

Global Day of Prayer for Burma



March 9, 2008



March 9, 2008

Dear friends,

This message was sent by a relief-team leader training new relief teams inside Burma as we were planning this year's day of prayer:

I am thankful to all of you who pray and care for the people of Burma and to God who has all things in His hands. As I look around the beautiful jungle valley we are in and see the rushing streams and rising mountains and enthusiastic new teams I am filled with gratitude. All of this is a gift from God and those of you who help us in this.

I was reminded again that we can not do this alone nor have we ever done anything alone here. This fills me with wonder at God's provision and the generosity and breadth of vision from people like you. It also motivates all of us here to do our best and live full, free and useful lives that glorify God and honor you all.

We believe that:

- 1) God loves the people of Burma and we should be strong in the mighty power of God.
- 2) The rider on the white horse (Rev 19:11-14) will fight for the oppressed.
- 3) We should go deep and go ahead, not broad or shallow or sideways.
- 4) God reveals what lies in darkness.

We are reminded and inspired that God cares and takes action in all of our lives.

Thank you all for your prayers, love and support.

God bless you,

A relief-team leader, Karen State, Burma

Human Dignity

The Free Burma Rangers (FBR) is a multi-ethnic humanitarian service movement. They bring help, hope and love to internally displaced people under attack in the war zones of Burma. Teams are trained, supplied and sent into the areas under attack to provide emergency medical care, shelter, food, clothing and human rights documentation. The teams also operate a communication and information network inside Burma that provides real time information from areas under attacks. Together with other groups, the teams work to serve people in need. The letter below is from a doctor working with the Free Burma Rangers. It attempts to answer the questions of why and how to be involved in Burma:

I am writing from the jungles of eastern Burma where I am teaching advanced medics with the Free Burma Rangers (FBR). In the publication *A Campaign of Brutality* (http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Features/20070315_NorthernKarenState.pdf), FBR gives 10 reasons why it is right to be involved in Burma. The very first listed is for human dignity. In a land such as Burma, the value of a human life becomes more than some distant theoretical discussion. It becomes a serious and very personal issue.

As I struggled with the idea of human dignity, I decided to ask the medics what they thought. One of the medics, named Raykaw, answered, "Once, because God gave us love, so we need to love each other. . . to help each other. That is our dignity." I then asked him if that would apply to an injured Burma Army soldier who came to him for treatment. At first, Raykaw looked at me as if he didn't understand the question. Slowly, thoughtfully, he replied: "For me, if [a Burma Army soldier] came to me. . . I want to help them. They need love and help. For example, when we see them, if they have no one to help them to stop their bleeding, they will need something to keep their life. For me, we need to help them. If they are bad after that, no problem. . . That's up to them." These are the words of a very experienced medic, one who has seen the atrocities of the Burma Army with his own eyes. One who has spent years risking his life to bring medical help to people hiding from the Burma Army in the jungle. One who, as a child, was himself displaced from his home by these very soldiers. For Raykaw, his human dignity is to be able to give to others, even to his enemies. Period. His profound statement is backed up by his life as a Free Burma Ranger medic.

Giving is clearly one aspect of God's own nature. As beings made in His image, giving becomes one aspect of our own human dignity. Even if, as Raykaw said, it means giving to an enemy who would turn right around and do us harm. I have come to believe that our human dignity is wrapped up in our ability to exhibit any of our maker's characteristics. Generous giving. Creativity. Love. Courage. Kindness. Free choice. And to do it solely because it is of God. . . because it is truly good. If so, then it is our duty, our honor, even our dignity as Christians to enable and protect the capacity of all men to exhibit those characteristics in their lives.

This is the reason I believe it is right and critically important as a Christian to be involved in Burma. Just as the Free Burma Rangers describe. . . "for human dignity." For me, not only does this answer the why to be involved, it also addresses the how to be involved. "Once, because God gave us love, so we need to love each other. . . to help each other." That is our dignity—even to love our enemies.



Running races during a Christmas celebration in northern Karen State.



Teacher hands out blankets to IDPs. Saw Wah Der, Jan 07.

Good Life Club



Studying in the jungle.



Continuing school while in hiding. Saw Wah Der, Jan 07.



Karen child at the burned ruins of her home. Jan 07.



Chin refugees.

