

MUP TO HELP ELECTORATE IN MAWLAMYINE ENSURE THEY ARE ON VOTERS LIST

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မွန်ညီညွတ်ရေးပါတီ
ဝါ-နီ-ပြာကြယ်ဖြူနဲ့ ရွှေဟင်္သာ

October 7, 2020

HURFOM: The second announcement of the updated voter list was declared open for review from October 1 to 14, 2020. The Election Sub-commission office in Mawlamyine and the Mon Unity Party (MON) said they would both help voters in Mawlamyine constituencies to check that their names are on the list. [Read more on page3>>](#)

THE 71ST INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY STATEMENT BY HURFOM



SPECIAL VOTING PROVISIONS ANNOUNCED FOR C-19 PATIENTS



Photo: DVB
November 5, 2020

HURFOM: The Mawlamyine District Election Sub-commission, has announced that Covid-19 patients, and those in quarantine centers in Mon State must comply with specific measures in order to participate in the upcoming general election.

This group of voters will not be allowed to touch their ballot. Health staff will put a stamp on their ballots in accordance with their choice. Poll station staff will show the voter their stamped ballot, so they can verify their choice, and then staff will close the ballot envelope. Physical distancing will be maintained at all times between the voter and staff.

"According to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sport (MOHS), the staff in this role must sterilize the envelopes and put them in a separate box," said an official from the Mawlamyine District Election Sub-commission. [Read more on page3>>](#)

News

UPDATED VOTER LIST NOW INCLUDES 2,000 YE CHAUNG PHYA VOTERS



October 4, 2020

HURFOM: On October 1, 2020 an updated voters list was released. This time, more than 2,000 voters were added to the original list.

“This time, people from Ye Chaung Phya have been included in the list. There were 2,232 people, but more than 500 people were still left out because there were errors in their date of birth and other facts. We’ll re-apply with Form #3,” said Nai Loon who helped the local villagers secure their voting rights.

The updated voters list now includes nine villages in Ye Chaung Phya region near Ye Township in Mon State. The area is under the control of the New Mon State Party (NMSP).

The original voters list was released on July 25th, but excluded people from

Ye Chaung Phya. Ye Youth Network then visited the area and collected names to be added to the voter list before the end of August. The Network reported their list of names to the Mawlamyine District Election Sub-commission, which resulted in more than 2,000 Ye Chaung Phya residents being included in the updated voter list.

“Ye Chaung Phya has nine villages and 2,232 eligible voters. Chell Tike village has 193 voters, and they have to cast their votes at Kyaung Yaw village (controlled by the government). The remaining eight villages have 1,939 voters and they have to vote in Kyone Long village (also controlled by the government). It’s difficult for them to travel to the polling stations, and there will be more than 2,500 voters in a polling station so we’ve

requested (the Election Sub-commission) to establish another polling station,” said Nai Loon.

The Ye community has also requested the Election Sub-commission establish another polling station at Pha Lan Chaung Wa village, in the middle of the Ye Chaung Phya region.

Democracy activists note that, in addition to such challenges to enumerate (register) eligible voters, restrictions related to COVID-19 may keep Ye Chaung Phya voters from appearing at the polling stations.

The increase in COVID-19 infections in Mon State, has led the NMSP to announce a ban on election campaign activities, and they imposed movement restrictions in their controlled area as of September 11.

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- **HURFOM ACTIVITIES:** HURFOM Marks the 72nd International Human Rights Day
- **News:** Improper voting ballot stamps found in Paung Township

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"We'll help those who have difficulties, to check that they are on the voter lists, — elderly people, and those who haven't checked the list yet. We are providing this support in order to help every eligible voter be able to cast their votes," said Nai Lawi Marn Ong, who is assisting the effort.

Those requesting help must contact 09 758 387 691 and provide their names,

National Registration Card (NRC) number, fathers' names, and their current address. The service is available from 9 am to 4 pm and the MUP will provide assistance from October 6 to 14, 2020.

"The support is for those who live in Mawlamyine constituencies #1 and #2. We'll help every one cast their votes, no matter what party they wish to support" explained Nai Lawi Marn Ong.

On the first day of operation, the team received requests for help from 5 people.

According to the Mon State Election Sub-commission, when the first voter list was released on July 25, 11,620 people notified the Sub-Commission of incorrect information, and more than 25,000 people complained their names were not on the voter list.

SPECIAL VOTING PROVISIONS ANNOUNCED FOR C-19 PATIENTS

News from page no.1



Photo: DVB

The Township Election Sub-commissions will collect the separated boxes and hand them over to village/ward Election Sub-commissions. Then, the ballots will be transferred into the (regular) boxes in public. Those boxes

will be sterilized and no person (outside of the election process) is allowed to handle them.

"Those who have to stay at quarantine centers, and are out of their constituencies will be listed

separately. We'll inform their Township Election Sub-commissions in advance (that they cast their votes at the quarantine centers). They must apply for advance voting with Form #15," said the official.

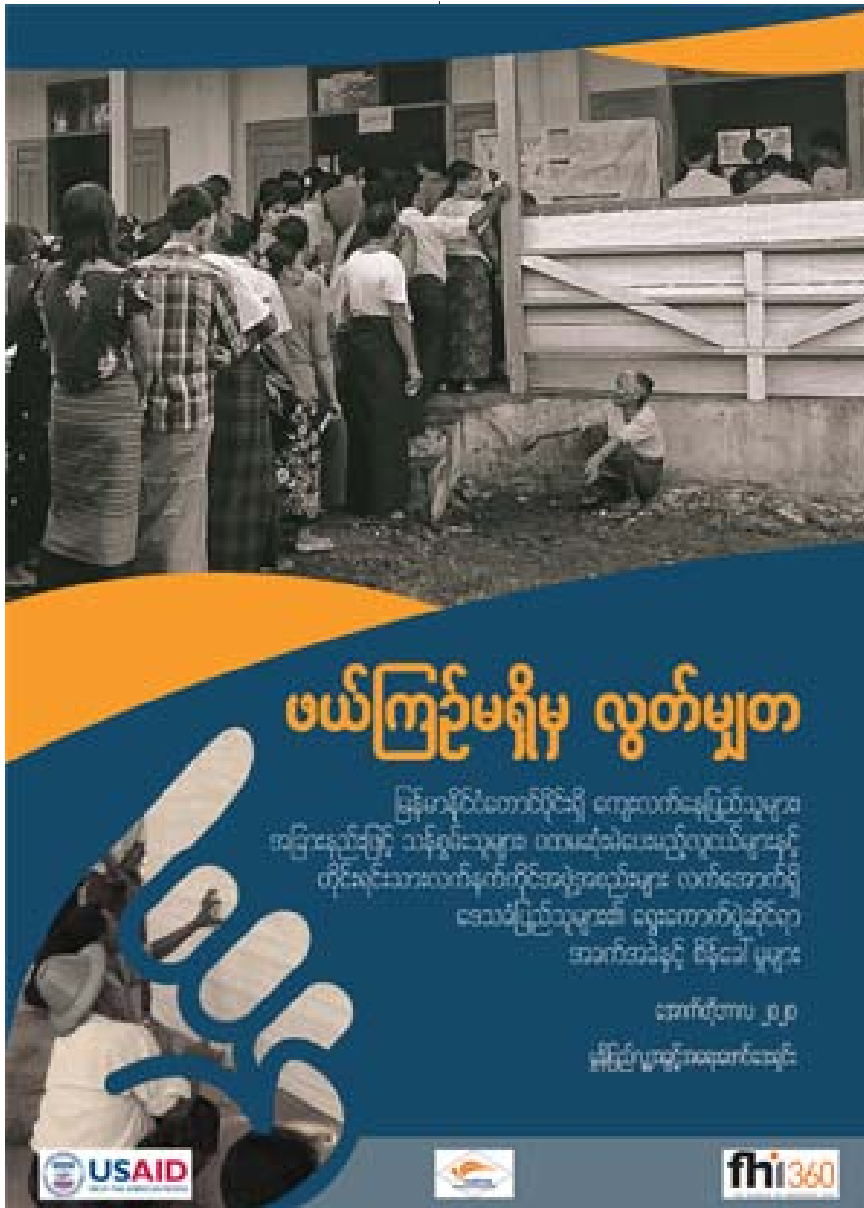
On October 24, the Union Election Commission (UEC) announced that patients in hospitals, those who are in police custody, those who are outside of their constituencies, elderly persons who are 60 and above, and those who are in quarantine centers can cast advance votes from October 25 to November 5, 2020.

