

BURMA HUMAN RIGHTS YEARBOOK 2007  
**CHAPTER 15**

**ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS**

*“States Parties condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races.”*

- Article 2 (1), Convention on the Elimination of all forms of  
Racial Discrimination



## 15.1 Introduction

Before the British occupation and annexation of the Burmese territories, the area we know as Burma today was a series of autonomous indigenous nations. Many ethnic groups were separated by geographical boundaries such as steep mountains and wide rivers, resulting in sharp linguistic divides and a large number of distinct ethnic groups in a small territory. Burma officially has over 134 different ethnic groups, speaking more than 100 distinct languages and dialects. (See Section 15.5: Official List of Ethnic Minority Groups in Burma). Approximately 68 percent of the population of Burma belongs to the predominantly Buddhist Burman ethnic group, while over 20 million people, or approximately 32 percent of the total population belong to an ethnic minority group. Although all together, they occupy approximately 55% of the land in Burma, this land is mainly located along the border regions. The geographical marginalization of the ethnic minorities of Burma is also paralleled in the country's politics and history.

For the purposes of Colonial administration, Burma was divided into two zones: the centrally located "Ministerial Burma", a predominantly Burman region, and the "Frontier Areas", located in the mountainous regions situated along Burma's present-day international borders where most of the ethnic minorities were based. On one hand, the local systems of governance in Ministerial Burma were destroyed. The British imposed their own administration and system of governance in the area. However, they also invested resources there. While the Frontier Areas retained their systems of governance and some autonomy, they were exploited by the British for their natural resources and given very little in return, particularly in terms of health, education, economic development, or political voice at the national level.<sup>1</sup> This legacy endures to this day.

Burma had some indication that independence would be forthcoming from Britain and a number of Burman leaders and leaders from various key ethnic groups made preparations for the new nation in advance. Perhaps the most important document to lay the foundations for the new nation was the Panglong Agreement; signed by General Aung San, a prominent Burman leader, and Chin, Kachin and Shan leaders. For General Aung San,

*"The essential prerequisite is the building of one unified nation. In concrete terms it means we must now bridge all gulfs now existing through British machinations between the major Burmese race and the hill peoples, the Arakanese, the Shans and unite all these peoples into one nation with equal treatment unlike the present system which divides our people into 'backward' and 'administered' sections."*<sup>2</sup>

The Panglong Agreement was the key document in attempting to build this unified nation and in creating a federal Burma. The constitution which emerged after Britain granted Burma independence on 4 January 1948 fell short of the expectations of many. The territories of four ethnic groups, the Karen, Karenni, Shan and Kachin, were recognized and each was designated a separate state. Each recognized ethnic group was represented at the national level and two groups, the Shan and the Karenni, were allowed the choice to succeed after 10 years. Other groups, however, continued to feel marginalized. Perhaps these issues could have been resolved in the Chamber of Nationalities, had the Federal Union of Burma been given a fair chance. However, a military regime took power in 1962 and the new constitution in 1974 stripped all ethnic minority groups equally of any autonomy. (For more information, see the Historical and Political Background).

Fast-forward to the present: over the past decade, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has come under increasing international pressure, particularly due to its treatment of ethnic minorities, but also due to its non-democratic rule, the continued

detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, economic mismanagement and its effect on the region, particularly in regards to the spread of HIV/AIDS and illegal drugs.

In an apparent attempt to deflect some of this international criticism and regain some international credibility, in 2005 the SPDC resumed the National Convention and the constitution drafting process. The National Convention (NC) had been operating since 1993 but was often suspended until it finally adjourned in 1996, having accomplished very little and certainly nothing concretely democratic.<sup>3</sup> Only ethnic minorities who had signed ceasefire agreements with the SPDC were invited yet their concerns were not allowed on the agenda. Delegates were only permitted to discuss a pre-drafted agenda set by the SPDC. Discussion of topics not listed on the agenda was not tolerated and laws were enacted against criticism of the NC, the punishment for which attracted a 20 year jail term.

The National Convention concluded in July 2007 having (according to the SPDC at least) finally drafted the guidelines for the new constitution. At the final session of the NC, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) presented a 19-point statement calling on greater autonomy for ethnic groups. In response, the SPDC threatened to *"kick the KIO up to the mountains"*. (For more information on the National Convention, see Chapter 9: Freedom of Opinion, Expression and the Press).

In response to the resumption of the National Convention, an Ethnic Nationalities Conference was held in 2005 to commence work on drafting an alternative constitution – one which would protect the rights of the ethnic minorities and give them a voice at the table.

There have been a number of meetings to draft alternative constitutions over the years, particularly along the Thai-Burma Border. In 2006, the Federal Constitution Drafting and Coordinating Committee (FCDCC) put out a draft of a Federal Constitution. The FCDCC is made up of MPs, and other members of the Burmese democracy movement in exile, including representatives of women and youth groups. The seminar for the draft constitution was held in territory controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU) in Karen State. The draft of the Federal Constitution contained 14 chapters and 197 articles and was designed to build democracy in Burma through a genuine federal system. In addition, the National Reconciliation Program (NRP) has been helping ethnic groups draft their own state constitutions in the event that federalism is realised in Burma. Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon and Shan groups have reportedly commenced work on the drafting process.<sup>4</sup>



A displaced family living in hiding in eastern Burma where they try to survive while trying to avoid contact with the SPDC and its allied ceasefire armies who oppress them.  
[Photo: BBC]

## 15.2 Ethnic Politics, Armed Resistance, and Ceasefires

The foundations for armed ethnic resistance in Burma were initially laid by the British during World War II. The British used various ethnic minority groups in their campaign against the Japanese in the region at the time, and thus providing many of these groups with their first formal military training. Certain ethnic minority groups were preferred for recruitment into the British armed forces, particularly the Karen, Kachin and the Chin and it could be said that some of these groups never fully disarmed following the War.

