"Subject- Illegal demands of money by soldiers in villages resulting in the death of one soldier.

1. Information received is that one soldier from Infantry Battalion No: 11(IB-11) based in Shwebo was beaten to death in the Maungdine village, Zee-byu-gone village-tract, Kan-ba-lu township, Sagaing Division.

2. The facts given to us is that on the 23 January 1999 at about 15:30 hours in the evening, four soldiers (Lein Htan, Thet Cho Oo, Than Aye, and Htun Htun) arrived at the village and arrested the first two villagers they saw whose names are Maung Htun and Mya Thein after which they demanded Kyats 20,000(twenty thousand). These two said that they did not have that money to give and offered to take them to the house of the village chairman. For refusing to give the money immediately they were punched and fist by the four soldiers.

3. The villagers who witnessed this found it intolerable so they came out shouting "dacoits" and beat up the soldiers. The soldiers responded with a hand grenade which did not explode. As a result, Lein Htan died, Thet Cho Oo received injuries and the other two escaped.

4. Prior to the incident, soldiers had continuously made illegal demands for ten thousand and fifteen thousand Kyats from the villagers of Min-ywa and Kya-bak-kan respectively. Though the village elders had made complaints about this to the township SPDC, no effective action was taken. Fourteen villagers have been arrested in connection with the death of this soldier.

5. Further information received is that it is a regular practice for soldiers from the IB-11 and IB-42 to visit nearby villages on Saturday and Sunday and demand money from villagers and the owners of rice mills and one thousand Kyat for every cart carrying bamboo or firewood.

6. The death of one soldier, the injuries received by another and the arrest of 14 villagers are events that should never have happened. We therefore protest this habitual practice of soldiers demanding money from villagers and ask that it be stopped."

END
Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
5 March 1999