

Testimony of Wunna Maung
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Joint Hearing, Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation and
Human Rights and the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

U.S. House of Representatives,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I'd like to especially thank Congressmen Tom Lantos, Peter King, and others for their support for the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003. I also want to thank Chairman Gallegly, Vice Chairman Pitts, and Chairman Leach for organizing this hearing. I am 26 years old, and I am a member of the youth wing of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Mandalay, Burma's second largest city. As part of my responsibilities, I served as a security officer for the leader of our party, Aung San Suu Kyi, whom we call Daw Suu.

Daw Suu traveled by vehicle caravan during speaking tours throughout early 2003. In the caravan, there were 10-15 vehicles and hundreds of motorcycles. Altogether, we estimate that there were about 600 people traveling with us. Whenever we traveled, tens of thousands of people showed up to see Daw Suu. The people were very excited, because we admire Daw Suu very much, and because the people want democracy.

Whenever we stopped the caravan, I and my security team members created a two-layered security perimeter around the caravan. I always helped to form the outer layer of the perimeter. Before our journey, we heard many rumors that local officials of the military regime were training their troops with blunt weapons, including clubs, spears, and iron spikes. For this reason, Daw Suu advised us to absolutely avoid any words or behavior that might lead to confrontation with any member of the military. She told us that if we were attacked, we must not fight back. Even if we are struck or killed, she said, we should absolutely not fight back.

On May 29th at 9:00 am, our cars began our daily journey. Our party arrived at Sagaing, about 12 miles outside of Mandalay, at about 10:30 am. Before entering Sagaing, we witnessed about 600 people holding signs that read, "We don't want people who don't support the USDA". The USDA is the political arm of the military regime.

Standing behind these people was a large crowd of people welcoming our party, yelling, "Long live Aung San Suu Kyi". We did not stop, but continued onward. At about 6:00 pm, we reached the entrance to another town, Monywa. Tens of thousands of people showed up to meet Daw Suu and the NLD members, and we could not even reach the middle of town for another three hours. Tired after a long day, we all decided to sleep for the night.

The next day, we traveled further, stopping along the way to establish NLD offices

and hang up our billboards. We stopped in one town so that Daw Suu could give words of encouragement to the family of an elected member of parliament who is still imprisoned. At this point, our scout car rode ahead, but didn't return. We sent ahead motorcycles to scout out, but they also did not return. At about 8:30, we reached a place, near Kyi Village, between Saingpyin and Tabayin, where the attacks began. I was riding in a car two positions behind Daw Suu's car. After passing Kyi Village, two Buddhist monks blocked the way stopping the vehicle in which Daw Suu was riding. One of my colleagues exited from his car, and asked why the monks were blocking the road. The two monks said "We have been waiting for a long time for you. Ask Daw Suu to give a speech." As my colleague tried to respond, four trucks, full of people, quickly drove toward our caravan, yelling, "Oppose those relying on external forces..."

When local villagers yelled in response, the USDA members began to brutally attack the villagers with iron spikes, bars, and wooden clubs they had brought with them. After a few minutes, the USDA attackers turned to our caravan. We watched helplessly, and tried to show courage.

Because we had been told to never use violence, we tried to protect Daw Suu's car by surrounding her with our bodies in two layers. As we waited, all of the cars behind us were being attacked, and the USDA members beat the NLD members mercilessly. The attackers appeared to be either on drugs or drunk.

The USDA members struck down everyone, including youths and women. They used the iron rods to strike inside the cars. I saw the attackers beat U Tin Oo and hit him on the head before they dragged him away. He had a wound on his head and was bleeding. The attackers beat women and pulled off their blouses and sarongs. When victims, covered in blood, fell to the ground, the attackers grabbed their hair and pounded their heads on the pavement until their bodies stopped moving. The whole time, the attackers were screaming the words "Die die die..." There was so much blood. I still cannot get rid of the sight of people, covered in blood, being beaten mercilessly to death.

As the USDA members approached Daw Suu's car, we braced ourselves for the attacks. The attackers first beat the outer ring of my colleagues on the left side of Daw Suu's car, and smashed the glass windows of the car. As my colleagues fell one by one, the attackers then started beating the inner ring of security. The attackers hit my colleagues ferociously, because they knew we would not fight back. I was lucky and was not struck because I stood on the right side of the car. I would like to stress that during the attacks, we never fought back.

After the attackers broke the windows on Daw Suu's car, the driver sped off. She escaped beating, because she did not get out of the car. If she did, the attackers would have killed her. As Daw Suu's car left, we also ran away. People fled on motorcycle and foot. We ran as far as we could, but we grew tired. We flagged down a car and tried to drive away with 18 people crammed inside, but the USDA members were waiting for us, blocking the way and beating people who had fled earlier.

We were trapped. Since we had nowhere to go, we drove off the road and got stuck in a ditch. Fortunately, there were some woods nearby. Altogether, we counted 97 people hiding in the woods, and we all slept there overnight. Two of those hiding with us turned out to be part of the gang that had attacked us. They told us they

had been ordered to do so by the USDA. They explained, "We had never done such a thing in our life and since we could not bear to do such a thing, we came fleeing with you." The next morning, we all slowly approached the main road, at about 5:00 am. Shortly thereafter, we heard several gunshots. The military regime's police, from their cars, were firing at our motorcycles.

Since the police were firing at anyone who used the road, we walked across rice fields until we reached a village where local people allowed us to stay for the night. We exchanged clothes with some others the next day, and continued walking. Along the way, we met some other USDA members, who told us that they had been paid 800 kyats, and given meals and liquor in exchange for beating up a group of people. The USDA members had not realized that the people they were going to beat up were NLD members. I arrived in the United States a couple of weeks ago. I would like to say that the people of Burma very much admire the people of the United States. We know the United States stands for freedom, and we greatly appreciate everything you have done for us. The people of Burma are defiant--their will is strong, and they want change. We are not victims, but freedom fighters, and will continue our struggle.

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