Letter from a Partners team member helping the FBR to train Good Life Club counselors:

"Yes, I know what that feels like," said Kaw Bla Sei. "My mother and I were captured by the Burma Army when I was 5 years old. For a whole day they dragged us through the jungle without any food and water. Then they let us go. After that happened I was always afraid. It did not go away until I turned 12."

The group I was speaking to was the Good Life Counselors. They are the men and women who will focus on the needs of children when they, together with the rest of the relief team they are a part of, enter a village or an IDP site. "Why are the children important?" I ask them. "Because they are the future!" is the answer I get back. "What is the most important quality you need to serve the children?" "We must love them." On their journey to the villages and hide sites of the displaced people, they will try to find ways to meet both the physical and spiritual needs.

After a class is over Kaw Bla Sei says, "A while ago I found four children aged 4 to 10 wandering aimlessly around a village. They did not have any parents. I helped them get to a refugee camp where they were taken in at an orphanage. They are all doing really well now."

Saw Kiaw has chosen to follow Jesus' calling to serve the little children, and I believe there will be a real, special prize for people like him. Until then he will be busy looking for children in need.

The Good Life Club program is based on the words of Jesus in John 10:10, "The thief comes to kill and destroy; but I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly!" The word abundant is so big and full... only Jesus can truly meet all of our needs in an abundant way. In whatever ways we are able, we hope to bring love and faith, along with tools for a good life, body and soul. These include teaching, primarily bible lessons and healthcare, songs and games, and a school pack for the teachers.

Kids Packs

- small comb and mirror
- a box of children's chewable vitamins
- 2 children's toothbrushes
- fingernail clippers
- a small toy
- a drawing or photograph of you or your group
- a postcard from your city or state with a verse of scripture

Mom and Baby Packs

- small fingernail clippers
- multi-vitamins for mom
- pediatric vitamins (not needing refrigeration)
- 2 sets for baby including cap, hand mitts, shirt (not a onesie)
- a teether
- a drawing or photograph of you or your group
- a postcard from your city or state with a verse of scripture

Shipping Information:

Thank you for your help in sending the packs to us. At this time, it is still not possible to send charitable bulk shipments to us. Please send standard household/gift size boxes with the description, "household/personal goods" on the customs form.

Send packs standard airmail (USA: not to exceed 79 inches length/width/girth) to the address on the back of this booklet, with the name, "GLC".

Pray for your enemies

Fighting the Serpent by Praying for the Enemy

The chief and most powerful enemy of human beings is the deceiver of Adam and Eve, the serpent, our ancient foe that “seeks to work us woe.” It wants to destroy the image of God in the world. It wants to damage and destroy our bodies, our minds, our hearts and our souls.

In this way, even in Burma the Burma Army is not our biggest enemy. Our biggest enemy is the serpent, a symbol of Satan. If we forget that our biggest enemy is the serpent, we can forget that God can redeem even the worst commanders and soldiers in the dictator’s military. Many of them are caught in a web of oppression and deceit themselves. A Burma Army general is a human being.

He is not the serpent. This can help us pray for even the worst of the soldiers and commanders. We can pray that their eyes be opened to see that God hates hands that shed innocent blood. We can pray that they be released from the power of the serpent and their own bad decisions. We can pray blessing upon them, that the power of bad things in them weakens while the power of good things in them grows. We can pray that they begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

When Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for them, this is not a counsel of weakness. It is not a mystery that cannot be understood.

If we pray for someone we pray not that they become strong to do evil, but that they become strong to do good. This is just what we want for our enemies, and for the enemies of the people of Burma. We want the power of darkness in these enemies to grow weak. There is no better way to do this than to love those who hate and to pray for them. Love takes away strength from hate, and the power of prayer comes directly against the power of evil.

We can help the people of Burma by praying for the soldiers who do evil things to them. When we do this we fight against the biggest enemy of us all. When we show love and pray for enemies, we send strong weapons into battle against our ancient foe the serpent.

Jesus tells us to be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves. If we do not know how to think like serpents, we may get bit by them. If we do not remember to act like doves, we may turn into serpents ourselves. When we pray strategically for the enemies of the innocent, we attack the thinking and activity of the serpent head-on. When we pray for enemies in love, we act with the purity of intention and action of the dove—the symbol of the Holy Spirit of God.



Burma Army soldiers force a porter to carry their supplies.



Burma Army forces porters to carry their supplies. Sept 07.



Bulldozer being used to clear new roads in Nyaunglebin and Papun Districts. April 07.