Following the end of the War when Burma was granted independence in 1948, many ethnic minorities were left bitterly disappointed at having shown such devout loyalty to the British during the War yet were never granted the right of secession that had long been promised them. The Karen in particular were one such group in this position. Then, just over a year after independence, in 1949, the Karen took up arms in what would later become the longest running civil war on the planet. Over time, numerous other ethnic groups also followed suit and similarly opposed the central Burman-dominated administration, although many of these groups did not take up arms until the military coup of 1962.

Over the long years that ethnic armed conflict has been waged in Burma, the central Burmese regime has employed a plethora of different strategies to contend with these groups. One such strategy, which is believed to have been originally conceived in the mid-1960's but not employed until the early-70's was dubbed the 'Four Cuts Policy' (*Pya Lay Pya* in Burmese).<sup>5</sup> The four 'cuts' are reported to cut off all food, funds, recruits, and information given to armed resistance groups by their purported civilian support base, without which, they would be unable to continue fighting. The upshot of a scorched earth policy such as this, however, is the intentional targeting of the civilian population as a legitimate military threat in flagrant contravention of numerous international laws, not least of which are the Geneva Conventions.

The Four Cuts Policy continued to be employed as one of the central tenets of the SPDC's counter-insurgency campaign throughout 2007. The SPDC has continued to make use of the Four Cuts Policy as its principle instrument in its ongoing fight against resistance groups. However, though the Four Cuts Policy was initially devised to undermine armed opposition groups, the exact same tactics were still employed in 2007, not to weaken insurgent groups, but rather to control and exploit the civilian population.

The Burmese military regime under its various guises has long employed a strategy of divide and rule among the ethnic minorities to great effect. The SPDC has been no exception to this and has persuaded some groups join them and even to assist them attack other groups still opposing the regime. Since 1989 and up until his arrest in October 2004, the former Prime Minister and former head of Burma's Military Intelligence apparatus, General Khin Nyunt, approached many armed ethnic groups with ceasefire pacts which would permit them peace and a degree of autonomy, along with economic concessions, and the right to retain their arms. This deal proved too sweet for many and as many as 17 ceasefire pacts were signed with the junta. However, none of these agreements have ever resulted in any sort of tangible solution to the existing political problems. Moreover, all such ceasefire agreements have been designed to prevent combatants from shooting at one another, but have failed to address the human rights violations and attacks committed against the civilian population. The unfortunate result has been that in many cases, the newly-formed ceasefire group, perhaps dazzled by their new-found freedoms and impunity, adopts many of the same practices and policies as the SPDC and also commits the same widespread human rights violations against the very people whom they claim to represent.

Listed over the pages which follow are the brief summaries of a number of the ethnic ceasefire and ethnic resistance armies which were operating in Burma during 2007. Please note that this does not represent an exhaustive list of all such groups, but rather is limited to only some of the stronger and more influential groups or those that were active and reported on during 2007.

## Arakan State

Though there is no active combat taking place in Arakan State, a number of ethnic Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) persist in the region. The NSAGs represented are those allied with as well as opposing the regime.

On 29 May 2007, U Htun Aung Kyaw, commander of the Democratic Party of Arakan (DPA), was arrested by Bangladeshi authorities during a raid in Bodi Punking village in the Bandarban District of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.<sup>6</sup>

The Arakan Liberation Army (ALA) is the armed wing of the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), who together have been fighting against the regime since 1968. The ALP/ALA continued to oppose the SPDC during 2007. On 22 October 2007, two armed insurgents, believed to be affiliated with the ALP were arrested by NaSaKa (Border Security Force) personnel as they attempted to cross back into Burma from Bangladesh. The following day, on 23 October 2007, 20 ethnic Chakma families originally from Bangladesh, were deported from Horkadaung village in Maungdaw Township back to Bangladesh. The families were deported by the authorities on suspicion of providing information to Arakanese insurgent groups.<sup>7</sup>

On 9 November 2007, 17 former members of the now-defunct Arakan Army (AA), including 12 men and five women, reportedly surrendered to the SPDC at the Lat Pan Wa army outpost in Paletwa Township near the border with Bangladesh.<sup>8</sup>

## Chin State

The opposition Chin National Front (CNF) was created in 1988 following the nation-wide pro-democracy uprising of that year with the stated intent of achieving self-determination for the Chin people. The CNF has expressed interest in negotiating a ceasefire with the regime and to this effect had originally attempted to open discussions with the SPDC in 1995. However, all such discussions have never resulted in any tangible results. Although, in March 2007, the very first peace talks were conducted between the CNF and the SPDC in the town of Rih on the Burma-India border. *"From my point of view, the talks were successful. ... I regard it as heading towards a positive path,"* said Dr Sui Khar, the Joint General Secretary of the CNF, who led the ten-member delegation in the talks.<sup>9</sup>

