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Building a New Life:
From a Refugee Camp in Thailand to an Apartment in Austin, Texas

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**Building a New Life:
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by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2011

Abstract

Building a New Life:

From a Refugee Camp in Thailand to an Apartment in Austin, Texas

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

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Burma is home to one of the longest-running civil wars in the world, and Burmese refugees are the largest refugee group to arrive in the United States since 2008. The aim of this report is to help tell their story through testimonies of how individuals became refugees in the first place and what they experienced as a result. I have told their story in both a written narrative and a documentary video.

I know that testimonies of the refugees in my story cannot impact the situation in Burma overnight, or in the short-term future, but I hope that by presenting a small segment of history in this report I will contribute to change and give voice to ordinary people involved in extraordinary events. I would like to thank all the refugees who helped make this report possible.

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Overview: The Displaced Ones

It isn't hard for me to imagine how difficult it is for people who have lived all of their lives under total state control, with none of the basic conveniences of life or freedoms many of us take for granted, to search for new and better ones.

I became interested in Burma's Karen refugees because, as a South Korean, I grew up hearing news about North Korean refugees who crossed the border to the South and experienced total confusion about life in their new country. In high school, I remember reading a book by Lee Young Kook called *I was a Kim Jong Il's Bodyguard*; it was about a North Korean defector who twice risked his life to cross the Dooan River that separates North Korea from China only to face another daunting life after settling in South Korea, where he had to start all over again and from nothing.

What has brought about the displacement of the North Korean defectors? How are we to approach and help them? I always had such questions in mind as I read about the political system in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and that deepened and extended my interest in understanding the difficult steps of a refugee's journey to a new life, no matter the country of origin.

The United Nations defines a refugee as a person who flees her or his home country out of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." For individuals seeking to settle in the United States, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must first classify them as refugees. "The process can take months or sometimes years when they apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services," said Reed Iwami, co-founder of the Burma Connection, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Austin, Texas. While refugees from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were the largest group to arrive in the United States from 2000 to 2005, it is the Burmese who have arrived in the greatest numbers over the past five years, ahead of 83 other countries like Bhutan, Somalia, Iraq, and Iran, according to the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services.

When I came to Austin to attend graduate school in journalism in 2009, I began to research the main Burmese refugee groups in Central Texas. According to the 2011 Annual Report to Congress from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, 69,200 Burmese refugees (30,000 of them belong to Karen ethnic minority) have arrived in 41 states since 1992, while Texas ranks second among the states with about 8,000. Today, the records show 300 Burmese refugees have settled in Austin since 2006.

A Burmese Diaspora

The start of mass emigration of Burmese refugees to other countries dates to January 4, 1948, when Burma got its independence from the United Kingdom. Burma became engulfed in ethnic conflicts, and the military regime in Rangoon started to target minority groups. According to Minority Rights Group International, Burma has over 100 ethnic groups, the richest ethnic diversity in Asia, and the country had never existed as a unified nation state because the minority groups demand for self-determination, federalism, and autonomy.

By 1949, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), led by the Karen, at 7 million the second-largest ethnic group in the nation's population of 48 million, waged an armed rebellion against the central government for independence, or at least federalism. The Karen were dissatisfied with the new government, led by the civilian elected former Prime Minister U Nu, which failed to heed minority demands for autonomy and self-determination. In 1962, a military coup was staged by General Ne Win and Burma Socialist Program Party proceeded to crackdown on ethnic minority political leaders and pro-democracy activists that marked the beginning of a war and ethnic insurgency which has engulfed the country until today. In 1989, the military dictatorship in Rangoon changed the name of the country to Myanmar; however, most ethnic groups do not call their country Myanmar – they call it Burma.

According to the U.S. Department of State, cease-fire agreements between the Rangoon government and majority of armed ethnic opposition groups, including the Karen, were reached in June 1995, but internal armed conflicts have continued in many areas and the dictatorship has repeatedly broken the terms of pacts. The 2007 report of the UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights found that government-led counter-insurgency operations continued and unarmed civilians were being targeted in military offensives, with mortar bombs fired at Karen villages. "Even now the Burmese army troops continue persecution, arrest of anti-military government activists, forced relocation of ethnic minority villages to clear areas of activists, as well as discrimination in such areas as language use and education," said Saw Simon, a Karen refugee pastor in the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand.

