

## Account of Monk Ashin Kavida, 23 years old, Given in Mae Sot, Thailand

The crackdown started on 26th September. On that day, all the roads around Shwedagon Pagoda were blocked. But we decided to get to our destinations at any cost. We had already planned to start demonstration at 12 o'clock. Finally, we got to Shwedagon pagoda at about 11 o'clock. There were about 300 protesters including monks who were blocked.

While

we all were being blocked, it looks like a killing field. Those who came to join the movement were forced to go back. When the riot police blocked us, we could not go ahead or back. They told us they will send us back to our monasteries in their trucks but we didn't trust them. We surely knew where they would send us.

We told them we did not need their help and could go back by ourselves, but they didn't allow us to do so. So we sat in front of the eastern entrance of Shwedagon Pagoda. Up till then, the riot police and the soldiers blocked the ways. We tried to negotiate with them to make way for us. It took a little long time.

Meanwhile, the rest of the monks sat down on the floor and chanted Metta Pote (Loving kindness). But all our efforts were in vain. The riot police started dragging the students into the trucks. I told them not to touch the students who were innocent. Then, I asked the riot police was that how they loved people.

The riot police hesitated for a while and then they shouted, "Pull them out", "drag them out." Hearing that, one novice was afraid and tried to jump over the high wall. So all the people panicked and followed him but there were masses of people and the wall was so high that we couldn't manage to flee.

About

300 protesters including nuns and young women were beaten. Some were wounded in the head. It was really brutal and ruthless to crush down the movement. They pulled the monks who were climbing the walls and kicked and beat them. Some monks fell down on the ground, bleeding, and then they were thrown into the trucks.

Out of 300, only 70 protesters managed to escape by moving around the monastery compound. The rest were taken to

the trucks.

We went on with our demonstration. The students have paid respect and believed in Buddhism since their ancestors. The actions of the junta made some students sick. They couldn't stand it anymore and they threw stones at the riot police.

To scatter the crowd, the army used tear gas. We had to tear out our robes and cover our eyes in order to protect them from the smoke and tear gas. When the officials shot tear gas, the students moved back and when the students threw pieces of bricks and water bottles at them, they stepped backward. By doing so, it took a long time.

So we, the monks, pleaded with the students not to use violence, we were doing a peaceful demonstration. We did not expect that the junta would crush down a peaceful demonstration but when they raided the monasteries, shot and arrested the monks. I was so surprised and unbelievable that I could not express how my feelings were. All my beliefs were also destroyed.