A second round of talks was slated to take place after the National Convention was completed, but these were postponed by the SPDC which maintained that it was *"too busy"* for anyone to attend further discussions.<sup>10</sup>

In April 2007, it was reported that the CNF had been exacting a tax of 3,000 kyat from each family in Matupi Township. At the end of February 2007, SPDC army soldiers attached to Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #140 arrested seven people for having paid this tax following a clash with members of the Chin National Army (CNA; the armed wing of the CNF) which killed three SPDC army soldiers. Two weeks later, the bodies of three of those who were arrested were found dead by their families. The victims were identified as:

1. Mum The;
2. Khun Ling; and
3. Tin Cung.<sup>11</sup>

On 11 April 2007, it was reported that three Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) chairmen from Matupi and Mindat Townships were killed by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #50 in February 2007 for allegedly aiding the CNA. Two others were also reportedly arrested on the same charges but their fate was unknown. The three victims were:

1. Ting Co, VPDC chairman of Sanset village, Matupi Township;
2. Hung Ling, VPDC chairman of Ca Nam village, Matupi Township; and
3. Maung Khe, VPDC chairman of Lungphanu village, Mindat Township.<sup>12</sup>

In the last week of May 2007, Zun Cung Nung, the owner of a hotel in Falam Township was issued orders by U Ong Maung of the Falam Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) to close his hotel, dismantle the building, and relocate elsewhere following speculation that the hotel had been used to shelter members of the CNA. *“Zun Cung Nung will lose not only a hotel but also his estate and farmland,”* reported a local villager, suggesting that he would lose not only his business, but also his home and all other forms of livelihood on the strength of the accusation.<sup>13</sup>

On 11 July 2007, three young Chin men were arrested by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #233 under suspicion of having ties with the CNF. No further information was made

## Kachin State

### Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and their armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), was originally founded in 1961 with the stated goal of the creation of a *“Free Republic of Kachinland”* and was once considered to be one of the stronger ethnic opposition groups in Burma – that is until they signed a ceasefire pact with the regime in 1994.<sup>14</sup>

As part of their ceasefire agreement, the KIO was permitted to control significant areas of land in Kachin State including the areas bordering China, and was also granted considerable economic concessions, including certain mining and logging operations. The KIO was also authorized to lease large tracts of Burmese soil to Chinese businessmen for profit. Although, some commentators have argued that the Kachin people have benefited little since the KIO signed their ceasefire with the SPDC:

*“In the more than 12 years since the truce between the KIA and the junta was signed, little has occurred to advance security or prosperity for the Kachin people. The ceasefire agreement has delivered its benefits only to the Kachin leaders and their friends. Many of them have become wealthy by selling off the valuable resources of Kachin State—timber, gold and jade—to Chinese entrepreneurs. ... The Kachin people benefit little or nothing from this trade.”<sup>15</sup>*

Meanwhile, KIO Vice Chairman, Lieutenant General Nban La Awng, has clearly benefited from the ceasefire, who, on 2 June 2007, lavished an estimated 30 million kyat on a party to mark his own 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Prior to this, it was reported that Nban La Awng had spent an outrageous 100 million kyat on his son's wedding, which had catered to approximately 4,000 guests. It has been speculated that these two ceremonies were the most expensive ever to have been held in Kachin State.<sup>16</sup>

At the final session of the junta's much touted National Convention on 18 July 2007, the KIO issued a 19-point statement which called for greater autonomy in ethnic states. This move infuriated the regime who prohibited any and all discussion off the pre-determined agenda which they had set themselves. In August 2007, it was reported that Major General Ohn Myint, commanding officer of the SPDC Northern Regional Command in Kachin State was so outraged at the KIO over this demand that he had begun stockpiling weapons in Myitkyina, presumably in preparation for the imminent resumption of hostilities. He was also quoted to have said that *"the KIO reiterating its demand [for] autonomy of Kachin State in the ongoing final session of the National Convention is totally unacceptable"*.<sup>17</sup> In July 2007, Major General Ohn Myint had also warned that the *"SPDC shall kick the KIO up to the mountains, if they persist in their demands for an autonomous Kachin State"*.<sup>18</sup>

Potential for more splits from within the KIO emerged in October 2007 when a public statement critical of the KIO's support and praise of the outcomes of the SPDC's National Convention, entitled the *"Voice of the Kachin youth in Mai Ja Yang,"* was circulated through KIO-controlled territory. Some reports maintained that disagreement over the issue threatened to result in further fictionalization of the troubled Kachin organization:

*"While elderly and senior leaders of the KIO are keen on taking part in the [general] elections [in 2010], the junior leaders and the youth are totally against it. They want the KIO to take on the junta ... and continue to fight for autonomous status"*.<sup>19</sup>

In November 2007, the SPDC banned all vehicular traffic along the Myitkyina-Laiza highway and actively prevented people from entering the KIO-controlled town of Laiza. It was believed that the road closure was carried out as a form of punishment after the KIO refused to sign a pre-drafted declaration denouncing a recent statement made by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi regarding national reconciliation. An unnamed youth from the area said that *"The relationship between the KIA and the junta has always been like this. Whenever the junta is displeased with the KIA, they do something like this. The junta wants to show the KIA its power"*. A local businessman reported that road closures like this strike at the KIO where it hurts by hampering the lucrative border trade it enjoys with China. *"A day's ban will not have much impact. But if it continues it will impact not only local residents but also the KIA,"* he said.<sup>20</sup>