Advance ballots cast from quarantine centers were collected on October 29.

In Mon State, as of November 3, there were 687 Covid-19 cases documented. 82 persons remain hospitalized, and 589 cases are deemed resolved. There have been 10 deaths attributed to Covid.

News

HURFOM RELEASES REPORT ON ELECTORAL CHALLENGES FACING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES



COVID-19. We had some delays, and had to cancel 2 workshops due to travel restrictions and social distancing policies. We've finished this report with the contribution from the local communities," said Nai Bnyair Ogvon, the Project Coordinator.

The report highlights electoral challenges facing rural populations, especially women, the elderly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), first time voters, persons with disabilities, as well as people under the control of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs).

According to the report, the most marginalized populations are persons with disabilities and those living under the control of EAOs. These communities often have no access to information related to the election, are not included on the voter list, or face problems related to polling stations.

The report calls for institutional remedies to these electoral barriers, in order to create an inclusive electoral environment for all.

The report is more than 100 pages long with nine chapters, and is available in Burmese and English.

"This is the third election under the 2008 constitution. In the 2015 election, only half of eligible voters in Mon State appeared at the polling stations. The number was too low. They've wanted changes but why didn't they come to vote? We've done this report in order to address the electoral challenges facing voters,

October 8, 2020

Today – on October 8, 2020, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) released a report detailing electoral barriers and challenges facing marginalized populations in Southern Myanmar. The report is titled, *"Without Inclusivity, No Free and Fair Elections"*.

"This is the third election under the 2008 constitution. In the 2015 election, only half of eligible voters in Mon State appeared at the polling stations. The number was too low. They've wanted changes but why didn't they come to vote? We've done this report in order to address the electoral

challenges facing voters," said Nai Aue Mon, the Program Director of HURFOM.

During the months of August and September 2020 information was collected from 129 villagers living in 30 different villages across six townships in Mon and Karen States, and from the Tenasserim Division. There were also two group discussions held in Kyaikmayaw and Thanbyuzayat Townships. Due to travel restrictions, some information was collected by online meetings or phone.

"Our main challenge for this report was COVID-19. We're well prepared, but things didn't go as planned due to

News

SECRETARY OF MON STATE ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION ACCUSED OF MISAPPROPRIATION OF ELECTION FUNDS



October 10, 2020

HURFOM: On October 7, 2020, the Chair of Thaton District Election Sub-commission and two members held a press conference at the Thu Wunna Ran Thi Monastery, Thaton Town, Mon State. The Chair alleged that U Hein Linn Htet, the Secretary of the Mon State Election Sub-commission, had misappropriated election funds.

In 2019, the Mon State government allocated 120 million Kyat to the Mon State Election Sub-commission for the 2020 election. Concerns with how these funds were being spent were raised when it was noted that each Mon State township must have nearly 40 photocopy cartridge toners on hand in preparation for the election, but in reality, each township received only six units of toner cartridges.

In addition the budget plan for the 120 million Kyat submitted by the Mon State Election Sub-commission was not the same as the budget plan submitted to the Union Election Commission (UEC).

The Thaton Election Sub-commission filed a report noting their concerns to the UEC, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the President's Office on February 2, 2020 but there was no official response. This led U Maung Oo and two additional members, Daw Moe Moe Khine and U Thet Oo. U Maung Oo, to resign in early October.

U Maung Oo said, *"We filed a report to every particular department but there was no legal action. We officially sent the report but they did nothing so it looked like they didn't respect us."*

With no evident action taken by upper authorities to their initial report, U Maung Oo investigated the case himself. He learned the Deputy Director of the UEC had quietly investigated the matter and halted the salary promotion of the Secretary of Mon State Election Sub-commission. But there was no official statement about this action.

U Maung Oo explained, *"We were not notified officially of a reply and there*

was no official letter from the Mon State Election Sub-commission Office. The UEC had inquired about the case but we heard nothing about them taking action. So I personally inquired about the case and found that they took action against the Secretary of Mon State Election Sub-commission by halting his salary promotion. There was no transparency. Our effort to file the report received nothing."

U Maung Oo concluded, *"... taking action against one staff member has no transparency so we can't trust the whole election has transparency. We can't work for those who don't value and acknowledge us. That's why we resigned."*

HURFOM contacted the Secretary of Mon State Election Sub-commission for a comment, but he did not pick up the phone.

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News

SENIOR MEMBER OF THE NLD IN THATON ATTEMPTS EXTORTION OVER AN INSULT TO THE PARTY LOGO.



Photo: NLD Thaton

October 12, 2020

HURFOM: On October 4, 2020, an 11-year-old was preparing to support the National League for Democracy (NLD)'s election campaign in Ka Dike Kyi village, Thaton Township, Mon State.

The child's grandmother tried to stop her because of worries about Covid-19.

The grandmother used an insult directed at the NLD logo.

A member of the Thaton NLD, who overheard the exchange reported the incident to the party's Central Executive Committee Member, Ko Ye Tun, who then tried to intimidate and extort the grandmother.

