

## **Statement by Razua Women's Group**

### **Burmese military authorities must stop punishing communities opposing sexual violence**

**Date: July 7, 2014**

On June 10, 2014, a Burmese soldier from Light Infantry Battalion 269 attempted to rape a 54 year old woman near Razua in southern Chin State. She was badly injured and admitted to hospital in Razua. The soldier was arrested, but many local villagers were worried there would be no justice, as in former cases. Therefore, on June 15 and 16, we, the Razua women's group, asked permission from the Razua police to hold a peaceful protest to demand justice in the case, but the police refused permission.

On June 17, two of our Razua women leaders went to Matupi township to meet with the Matupi women's group. On June 19, the Razua women leaders asked the Matupi police for permission to hold a peaceful protest. However, the police not only refused permission, but threatened to arrest any protestors.

On June 18, the Matupi township administrator and Burma Army Tactical Commander went to Razua, and together with the Razua sub-township administrator, called a meeting of community leaders, including the husband of the injured woman. The Army Commander gave 100,000 Kyat (about US\$100) and 15 packets of Yum Yum noodles to the husband, as "compensation". The officials told the community leaders not to hold a protest. They said that if they did, the newly implemented town development projects would be delayed by 5 to 10 years. They also said that if the police shot anyone during the protest, they would not take responsibility.

On June 23, we, the Razua women's group, organized a peaceful public protest in Razua, attended by about 400 people. On June 24, the Matupi also held a peaceful public protest, attended by about 200 people. On June 25, two of our leaders travelled to Matupi to meet the Matupi women's group, but they were arrested on the way by the police, and brought back to Razua police station. The police then told the women they had to go to Matupi, where they would be charged for illegally holding a protest, on the orders of the Chin State Chief Minister. They told the women that if they did not want to be detained in Matupi, they needed to find guarantors to ensure they would not run away, so the women called four pastors to come and sign as their guarantors.

On June 29, the township administrator came to Razua and held a meeting with community leaders the next day and told them that the four women leaders who organized the protest would be punished soon. On July 2, the women were told by the police they would have to go to Matupi to face charges. They were told they would only be away from home a few days, so they travelled to Matupi only taking one change of clothing on July 3. But on July 4, when our four leaders were called to court, and asked if they wanted a lawyer to represent them, they said they wanted a lawyer, and the court hearing was rescheduled till July 8. So, they have already been away from home longer than they expected. Two women have children in Razua who they need to take care of.

In Matupi, two Matupi women's leaders and two youth leaders were also charged for organizing their protest.

We, the Razua Women's Group, strongly urge the government authorities to immediately stop harassing our community leaders and drop all charges against them. We also repeat our calls for justice in the recent case of attempted rape, and for an end to military sexual violence against ethnic women.

#### Contact

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