



***THE MESSAGE BOARD***  
***A Newsletter from***  
***A. Roy Medley, General Secretary***



Personal Reflections

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**Nobel Women's Initiative**

On the evening of September 16, 2010, Rothang Chhange and I traveled to NYC to attend the premier of a new documentary film that is a witness to the human rights violations endured by the women of Burma. Sponsored by the Nobel Women's Initiative, the film is an important effort to draw attention to the human rights abuses of the military regime and to lift up the continuing plight of their fellow Nobel Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Through the testimony of 12 women, one hears their stories of rape, torture and abuse as a part of a military strategy of intimidation and subjugation. This same abuse also marks the lives of many of the women refugees now living among us as sisters in Christ. Though they seldom will speak of it, many bear the scars of such experiences.

Watching the movie, I flashed back to the documentary film I saw while in Thailand that was produced by the Free Burma Rangers. While their title makes them sound like a military organization, the Free Burma Rangers are medical and educational volunteers who risk their lives to enter the conflict zones along the Burma-Thai border to bring education and medical care to the thousands of displaced villagers hiding within the Burmese jungle. Their video, even more graphic than the one we saw this evening, documents the military regime's campaign to destroy minority ethnic villages—the great majority of which are Baptist Christians. After attacking a village, burning it down and forcibly leading away any whom they have not killed (they systematically seek to kill village chiefs, among others) or who have not escaped into the surrounding jungle, they sow the fields and villages with land mines. The video captured pictures of the bodies of slain women and children lying in their innocent blood. As gruesome as those sights were, the most gut-wrenching episode, however, was an operation performed without anesthesia by the Free Burma Rangers to remove the leg of a young boy mangled by a land mine. The doctors had already used up their small supply of anesthesia when this young teen was carried in to them. Without the surgery he would certainly have died of gangrene. So with knives and saws, they proceeded to remove the leg of the still conscious boy.

This young boy was injured when he returned to his still smoldering village to look for his family, and he stepped on a mine that had been planted in front of his family's home. As I later visited in the refugee camp after seeing this video, I encountered many who were blind or who were amputees because of land mines.

The goal of the Nobel Women's Initiative is to heighten world awareness of the systematic human rights abuses in Burma, in order to bring pressure on the UN Security Council to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court and instate a commission of inquiry against the military dictatorship of crimes against civilian population of Burma, including women. Such commissions have previously been held for the former Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and the government of Sudan. The US government, along with several others, has endorsed the inquiry as a means of holding the regime accountable for its actions.

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Office of the General Secretary

American Baptist Churches USA • PO Box 851 • Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

800-ABC-3USA, extension 2274 • Roy.Medley@abc-usa.org

[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)