Relief Teams

with internally displaced people in Burma



Baptism Dec 06.

From a relief-team leader:

During a relief mission, one of our team members asked to be baptized.

His name is Saw Hser Wah ("Sweet White") and he was an animist from the Toungoo area of the Karen State. He joined one of the FBR teams this year as a communications specialist. As you know, we have people of many faiths on our teams and all are welcome. In the Karen area most team members are Christians but not all. We had just

held a meeting with our headquarters team and the team Hser Wah is on and they volunteered to go on a mission to a particularly dangerous area.

Hser Wah came up to us and said, "Tomorrow we set out on a new mission and maybe I will die. If I die, I do not know what will happen to me. I want to give my life to God and be baptized because if I do so, even if I die, I know I will be with God. Please, if you have time, baptize me."

Hser Wah was baptized in a stream at a fork in the trail where our teams were heading west and his team was heading north. The local people, all IDPs—some animist and some Christian—joined in the service. We thanked God and one month later met up with Hser Wah and his team again.

He said, "See I am still alive and now that I belong to God I am not afraid but I am also in no hurry to die either!"



*Fleeing Burma
Army attacks.
Jan 07.*



*Medics in Karen State
treating a teenager
who stepped on
a Burma Army
landmine. The boy
survived. Dec 06.*



Shan relief-team medic treating a Shan displaced woman. Sept 07.



Arakan relief team with displaced people in western Burma.



Lahu relief team gives medical treatment to displaced villagers.

Two relief-team members who died during 2006-2007.



Lee Reh, who was captured, tortured and killed in April 2007 by the Burma Army during a relief mission to help the internally displaced.



Chit Doh, a Karenni relief-team leader who became sick and died this past year.

Porters



Villagers forced to carry loads for the Burma Army in June 07.

Maw Pu army camp



Maw Pu Army camp in northern Karen State.



Porter killed by the Burma Army. Jan 07.

The Burma Army forces both villagers and prisoners as porters. The Burma Army has used more than 1,700 prisoner porters in their current offensive in northern Karen State which began in February 2006. More than 256 have been reported dead, many of whom were executed. Among the porters in Papun District alone, there are more than 20 child porters (boys under 16 years old from Insein Prison).

The Burma Army is now using the term "transporter" or *woon htan* instead of "prisoner porter" to describe the people they force to carry their loads.

The following information is from escaped porters, Burma Army deserters and villagers who have seen the bodies of dead porters. Porters are beaten and poorly fed. If they cannot carry loads they are often beaten to death or shot. Some who become sick are given an injection of an unknown drug and these porters reportedly die within a few hours.

Porters who were killed by the Burma Army or who died from sickness as they carried loads:

Nyaunglebin District: Of the more than 400 porters used in this area, more than 20 have died.

Papun District: Of the more than 700 porters used in this area, 150 porters died by torture, by execution and by sickness (dysentery is the most often cited).

Toungoo District: Of the more than 600 prisoner porters, 95 were killed. Some were reportedly killed because their throats were cut, and others starved to death. Note: Not counted yet are any of the deaths resulting from the more than 850 villagers used to carry loads for the Burma Army.

Total*: 1,700 porters, 265 dead.

*(*Totals as of December 2006)*

As Good As It Gets

A story from a relief mission in Burma

Last week we were providing relief to a group of Karen people in their hiding place. These people had fled their homes when the Burma Army attacked and were living in lean-tos and makeshift shelters in the jungle. We had been in this area since early January and had just about exhausted our medical and other relief supplies. The medics were able to treat most of the cases we saw and the two cases that we could not treat we were able to evacuate.

It was just getting dark when a man came up to me carrying an old woman. "This is my grandmother," he said. "She is 97 years old and has been blind for four years; can you help her?"

I said a quick silent prayer, and thought that probably the only help we could give was love and some vitamins. Her grandson set her gently down in front of me, as all the medics were busy. She squatted down with her thin arms dangling down beside her legs. She began to shake. I asked her if she was cold and she said yes. I got a Good Life Club jacket that Partners had donated and put it on her. She smiled broadly and said repeatedly, "Thank you, thank you."

Her eyes were squeezed tight and with the help of her grandson we opened them for examination. Her eyes were small, misshapen and looked partially dissolved. They did not look much like eyes anymore. I asked the medics their opinion and they said, "She has been blind a long time, is very old, and so there is no way to fix those now." I told her we could not help her eyes and I got some vitamins from the medics and gave them to her grandson with instructions. And then I prayed for her. That was it; no healing and no treatment for her eyes. The grandson then smiled and as he started to pick her up, he thanked us again.