"I was angry with my granddaughter, and shouted at her "Just put the headband (with the NLD's logo) into your ass". In the evening, one of my neighbors said that NLD CEC member,

Ko Ye Tun reported me to the Administrator," said the grandmother.

After being reported to the Administrator, the grandmother apologized for her statement at the village Administrator's office.

A family member reported that, *"When my elder sister apologized to him, he said, she can be jailed because of her abusive words. She was afraid, and said she would accept any monetary or physical punishment. Then he said, she must pay one million Kyat. He continued the money wasn't for his personal use but for the party's fund."*

This was not possible for the grandmother, but Ko Ye Tun agreed to accept 600,000 Kyat.

"When the NLD Chairperson asked Ko Ye Tun, he said he didn't ask for the money. But the villagers who came with me said he did, and he finally confessed to the extortion. The

600,000 Kyat hasn't been paid yet," reported a family member.

HURFOM contacted Ko Ye Tun, and the Thaton NLD's Chairperson for a comment, but neither responded.

Thaton NLD's Chairperson, Daw Mar Mar Khine confirmed to the ThanLwin Times the incident did occur, and they would further investigate the attempted extortion.



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News

VOTER EDUCATION UNAVAILABLE IN YE CHAUNG PHYA (NMSP ZONE) DUE TO COVID-19 TRAVEL BAN



October 16, 2020

HURFOM: On September 11, 2020, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) announced restrictions on people's movements in the 30 villages of their controlled area.

This directive is impacting Community Based Organizations (CBO's) and Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) providing voter education training in the areas controlled by Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO's).

"The NMSP banned the comings and goings in their area. So we can't do

voter education training for Ye Chaung Phya residents. We're considering other options, such as inviting them to Wel Sin village (of Ye Township) to have the training," said Nai Lon, a Ye resident who helped Ye Chaung Phya residents secure their voting rights.

The 2020 election is the first chance for the Ye Chaung Phya residents to cast their votes and approximately 2,000 residents have been added to the original voters list that were originally excluded.

Locals worry their votes may become rejected ballots, because they have no

prior election experience and no access to voter education.

"We can't go to Ye Chaung Phya at the moment. Now, we're doing election training in Southern Ye. I have been planning to go to Ye Chaung Phya after October 18," said Nai Mon Htaw, a trainer who focuses on voter education.

Local transmission of Covid-19 has not declined in Mon State, and the NMSP has not lifted their travel ban.

"When we collected the voter list in Ye Chaung Phya, we invited two or three residents per village to Ye in order to provide voter education training. But it isn't enough. We must give the training. If not, they don't know how to cast their votes," said Nai Lon.

About 500 Ye Chaung Phya residents remain left out of the second release of the updated voter list. These individuals applied with Form #3 in order to get their names in the voter list.

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CANDIDATE WORRIES ADVANCE BALLOTS MAY BE REJECTED



November 4, 2020

HURFOM: Due to Covid-19, village/ward election sub-commission are collecting advance ballots from the elderly (those 60 years of age and older) from October 29th to November 5, 2020.

Election candidates are expressing their concern these advance ballots may be rejected because some voters are

unfamiliar with the complicated voting procedures.

"As far as I know, just a few (advance) voters know how to vote. Some didn't know how to put a stamp on their ballots. Some did nothing but just put their (blank) ballots in the boxes. Some stamped their ballots but put them into the wrong boxes," said an election candidate of the Mon Unity Party (MUP) in Thanbyuzayat.

The elderly have a right to cast their vote in advance in their village/ward election sub-commissions between October 29 and November 5, 2020, and those with (severe) illnesses can cast their votes from their homes.

"[Sometimes] elderly people's fingers are shaking so they can't put a stamp on their ballots very well. And most of them can't read well, so there were difficulties during the advance voting. They are also [difficulties] in learning how to vote," said the candidate.

Despite these challenges, the Union Election Commission stated on October 30 that ballots will not be rejected due to the following factors; i) opened envelopes, ii) ballots being stained by envelope glue, iii) torn when envelopes are being opened, iv) use of a ballpoint pen rather than a stamp to mark voting choice or, v) ballots being erroneously placed into wrong envelopes.

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News

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH RESTRICTIONS MAKING VOTER EDUCATION INEFFECTIVE

October 18, 2020

HURFOM: The Civic Action for Free and Fair Election (CAFFE) Project has been conducting voter education training since the third week of September, and will continue until the end of October, 2020.

However, project coordinators report that Covid-19 restrictions and community concerns about the virus has made the training ineffective.

“Due to the current restrictions, we can’t travel where we want. I’ve provided (voter education) training to young people in the city where there is access to the Internet. [It is hoped, they will in turn, show their villagers how to vote. [However, this method is not too] effective,” said Min Wunna, a Project Coordinator of CAFFE Project.

Most of the Mon Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) helping with voter education are located in townships that are under “stay at home” orders issued by the Mon State

government. As a result local villagers are reluctant to attend voter education sessions fearing a spread of the virus.

“In some villages, the Administrator and the Village Election Sub-commission allowed us to organize a training. But the villagers don’t welcome us. We weren’t allowed to organize training in government schools and monasteries. There are many challenges,” said Nai Choon, a Project Coordinator with the Human Rights Foundation of Monland who coordinated voter education training in the Mon and Karen states and in Tenasserim Division.

Some remote villages are under a “lockdown” so there has been no voter education in these communities.

“Some villages in Ye Chaung Phya and Kyarinnseiky Township don’t have any Internet access. We wanted to go there in person but the villages were locked down,” said Min Wunna.

The CAFFE project had planned to conduct voter education and training

sessions in 14 townships. To date they have been able to offer training in 8 townships.

“We can’t gather people during the Covid-19 period. When going to the Administrator to ask permission for the training, he asked how we were prepared to prevent the spread of Covid-19. We replied that we are well prepared with masks and hand sanitizer. But the Administrator has to discuss our request with the Hundred Household Leader and Village Committee before granting us permission,” said Min Bnyair Chan, a voter education trainer in Yebyu Township.

Civic Action for Free and Fair Election (CAFFE) Project is supported by five Mon CSOs – The Rehmonya Institute for Civic Engagement (RICE), Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), Jeepyah Civil Society Development Organization (JCSDO), Konhongsar and Mon Youth Progressive Organization – (MYPO).