Today, the political arm of the KNLA, the Karen National Union, continues efforts to fight the government and gain autonomy. However, due to the long period of military domination, more than 500,000 Karen have fled to refugee camps in Thailand to escape war and human rights abuses since 1984. Once in Thailand, they are relatively safe from harm, but they must stay in nine temporary camps on the Thai-Burmese border. The U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration reported that there are 400,000 people living in these camps.

Field Notes

In January 2011, I visited Mae La refugee camp on the Thai-Burmese border, the largest of the camps, which houses 150,000 people, most of them ethnic Karen. I stayed there for three weeks. When I passed through the gate and walked past Thai police carrying machine guns, I realized I was now about to see with my own eyes the camp that I had heard about from my Karen refugee friends in Austin.

The size of the camp was startling. The houses, constructed of bamboo and wood with roofs made of dried leaves, stretched for miles in all directions along a series of hillsides. The western border of the camp was a large mountain with bare granite rock. To the west of the mountain was Burma. The refugees can be immediately sent back to face

imprisonment or torture for leaving their country illegally if the Thai police catch them outside the camp.

For this report, I followed specific Karen individuals and explored their path to new lives, a journey that typically starts in the refugee camps and continues in Austin. My translators were local missionaries fluent in English and Karen. It took time for me to develop a level of trust with refugees necessary for them to share with me often painful memories, dealing both with their lives in Burma and what happened to them thereafter, in Mae La and Austin. I was conscious of the fact that, if the Burmese government discovered the identity of my sources, their family members remaining in Burma might face harm. Because of this, I was careful to ask and receive their full permission to tell about their stories. I will start with Rha, who was desperate to tell her story after she understood who I was and why I wanted to tell her story.

Chapter 1: Living in a Refugee Camp

It was midnight of November 20, 2004, when Rha Htoo was startled from her sleep in the pitch black by the pulsing of machine gun fire outside her small thatched hut. “I was so frightened,” Rha said. “My neighbors were wailing. There was gunfire everywhere.” Located among some of the steepest mountains in the Western Karen State of Burma, Rha’s remote village exploded in chaos that night. According to Asian Human Rights Commission, four Burmese army battalions went house to house, methodically setting fire to 30 dwellings and destroying more than 2,000 baskets of rice. They sent a brutal message: Leave your homes, or we will burn them to the ground.

According to Amnesty International, the ruling military dictatorship in Burma is one of the world’s most abusive and oppressive regimes. It has been involved in a military campaign against the Karen, the largest indigenous ethnic group in eastern Burma, to eliminate those the government doesn’t see as “Burmese.” The military today has about 500,000 troops.

Frantic, with not a minute to grab food or money, Rha fled with only the clothes on her back. She ran as fast as anyone being squeezed by a crowd of 800 could and did not stop to catch her breath until she was deep in the jungle. On that day Rha became one of 650,000 Karen people whom the U.N. calls “internally displaced persons.”

Rha remembers the nights with particular vividness – they were freezing. For three weeks she hid in the mountains or amid thick jungle foliage. Spread out in small clusters so that the army would not detect them, the survivors found communication not only difficult but also dangerous. “I lived in fear,” Rha said. Foraging was the only way to get water or food. Rha succumbed to respiratory infections, which intensified in part for lack of water. “Everyone was getting sick,” she said. “One of my close friends got malaria, and she just wanted to die because there was no treatment.” The Reproductive Health Response in Conflict, a NGO that promotes reproductive health for all persons affected by humanitarian crises, says the number of Karen refugees who have died from diseases in the jungles is unknown, but estimates that some 30,000 individuals have suffered from malnutrition, malaria and land-mine injuries while fleeing Burma since 1984.

Even in the jungle Rha and her fellow refugees had to be prepared to move at the first sign that the Burmese army might be advancing toward their latest hideout. “We could not go back to our village, because the army placed land mines around the areas they attacked and burned,” she said. The Burmese military used forced labor to build bases at destroyed villages to discourage returns.

