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22 February 2008

MMR102759.E

Myanmar (Burma): The reasons for and consequences of being expelled from university
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006 reports that the government of Myanmar restricts academic freedom and has warned students that any disturbances or student unrest "would be dealt with severely" (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2a).

A former political prisoner and student leader from Myanmar (Burma) provided information regarding university expulsions to the Research Directorate in correspondence received on 7 February 2008. He indicated that students can be expelled from school for participating in protests, inciting unrest or for their affiliation with political organizations (Former Political Prisoner 7 Feb. 2008). They can likewise be expelled or dismissed for confronting school authorities or supporting members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) (ibid.). According to the Former Political Prisoner, a student who is expelled for such reasons cannot graduate and may be unable to find a "decent job" (ibid.).

The Executive Director of Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB) provided corroborating information in a telephone interview conducted by the Research Directorate on 28 January 2008. CFOB is an Ottawa-based non-governmental organization (NGO) that supports the Myanmar (Burma) pro-democracy movement and maintains links with exiles from the country (CFOB n.d.). The Executive Director indicated that students who are involved in any kind of political activity can be expelled (CFOB 28 Jan. 2008). For example, he suggested that if a student helps form a student's union - even if the goal of the union is merely to improve standards of education - the student could be expelled (ibid.). Any student who attends political rallies or meetings could be expelled (ibid.). The Executive Director explained that all students wishing to enter university must sign a document indicating that they will not become involved in political activities (ibid.). If they do, the document specifies that the students will be expelled (ibid.) The Executive Director added that many students have been expelled over the years (ibid.). He further stated that students who are expelled face limited prospects and will not be able to receive further education (ibid.) However, the Executive Director added that due to high levels of corruption in Myanmar (Burma) there are ways to circumvent government restrictions such as by paying bribes (ibid.).

In 2006, the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) - "a non-profit Burmese media organization committed to responsible journalism" (DVB n.d.) - reported that four students were expelled "for life" from college for honouring Burmese national heroes on Martyr's Day by offering flowers, lighting candles and saying prayers at a pagoda (DVB 25 July 2006).

Information regarding the consequences for students who are expelled from school could not be further corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as

to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB). 28 January 2008. Telephone interview with the Executive Director.

_____. N.d. "What Is Canadian Friends of Burma?" <<http://www.cfob.org/about.html>> [Accessed 4 Feb. 2008]

Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB). 25 July 2006. "Students Expelled from College for Life." (BurmaNet News) <<http://www.burmanet.org/news/2006/07/25/>> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2008]

_____. N.d. "Mission Statement." <<http://english.dvb.no/about.php>> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2008]

Former Political Prisoner. 7 February 2008. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

United States (US). 6 March 2007. Department of State. "Burma." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78768.htm>> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2008]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Representatives from the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), the Irish Centre for Human Rights, and the Open Society Institute (OSI) were unable to respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), Amnesty International (AI), Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), BurmaNet News, Freedom House, International Labour Organization (ILO), *The Irrawaddy*, Mizzima, Radio Free Asia, Seafarers' Union of Burma (SUB), United States (US) Campaign for Burma, Voice of America (VOA), World Institute for Asian Studies.

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