Earlier in the year, in January 2007, the SPDC had similarly pressured the KIO to issue a statement denouncing attempts by the United States to pass a resolution on Burma through the UN Security Council (UNSC). The resolution was put to a vote on 12 January 2007 but was vetoed by both China and Russia.<sup>21</sup>

Also in January 2007, it was reported that the KIO had increasingly turned to drug trafficking to raise funds after Major General Ohn Myint had officially banned them from conducting cross border trade with China. According to reports, the KIO's main sources of revenue prior to 2006 were timber (40%), jade (30%), and casinos (20%), with as much as 60 percent of their trade going across the border into China.<sup>22</sup>

### New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K)

The KIO has suffered a number of damaging splits over the years. In 1989, the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K) was created when the KIA 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, led by Zahkung Ting Ying and Layawk Zelum, broke away and immediately signed a permanent ceasefire pact with the junta. Since its inception, the NDA-K has shown no political aspirations, which has resulted in the organization being viewed more as a commercial group than a political one. The NDA-K is based in Pang Wah, on the Sino-Burma border, where they control the area known as Kachin State Special Region-1 and conduct numerous logging and jade and gold mining ventures. It is believed that there are approximately 800 soldiers in the NDA-K.

In 2005, NDA-K General Secretary Layawk Zelum and his supporters staged an unsuccessful coup against Zahkung Ting Ying, after which, the coup leaders returned to the KIA who continue to support them.

On 18 August 2007, fighting broke out between the NDA-K and the Rebellion Resistance Force (RRF), both of which are SPDC-aligned ceasefire groups, in Putao District. The firefight occurred when eight ethnic Rawang soldiers from the NDA-K's 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion attempted to defect to the RRF with their weapons. The RRF is reported to consist entirely of Rawang militiamen.<sup>23</sup>

Also in August 2007, the already strained relationship between the NDA-K and the SPDC experienced additional tension when NDA-K soldiers surrounded a newly-established SPDC army outpost near Changmaw Krung close to NDA-K-controlled territory. NDA-K spokespersons maintained that the move was a *"precautionary measure against possible security threat"* by the SPDC army who had recently trebled the number of its soldiers in the area. According to sources, this move by the NDA-K came at a time when the organization was under increased pressure from the SPDC to disarm and downgrade to a local militia.<sup>24</sup>

As in previous years, representatives of the NDA-K attended the National Convention (NC), and people living in areas under its control were similarly forced to attend rallies in support of the NC.<sup>25</sup>

In a transparent move to please the regime so that they would be permitted to *"enjoy an equal-profit economy"*, on 1 November 2007, the NDA-K delivered a letter to the SPDC stating that the NDA-K *"will protest against every matter which is harmful for peace and stability of the country"*.<sup>26</sup>

### Karen State

Karen State is home to the world's longest continual ethnic conflict. The Karen resistance began in 1949 soon after Burma was granted independence from Britain and has continued near ceaselessly to this day, for almost 60 years. The main Karen opposition group is the Karen National Union (KNU), whose armed wing is known as the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). The KNU is widely regarded as one of the stronger resistance groups opposing the military regime, although over the years, they have suffered a number of damaging splits within the ranks. The most detrimental of these occurred in December 1994 when a large group of rank and file soldiers broke away to form the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).

Almost immediately, the DKBA formed an alliance with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC; as the regime was known prior to November 1997) and betrayed the KNU by showing the SLORC soldiers all of the weaknesses of key defensive positions and the

way through the extensive minefields protecting the KNU headquarters at Manerplaw. As a result, Manerplaw fell. This was followed in quick succession with the fall of a number of other KNU strongholds located along the border with Thailand, including nearby Kaw Moo Rah, less than a month later. Since that time, the KNU has lost most of its territory and been forced to adopt guerrilla tactics, for which the jungles of Karen State are ideally suited.

The DKBA was rewarded by the regime not only with numerous economic concessions, but also they also were awarded control over many areas that had formerly been controlled by the KNU, including a number of lucrative border checkpoints where they could make considerable revenue from taxing the traders who passed through those gates. Over the past 15 years, their sphere of influence has increased and DKBA units have a presence in six of the seven Karen districts. However, the DKBA has also embraced many of the same policies used by the junta and are guilty of committing widespread human rights abuses against the same people that they claim to represent. (For more information, see Section 8.4: Abuse of Ethnic Minorities by Ceasefire Groups below).

In January 2007, the KNU suffered its most recent split when a number of KNLA soldiers attached to the KNLA 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, led by Brigadier General Htain Maung, broke away to create the Karen National Union / Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLA PC) and immediately signed a ceasefire pact with the SPDC.

