriminatory policies towards the Chin, in particular with regard to the celebration of religious holidays.
- To establish a representative body specifically designed to observe the development of religious rights of the Christian Chin.

Thank you for your attention.