

6th session of the Forum on Minority Issues

IV. Promotion and protection of the identity of religious minorities

Chin Human Rights Organization on Item IV

Thank you, Madame chair,

My name is (...), I am from the Chin Human Rights Organization, an NGO working on the promotion of human rights for the Chin people in Myanmar. As noted in draft recommendation, article 18, 19, 22, it is the responsibility of a states to fully comply with the article 18 of the UDHR and the declaration of religious freedom to take special measures for religious minorities and to adopt legislation to prohibit discrimination against religious minorities. Myanmar is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, almost 90 percent of people in my homeland (...) are Chin Christians, but Myanmar's 2008 Constitution notes the special position of Buddhism as the faith practice by the majority. While Christianity, Islam, Hinduism (...) In practice, Buddhism is treated as, de facto, the state religion. Myanmar's Ministry of Religious Affairs uses state resources to promote and propagate Buddhism. Actors from the Buddhism religious backgrounds are commission to build to renovate our homeland for religious infrastructure. Over the past two decades, the state's practices have given rise to a wide range of violations of freedom of religion, such as the destruction of (...) Christian crosses by state actors using the force labour of Chin Christians to build Buddhist infrastructure and force relocation for Buddhism infrastructure. Chin people continue to face intersectoral forms of discrimination on racism, ethnicity, religion, and language. One impact of such discrimination is extreme poverty, 73 percent of children live below the poverty line compared to the national average of 25 percent. Another impact is on the right to effective participation in public and economy life with very few Chin Christians holding senior positions in Chin state. We, therefore, (...) this forum to include our recommendation which are just all states to form independent and impartial commissions on religious freedom, to ensure that people of all religious backgrounds have the full enjoyment of their right of religious freedom, we also (...) this forum to call on the government of Myanmar to take concrete measures to fully comply with article 18 of the UDHR and to adopt legislation that prohibits discrimination against religious minorities, this includes lifting the restrictions on land ownership for non-Buddhists organisations for religious purposes and requirements to seek private permission for building or renovating religious infrastructure at all levels of government. The Ministry of Religious Affairs should be replaced with an independent and impartial commission on religious freedom and it is mandatory to include measures to address deep-rooted discrimination on the basis of religious identity.

Thank you for your attention.