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Statement on Issuance of Passports to Burmese Migrant Workers under an Agreement between Thailand and Burma

1. On 1 September 2008, the Thailand Department of Employment released an official statement that the Burmese government has agreed to work with the Thai government to issue passports for Burmese migrant workers from September 2008 until February 2009. Thai employers must submit the names of their Burmese workers to the Thailand Ministry of Labour through the administrative offices of the applicable provinces. These lists of Burmese workers will be forwarded to the Burmese Embassy. The Burmese government will then determine which applicants are Burmese citizens eligible to receive a passport.
2. Burmese migrant workers who do not have proof of citizenship should not be disqualified from being able to obtain a passport. The majority of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand do not have Burmese citizenship cards. The registration form issued by the Thai government specifically requires a citizenship card number. Before issuing passports based on proof of citizenship, the Burmese military regime first needs to conduct a citizenship card issuance program in which all migrant workers can officially receive a number.
3. Citizenship is determined by the existing provision 4/82 of the 1982 Burma Citizenship Act. The military regime must issue a citizenship card to those who qualify as citizens in accordance with the Act.
4. The Burma Lawyers' Council therefore demands that the military regime promptly:
 - (i) Comply with the 1982 Burma Citizenship Act and issue citizenship cards to nationals of Burma, including Burmese migrant workers in Thailand.
 - (ii) Announce the citizenship card program nationwide and ensure that there are no bribes or corruption in the program's implementation.
 - (iii) Issue legal passports based on the citizenship cards.

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