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Photo: မာ်ဗညာဆာန်

News

ETHNIC POLITICAL PARTIES URGE UEC TO RECONSIDER LIMITED ELECTION CANCELLATION DECISION



ပြည်ထောင်စု ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်၏ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများ ကျင်းပခြင်းမပြုမည့် နယ်မြေများစာရင်း သတ်မှတ်ထုတ်ပြန် ကြေညာခြင်းအပေါ် ပေါင်းစည်း တိုင်းရင်းသား ၅ ပါတီ၏ ပူးတွဲထုတ်ပြန်ချက်

ရက်စွဲ၊ ၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ်၊ အောက်တိုဘာလ ၁၈ ရက်

၁။ ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်သည် ၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ်၊ အောက်တိုဘာလ ၁၆ ရက် နေ့စွဲပါ ကြေညာချက် အမှတ် (၁၉၇/၂၀၂၀) ဖြင့် ၂၀၂၀ ပြည့်နှစ်၊ နိုဝင်ဘာလ ၈ ရက်နေ့တွင် ကျင်းပပြုလုပ်မည့် ပါတီစုံအထွေထွေရွေးကောက်ပွဲတွင် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများကျင်းပခြင်းမပြုမည့် နယ်မြေများစာရင်းကို ထုတ်ပြန်ကြေညာခဲ့ပါသည်။

၂။ ယင်းထုတ်ပြန်ချက်အရ ကချင်ပြည်နယ်ရှိ မြို့နယ် ၁၁ မြို့နယ်မှ ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု ၁၉၂ အုပ်စု၊ ကရင်ပြည်နယ်ရှိ မြို့နယ် ၆ မြို့နယ်မှ ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု ၅၃ အုပ်စု၊ မွန်ပြည်နယ်ရှိ မြို့နယ် ၁ မြို့နယ်မှ ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု ၁ စု၊ ရခိုင်ပြည်နယ်မှ မြို့နယ်ပေါင်း ၉ မြို့နယ်နှင့် အခြားမြို့နယ် ၄ မြို့နယ်မှ ရပ်ကွက်ပေါင်း ၁၅ ရပ်ကွက်နှင့် ကျေးရွာအုပ်စုပေါင်း ၁၃၇ အုပ်စု၊ ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်မှ မြို့နယ် ၆ မြို့နယ်နှင့် အခြားမြို့နယ် ၁၇ မြို့နယ်မှ ရပ်ကွက် ၈ ရပ်ကွက်နှင့် ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု ၁၃၃ အုပ်စု၊ ပဲခူးတိုင်းမှ မြို့နယ် ၂ မြို့နယ်မှ ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု ၄၂ အုပ်စုတို့မှ မဲဆန္ဒရှင်ပြည်သူများ မဲပေးပိုင်ခွင့် ဆုံးရှုံးနိုင်စွမ်းရှိကြောင်းတောင်းဆို ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

၃။ မဲဆွယ်စည်းရုံးရေးကာလ ထက်ဝက်ကျော်လွန်လာပြီး ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကျင်းပရန် ရက်ပေါင်း ၂၀ ခန့်သာ လိုတော့သည့် အချိန်တွင် ယခုကဲ့သို့ ထုတ်ပြန်ကြေညာခြင်းသည် သက်ဆိုင်ရာ ဒေသများမှ တိုင်းရင်းသား မဲဆန္ဒရှင်များအတွက် တရားမျှတမှု မရှိဟု ယူဆပါသည်။

၄။ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲတစ်ခု၏ အရေးအကြီးဆုံးသော အင်္ဂါရပ်တစ်ခုမှာ လွတ်လပ်တရားမျှတမှု ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ယခုထုတ်ပြန်ချက်ကြောင့် ပြည်ထောင်စုရွေးကောက်ပွဲကော်မရှင်၏ ပွင့်လင်းမြင်သာမှု၊ ဘက်မလိုက်မှု၊ သမာသမတ်ကျမှုနှင့် ဂုဏ်သိက္ခာရှိမှုတို့အပြင် နိုဝင်ဘာလ ၈ ရက်တွင်ကျင်းပတော့မည့် ၂၀၂၀ အထွေထွေ ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများ၏ လွတ်လပ်မှုနှင့် တရားမျှတမှုကိုပါ မေးခွန်းထုတ်စရာဖြစ်စေပါသည်။

၅။ ယခုကာလကဲ့သို့ နိုင်ငံသားတိုင်း တန်းတူအခွင့်အရေးရရှိပြီး လွှတ်တော်နိုင်ငံရေးတွင် ပါဝင်ခွင့် ရရှိစေသည့် နည်းလမ်းဖြင့် နိုင်ငံရေးပေါင်ကို ချဲ့ထွင်ရန် မဖြစ်မနေလိုအပ်နေသည့် နိုင်ငံရေးအနေအထား

The cancellation of elections in some constituencies takes place only 20 days before the general election.

This decision is not fair to the voters and the candidates who live in these constituencies, continued Nai Layi Tama.

According to the ethnic parties statement, the UEC decision challenges the notion of a free and fair November-8 election, and forces the voters and the political representatives to do politics outside of parliament.

“Before making the decision, the UEC must invite the political parties and listen to and negotiate with them. But they have released their statement without informing the political parties — so it’s not fair,” said Nai Layi Tama.

The UEC decision means people from 11 townships in Kachin State, six townships in Karen State, one village track in Mon State, nine townships, four wards and 137 village tracks in Arakan State, six townships and 133 village track in Shan State and 42 village tracks from two townships in Pegu Division will lose their voting rights.

Before making the decision, the UEC must invite the political parties and listen to and negotiate with them. But they have released their statement without informing the political parties — so it’s not fair

October 20, 2020

HURFOM: On October 16, 2020, the Union Election Commission (UEC) announced a list of constituencies in States and Divisions that will not be able to hold free and fair elections.

In response, an alliance of five ethnic political parties has urged the UEC to reconsider its decision.

The five political parties include, the Kachin State People’s Party, the Kayah State Democratic Party, the Karen National Democratic Party, the Chin National League for Democracy and the Mon Unity Party.

The ethnic parties have demanded the UEC reconsider its decision in order to restore voting rights and to bring justice and equality for all ethnic communities.

“The constituencies that the UEC canceled are those where the ethnic political parties surely will win the election. That’s why we’re doubtful about the decision of the UEC,” said Nai Layi Tama, the Joint Secretary #2 of the Mon Unity Party.

News

IMPROPER VOTING BALLOT STAMPS FOUND IN PAUNG TOWNSHIP

UEC အမှတ်အသားပါ တံဆိပ်တုံးအစစ်

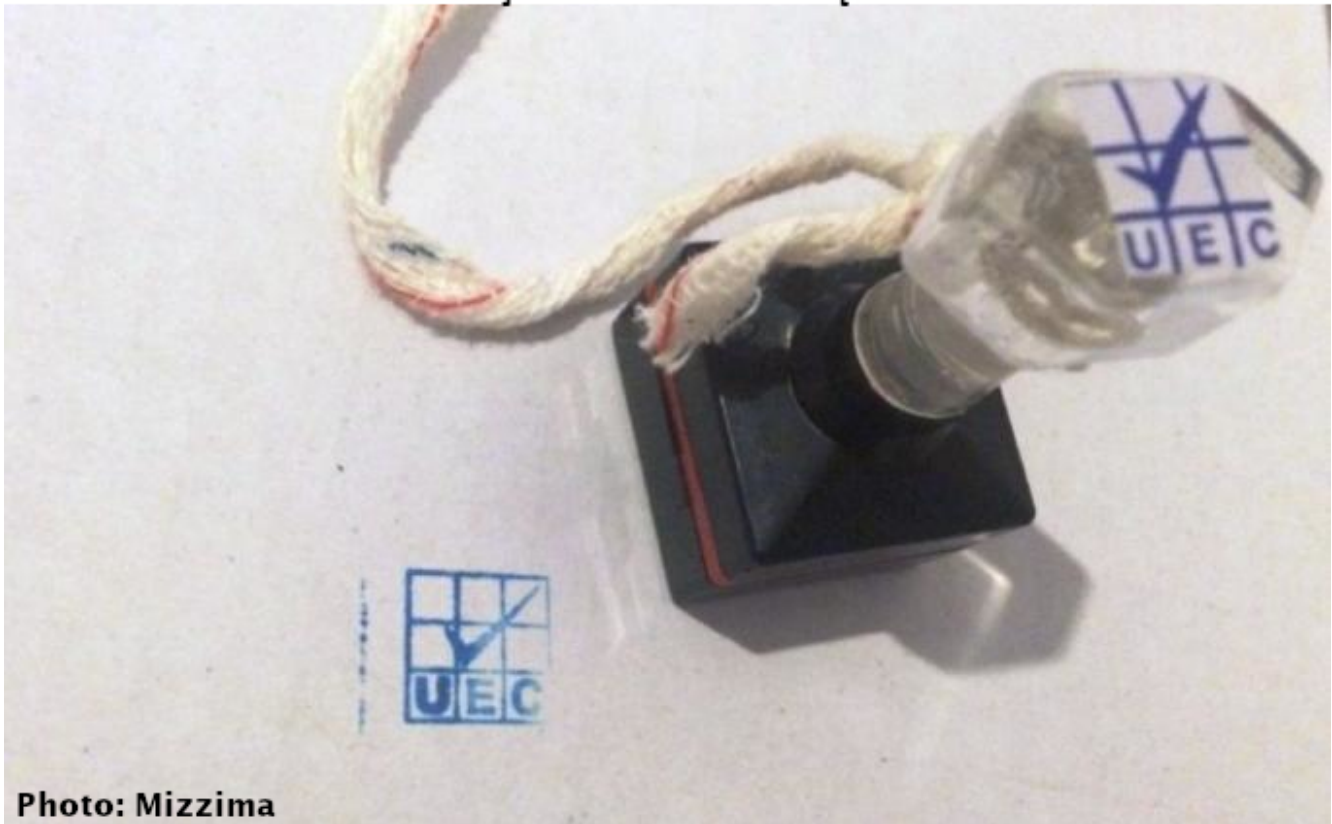


Photo: Mizzima

November 6, 2020

HURFOM: On October 29, 2020, voters were found to be using an improper stamp on their election ballots. The incident took place at Polling Station #1 in Ta Gon Tie village, In Byaung village track, Paung Township, Mon State.

Some elders voters were casting their advance votes using stamps that did not include the Union Election Commission "UEC" logo.

23 voters were found to be using ballots that did not have the UEC logo. It is not clear if the use of these stamps was intentional or a printing error.

Daw Mi Coon Chan, an NLD election candidate from Paung Township, opposed rejecting these ballots and called on the Paung Township Election Sub-commission to arrange for the implicated voters to re-cast their votes.

"The UEC must take responsibility for the faulty stamps because the UEC is the one who has managed everything about the polling station. Those who

came to cast advance votes were all elderly persons. If the UEC rejects their votes, I can't accept it. The UEC must approve their votes (even with the faulty stamps) or they must [allow them] to cast their vote," said Daw Mi Coon Chan.

The Township Election Sub-commission reported the case to the Mon State Election Sub-commission on November 3. The Mon State Election Sub-commission will in turn file a report to the UEC, according to U Thet Naing Oo, the Secretary of Thaton District Election Sub-commission.

"We didn't know who put the faulty stamp on the ballot and when. We just gave a stamp with the UEC logo. We have four stamps and one of them [did not have the logo]," said U Thet Naing Oo.

Even though the incident has been reported to the UEC, the Negotiation Team of the Paung Township Election Sub-commission decided that ballots

with faulty stamps would be declared as rejected votes.

"UEC will release their own statement. But we have to follow the law. We can't take a faulty ballot as an authentic one. If we do so, there will be consequences. Who will take responsibility for that? That's why we decided to reject those votes," said U Htwe Oo, a member of the Negotiation Team of the Paung Township Election Sub-commission.

According to the Paung Township Election Sub-commission, the township has 98 polling stations and 210,000 eligible voters.

We didn't know who put the faulty stamp on the ballot and when. We just gave a stamp with the UEC logo. We have four stamps and one of them [did not have the logo]

MUP QUESTIONS SOME ELECTORAL RESULTS: TOWNSHIP ELECTION SUB-COMMISSION REFUSE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION

November 21, 2020

HURFOM: The Mon Unity Party (MUP) is expressing concerns with the electoral results in some constituencies in Mon State. In an effort to investigate they requested specific information from a select number of Township Election Sub-commissions, but their requests have been denied.

"The Commissions must give Form #1 to every candidate who contested the election. But now they gave nothing. Even when we, the political party, have requested this information. So we're having doubts [about election integrity]," said the Joint Secretary of the MUP Election Campaign Committee.

The MUP is questioning if there were election irregularities in constituencies in Thanbyuzayat, Kyaikmayaw and Paung Townships. They requested the required Form #1, the eligible voter list,

Form #16 and the voting results from each polling station, Form #18 for the advance vote list, as well as Form #19 for the final result of the election but the sub-commissions. All of their requests have been refused..

"If an election candidate makes a request, the Commission must give every form. That's the procedure. Now there was no transparency about the voting result. If the township sub-commissions haven't given us the forms, we'll make the request at the upper levels," said Joint Secretary Nai Than Shwe.

Thanbyuzayat Township has four parliamentary seats and the MUP won only one seat for the Mon State Parliament. Kyaikmayaw Township also has four parliamentary seats, and the MUP won only one seat for the Mon State Parliament. The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD)

won all parliamentary seats in Paung Township.

"On November 11, we went to the township Sub-Commission to request Form #16. But they replied that we must go to the village Sub-Commissions to collect the forms. Kyaikmayaw has about 90 polling stations so we have no time to do that. I also contested the election in 2015 and the 2015 township Sub-Commission gave me both Form #16 and #19. This year, they gave us nothing even though we requested them," said Mi Jondel Non, a MUP candidate.

Nai Than Shwe added, *"Only after an investigation, can we say if we will file a charge (against the election Sub-Commissions) or not. Now, we're just trying to get electoral forms. We've also asked our township committees to report on any electoral fraud in their townships but nothing has been received yet."*



News

CANDIDATES SAY WEAKNESS, IRREGULARITIES AND PARTY INFLUENCE IMPACTING ADVANCE VOTING



Photo: HURFOM

November 7, 2020

HURFOM: Some election candidates claim there are weaknesses within some Election Sub-commissions where irregularities, influence and threats from the political parties might be jeopardizing a “free and fair” election from happening.

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) interviewed two election candidates on November 5 to hear their concerns as it has been impacting advance voting. Elderly voters (60+ years of age) make up the majority of those who have been casting their advance votes between October 29 and November 5, 2020.

The candidates, U Tun Kyaw Myint and Min Aung Htoo, observed three things of concern taking place in some advance voting polling stations – i) weaknesses in the voting process, ii) irregularities concerning balloting and family support for the elderly and iii) undue party influence. Below is an excerpt of the interviews with both candidates.

Weakness of particular Election Sub-commissions

“We don’t have the updated voter list. Only the election sub-commission has it, and they deliver election slips (showing the slip on election day will make the voting process quick and

easy, [because sometimes] the polling staff can’t easily find the voter in the list). Some voters got slips but some didn’t. Those who didn’t get a slip won’t lose their voting right, [but it is an irregular practice] ... as soon as we noticed that yesterday (on November 4), we reported it to the Township Election Sub-commission. We urged the Township Commission to make sure that won’t happen again,” said U Tun Kyaw Myint aka Nai Min Latt, an election candidate of #2 Constituency of Mon State Parliament in Thanbyuzayat Township.

“Casting advance votes is the right of elderly people. But there are many challenges. The Commissions themselves don’t know the electoral law and they make careless mistakes,” said Min Aung Htoo, an election candidate for #2 Constituency of Mon State Parliament in Ye Township.

He explained, ***“The Commission has delivered the wrong ballots. For instance, instead of delivering State parliament ballots, they gave out ethnic affair candidate ballots. And there were inconveniences where they delivered election slips. According to the electoral law, the Commission has to deliver the slip to the voters’ house but in reality, the voters had to go to the Commission office to get the slips.”***

Canadiadate Min Aung Htoo, added, ***“...[some] elderly voters can’t read well***

and are physically weak. They didn’t have family members to assist them. In those cases, polling staff put a stamp on the ballot paper that was different from the choice of the voters.”

Daw Nyunt Yi aka Mi Jondal Non, an election candidate for #1 Constituency of Mon State Parliament in Kyaikmayaw Township said, ***“Elderly people have the right to have their family members assist them but the village Commission didn’t accept that. The village Commission didn’t want family members to assist elderly voters. They were [either] forcing elderly voters to vote themselves or polling staff would assist, but the voters didn’t trust the staff. So we had to send a complaint to the township Commission. It was okay after that, but the village Commission still made things difficult.”***

Mi Jondal Non affirmed the same irregularity that candidate Min Aung Htoo observed from Thanbyuzayat Township, ***“On the first day [of advance voting] in Kyaikmayaw Town, the Commission didn’t give the ballots for Mon State parliament. They just gave ballots for House of Nationalities (Amyotha Hluttaw), House of Representatives (Pyithu Hluttaw) and Ethnic Affair Candidates. We had to bring the voters to the polling station and let them vote again.”***

Influence of Political Parties over the Election Sub-commissions

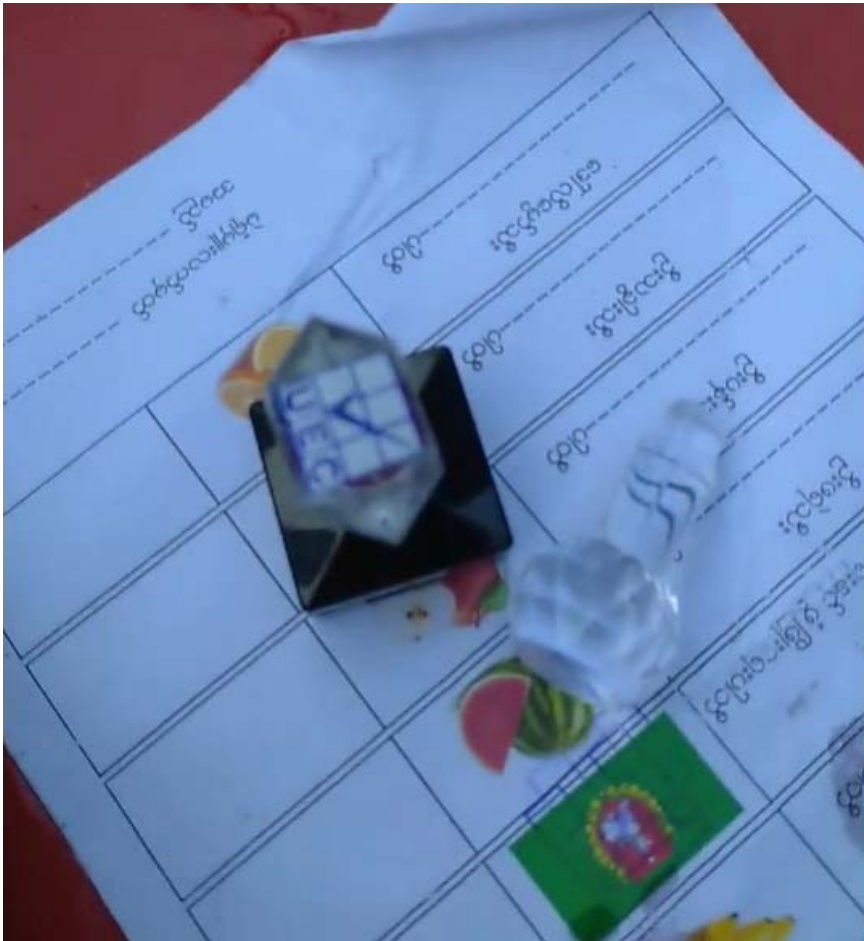
Nai Min Latt, said, ***“When delivering election slips, some Commission Members [where known] to be NLD supporters, and they delivered the slips to the voters who supported NLD. So only those who support NLD got the slips. Other voters didn’t get the slips.***

He added, ***“... the Commission also allowed the Hundred and Ten household leaders who support the NLD to deliver the slips. So just those who got the slips appeared at the polling station. They were the ones who supported NLD. It’s not happen at all polling stations. It happened at the***

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News

USDP POLLING STATION REPRESENTATIVE CHARGED FOR VIOLATIONS OF ELECTORAL AND CRIMINAL LAWS



November 11, 2020

HURFOM: On the election day – November 8, 2020, a polling station representative with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was

caught with an authentic election stamp and a fake election stamp by the police at Polling Station #6 of Region #10, Ah Sin village, Ye Township, Mon State.

