

**United Nation 1st Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous
Issues**

New York, May 21 , 2002



Agenda Item No. 6 - Human Rights.

Statement by : Cung Bik Ling, Chin Human Rihts Organization

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for giving me to address this historic First Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and I extend my warm congratulations on your election as Chairperson of the Forum.

I consider it a great opportunity to inform you briefly about the disastrous situation that my people have been subjected to in Burma over the past 50 years. As many international community has stated, Burma is a country which still practices inhuman acts on their own people.

Nobel Peace Prize laurence Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said - and I cite her - "Life without peace is akin to a meaningless existence. Bura, under military rule, is like a battlefield where rights are being violated persistently. The question of human rights could not be avoided when there is talk of peace. Woe is forever to the people of Burma as there is no equality and justice in the country".

Under the long years of suppression and increasing military rule, the Chin indigenous peoples in particular are experiencing many of the same abuses and atrocities as other ethnic indigenous groups living inside and along the border areas of Burma. A specific human rights abuse suffered by the Chin people is religious persecution, even though the first and second Constitutions of Burma accorded freedom of religion. In theory, Burma is a union of multi-ethnic groups founded on the principle of equality and fraternity in which the citizens have the right to practice and enjoy their own religion peacefully. The reality is very different.

Mr.Chairman,

Given the political experiences of our country for the last five decades, we are gravely concerned about the continuing policy and intentions of the Burmese army towards the future of the indigenous peoples of Burma. Ignorance and continued denial of fundamental human rights to indigenous peoples will only amount to weakening the stability of the Union, and hinder the peace building process, which is most needed and will lead to the eventual lasting peace for the nation.

On the issue of religious persecution, we would like to make the following recommendation to the Permanent Forum:-

1. That a Working Group be formed on Religious Persecution that will make study the issue, and the report could then be provided to the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intorelance who has not been able visit Burma;
2. That a recommendation be made to ECOSOC to apply pressure to its member states to stop religious persecution in their countries.

Thank you, Mr. Chair