

NLD Statement 60/2000:

National League for Democracy
No: (97/B), West Shwegonedine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon

Statement 60 (4/00) (translation)

1. We have been made aware of the fact that the military anashins (dictators) issued instructions in May last year to the respective township and village authorities not to apply the provisions relating to "forced labour" as set out in the 1907 Urban Administration Act and the 1907 Village Administration Act. It is 53 years now since those Acts were passed and time for considering whether provisions contained in those acts are appropriate or not. However, the practice of "forced labor" still continues despite instructions forbidding the same and the villagers are still being forced to give their labour.

2. Residents of See-bin-tha, Ah-ya-daw, Taung-be-ywa-ma, Taung-be-ywa-thit, Taungbe-garden and The-ya-chaung villages in Mandalay Division, Pagan Nyaung-U Township have had to give "forced labour" illegally for the construction of the Sa-daw (Saya-daw) irrigation canal is the information that has been received. The alleged objective is to enable cultivation of crops in the neighboring lands but it is reported that the soil is poor, stony and unarable containing soap producing minerals.

3. The households in the said villages total over 1500 and each household is required to excavate 2 specified units of earth. In addition other earth works are required of them to facilitate travel and inspection by the authorities which leaves them no time for ploughing their fields to sow their crops before the rains fall. This is also the time for toddy juice extraction. Because of the demand for "forced labour" they have no time to go about their usual business and they suffer from loss of income for their daily needs. We therefore condemn the authorities that deny the people the right to operate their usual business in these times of great financial straits.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
26 April 2000