She held out her arms and grabbed him tightly from behind, drawing her legs up so that he could carry her on his back. She looked secure there and laid her head against his shoulder. As they walked away I almost began to cry. There she was, all folded up on her grandson's back, with her new GLC jacket with the smiley face logo shining. Off they went to their hiding place with no healing, no promise of security and no certain future. But for the moment she seemed content and was warm and I thought, "This is as good as it gets."

We want to help everyone, we want to be part of real change in Burma, but in reality sometimes we cannot do very much. But the little we each can do is sometimes as good as it gets here. We thank you all and all the individuals and organizations that are working together to make positive change for Burma. We thank God that in this life of triumphs and tragedy, of contentment and distress, there are good things that happen and with love, there is always a way.

God bless you,
A relief-team leader



Grandmother with new jacket being carried by grandson Jan 07.



Karen medic gives medical treatment to a landmine victim. Dec 06.



Day of Prayer for Burma celebrated in Paan District in Mar 07.

Oppression, hope and taking a stand in Burma



©Thierry Falise

Demonstrations led by monks in Rangoon, Sept 07.

For over fifty years, the dictators of Burma have waged war against their own civilian population. The demonstrations of 2007 were put down brutally. The war against the ethnic peoples continues. It is a war backed by a military of more than 400,000 soldiers and is supported by 50% of the nation's budget.

The Burma Army's methodology is to conduct large-scale offensives like the one described in this report, followed by consolidation of territory gained and expansion of control and then the launching of new attacks.

In spite of this oppression, the people of Burma have not given up. They need prayer, immediate protection, humanitarian assistance, and support for their pro-democracy organizations.



©Thierry Falise

Monks protesting in Rangoon, Sept 07.



Shan, Pa'O, and Lahu IDPs demonstrating unity.



Aung San Suu Kyi



Shan, Karen, Karenni relief teams support the demonstrators.



KWO, KYO and FBR team members from Nyaunglebin District send message of unity with demonstrators.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, has now spent more than 12 years under house arrest. She is the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the party which won over 80% of the vote in the 1990 elections in Burma. The military dictatorship responded by ignoring the results of the elections and jailing members of the opposition.



Father and daughter flee Burma Army attacks.



Nurse injured by Burma Army mortar in March 07.



Fleeing Burma Army attacks in Karen State.



IDP woman with children in a hiding site. Jan 07.



Families flee across road controlled by Burma Army. Dec 06.



Faith and Doubt

It often seems that we here are easily swayed by our circumstances. I was writing a message to friends under attack in Burma and ending the message with Proverbs 3:5-6. Later I realized I had left out the part that says “with all your heart.” It is difficult for most of us, I think, to trust God with all of our hearts. I am very grateful for your prayers and God’s mercy to help us do that. We will try daily to trust God with our whole hearts and for me it is like a choice between the planting and growing of two different trees: one called Doubt, the other Faith.

There are two trees before me I can help to grow. One is the tree of doubt. This one is easy to see, and has a clear, seemingly straight shot to the sky. It grows fast. But every time I put energy into helping that tree grow—and grow it does—the fruit that comes is poison with all of poison’s effects to me and others.

The other tree is called faith, and is much harder to grow. It is often choked by weeds and we seem to be standing in a thicket where we can not even see the sky. But the efforts of faith, prayer, the help of others as well as clinging to God for help,

makes it grow—however slowly. The wonderful thing is that the fruit of this tree is good in every way. And it is the fruit of this tree by which God gives us an insight into His view. By this fruit we can see some of the results of faith. Faith, by earthly definition, cannot be seen, but by the good fruit that comes from it, God has given us an insight into it. He has given us something tangible to hold on to. My prayer for you is the same as it is for me: to choose to grow the tree of faith and hold on to God for the strength to do it.

Thank you and may God bless you all,
Christians Concerned for Burma

“Trust in the Lord will all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

This booklet has been produced by Christians Concerned for Burma (CCB). All text copyright CCB 2008. All rights reserved. This booklet may be reproduced if proper credit is given to text and photos. All photos copyright Free Burma Rangers (FBR) unless otherwise noted. Scripture portions quoted are taken from the NIV unless otherwise noted.