

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

Statement 130 (8/00) (translation)

1. We have information about the exploitation, denial of workers rights and unjust treatment of the Burmese workers at the factories which are situated in the Hlaing-tha-ya industrial zone, Rangoon Division. They are:-

- the *Myanmar Yes* garment factory,
- *Apolo Garment* (Taw-Win factory) and the
- *Jong Lih* back-pack manufacturing factory.

2(a) The Myanmar Yes factory is Korean owned (foreigner) employing a total of about 1400 workers. Average wages is Kyats 10/- per hour. Though the working hours are stipulated as 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. workers are compelled to do overtime work from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. When demand is great they have to work into the morning hours the next day. Default or failure to work overtime results in dismissal.

(b) In addition to the absence of any form of medical assistance there are severe restrictions on toilet services in MyanmarYes. There is a range of 10 lines at this factory with over 100 workers in each line. Only one toilet card is given for each line. (Without the toilet card entry is denied). Cost of transportation provided by the employer is deducted from the wages.

(c) On the 16 May, 2000, one Ma Moe Moe Htay (worker on Line 6) took seriously ill at her workplace while working. Permission to rest was refused so she cried and begged the supervisor who saw her condition. She was then asked to hide behind the stacks of garments so that the employer would not see her. She was absent from work the next day. On 18 May 2000, clothed in the Myanmar Yes uniform, her dead body was found in the gutter running along the front right side of NaWaDe's house. The employer did nothing for her despite the circumstances of her death and the police did no investigation. This has made the other workers very disgruntled.

3 (a) The Taw-win garment factory is owned by Apolo Garment and is situated in the No 1 Hlaing-tha-ya industrial zone and belongs to a Taiwanese. About 700 workers are employed and basic pay is Kyats 1500 a month. Working hours is from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and overtime to 10:00 p.m. is compulsory every alternate day. If the day's production is over 100, an increase of one or two kyats is paid at the discretion of the owner. There is nothing fixed.

(b) In addition to the basic pay, a sum of Kyats 1600/- is paid for regular work but this is separated into two parts. Kyats 800/- is for the first fifteen days of the month (first part) and Kyats 800/- for the next fifteen days (second part). This entitlement is lost for one day of absence or failure to do overtime. No conversation, no flowers, no Thanaka, no make-up is allowed.

(c) In this factory, there are only 2 days of closure a month. Officially declared public holidays and religious celebration holidays are not observed. The employer refused to allow the workers the day off on the 19 July 2000, the fifty-third anniversary of martyrs day. This caused the workers to be most aggrieved because martyrs day is a day which is observed by the whole country as a day of mourning so they made their request to the employer who insisted that they attend work or have their "regular

work allowance" cut. When the workers said they were prepared to have the allowance cut, he reluctantly caved in and granted them the day off.

4. (a) The **Jong Lih** back-pack manufacturing factory is situated in No 4 industrial zone in Hlaing-tha-ya and is owned by a Taiwanese. About 750 workers are employed getting a basic salary of Kyats 7000/- a month. There are three shifts and no overtime work. The first shift is from 7:20 to 11:00 a.m., the second shift is from 12:50 to 5:00 p.m. and the third shift is from 5:20 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

(b) Workers can be dismissed for absence due sickness or if absence is due to a wife giving birth to a child. Very rigid and undesirable restrictions prevail at the workplace as for example only 6 minutes is permitted for bowel movement. One extra minute attracts a fine of K.30/-.

(c) This factory is closed for only 2 days in a month which is not fixed but declared at the discretion of the owner. Workers were required to work on Waso full moon day and the 53 anniversary of Martyrs Day. No holiday was granted. Workers eat and sleep at the factory. No leave is granted on other than the two days in the month. When the factory is not declared closed, workers have to remain on the premises and are not allowed to receive visitors.

5. This is how foreigners on Burmese soil control the Burmese worker. "Like water in their hands". With heads bowed they have to suffer this exploitation. The military anashins have completely ignored the rights of the Burmese workers and allowed the foreigners to do just as they please. There are no workers unions to defend the rights of the Burmese workers and this accounts for the abuses. We therefore urge the military anashins to seriously consider the rights of the worker and permit the formation of workers unions. Burma is a signatory to the International Labor Organization Communiqué No 87 with regard to the right to form unions and accordingly, permission should be granted to the Burmese workers to form such unions.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
14 August 2000.