### **Karen National Union (KNU)**

In late-November 2005, the SPDC mounted an attack on He Daw Khaw village in Toungoo District, Karen State, which served as the beginning of an SPDC army offensive against civilian villagers living in northern Karen State. This offensive has differed from many previous annual dry season offensives in that attacks on civilian villages and KNU bases have continued throughout the rainy season when attacks have traditionally come to a standstill. As such, the attacks have continued year-round over the past two years with little time for respite. This offensive has been labelled as the biggest in ten years and has resulted in an estimated 30,000 villagers becoming newly displaced as a direct result of the attacks.<sup>27</sup> It must be noted that while SPDC army units have launched attacks against the KNLA, the primary target of the current offensive, like the vast majority of those before it, is not the armed resistance of the KNLA, but rather unarmed civilian villagers.<sup>28</sup>



KNLA soldiers celebrate the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Karen Revolution at a KNLA camp inside Burma near the Thai-Burma border. [Photo: BBC]

Under the offensive, SPDC army forces mounted regular patrols through the hills of northern Karen State in search of internally displaced persons (IDPs), their settlements and their food supplies. Any IDPs that they found have been either captured and forcibly relocated to SPDC-controlled relocation sites, or simply shot-on-sight. Meanwhile all IDP hiding sites or hidden food caches discovered by the soldiers have been ransacked and then destroyed. The soldiers eat what they can, carry off what they are able, and destroy the rest. As a result of such policies, precious few villagers have much left in the way of food and starvation has become a very real threat for many. Moreover, fields and plantations and IDP sites alike have been sown with landmines for the purpose of discouraging the villagers from returning lest they step on one.

Many villagers from the region have reported that aside from overt threats to their physical security, their greatest concern is the lack of food.<sup>29</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 5: Deprivation of Livelihood). Confronted with the very real likelihood of being shot if seen, many IDPs therefore do what they can to avoid all contact with SPDC army units. Many must regularly move from place to place whenever an SPDC army patrol draws near, fleeing deeper into the forest to avoid detection.<sup>30</sup>

Within this context, some groups have argued that, weakened by repeated splits over the years, the KNU has largely become a defensive force, whose primary occupation has been to slow the advance of SPDC army battalions as they move through the forests in search of the internally displaced, moving in small groups and employing strategies of guerrilla warfare to harass and stall the SPDC, thus giving IDPs time to escape. (For more information, see Chapter 16: Internal Displacement and Forced Relocation).

On 24 December 2006, former KNU president and commanding officer of the KNLA, General Bo Mya died at the age of 79 from complications arising from diabetes in a hospital in Mae Sot, Thailand.<sup>31</sup> Held in high regard by many, the former leader's funeral was attended by an estimated 5,000 people who came to pay their last respects, including members of the DKBA, the SPDC and the Royal Thai Army (RTA).<sup>32</sup> However, many high-ranking KNU officials were conspicuous by their absence, who refused to attend the service out of protest against the presence of SPDC Colonel Myat Htun Oo who had been invited by the late leader's son, Colonel Ner Dah Mya.

Within days of the funeral, commanding officer of the KNLA 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Brigadier General Htaing Maung led a number of KNLA officers in ceasefire negotiations with the SPDC without the prior consent from the KNU Central Committee. Htain Maung and his followers were warned repeatedly to cease all negotiations, and failing to comply were ultimately ejected from the KNU on 30 January 2007. The following day, on 31 January 2007, Htain Maung announced the creation of the newest Karen splinter faction, the rather unimaginatively named, Karen National Union / Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLAPC). Htain Maung declared himself the chairman of the new faction and on 11 February 2007, celebrated the signing of a ceasefire agreement with the SPDC in Kawkaik, Karen State.<sup>33</sup> A statement announced that Thramu Lar Poe, wife of the late Bo Mya, had been appointed as the vice chairperson of the KNU/KNLAPC, while her son, Colonel Ner Dah Mya, was appointed the position of Secretary 1, despite having not informed either of them of this. *"The fact that my name is put in the position of vice chairperson, and my children are included as members of this organization is an evil set up. ... I absolutely do not accept it"*, said Lar Poe in an interview following the announcement. (For more information regarding the KNU/KNLAPC, see the subsequent section below).

In August 2007, it was reported that the SPDC had also approached Lieutenant Colonel Kyi Linn, commanding officer of the KNLA 18<sup>th</sup> Battalion with offers to broker a ceasefire pact in much the same way as Brigadier General Htain Maung had done. It remains unclear what the results of their meeting were as Kyi Linn was found dead on 20 August 2007, in the

Haungthayaw River near Kawkareik with a gunshot wound to the head. While speculation on who killed him arose, the actual motivation and culprit behind his death remain unreported.<sup>34</sup>

In April 2007, the KNLA 101<sup>st</sup> Battalion headquarters was overrun and occupied by SPDC-allied DKBA soldiers.<sup>35</sup>

Also in April, residents of the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand were ordered by camp security officials not to turn on any lights after dark out of fear of an imminent attack by Karen ceasefire groups. *"We have to shut down all the lights at 8:00 pm, including all electric generators and even candle lights,"* said one resident. According to the source, P'Doh Mahn Sha, General Secretary of the KNU, had maintained that Karen ceasefire groups such as the DKBA and KNU/KNLAPC had *"turned against civilians who did not support their break from the KNU"*. Despite concerns, no attacks were reported.<sup>36</sup>

On 13 July 2007, KNU intelligence officer, Major Tashee, was shot and killed near the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand. Camp residents reported hearing *"five or six gun shots"*, which resulted in the death of Tashee and one other unidentified man.<sup>37</sup>

### **Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)**

The DKBA continued to work alongside and on behalf of the SPDC during 2007. During 2007, the DKBA also worked closely with other Karen ceasefire groups, including the newly-formed KNU/KNLAPC in mounting attacks against KNLA bases as well as undefended civilian villages.<sup>38</sup> (For more information, see Section 8.4: Abuse of Ethnic Minorities by Ceasefire Groups).

