

Interview

Javier García: “There are very few resources to keep Thailand refugee camps”



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Javier García leads in the ground the NGO 'Colabora Birmania'.

García leads on the ground the NGO 'Colabora Birmania', an organization that helps the refugee population due to the genocide of the government of this country against ethnic minorities.

What does your NGO do?

Since our creation, in 2009, we have developed [many projects related to education, health and the fight against child labor exploitation](#). We also carry out actions to promote local economies among the Burmese population displaced in Thailand and serve the most vulnerable groups that mainly correspond to women and children and refugees.

What do you think about the situation in Burma and the genocide that is happening with refugee ethnic minorities?

Burma is a very classist and racist country. **The Burmese elites see ethnic minorities as second-class citizens.** Some of them, such as 'Rohingyes', can not freely travel to Myanmar and have to request special permits to get married, have children or property.

In addition, they suffer the repression of 'Tatmadaw' (name known by the Burmese army). **This army performs military operations in the areas controlled by ethnic minorities**, especially in the states of 'Karen', 'Shan' and 'Chin'. These territories have partisan warfare that have been facing the army for 40 years.

Hence the genocide and the continuous massacres that are being committed against these populations ...

Exactly. The raids of the army consist of attacking villages where the army kills adult men, violate women and girls (as a strategy of terror and population control) and recruit children as child soldiers and girls as sex slaves. **Once the village is destroyed, they plant anti-personnel mines** to prevent their repopulation by creating migratory crises that force these minorities to flee to the refugee camps in Thailand.

Why does the state, who has control of this army, allows this barbarity?

The Burmese government wants to gain ground to ethnic minorities in order to be able to freely exploit their natural resources without these minorities receiving any benefit, neither economic nor of any kind. Unfortunately, this type of action is so widespread that it seems normal and does not appear in the media.

The only positive thing is that **Burma has placed itself in the focus of international attention**. We hope that it will positively affect the living conditions of these populations and that the world knows everything that is happening in Burma for years, the longest war in contemporary history.

Has the supposed democratic opening of the country influenced anything?

Burma, it has gone from being a hermetic and impenetrable dictatorship for over 40 years to a form of government that seems like a democracy but there is still much to be able to say so. **The problem has its origin in the current Burmese constitution**, drafted by the military themselves who have all their armored privileges.

In what conditions are the refugee camps?

The opening of Burma has had catastrophic repercussions on the refugee camps. It has served as an excuse for the **Thai government to close the fields** and the most important **international agencies have cut funding** to the point that resources destined to maintain the fields to help the refugee population have been severely reduced, while the number of people grows. It is increasingly difficult to survive in refugee camps, portions have dropped by half in just 4 years and there are fewer resources to keep the population.

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