

Mon Affairs Union
Representative: Nai Bee Htaw Monzel

Mr. Chairman or Madame Chairperson

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in the Forum. I am representative from the Mon Affairs Union. The Mon Affairs Union is the largest Mon political and social organization in Mon State. It was founded by Mon organizations both inside and outside Burma in 2008. Our main objective is to restore self-determination rights for Mon people in Burma. Mon people is an ethnic group and live in lower Burma and central Thailand. They lost their sovereign kingdom, Hongsawatoe in 1757. Since then, they have never regained their self-determination rights.

Due to lack of self-determination rights, Mon people are barred from decision making processes on social, political and economic policies. Mon State has rich natural resources. Since the Mon do not have self-determination rights, the Mon people don't have rights to make decision on using these resources. Mon State has been ruled by Burmese military for many years. Burmese military government extracts these resources and sells to neighboring countries such as China and Thailand. For example, the government sold billions of dollars of natural gas from Mon areas to Thailand. Instead of investing the income earned from natural gas in Mon areas, the government bought billion dollars of arms from China and Russia to oppress Mon people.

Due to Burmese military occupation in Mon areas, livelihoods of Mon people economic life have also been destroyed. Since 1995, Burmese military presence in Mon areas was substantially increased. Before 1995, Burma Army had 10 battalions in Mon State. Now it has 30 battalions. As Burmese army increases in Mon areas so do human rights violation. Majority of the Mon are farmers. They farm for their living. However, over the past ten years thousands acres of farmland were confiscated by the Burmese army for constructing gas pipeline and military barracks. Due to the land confiscating, thousands of Mon became unemployed. They migrated to Thailand to seek employment. Therefore, lack of self-determination rights is major barriers for the Mon people to participate in economic, social and political decision making processes in Burma. Unless there is self-determination rights for the Mon, the Mon continues to suffer from human rights violation and economic hardships. Thousands of Mon continue to migrate to neighboring countries to escape from human rights violation and economic hardship.

Thank you