STATEMENT 82 (6/99) (translation)

[Note - To be read as continuation to Statement 17(1/99)]

1. Seventy six peasants had signed a written complaint which they lodged at the State Peace and Development Council against Sagaing Division, Sagaing township, Chaung-pauk village tract, Godown village chairman U Kyi Htay and others for illegal confiscation of their lands through falsification and misrepresentation.

2. Information received is that U Kyi Htay and others in authority falsely acquired 106.35 acres, (Chaung-pauk-kwin 766) alleging that a state owned factory was to be built on the site. The truth is that the acquisition was for the construction of the A-nu-ze-wa factory owned by a private company. However, to this date, no factory has materialised.

3. These lands are exempt from acquisition by government under Section 6 of the Law relating to the Acquisition of Agricultural Land because none of the owner's fields exceeded fifty acres. Therefore the acquisition is illegal.

4. The guidelines issued by Senior General Than Shwe specifically prohibits the acquisition of lands where crops are being cultivated if the purpose is for construction of factories, for conversion to garden land or for developing new suburbs. Secretary (2) also clarified the situation and said that the cultivators and farmers would not loose their lands and there was no reason whatsoever to fear.

5. Our information is that from the 7th to the 27 May 1999, U Kyi Htay (village authority) employed U Po Than and his gang from Kyauk-ta village to plough the said fields they illegally confiscated with 45 pairs of cattle and two tractors at a cost of Kyats 1000/- per day and submitted photographs of this operation to the higher authorities making it appear that the cultivators had been reinstated in their lands. Furthermore, the allegation is that U Kyi Htay instructed U Po Than and his gang of 45 men to carry knives with which they could attack any person who opposed them.

6. On 20 May 1999, the cultivators whose lands had been illegally acquired petitioned the Sagaing township authorities in writing for an injunction, but nothing has been done to date. The signatories to that petition are now in hiding because on the evening of the 20 May 1999, the police were instructed by U Kyi Htay to arrest them.
7. We have been informed that on 10 May 1999, the township authorities summoned cultivators U Tun Aye, U Ba Htee, U Sein Ya (Kyet-daung village) and asked them to organise and influence 46 other cultivators to accept compensation for the acquisition of a further 200 acres. Of the 46 only 6 have consented and they are affiliated in one way or another to the authorities. Because of their refusal, they have been repeatedly summoned but are afraid to comply. A total of 155 cultivators and their families whose lands have been confiscated are suffering tremendous hardship.

8. In connection with the complaint made to the SPDC on the 15 January 1999, Sergent Khin Zaw of Military Intelligence Unit 20 interrogated the petitioners and took down their statements but nothing has materialised.

9. We strongly urge that appropriate action in accordance with law be taken against those in authority who have deprived these cultivators and their families of their lands, means of livelihood and caused them to sink deeper into poverty and distress. We roundly condemn such activities.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon