

NLD Statement 85/2000:

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

Statement 85(6/00) (translation)

1. We have received information about the maltreatment and sufferings of the Burmese workers at the GOOD WEAR clothing factory (a Taiwan company) situated at 37/38 (a) Rope Factory Road, East Ward, Thingangyun township.
2. Though the working hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the workers are compelled to work overtime at the rate of Kyats 15/- per hour every day.
3. Overtime hours could stretch to 9:00 p.m. or to midnight or till dawn and the workers have no choice as to the period or the number of hours. The employer fixes the time and period. No exemptions are allowed for personal, health, private business, sickness, religious or any reason whatsoever. Even if one has been working the whole of one day, his duties for the next day have to be performed without a break.
4. Wages are paid monthly on the fifth day after the month. Payment for overtime is made at nights after the end of the period. Late comers face a fine of Kyats 50/- for every five minutes from their monthly wages. Penalty for inability to work overtime is Kyats 100/- for each day and every day after that. No rest period is given for Sundays or observance of any religious occasion. Penalty for absence of one workday is Kyats 1000/- and no reason (big or small) is countenanced.
5. The factory foreman, the manager, department heads, the director, clerks and other staff are all treated like servants of the owner of the factory. They have no right to make any representation on behalf of the workers. They cannot make any representation about their grievances to any other authority also. Many have been dismissed without any opportunity to explain or justify their actions. Though they are treated like slaves, the workers have to suffer in silence because they fear dismissal, which would affect their families and their survival.
6. One female worker (resident of Thuwunna) made a report about the situation to the Yankin Labour Office, which resulted in a few visits to the factory by the Labor Officers. Eventually, the complainant was dismissed and nothing changed in the factory.
7. The most distressing for the Burmese people was when material printed with the picture of the Lord Buddha was used to be sewn into garments for females, jackets, dresses, long pants, underpants etc.
8. In connection with this, at 14:00 hours of the 28 December 1999, the factory was raided and searched by the Thuwunna Police. Only one third of the offending material was taken away. Approximately 2500 dozen female garments had been manufactured and exported. The remaining two thirds was quickly transformed into garments and exported. Though the owner and three of the staff were arrested, they were released after four days and no further action was taken against them.
9. We remind the military dictators that money is not the be all and end all of everything. The workers rights should not be ignored and activities that will destroy the spiritual, religious and cultural sensitivities of the Burmese people are important and should not be allowed.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
7 June 2000