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Human Rights:

Mr. Chairman:

My name is Matthew McDaniel.

I am with the Akha Heritage Foundation in cooperation with Land is Life.

I am speaking on behalf of the Akha people of Thailand.

I am married to an Akha woman and have four children.

I have worked with the Akha continuously for 13 years in their villages in Thailand.

Lack of ID cards made it impossible for Akha people to attend this Forum this year.

There are approximately 70,000 Akha people in Thailand, only 20,000 have ID cards.

I would like to make very clear to this Forum the brutal conditions which the Thai government has imposed on the Akha people for the last 30 years as they built roads into the Akha mountain community.

In January of this year I filed a petition 1503 with the UNHCHR against the Thai government at the request and on the behalf of the Akha people.

This petition detailed 46 cases of extremely brutal murders, torture, electrocution, and extortion of Akha people by the Thai Army, Royal Thai Police and Thai Forestry Department FOR ONLY THE LAST TWO YEARS!

In no cases, were any of the security personnel responsible for these abuses prosecuted for crimes.

On the CONTRARY, witnesses were imprisoned and REMAIN in prison.

As a result of filing this petition with the UNHCHR I was deported from Thailand on April 24 without being able to contact or protect my Akha wife and infant children. I remain out of contact to this day. This constitutes severe retaliation against a human rights defender and has been filed as a second case against the Thai Government with the UNHCHR special envoy for human rights defenders, Ms. Hina Jilani in Geneva.

On behalf of the Akha people, I hereby make the following recommendations:

1.

That Akha observers be identified and protected from retaliation by the Thai government. That these observers receive the funding and training they need to report specific and severe violations of human rights in the Akha communities by agents of the Thai government.

2.

I hereby URGENTLY REQUEST that the Special Rapporteur be allotted sufficient funding to investigate the details of severe conditions that are being imposed on the Akha people of Thailand by the Thai Government. These conditions are not new, but have been imposed and steadily made worse over thirty years.

Akha women who bear as many as 10 children are lucky to see even four survive to adulthood under these brutal conditions.

Meanwhile the Thai Government benefits immensely by using Akha images to promote tourism in Thailand.

3.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the extra-judicial executions of Akha prisoners.

Thailand

4.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the location of army bases in the Akha villages where soldiers take food, kill livestock and abuse young Akha girls.

5.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the cases of torture and electrocution of Akha prisoners by Police and Army forces, PARTICULARLY the 4th Army at Sam Yaek Army Base, Ampur Mae Fah Luang, Chiangrai Province.

6.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the seizure of critical rice lands of the Akha people by the Royal Thai Forestry Department, and in particular the seizure of 8500 rai of land from Hooch Yoh Pah Soh village (Ampur Mae Fah Luang, Chiangrai Province). This village, present in the area for 150 years, have no alternative food source, women and children are being forced into starvation and ALREADY many Akha girls have been forced into prostitution. Rice land seizures are a violation of the most basic right, the right to food.

7.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the forced vaccination of Akha women DURING pregnancy under programs implemented by the WHO which result in shock and the spontaneous abortion of Akha babies.

8.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the forced sterilization of Akha women immediately following the birth of a child, without their free and informed consent at this stressful time, by Thai doctors in Chiangmai and Chiangrai Provinces.

9.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the mysterious disappearances and deaths of Akha babies immediately following birth in Thai hospitals.

10.

That UNICEF allocate funds to IDENTIFY all the Akha girls enslaved in the immense number of brothels in Thailand and that UNICEF extend support, protection and rescue services to these girls. Requesting that all Akha women in prostitution be included in this number, since most have been forced into prostitution since youth.

Forced prostitution in Thailand constitutes rape, and the rape of Akha women in Thailand is not brought to light. Rather it is often concealed by the more polite term, "trafficking in women".

11.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the names and locations of all Akha prisoners in Thailand whether they be from Thailand or Myanmar, and that there be a full review of these cases, as many of the prisoners are elderly Akha women over sixty years of age. The Akha suffer one of the highest per capital imprisonment rates in the world.

12.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the imprisonment of family members who are relatives of a suspect whom the Thai Police seek but are not able to find.

13.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the arrest of Akha women for infractions, placing them in prison while they are pregnant, many of them waiting up to 15 months just to find out what they are being charged with, and with no resources to hire a lawyer, defend their rights or gain maternity bail.

14.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the coercive removal of Akha children, particularly young girls from their families and villages by American and Italian missionaries who deprive these children of their most basic rights, exploit them for financial gain and expose them to sexual abuse.

15.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the Thai Governmental policy of assimilation imposed on the Akha people.

16.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the Thai Government refusal to rapidly process ID card applications for 50,000 Akha people, while at the same time threatening them each August with deportation to Myanmar even though they may have been born in Thailand. Endless promises which the Thai Government makes to the International Community and the Akha people are never kept.

17.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the exploitation of Akha images and intellectual property rights by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, while the Thai Government denies the Akha people national identity and the most basic human rights.

18.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the involvement of Thai Army and Police forces in the international drug trade, requiring Akha people to supply drugs, which often leads to the execution of these individuals after the drugs have been delivered.

19.

That the Special Rapporteur investigate the forced relocation of Akha villages.

We request that a report to the Fourth Session be made on the progress of these interventions on the behalf of Akha women and children.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

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