On 26 March 2007, two Thai Border Patrol Police were released from detention after having been detained by the DKBA for the past five days. The two officers, identified as Sub-Lieutenant Chavalit Rattanaphan and Lance Corporal Prayongyuth Panthang, had been invited to cross into Burma by DKBA officers before being kidnapped by them. According to an unidentified senior Karen official, *"the DKBA detained the two border policemen because it wanted to exchange them for three Karen National Liberation Army officers who work in the DKBA-controlled area"*.<sup>39</sup>

On 6 August 2007, it was reported that DKBA officers attached to the group's #907 Battalion was providing displaced Karen villagers with free land near Myawaddy. According to the report, displaced farmers were given 2,400 square foot plots of land near Mae Tawgale village on the proviso that they build their homes on it within a week of having received it. KNU representatives, however, believed that the DKBA had ulterior motives underlying their apparent kindness, fearing that the move would result in increased forced recruitment: *"the Mae Tawg[a]le area would now be turned into a fertile recruiting ground for the DKBA"*, said Major Saw Hla Ngwe of the KNU.<sup>40</sup>

### Karen National Union / Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLA PC)

The KNU/KNLAPC is based in Htaw Kaw Koh, Kawkareik Township, at the site of the assassination of former Karen leader and Karen martyr Saw Ba U Gyi. The KNU/KNLAPC's fighting strength is unknown but has been estimated to range from 100 to 400 armed soldiers.<sup>41</sup>

On 11 February 2007, the KNU/KNLAPC celebrated their "return to the legal fold" in a much touted "Victory of Peace Welcoming Ceremony" at their new headquarters in Htaw Kaw Koh. According to reports, 320 soldiers had surrendered to the SPDC, although other, conflicting reports have maintained that many of this number were actually civilians who were forced to wear uniforms to boost the numbers so that it appeared as though many more soldiers had defected than those who actually did. Some reports have maintained that a number of children were including among this number.<sup>42</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 13: Rights of the Child).



Brigadier General Hain Maung, chairman of the KNU/KNLAPC, photographed before being expelled from the KNU where he was the commanding officer of the KNLA 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade. [Photo: Nic Dunlop]

The newly-created KNU/KNLAPC was quick to sign a ceasefire pact with the SPDC and soon sided with their long-time enemies in attacking their former comrades in the KNU. To this end, the KNU/KNLAPC has worked alongside both the SPDC and DKBA to mount attacks on KNU positions, fighting shoulder to shoulder with men, who only last year were their adversaries and not their allies.

Some sources have speculated that Htain Maung may not be the real leader behind the KNU/KNLAPC, "but that he is following the lead of Pastor Timothy, a former member of the KNU Foreign Affairs Committee". Some observers have argued that Timothy, angered over his failure to secure any votes for a seat on the KNU Central Committee at the organization's 13<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2004 and then by his expulsion from the KNU in 2005 following the publication of a letter which was highly critical of the KNU leadership, sought to 'go it alone' and broker a ceasefire deal with the regime (with considerable economic concessions for himself).<sup>43</sup>

Reliable reports have also testified that the KNU/KNLAPC is recruiter and user of child soldiers.<sup>44</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 13: Rights of the Child).

## Karenni State

### Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)

Initially founded in 1957, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) continues to oppose the central Burmese military regime despite suffering a number of splits over the years. In March 1995, the KNPP reached a ceasefire agreement with the junta, although the truce was short lived, lasting only three months before fighting resumed. The two groups have remained in conflict every since, and though the KNPP has expressed an interest in engaging the regime in a ceasefire, all talks to date have produced little.

On 2 January 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #250 reportedly arrested and interrogated Phukhrakhu village chairman, Ti Reh before shooting him. The village secretary was also detained by the same unit. The incident took place following a clash with the KNPP which had occurred nearby. Local villages are often held accountable by the SPDC should they come under attack by opposition groups.<sup>45</sup>

On 6 April 2007, it was reported that SPDC army units continued to shell KNPP bases despite ongoing peace talks and that the number of clashes between the two groups had risen to as many as ten per month.<sup>46</sup>

On 8 April 2007, the village chairperson and village secretary from Halikhu village in Pruso Township were arrested and interrogated by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #427 after they had been involved in a clash with KNPP soldiers.<sup>47</sup>

On 11 June 2007, 30 ethnic Karenni arrived on the Burma-Thai border to seek entry into one of the Karenni refugee camps set up on the Thai side of the border after having fled a fresh round of SPDC army attacks against the KNPP located near to their homes. According to sources, over 200 Karenni refugees had arrived at Karenni Camp 1 since the beginning of the year.<sup>48</sup>

SPDC army units mounted unexpected attacks against KNPP bases in Shadaw Township in July at the height of the monsoon rains. It was believed that these attacks were an attempt to prevent a splinter faction of approximately 100 Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization (SSNPLO) soldiers from making contact with the KNPP. The SSNPLO defectors had recently abandoned their posts in SPDC-controlled areas of Shan State in mid-June fearing that the SPDC would attempt to disarm them at the conclusion of the National Convention.<sup>49</sup>

