

Joint-statement on the 61st Mon National Day

February 22, 2008

Today, Mon people around the world mark the 61st Mon National Day in commemoration of the founding of the last Mon kingdom, Hongsawatoi, and in celebration of their national identity, pride and heritage. The Mon, a subfamily of the Mon-Khmer, were the earliest inhabitants in both modern Burma and Thailand and the pioneers of civilization in both Old Burma and Old Siam. Mon people enjoyed their sovereignty and independence until the Hongsawatoi kingdom (Bago) in Lower Burma, was occupied and destroyed by the Burmese king Alaung Paya in 1757. With the help of the British and the Dutch, the Burmese king, Alaung Paya invaded and annexed the Mon kingdom and brutally killed thousands of innocent Mons including Buddhist monks, children, and pregnant-women. Those who survived escaped to Thailand. The Mon People became a minority group in their own-land and have been a people without a country ever since.

The Mons have never recognized successive Burmese regimes as the legitimate rulers of their land. They have defied the administration of these aggressors by all sorts of means including armed resistance. They fought against the Burmese rulers until the British occupied part of lower Burma in 1824. During British rule, the Mon People fought against the British along with the Burmese and other ethnic nationalities in order to regain their homeland. But when Burma gained her independence in 1948, the Mons were once again denied the right to exercise self-determination. Having exhausted all peaceful means of gaining their rights and freedom and under continuous rejection and brutal suppression by the Burmese leadership, the Mons were left with no other choice than armed resistance.

In 1995, the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the largest Mon armed resistance party entered into a cease-fire agreement with the current Burmese military regime (SPDC) with the aim of solving political problems by peaceful means. The SPDC, however, has dishonored its promise and refused to hold political talks with the NMSP. Instead, the Burmese regime has expanded its military forces in the Mon areas and committed various kinds of human rights abuses including land confiscation, forced relocation, forced labor, rape, and killing. Furthermore, the SPDC abolished the Mon National Democratic Front (MNDF), which had been fighting for the right to self-determination for the Mons through peaceful and democratic means. Many of the MNDF leaders and supporters were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, and sentenced to long-term jails.

On this 61st Mon National Day, we reaffirm our commitment to continue our fight until our people win our fundamental rights, freedom, and peace. We strongly urge Mon people around the world:

- (1) To build solid unity among ourselves and to work together for our causes,
- (2) To promote our culture and literature wherever we are,
- (3) To launch effective international campaigns against the illegitimate rule of Burmese military regime, and

We appeal to the international community:

- (1). To increase pressure on Burmese military regime to initiate political dialogue with the NLD and the ethnic nationalities.
- (2). To stop all kinds of human rights abuses committed by the Burmese Army in the parts of Burma that are the homelands of the Mons and other ethnic nationalities.

This statement is jointly issued by:

1. Australia Mon Association (AMA)
2. Euro Mon Community
3. Mon Canadian Society
4. Monland Restoration Council (USA)
5. Mon Women's Association of America
6. Mon Women's Organization of Canada
7. Mon National League for Consolidating and Aiding (Mae Sot, Thailand)
8. Mon Youth Association (Liberated Area)
9. Mon Refugee Association (Nopho Camp, Thailand)
10. Mon Refugee Organization (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)
11. Mon Unity League (Thailand)

Media contact:

Nai Kun Yekha (USA), Tel: 260-312-8962 email: yekha9@yahoo.com

Nai Cham Toik (Canada) Tel: +1 403 248 2027 e-mail:ctoik@hotmail.com

Nai Siri Mon Chan (Australia) Tel: +(61)433548199 e-mail: sirimonchan@yahoo.com;

Nai Sunthorn Sripanngern (Thailand) Tel: + (66) 0869890079

email:sunthornmul@gmail.com