Rha’s situation was not unusual. Human Rights Watch reported in 2006 that political oppression by Burmese army had for nearly 20 years forced the Karen people to give up their political representation and basic human rights of self-determination and independence. And so for more than two decades the Karen have been crossing the border into neighboring Thailand to seek safe haven. The first wave of Karen refugees began crossing the Thai border in 1984, when Burmese army forces launched what has become a sustained offensive against all of the nation’s rebel ethnic groups.

“It is one of the largest migration flows in Southeast Asia,” said Saw Simon, a Karen refugee pastor, who chose to live in the Mae La camp even though he has been free to resettle elsewhere since 1988. “All Karen refugee camps are unofficial and not officially recognized by the Thai government or the UNHCR,” Simon said. “So it became my mission to stay here and protect my people from evils.”

In January 2005, Rha became one of 2,400 Burmese who fled their country that month. After nearly wasting away for three months in the Burmese jungles, she arrived at Mae La. At first she was relieved but soon became extremely homesick. Memories of her comfortable village life both lured and haunted her. She tried several times to leave the camp. But Rha learned that she was trapped in a place that was in essence both a sanctuary and a prison. There was and still is no easy escape, because living in Thailand is illegal and going back to Burma is life threatening. “Anywhere I wanted to go I could think of was impossible because I could not leave this camp,” Rha said.

In 2007, Rha registered with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. It took her two years to become classified as a refugee because of the labyrinthine paperwork involved

and the large numbers of Burmese seeking resettlement. “I was nervous because my status in Thailand was illegal,” Rha said. In 2008, she became a staff camp office worker in Mae La, managing donated living supplies sent by numerous NGOs around the globe. The exposure to foreign people and cultures led Rha to dream of a different escape. This time she did not want to run to her homeland; her dream now was of resettling in America so she could study nursing. She decided to become a nurse when her mother died of malaria in 2006.

Today, Rha wishes to apply to study nursing in Texas. She chose Texas because her husband, Ba Tah, who is also a Karen refugee at Mae La, has parents who were accepted by the U.S. refugee program and have lived in Texas since 2009. “I want to become a professional nurse,” Rha said. “But I plan not to spend my whole life in America, because I want to go back to my village in Burma someday and help sick people.” Rha believes that with a U.S. education she can also work to educate the Karen people and participate in the fight for their independence from the Burmese army. “We want our country to be peaceful,” said Rha.

Thailand does not allow humanitarian organizations to assist the migrants and camps because the government does not want to risk tensions with the Burmese regime. UNHCR does not have a direct role in assisting Karen refugees either. As a result, the management of all refugee camps is left to NGOs like the Thailand Burma Border Consortium or church organizations that secretly work with Karen refugee leaders and Thai border officials. Such organizations provide refugees with food, shelter and basic commodities while researching the root causes of their displacement.

In the heart of Mae La, Pak Klosay plays an acoustic guitar and sings. He lives alone in a wooden house where the wall is filled with pictures of his family. He uses his music to help him get through the tragedies that have befallen his family. Born in the Karen state, Pak became an insurgent fighting against the Burmese troops that assassinated his politically active parents.

Later, Pak too became a casualty of the Burma regime's war against the Karen. In 2007, when the Burmese army discovered that Pak had joined the Karen insurgency, they planted a mine behind his house in the Western Karen State. One sunny summer morning, Pak stepped into his backyard, detonated the mine, and lost both eyes and a leg. Later, he discovered that his name had been on the regime's blacklist because someone informed on him. "Burmese soldiers had forced me to work for them," said Pak. "But I refused four times. How can I work with troops that killed my parent"?

Without his eyes, Pak felt his life had ended. But the toughest challenge was still ahead. It came when his wife and 9-year-old daughter abandoned him. "I woke up in the morning but couldn't hear anyone in the house," Pak said. "After few hours, my neighbor came and told me that my wife and daughter left home when I was sleeping. They left me for good because they thought I cannot make a living for them anymore since I became disabled." Pak was a farmer supporting his family for 13 years but could not continue after he lost his eyesight.

On the day his wife and daughter left, Pak attempted suicide, but his friend stopped him. He tried to take his life two more times, but his friend always found out and stopped him. "If it wasn't for my friend, I won't be here today," said Pak, who considers the friend his only family.