On 9 August 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #428 fired a volley of mortar shells into a crowd celebrating the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary Karenni Resistance Day. According to reports, a number of the shells failed to explode and no one was injured. Following the incident, Khun Oo Reh, Secretary 2 of the KNPP stated that *"They have failed to meet us at the discussion table so we have no choice but to continue our armed revolution"*.<sup>50</sup>

A clash between the KNPP and SPDC army soldiers from LIB #530, which left four SPDC army soldiers dead and an additional five injured, served as a prelude to the arrest of over 50 local Karenni villagers. The villagers were arrested for allegedly supporting the Karenni soldiers and having prior knowledge of the attack, which took place in Chitkeh village. *"They [the SPDC army soldiers] regularly do this kind of thing. ... They tell villagers that the Karenni soldiers cannot survive without the villagers' support. They also accuse the villagers of feeding Karenni soldiers,"* said Rimond Htoo, General Secretary of the KNPP. The arrested villagers all hailed from Loikaw, Chitkeh, Palong and Suplong villages.<sup>51</sup>

## Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)

The Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) was created in 1978 when approximately 200 members of the KNPP broke away from the group. At its formation, the KNPLF was originally a communist resistance organization, but later signed a ceasefire with the regime in June 1994.<sup>52</sup> Immediately after brokering this deal, the junta deployed the KNPLF against the KNPP with promises attaining a sizeable income through control of border-tax gates, the tin and wolfram mines in Mawchi, and taxes on logging, if it could take control of these operations away from the KNPP and act as a village security force in the name of the SPDC.

Similar in many ways to the DKBA in Karen State, the KNPLF has regularly served as a proxy army for the SPDC, searching for KNPP units and interrogating local villagers for information on their whereabouts and activities.

On 25 October 2007, a report in the *Kantarawaddy Times* speculated that while the KNPLF had banned the trafficking and sale of methamphetamine tablets in areas under its control, it has continued to permit the cultivation and sale of opium, which has resulted in a growing dependency to the drug in KNPLF areas. *"Opium is mixed with powder of banana leaf and dried in Myinn Khwar leaves to be smoked. Most drug addicts are young school boys and labourers, and only a few are poppy farmers"*, said a representative of the Karenni Anti-Drug Action Committee (KADAC).<sup>53</sup>

## Mon State

### New Mon State Party (NMSP)

The Mon resistance began very early soon after independence when the New Mon State Party (NMSP), and its armed wing, the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA) was founded. However, this opposition ended in 1995 when the NMSP brokered a ceasefire agreement with the regime in exchange the right to retain arms and a number of economic concessions.

According to reports by *Kaowao News*, the NMSP had once received monthly payments from the SPDC of 4.1 million kyat, although these payments ceased in July 2005 after the group spoke up in favour of federalism at National Convention proceedings.<sup>54</sup>

## Shan State

As the largest ethnic minority state in Burma, and as one of the most ethnically diverse, it should come as no surprise that numerous groups operate in Shan State. Acutely aware that this may represent a threat to their control over the region, the regime has maintained a consistent and heavy military presence in the state. The majority of armed ethnic groups operating in Shan State have allied themselves with the regime and signed ceasefire deals. Some groups, however, such as the Shan State Army – South, continued to oppose the regime throughout 2007.

On 16 April 2007, the Lahu Democratic Front (LDF), the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) and the Pa'O People's Liberation Organization (PPLO), all members of the opposition National Democratic Front (NDF), and all of whom operate in Shan State, announced their intention to ban the use of antipersonnel landmines by signing the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment. (For more information, see Chapter 4: Landmines). According to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL):

*“Geneva Call’s Deed of Commitment requires signatory organizations not only to refrain from mine use, but to cooperate in a program to destroy any mine stocks they may hold. They will further be expected to cooperate in the clearance of mines which they or others may have laid previously in their areas of operation”.*

### **United Wa State Army (UWSA)**

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) was formed in 1989 following the disintegration of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and brokered a ceasefire with the junta soon after its creation. Believed to have as many as many as 20,000 active soldiers, the UWSA operates out of Wa territory in the northern part of Shan State along the Chinese border from Kokang to Mongla and along the Thai border areas from Tachilek to Homong.<sup>55</sup>

Although the group profits greatly from its affiliation with the SPDC, villages in their sphere of operations reportedly remain largely undeveloped and lack basic healthcare and education facilities. In return for supporting SPDC army soldiers in their attacks against other ethnic minority groups, most notably the opposition Shan State Army – South (SSA-S), the SPDC has turned a blind eye to the prolific drug operations conducted in UWSA territory, which serve as the primary source of much of the group’s wealth, arms and power.<sup>56</sup> There has been considerable speculation over the past several years regarding the SPDC’s complicity in the drug trade and that they have received kickbacks from groups such as the UWSA for permitting such activities to continue unpunished. However, little concrete evidence has emerged to conclusively prove such accusations.