The individual was charged under the Burmese Criminal Act Section #420 – *Cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property*, and Section #468 – *Forgery of purpose of cheating* by the Ye Town Police.

The individual was under suspicion, which led the police to conduct a personal search, where they found four sample ballots, an authentic election stamp and a fake election stamp.

An official at the police station, said, the person claimed “... **the stamps were used in election education. We detained [the individual] at the Ye Town Police Station.**”

According to some reports, the individual had not yet used the stamps.

On the same day, the Union Election Commission (UEC) announced they were pressing charges against the individual for violations of electoral law #58 and #59.

Ye Township has 230,000 eligible voters and 130 polling stations.

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polling stations managed by NLD-supported Commission Members.

“Also, when elderly people needed assistance from family members to cast their vote – the NLD opposed that. We are still waiting for instruction from the District Election Commission to settle this problem,” concluded Nai Min Latt.

Min Aung Htoo observed that, “In some polling stations, there was influence from the political parties. For instance, let’s talk about the NLD. They did what they wanted where they had power. We interrupted the voting process. They even intimidated the voters.”

Voter intimidation and undue party influence

“In Kwan Ngan village, voters who had accepted 20,000–Kyat in government monetary support didn’t want to cast an advance vote because they’re afraid they couldn’t vote for the parties they supported. Those who provided monetary support intimidated them to vote for NLD. They were told that a car would pick them up on the election day and they had to vote for NLD. The problem here is intimidation against the voters who got monetary support,” said Mi Jondal Non.

Both candidates felt that what they observed in advance voting polls is

limiting the country’s ability to ensure that a free and fair election is taking place.

“Advance voting process across the country isn’t totally free and fair,” said Nai Min Latt. He concluded his interview saying, “**The political parties, CSO and election monitoring groups must watch this election closely. It’s not easy to hold an election during the Covid-19 period.**”

Min Aung Htoo, added, “**The good point of advance voting is we can reduce the number of voters [having to turn out] on the election day. But the advance voting process itself has mistakes.**”

News

HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES PEOPLE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES AS COVID-19 DEATH TOLL INCREASES



December 8, 2020

HURFOM: The increase of Covid-19 infected patients and a rising death toll has caused the Mon State Department of Public Health to urge people to obey statements, orders and guidelines released by the Ministry of Health and Sport (MOHS). Public Health officials requested that people living in townships under “**Stay at Home**” orders cooperate with the department by following their instructions.

“Some people are weak in following the instructions. The instructions for people living in “Stay at Home” townships must behave. If people

cooperate, the number of infected patients will decline,” said Dr Win Pa Pa Htay, Deputy Director of Mon State Health Department.

Burma has seen a sharp increase in the number of patients during Covid-19’s second wave. In Mon State, there were 1,600 Covid-19 cases and 473 were admitted to the hospital as of December 3. Meanwhile 2,456 people had to stay at the quarantine centers when the death toll increased to 13, according to the Mon State Public Health Department.

“There are three Covid-19 isolation wards in Mawlamyine, and one in Thaton. Now, the Dawei Hostel at

Mawlamyine University has been used as Covid-19 Center. As of today, we have enough space for the patients but we don’t have any plan for the further patients,” said Dr Win Pa Pa Htay.

The most infectious townships are Mawlamyine, Thaton and Kyaik Hto townships, and most patients have been suffering from loss of smell or taste. This is one of the early symptoms of infection.

“As local transmission increases, health workers have to take care of more patients and at the same time, they have to find the contact persons of the positive patients. Then they have to test those people in the quarantine centers. Not only health workers in our Mon State but also the whole of Burma are facing hardships,” continued Dr Win Pa Pa Htay.

A Mawlamyine resident said, *“Even with the “Stay at Home” order, people are still going outside. Now, it is the festival period, so people don’t care about the disease. Some people think Covid-19 is just like a seasonal flu.”*

On November 28, 2020, the National Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19 announced that all Covid-19 containment protocols will be extended to December 15, 2020.

• • •

17-YEAR-OLD CHARGED WITH POSTING EXPLICIT VIDEO ON SOCIAL MEDIA

November 18, 2020

HURFOM: On November 14, 2020, a 17-year-old boy was charged by the Mawlamyine police for posting an explicit video on social media. The boy had taken intimate videos of himself and his ex-girlfriend.

Apparently when his girlfriend wanted to end their relationship, he refused and threatened if she ended their

relationship, he would post intimate videos he had taken of them.

The girlfriend’s family reported him to the police, according to U Kyaw San Win, a community member who provided assistance to the family.

“When they were in love, they used to live together. Sometimes the girl refused him but sometimes she agreed to sleep with him. And he secretly took

the video. Later, he threatened her to sleep with him by intimidating her that he would post the video on social media if she refused to sleep with him. Then he posted the video and the girl [attempted to have the video deleted out of shame]. But he was getting worse and finally the girl’s family decided to report him to the police,” said U Kyaw San Win.

The girl’s mother reported the incident to the Zay Yar Thiri Police Station on November 14. Charges under the Criminal Act #363 Punishment for kidnapping and #376 Punishment for rape were filed against the boy who is being detained at the police station.

HURFOM ACTIVITIES

HURFOM MARKS THE 72ND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



December 10, 2020

Today, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) marks the 72nd International Human Rights, during a time when so many individuals around the world are struggling to cope with the global pandemic and its consequences.

Throughout the past year, many individuals in Burma/ Myanmar have lost their jobs, seen their businesses go under, and other sources of income cease to provide them with a livelihood. Moreover, armed conflict in the country has continued, with the vast majority of the widespread human rights abuses being perpetrated by State security forces, and to a lesser extent Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), and human rights organizations, including HURFOM, have documented thousands of cases of human rights violations against innocent civilians such as extrajudicial killings, inhumane torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, sexual violence, forced displacement, and ethnic and religious discrimination.

Although the Burma/Myanmar government has extended several ceasefires to various EAOs, the Burma Army continues to repeatedly refuse calls to offer a nationwide ceasefire in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Arakan Army. Additionally, while the conflict continues to rage in Arakan State, violence also continues to systematically target civilians in northern Shan, Chin, Kachin, and Karen states.

Critically, the restriction of humanitarian access by the Burma/Myanmar has continued across the country, particularly in Rakhine and Kachin states, and extensive violations are ongoing. Impunity persists for past and current human rights violations by State forces, and the NLD-led

government continues to dismiss allegations of rights violations and ignore calls for investigations and accountability.

The government continues to use a range of oppressive laws to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association and has imprisoned civilians for peacefully exercising such rights. Human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers who speak out about human rights conditions around the country still face intimidation, surveillance, and attacks. Women and children are still subject to violence and need better protection under domestic legislation and through rule of law.

