popular by the Balkan War but because we have been suffering already for almost five decades. Among many, I would like to mention one method of ethnic cleansing in Chinland. For instance, the Government has re-drawn state boundaries since independence and as a result, they have excluded Klay-Kabaw and Naga hill and Asho areas which used to be homelands of the Chin people from Chin state. Moreover, they expelled the Chin people from their homes and replaced them with the Burman people and established Burman towns such as Saya San, Bandhula and Aung Za Ya. As you all know these names are the names of the Burman military forces.

The Chin people also suffer religious persecution. You might be aware that more than 80 percent of the Chin population is Christian. The military government is now saying that since Christianity comes from the West, it is imperialist and the person who is Christian is unpatriotic to Burma. So they do not allow us to establish new churches and even prohibit the Bible to be printed. Another military strategy to oppress the Chin people has been to send Chin orphans to Buddhist monasteries and force them to wear the yellow robe, which means they are forced to convert to become Buddhist monks.

I would also like to mention the refugee problem among the Chins. There are 40,000 Chin refugees both in Bangladesh and India. In February 1995, the Indian Government and Burmese military regime signed an agreement that included the forced repatriation of refugees. This agreement badly effected the Chin people in two different ways. The first effect is that the Indian government agreed to deport refugees from the India border, especially those seeking refuge in Mizoram state. Most of the refugees who were sent back to Burma have been imprisoned, tortured and killed. As well, the military junta is using many Chin people as forced labour to build highways and roads.

Unfortunately, neither the international community or organizations including UNHCR have provided assistance to our refugees. UNHCR can help only those refugees who are able to reach New Delhi.

Finally, I would like to mention the ceasefires between the ethnic forces and the military junta. We, the CNF, are always looking for a peaceful solutions to stop the civil war in Burma. Currently, the military junta has been approaching many ethnic nationalities have accepted their offer while others have not. We, the CNF have not accepted this offer because this type of ceasefire is in fact, a surrender which does not provide for any political dialogue or a solution to the civil war. However, the CNF is open to the idea of ceasefire negotiations without pre-conditions that allows real political dialogue in order to achieve a genuine federal Union. We believe that the best way to achieve this Federal Union is with tripartite dialogue with the Burman democratic forces, the ethnic nationalities and the military regime as agreed to by the Chin National Front with all other ethnic nationalities in the Mae Htaw Raw Hta agreement in 1997.

We strongly believe that the voice from the Chin struggle cannot be silenced. We shall achieve our goals together with all the democratic forces of Burma who have been fighting on the Burma-Thai border as well as those who are based overseas. Although there has been more and more repression and persecution by the junta in the western region of Burma, we, CNF, have been able to stand firm and move forward along with our aims and objectives.

We therefore hope that in this conference, the Canadian government and other Canadians will come to better understand our movement and support us with all available means. So, my dear friends, let us work hard for our movement which is not only for the freedom of our generation but also for the future generations of Burma.