In 2010, Pak's friend led him to Mae La. "Overcoming my family's rejection was the worst time in my life," said Pak. "But I always think about them and hope that they come back some day." Pak wrote three songs that reveal his deep nostalgia and longing for his family. He does not blame or get angry at what his wife and daughter have done to him, because he still loves them. His greatest wish is to have a family reunion. "I don't know where they are right now, but meeting them again is the only dream I have, because I miss them so much," said Pak.

Since 1984, Thailand, which shares a porous 1,500-mile border with Burma, has helped new asylum seekers from Burma, for both humanitarian and political reasons. However, in January 2011, Thai authorities began to tighten border security with more troops to stop the inflow of migrants from Burma. "The Burmese refugees have been in Thailand

for more than 20 years, and it became our burden to take care of them because too many are coming,” Thailand’s National Security Council chief Tawin Pleansri reportedly said in April 2011. “I cannot say when we will close down the camps, but we intend to do it. We do understand that the refugees don’t want to stay at the camps forever either.”

Thai authorities announced that their plan includes helping refugees find jobs, because many of the refugees have been in the camps for more than 20 years without work. The Thai government also urges UNHCR and other countries, especially developed nations, to engage more with national and regional authorities in Burma to promote conditions for the refugees to go home.

“Our country is still a dangerous and unstable place for the refugees to return. The political conflicts are still going on,” Simon said, shaking his head. He was in one of the first generations that fled Burma, 23 years ago with his wife. He can’t understand how the Thai leadership can go ahead with his plan to close the camps, including Mae La. “These people will face persecution, rape and torture again because of their religion or political opinion,” said Simon. “This will lead them to escape again as illegal migrants if they are lucky to escape from forced labor camps and military-ruled homeland.” Solving the ethnic conflicts is the biggest issue facing Burma today.

Zoya Fransis can’t understand it either. He has lived in Mae La for 21 years and says he never wants to go to Burma. Since most Karen refugees are homesick, this may seem surprising. But Zoya was born in Mae La. “There is no one who will greet or know me if I go to Burma,” said Zoya, whose parents died in the camp when he was 7 years old. He has known no other life. He ponders how his nationality can be Burmese if he was born in Thailand. “But I am not a Thai either, because I don’t have a nationality,” said Zoya. “I have been an illegal person from the day I was born.”

It is not only Zoya who faces the crisis of his nationality. The Karen state struggling to become independent has fought against the Burmese dictatorship for nearly five decades. History will be repeated if the Karen are sent back to their homeland unless the politics in the country is settled. “But what about me? Who am I?” Zoya said as he watched his 2-year-old child, who was also born in Mae La. “We don’t have a home. Where do we

belong?” Sitting in a bamboo hut he built with his own hands, Zoya remembers his parents advising him to never leave Mae La. “I am scared to go back to Burma,” he said. “And I don’t even know if I can get a good job in Burma to support my wife and kid.”

UNHCR reported in 2005 that the bulk of assistance such as clean water, food, medicine and clothing at the camps is provided by NGOs, while the organization focuses on protection and programs to ensure the refugees are safe in the camps. The Thai government has invited UNHCR to work in Thailand since 1975; in that time, more than 1.3 million refugees have been hosted by Thailand from countries including Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Today, most refugees in Thailand are ethnic minorities from Burma, mainly Karen, and UNHCR advocates that they be given greater liberty to come and go from the camps, particularly to get a job in Thailand's labor-short economy.

In 2011, UNHCR agreed with Thai authorities that the Burmese refugees should not stay on Thai soil forever. “But return should be voluntary,” Kitty McKinsey, the UNHCR spokeswoman for Asia, reportedly said. “People should make their own decisions on whether they think it is safe for them to go home. The main thing is that they have to go home voluntarily, and with safety and dignity.” She added that if the repatriation begins, the UNHCR should be allowed access to the Burmese refugees to make sure that they are returning voluntarily, not forcibly. On October 5, 2011, Prime Minister of Thailand Yingluck Shinawatra visited Burma to meet with Burmese President Thein Sein, and discussed about the future of Burmese refugees in camps in Thailand. UNHCR reported that it is unclear that Yingluck will heed the Burmese representatives’ request to shut refugee camps because when her brother Thaksin Shinawatra became Prime Minister of Thailand from 2001 to 2006, many exiled offices were shut down.

