

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PAGODAS – THE OTHER BURMA

Documentary-film, 52 and 74min.

Writer/Director: Irene Marty

Produced by KAIROS-Film GmbH, Zurich - Switzerland

Thanks to opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the world knows that there are no political rights in Burma. Suu Kyi is regarded as the “Icon of the non-violent struggle”, she has been fighting for democracy and Human Rights in Burma for more than a decade. Despite repression and house-arrest, there has been no success in silencing this woman. But only very little is known about the oppression and suffering of Burma’s ethnic and religious minorities.

Researched and filmed over four years in Burma, Thailand and the Thai-/Burma border area, “**In the Shadow of the Pagodas – the other Burma**” is a documentary focusing on the daily struggle of survival of the ethnic and religious minorities of Burma.

The film begins as a picturesque journey through the “Golden Land of a thousand Pagodas”, showing the sunny side of the country as it is presented to visiting tourists. The filmmaker, who last visited Burma in 1981, realises that visitors are being led through a tourist-corridor. No one, living in the “Golden Land”, dares to talk about the Human Right situation. In order to find out more, the filmmaker and her team must leave Burma. In neighbouring Thailand, where more than 150’000 refugees from Burma are living in official refugee camps, they find people who are willing to talk.

The Film-Team also manages to meet with the freedom fighters and rebel armies of Burma, which are fighting as allies against the ruling junta. Those freedom fighters smuggle the team back into Burma, into areas where no TV-cameras have been before. Not the fighting of these rebel armies becomes the focus of the film, but rather the stories of the civilian people, whom the Film-Team is able to meet on their illegal trip through a forbidden war-zone. These civilians have fled their homeland in order to escape the terrorizing of the ruling junta. It is estimated that one million people, men, women and children, live as internally displaced people (IDP s) in the jungle of Burma.

The stories they tell make up the focus of the film:

The genocide of Burma’s ethnic minorities, Christians and Muslims.

October 2004,
Irene Marty

www.kairosfilm.ch
www.burma.ch