

BAMBOO HOUSES ARE DESTROYED, May 24, 2008

Around 9:00 AM Central Standard Time on Saturday May 24, 2008, HIHRW started receiving telephone calls from Huay Nam Khao reporting two suspicious vehicles entering the camp with what looked like guns attached to the top of each vehicle. The residents believed these vehicles may be chemical trucks the Thai Military use for spraying tear gas on protesters. At around 9:30 AM, more telephone calls came in reporting that the Thai military had begun to spray chemicals at the population in the camp. (eNo chemical was spray on anyone. Please read paragraph three)

According to one caller, he overheard 4 shots coming from where the vehicles were. Smoke was appeared on the air. Another man reported that thousands of people rushed into the building of MSF (Medicine San Frontiers) for safety. Another man reported that people were laying on the ground, vomiting and coughing with dry throats. At around 10:01 AM, another man reported that 4 people were drowsy and one elderly woman was vomiting. It was later reported that the five people were taken to the clinic for treatment.

They feared that the Thai authorities sprayed chemicals on them before taking them into trucks for deportation. Another man called to confirm that some unknown chemical was actually sprayed on the fence. The smell was all over the place. Due to panic and fear of chemical poisoning, a Hmong man announced over a loud speaker informing everyone that it was not chemical poisoning. He encouraged every one to return to their shelters. At around 11:00AM, another man reported that no one was really sick.

Over the past several months, the people are not only reacting politically but are actually panicking. They are psychologically tormented by the Thai and Lao governments. Incidences that are blown out of proportion, such as the spraying of chemical, may spread panic to the population, causing major psychological damage leading the Hmong to over react.

They have reason to fear. On January 31, 2007, the Thai military used tear gas on a group of 153 in the NongKhai Immigration Detention Center (IDC) for the preparation of forced repatriation. On June 9, 2007, it was reported that the Thai authorities used tasers to shock groups of Hmong detainees in Phetchabun province prior to repatriation. On May 23, 2008, the Nations News Agency based in Bangkok published an article stating that the Thai military may deport about 2,000 Hmongs from Huay Nam Khao to Laos by Friday or Saturday. Under extreme circumstances, the Hmong may react violently to attempted deportation.

On May 16, 2008, the majority of the population in Huay Nam Khao went on a hunger strike demanding for the UN to step in. According to one of the organizers, due to the mixture of the population, it was very difficult to obtain cooperation in organizing any event that may get the attention of the UN and international communities in good faith. Even though they may have had good intentions, the results may have turned out unacceptable by the Thai government.

On May 23, 2008 at around 9:45 AM (Thailand), the Thai Authorities arrested Neng Moua, a section leader, for an unknown reason. Due to fear of his safety, the entire population in the camp, except for group F, followed Neng Moua to the military quarter. At around 10:15 AM, two houses in group G were on fire. It was reported that aid workers from the

NGO were able to stop the spreading of the fire. At around 10:30 AM, more houses were burnt in Group A, and then five minutes later group B was on fire. More than two hours later, it was reported that half of the camp was destroyed by fire. It was later reported that a total of 912 houses were destroyed leaving thousands of people without shelter.

It was reported that after the camp was destroyed by the fire, the Thai authorities are still looking for certain Hmong leaders for unknown reasons. They believe the Thai authorities are planning to arrest the leaders for interrogation. Currently, no suspects have been arrested.

The Hmong leaders held a meeting yesterday regarding the continuation of protest and a hunger strike. It was questioned whether they should continue because the top leaders seemed to have shied away from the plan. The news report that all of the Hmongs in Huay Nam Khao will be repatriated due to the recent protest and hunger strike. This has worried the Hmong leaders in Huay Nam Khao.

Thousands of Hmongs are homeless, and disease is a major concern because of the raining season. Women and children sitting in the rain suffer from mosquito bites and sickness. It was reported that UNICEF is on their way to Huay Nam Khao with more foods, pots and pans.

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