In Mae La refugee camp, it is not only Rha Htoo, Pak Klosay and Zoya Fransis who live with painful stories about what the Burmese military did to forever alter their lives. Most of the refugees who had to abandon their homes to flee to Thailand have at least one unforgettable experience or memory that will not easily go away. With few hopes of returning to Burma in the foreseeable future, resettlement in the West offers them their

only realistic chance of leaving the refugee camps and leading normal lives. Since the Thai government gave the green light to resettlement in 2005, more than 46,000 refugees have left the camps for the U.S. and 11 other countries.

Chapter 2: Building an American Life

Inside the urban cluster of north Austin sits an apartment complex that looks like many others in the area along busy Lamar Street. The units are packed together, drying laundry hangs from identical balconies, and kids play guitar and soccer in the playground near their homes.

In apartment 202, 29-year-old Saw Say Wah looks at his first laptop computer. “So this is how you write a good resume,” said an Austinite volunteer who came to help him download Microsoft Word and find an appropriate job with help from the Internet. According to the International Rescue Committee, resettlement agencies across America have used private funds and volunteers to help refugees to find jobs for years. But this is not the first time that Wah tried to get a job in Austin.

Born to a Chinese-Karen father and an Indian-Karen mother, Wah is not a pure Karen. “I never had a nationality because I was born in Mae La,” said Wah. Today, he says, he is happy to write his status as a refugee on his resume when applying for jobs in Austin. “I don’t need to work and live illegally like in Thailand,” said Wah. “I am free to live whatever I want.” He cannot forget his joy the day he received an American passport in 2005. It had taken him two years.

Third-country resettlement is a major topic of discussion among the refugee residents not only of Mae La but also of Austin. According to UNHCR, The International Rescue Committee, a nongovernmental international relief and development organization in U.S. that provides resettlement services, processes the names of the Burmese refugees, family details, and preliminary interviews for the ones who desire to be resettled to U.S. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security conducts a final interview and accepts or rejects the application. If resettlement is approved, the International Organization for Migration provides medical screening, which focuses on identifying communicable diseases such as TB and HIV, and prepares for departure for the refugees from the refugee camps to new homes in the U.S. “DHS also checked if I had any criminal records. I have none in my life,” said Wah.

But his new life in America hasn't been easy. When he arrived with his wife and a four-year-old son in Austin in 2007, he was nervous because it was their first time in a city. Wah is not from the educated class; he was a farmer for 10 years in the hills of Mae La. The greater challenge came when other refugees swindled him.

When Wah came to Austin, he got a job offer from a small local food factory, but he moved to Georgia when a Burmese boss in a factory that produces soccer balls in Atlanta offered him \$3,000 per month. Wah thought it was enough money to support his family and even send extra money to his parents in Burma. But the job was a fraud. "I was told that I would work five days a week but I only worked twice a week, not even a full day," said Wah. "And the boss fired me after 10 days without telling me any reason. I got very upset because I was cheated by a Burmese man in America." Wah doesn't regret coming to the U.S. and facing such issues because he sees it as a positive challenge for his personal growth, to learn how hard it is to live in the real world of a capitalistic society, just like any other refugee.

In November 2008, after a week in Georgia, he moved to Wisconsin because he heard of job opening from a shoe factory. But his family couldn't bear the cold winters. After three months, he returned to Austin and lived for six months without a job until he found a position responsible for painting surfaces of automobiles in a car dealership in south Austin. "But the working condition was harsh," said Wah. "I could only sleep three hours a day and work all day."

He didn't want to give up. To support his family in Austin and his relatives back in Burma, he tried to accommodate a new life and working conditions, but he didn't find the right job. He tried two more jobs in Houston and came back to Austin because he could not bear the fast-paced working conditions or meet the qualifications. In Mae La, he didn't have to worry about making a living because NGOs provided food, clothes and other necessities. After four years in America, he is still jobless. "I think I failed to stay at the workplace because the communication between me and the boss was poor," said Wah. "From every person I meet here, I am now learning how to live in the United States."

