KACHIN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION THAILAND

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PRESS RELEASE

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Growing numbers of Kachin women trafficked as brides across China

Forced by deteriorating political and economic conditions in Burma to migrate to China, ethnic Kachin women are increasingly ending up as forced brides, according to a new report by an indigenous women's group.

"**Eastward Bound**" by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), documents the trafficking of 163 women and girls between 2004 and mid-2007, almost all to China. While 40% of the women have simply disappeared, most of the rest were forced to marry men in provinces across eastern China.

About a quarter of those trafficked were under 18. Most of these girls, as young as 14, were sold as brides for an average of about USD 2,000, usually to farmers.

The report highlights how the Burmese regime's new anti-trafficking law, passed in September 2005, is failing not only to curb trafficking, but also to protect the rights of trafficked women. Victims have been refused assistance by the Burmese Embassy in Beijing, denied entry back to Burma, and falsely accused of trafficking themselves. One woman accused of trafficking was raped in detention by a local official.

"***Anti-trafficking laws are meaningless under a regime that systematically violates people's rights, and whose policies are driving citizens to migrate***," said Gum Khong, a researcher for the report.

While international agencies have raised the alert about increased trafficking in Burma following Cyclone Nargis, KWAT cautions against indirectly endorsing the regime's heavy-handed attempts to control migration.

"***International agencies must look holistically at the trafficking problem, and not be complicit in any efforts by the regime to further abuse people's rights under the guise of preventing trafficking***" said KWAT spokesperson Shirley Seng.

KWAT first exposed the trafficking of Kachin women on the China-Burma border in their 2005 report "Driven Away."

The new report can be viewed at http://www.womenofburma.org
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