

History of Zomi Refugees

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The Zomi people are inhabited in the western part of Myanmar (Burma), the present day of Chin State - a mountainous landscape stretching along the present day Indo-Burma border- an area of circa 36000 square kilometers. The total population of the Zomi people inhabiting in Chin State is estimated an half of a million. Some of the Zomi people are lived in the lowland of Myanmar- Kalay-Kabaw Valley, including Yangon and Mandalay. The Zomi people have scattered in their surrounding areas, India and Bangladesh. The majority of the Zomi people are Christian but there are some other minority religion such as Buddhism, Islam and traditional beliefs. Among the Zomi people, it is estimated more than 90% of the population are Christian. Until Myanmar was an independent country from the British, the Zomi people were directly governed by the British government. In order to get independence from the British government, by virtue of equal status with other national states-Shan and Kachin, the Zomi people- had signed the agreement with Burmese people, which is known as Panglong agreement on 12 August 1947.



With the military overturned the state power from elected government in 1962, the agreement between the Burmese and the Zomi, Shan and Kachin was abrogated and the spirit to the Union has been legally ceased to exist.

On the raise of military power in Myanmar, ethnic minority has been suppressed in various ways. The ruling government which is then called Burmese Socialist Program Party had systematically controlled over our land and our people. Since then, the government have persecuted us in the following areas.

Ethnic Persecution: Even the Zomi people are minority in Myanmar, they have distinguished language, culture, literature and so on. As the military came into power, the Zomi people were not allowed to learn their own language and literature in school. Instead, the Burmese government forced the people to learn Burmese literature. Teaching ethnics Zomi literatures were abolished while the Burmese literature was taught in every school. The Zomi people were forbidden to celebrate their own cultural festival. They were instead to force participation into Burmese festival.

Religion Persecution: The majority of the Zomi people are Christian, roughly 90% of the population. The legalization of Buddhism as the State religion by the then ruling government, the Zomi people against the government' policy and seek to practices their religion and beliefs freely. The Zomi people overwhelmingly did not support the government, so the government began to execute their leaders or pastors, harass and intimidate the people with forced labor camps, rape and beatings. Many pastors were either killed and their bodies draped across the podiums of their churches to intimidate their congregations or they were sent off to labor camps, resulting many Zomi fled their homeland to seek a safe place.

Political Persecution: By adapting one party system in the country and oppressing any possible individual who criticizes the government, the junta arrested everyone and put them in jail. Just by listening Burmese radio that aired from outside the country such as BBC, VOA, you could be sentenced to minimum 3-7 years in jail. No one can read or subscribe books that published without censored by the government. The Zomi people were not allowed to enjoy their fundamental rights-freedom of expression. The Zomi people have no voice on their internal issue like education, healthcare or even employment.