“Except for airfares from Thailand to the U.S., refugee resettlement costs in America are covered by a three-year, interest-free loan that are provided by International Organization for Migration,” said Reed Iwami of the Burma Connection in Austin. “First installments are only due after up to six months, which is the assumed time the resettled refugees will have found a job.”

According to UNHCR, refugees receive eight months of Medicaid, food stamps and 36 months of financial support from the U.S. government and must take health tests and get vaccines when they come to the U.S. They can begin to find jobs and become self-sufficient only after they get identification, social security numbers and work permits. While not technically required, learning to read and speak English is not an option, if refugees want to achieve a measure of success and independence. To navigate this complex process, the Burmese refugees depend on Refugee Services of Texas (RST), the biggest resettlement agency in Austin. Rent assistance lasts four to six months, depending on what agencies can afford.

In the resettlement process, the International Organization for Migration gives the refugees a basic cultural orientation and equips them with survival English. “But life in the U.S. can still be hard if the newcomers don’t speak enough good English,” said Sofia Casini, the former director of RST. “Although there are free English classes offered to the Burmese refugees, instruction begins at the lowest level, and the progress is slow because the refugees have different levels of English.” She added that refugees need to have more patience when they come to the U.S.

In a busy, crowded RST’s office in Austin in April 2011, five Burmese family members who arrived in America from Mae La camp a week before listen to a Texan volunteer talk about basic survival skills in America. Yesterday was orientation. Today, training began. They are the eighth family to arrive in Austin that month with help from the refugee resettlement agency. The family left their home in Burma when the soldiers burned down their village in 2002. They lived in Mae La for eight years and decided to come to the U.S.

Nya Mu Kwee, the father of the family, received a good education in Burma. He was a doctor and was able to raise his three sons in comfort without any financial difficulties. His wife, Hser Htut, was a history teacher in a middle school. They both never thought of leaving their country because they were well known and respected in their community.

In America, however, his poor spoken English and weak comprehension have become something he is not so proud of. "I know all the leaders and authorities in refugee camps on Thai-Burma border," said Nya. He recalls that he was well treated in Mae La because he served as a doctor and people always lined up for treatment. "My life in Mae La was comfortable, because I got respect from everyone," said Nya. "I don't think I get the same respect in America. I am considered a low-class person."

The first three months in his workplace, he felt isolated and ashamed. He missed the status and authority he had enjoyed in his hometown in the Karen State. "But I will survive here for my kids and the Karen's next generation," said Nya. "I hope many Karens become more educated so that when we go back to Burma, we can change history." Nya wants to help the people in Burma establish democracy and hopes that the military regime in Burma will be dismantled in the near future.

Conclusion

After a half century of oppressive military rule, change in Burma may finally be on the way. Senior Gen. Than Shwe, who led the junta for nearly two decades stepped down in March 2011, and the new president of Burma, U Thein Sein, a former general and military figure, has signaled a sharp break from the highly erratic policies of the past.

On November 18, 2011, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the General Secretary of the opposition National League for Democracy and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, announced that she would rejoin the political system of the military-backed government by registering for future elections after spending 15 of the past 22 years under house arrest. Amnesty International reported in October 2011 that more than 200 political prisoners were released, though an amnesty had been expected for hundreds more. According to Amnesty, more than 1,600 political prisoners are still in jail in Burma.

The recent developments came shortly after President Obama announced that he was sending Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to visit Burma in December 2011, the first by a secretary of state in more than 50 years. They represent signs of possible movement to at least some political liberalization and perhaps an end to Burma's diplomatic isolation. The recent political reforms by the repressive regime also promised electoral reforms and to halt the ethnic persecution that has created thousands of refugees.

"Burmese refugees who migrated to other countries had helped us to tell stories more straightforwardly and increased attention to our predicaments," said Saw Simon, the Karen refugee pastor in Mae La. The pastor believes that the Karen diaspora, spread all over the world, has proved that hearing the small voices of the refugees does make a difference, because they have the power to affect the minds and hearts of sympathetic people in the wider world. Out of their unwilling exodus from their homeland, the Karen refugees say they have learned to have hope that no more refugees will have to follow in their footsteps.