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# *Overview of developments on border and political initiatives in western Burma*

Zing Cung

Vice-Chairman of Chin National Front

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to all of you for coming to this conference today. We are also grateful for having the opportunity to participate. It is so encouraging for us who are fighting for democracy, equality and justice in Burma. I would also like to express our gratitude especially to members of the Canadian Parliament who strongly support our democratic movement in Burma.

We know that your voice in the Canadian Parliament will make a big impact on the international community. So, through your parliament, please make a voice for the voiceless people of Burma who have been suffering for so long under the dictatorship rule. And I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to the Canadian Friends of Burma who organized this conference and made it possible.

Today, I am going to speak to you as a representative of the Chin delegates who attend this conference. My name is Zing Cung and I am vice-president of the Chin National Front (CNF). We, the Chin National Front are fighting on behalf of the Chin people for democracy, national equality and self-determination. I would like to mention the background history of the Chin people very briefly. Chinland is located in the adjoining area of Burma, India and Bangladesh. The whole population of the Chin people is 2.5 million. Until the British colonial period, Chinland was an independent country, ruled by our own tribal Chief. In 1896, after ten years of rule under King Thibaw, the British dethroned him and began occupying Chinland. It was the first time in our history that Chinland was occupied by outside forces.

Since we were an independent people before the colonial period, we had the right to gain back our independence from Britain. But instead of

demanding our independence on our own, we agreed to join the Union of Burma according to the Panglong Agreement. As you all know, the Panglong Agreement was signed on the principle of national equality. In other words, the people of various nationalities in Burma agreed to form the federal union which they believed would guarantee freedom, equality and self-determination.

But unfortunately, after Aung San, the father of the Union of Burma was assassinated, the leaders of Burma did not honour the Panglong Agreement and the right to self-determination for the ethnic nationalities and as a result, civil war

broke out soon after Burma gained its independence in 1948. In 1961, all the

non-Burman nationalities held a very important conference in Taungyi and agreed to amend the Union Constitution based on a federal system. Before it was able to happen in Parliament, Ne Win took over state power and suspended the Union Constitution in 1962. As you all know, the main reason for the military coup in 1962 was

to prevent the formation of a federal union of Burma. In 1974, General Ne Win

promulgated a new constitution based on a Unitary System in a society that was multiracial and plural. This Unitary Constitution was nothing but racist and chauvinistic.

Indeed, we the Chin people and other nationalities in Burma have been suffering from many kinds of suppression, exploitation and persecution under the racist, chauvinist regime of General Ne Win and the successive military governments.

Apart from the civil war that we have been fighting now for five decades, General Ne Win and his military government have been launching ethnic cleansing in many ways. I use the word "ethnic cleansing" not because the term has been made

***I use the word  
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not because the term  
has been made popular  
by the Balkan War but  
because we have been  
suffering already for  
almost five  
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