While the COVID-19 lockdowns and emergency measures that have been taken by some local governments to address the pandemic may have helped mitigate the spread of the virus, they have also exposed and exacerbated human rights violations such as abusive law enforcement practices, unlawful detention, arbitrary arrests, movement restrictions, and silencing of human rights defenders and humanitarians. Moreover, many of the most vulnerable citizens who live in EAO-controlled areas or remote communities are being left behind, without access to humanitarian aid and government support.

To recover better means strengthening our commitment to human rights and addressing human rights violations, respecting human rights for all and creating protection systems, and strengthening and creating better institutions.

We are all in this together, and we must remember the way forward is through justice, inclusivity, and equality.

HURFOM urges:

- ② The current Burma/Myanmar government, who will be in power for the next five years, to ensure the protection of all people in the country.
- ② The Burma army and EAOs to cease all armed conflicts, respect human rights, and to hold their members accountable for human rights violations and abuses committed.
- ② The Union and State governments to address the unequal and insufficient support of aid and healthcare for COVID-19 to vulnerable populations and to meet ongoing needs of all populations. To act to ensure everyone's right to life and health are in line with international human rights law by ensuring healthcare provision and humanitarian and health education are all-inclusive in all ethnic minority areas.

News

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCREASING: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REMAINS POOR

December 10, 2020

HURFOM: The number of incidents of domestic violence has been increasing in Mon State, but the public is not showing interest in the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence* campaign.

The Mon Women's Organization (MWO) organized the state-based campaign running from November 25 to December 10, 2020.

The *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence* is a global campaign designed to challenge violence against women and girls.

On November 25, members from the MWO, Mon Cetana Development Foundation, Mon Women Network (MWN), Jeepyah Civil Society Development Organization (JCSDO) and other civil society organizations

wore shirts with the statement "Gender-based violence must end." Participants wore the shirts while cycling in Mawlamyine.

"Only MWO and its partners joined the 16 Days of Activism. We need more participation. I think most organizations aren't interested in this activity. There has been a poor response from the public," said Mi Pon Nyan Chai, a CEO member with MWO.

Some organizers think the poor levels of public attention to the campaign is not related to Covid-19.

"I think it isn't related to Covid-19. (Even if you have to stay at home due to Covid-19,) you can write a supportive post on social media (if you are interested in the campaign). Now, just a few people have shown their support to the campaign on social media. And we always say that everyone is

welcomed to our campaign," said Mi Pon Nyan Chai.

Others have noted the campaign has faced challenges because of Covid-19, organizers were unable to mobilize people and had difficulties in cooperating with other network organizations.

While women's organizations urge both men and women to cooperate to end gender-based violence, it has been mostly women who have been active in the campaign.

"Everyone should contribute to this activity to better understand gender issues. But we can't mobilize the public due to the Covid-19 now. This is the biggest challenge," said a young man who has been an active supporter of the campaign.

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Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people, The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- ☐ Monitoring the human rights situation in Mon territory and other areas in southern Burma
- ☐ Protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly “Mon Forum” newsletters. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter.

Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P.O. Box 35, Sangkhalburi Post Office,
Kanchanaburi, 71240 Thailand

E-mail: info@rehmonnya.org

Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

THREE RAPE CASES INVOLVING MINORS IN KAMARWAT TOWNSHIP



December 1, 2020

HURFOM: In the month of November, 2020, three incidents involving the rape of minors took place in Kamarwat Town, Mudon Township, Mon State. The victims were between the ages of 14 to 17. The rapists have been identified as

either neighbors, friends or boyfriends. On November 10, a 35-year-old male and former monk raped a 15-year-old girl who visited a monastery to charge her phone. The rapist was charged under the Burmese Criminal Act, Section #376 and has been detained at the Kyaikmayaw Prison.

On November 18, an 18-year-old male raped a 15-year-old girl after promising he would marry her, but instead he ran away. He was charged under the Burmese Criminal Act, Section #363 – punishment for kidnapping and Section #376 – punishment for rape. He has not been found yet.

On November 23, a 20-year-old male raped a 17-year-old girl, and threatened her life if she told anyone. In this case the elder brother was the rapist.

“They reached home at 8pm and the victim said nothing to her family, but she did tell her neighbor. The neighbor revealed the incident to her sister-in-law, and then her grandmother knew the truth. So she reported what happened to us on November 24,” said an official from Kamarwat Police Station.

The day after the rape occurred, the victim's grandmother reported the case to the Kamarwat Police Station. The rapist has been charged under the Burmese Criminal Act, Section #376 – punishment for rape. He has been detained at the police station, and will be transferred to Kyaikmayaw Prison no later than November 30.

THANBYUZAYAT POLITICAL PARTIES UNSATISFIED WITH UEC RESPONSE



December 15, 2020

HURFOM: Political parties from Thanbyuzayat Township, in Mon State are unsatisfied with the response of the Union Election Commission(UEC) and the Township Election Sub-commission, who have both denied requests to share electoral information.

On December 10, the Thanbyuzayat Mon Unity Party (MUP) held a press conference to announce their dissatisfaction with these decisions.

"We want to re-check the voting list and check the list of eligible voters from the Township election sub-commission. They replied they would provide the documents after getting approval from the District election sub-commission. But later, they said they needed approval from the UEC to share the information. Then, they said they couldn't fulfill our demand," said Nai Aung Myint Sein, an Mon Unity Party (MUP) candidate with the Thanbyuzayat House of Representatives.

U Naing Oo, a MUP candidate with the Thanbyuzayat House of Nationalities, Nai Aung Myint Sein, a MUP candidate of the Thanbyuzayat House of Representatives, and U Tun Myint Kyaw, aka Nai Min Latt, an MUP candidate with the Thanbyuzayat Mon State Parliament Constituency #1, all met

with local media and shared their disappointment with the response of the UEC.

"What we doubt is that the number of actual voters were more than is on the list. [We are concerned] that some voters were under the eligible age to vote, and that the voting list did not have transparency. We want to confirm [if] these [are] errors, so we demanded the original lists from the election commissions. If they don't share it with us, we'll report [the matter] to the President," said Nai Aung Myint Sein.

The UEC stated that any electoral disputes or allegations of fraud, must be done by filing reports in accordance with the electoral law Chapters #13 and #14. The UEC also said they could not share the requested electoral information publicly.

The Thanbyuzayat Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) plans to organize a protest against the UEC decision on December 15th. The Chair of the Thanbyuzayat USDP, U Soe Naing said thier protest would target the UEC, not the township election commission.

The USDP has submitted about 50 electoral cases to the courts after the National League for Democracy (NLD) said they would challenge the outcome of five USDP candidates who won seats in the 2020 election.

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