



May Day Statement by

Swedish Burmese Human Rights Association

1. On this auspicious day for workers, the SBHRA pay respect to Swedish workers, who have established such a wonderful nation, Sweden, in addition to all workers across the world. Then, let us introduce about the situation of our fellow workers in Burma.
2. Despite that the right to peaceful gathering and demonstration of people was provided for in the 1974 Constitution of Burma, the regime gunned down workers' strike occurred in Rangoon and in many towns in upper Burma on June 6, 1974. Over 120 workers and people who participated in such a peaceful demonstration then got injured and about 45 had to sacrifice their lives. Since that time, formation, existence and operation of trade unions have been formally banned.
3. In the aftermath of 1988 people's uprisings, the military regime vindictively restricts people's right to freedom of speech, association and assembly. It criminalized the peaceful actions of eight Shan ethnic leaders, whose efforts are exerted to re-establish a genuine Union by forming an association, namely "Shan State Academic Consultative Council". They were arrested and punished with long-term imprisonments, ranging from 75 to 106 years, in 2005. People who filed complaints on forced labor at ILO were also criminalized and provided harsh penalties. Under such an atrocious oppression of the military regime, the emergence of independent trade unions in Burma is still a dream in spite of the fact that Burma has been a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) since 1956.
4. Given that there lacks the protection of rights of workers inside Burma, people left their mother land and have ended up with their lives as migrant workers in neighboring countries. Over two million migrant workers from Burma are currently working in Thailand alone. Although Thailand is a member country of ILO, migrant workers' right to form their own organizations is still

ignored. As a result, the migrant workers from Burma cannot enjoy minimum wages stipulated by Royal Thai Government; they can be dismissed from job at any time without receiving compensation; and, for a number of times, they have become victims of crimes or they are subject to be criminalized.

5. Pursuant to Article 20 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Workers in Burma and from Burma should enjoy this right regardless of whether they work inside and outside of their mother land. The Swedish Burmese Human Rights Association (SBHRA) urges the military regime in Burma, SPDC, to recognize the rights of workers to form their own trade unions independently and we demand that SPDC annuls its 2008 Constitution which immensely prohibits human rights of people and basic freedoms of citizen, including the rights of workers. The SBHRA also requests the governments in ASEAN countries to comply with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990 and protect the rights of migrant workers from Burma as well as other countries.

The Executive Board of the SBHRA

May 1, 2009