On 17 July 2007, the SPDC ordered the UWSA with an ultimatum to either disarm, attack the SSA-S, or to withdraw from their bases located along the border with Thailand and to return to the Wa Self-Administered Region further north adjacent to the Chinese border. They had been issued the deadline of 31 July by which to have completed the relocation, however, rather than comply with the orders, “[t]he UWSA ignored the order and went ahead with reinforcing its presence in the border area”.<sup>57</sup> Some reports maintained that the “Wa leaders [said that] they [would] fight any effort to remove them”.<sup>58</sup>

Further souring the already shaky relationship between the UWSA and the SPDC, in November 2007, the UWSA defied SPDC orders and refused to sign a pre-drafted declaration condemning a statement read out by UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari on behalf of Aung San Suu Kyi which had called for national reconciliation.<sup>59</sup>

### **Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)**

The Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) was formed in 1996 following the agreement of the Mong Thai Army (MTA) to enter a ceasefire pact with the regime by MTA soldiers who were unhappy with the decision and who chose to continue opposing the regime. While the MTA was known more for its involvement in the drug industry than they were for representing the people, the SSA-S quickly became known as a legitimate representative of the Shan ethnic minority. Since the SPDC will only accept a complete surrender of arms from the SSA-S, no ceasefire negotiations have ever taken place between the two groups.<sup>60</sup> On 23 May 2007, fresh talks were slated to take place, but were cancelled when the SPDC delegation failed to show up for the meeting.<sup>61</sup>

Throughout 2007, numerous armed clashes occurred between the SSA-S and the SPDC who also ordered a number of its ceasefire groups, including the UWSA, to attack SSA-S positions.

On 21 January 2007, soldiers from SSA-S Battalion #34 were surprised when they were ambushed by an SPDC-allied Lahu militia group approximately 25 kilometres south of Kengtung, in which two SSA-S soldiers were killed. *"We were caught unawares because it has been a long time since we clashed with each other,"* said an SSA-S officer. Further clashes occurred the following morning with SPDC army soldiers who had arrived in the area to support the Lahu militia.<sup>62</sup>

On 7 April 2007, SSA-S soldiers clashed with SPDC army soldiers from IB #131 near Kye-thi village in central Shan State. SPDC Major Tun Oo was reported killed and four of his men wounded.<sup>63</sup>

On 13 April 2007, a firefight between the SPDC and SSA-S in Mongpiang, Lawkzawk Township left two SPDC army soldiers dead and a further ten wounded.<sup>64</sup>

In March 2007, it was reported that an SSA-S unit commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Awng Mya had joined forces with soldiers from the Wa National Army (WNA) and mounted patrols of the Loi Wa Her area opposite Muan District of Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand. According to reports, the two groups had been working together over the past year to strengthen the defences at the WNA base at Loi Wa Her.<sup>65</sup>

On 6 June 2007, the SSA-S held a drug burning ceremony at its Loi Kawwan base opposite Thailand's Chiang Rai Province. According to reports, the event marked the third such ceremony and had destroyed 1.1 million methamphetamine tablets reportedly valued at 38.5 million baht (US\$1 million), which had been seized from the SPDC-allied ... led by Ja Seu-bo.<sup>66</sup>

### **Shan Nationalities People Liberation Organization (SNPLO)**

Formed in 1968, the Shan Nationalities People Liberation Organization (SNPLO) reached a ceasefire with the junta on 9 October 1994 and reportedly became closely allied with the UWSA.

In late-2005, the group suffered a major split. Hkun Chit Maung split away from the SNPLO with approximately 100 men and established their base at Nawngtao in Hsihseng Township, to the west of the Pawn River. The new faction was renamed the Pa'O Regional Nationalities Unity Organization (PNUO). His 100 troops were reinforced by additional soldiers from a fellow ceasefire group, the Pa'O National Army (PNA) and also received support and protection from the SPDC. The second faction, led by Hso Pyan, retained the SNPLO name with an estimated 250 men. Hso Pyan's faction based themselves to the east of the Pawn River. No large-scale battles have occurred between the two groups although there have been a number of small skirmishes and ambushes.

Following the conclusion of the National Convention (NC) in July 2007, the SPDC increased pressure on its ceasefire groups to disarm and recognise the SPDC army as the sole army of the country, in accordance with the provisions spelled out in the NC.<sup>67</sup> While some members of the SNPLO agreed to this, including its chairman, U Chit Maung, others did not.

A breakaway faction of approximately 100 SNPLO soldiers who could not accept this demand fled into Karenni State into areas controlled by the opposition KNPP where they announced that they would resume fighting against the regime after a more than a decade of observing the ceasefire. According to SNPLO Vice President Ti Saung, *"They (SPDC) told us to surrender which we can't accept"*.<sup>68</sup> As a result of their refusal to disarm, on 10 August 2007, SPDC army soldiers attacked the group. Colonel Aung Kyaw who was also among the defectors said that, *"The government started pressuring them after they refused to*

*disarm several times ... and so the fight broke out in the area east of Ban Yin*".<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Colonel Khun Thurein, General Secretary of the SNPLO said that *"We will fight back against the government for a chance to have democracy and real a federal union in Burma. ... There is no way to win against the government except through armed revolution, ... [s]o, we will fight using arms"*.<sup>70</sup> On 16 July 2007, it was reported that the breakaway SNPLO faction were engaged in talks with the SSA-S over a possible merger of their two forces.<sup>71</sup>

On 18 November 2007, the breakaway faction announced that they had given themselves a new name: the Pa'O People's Liberation Organization (PPLO) and that they would continue to fight against the central regime in the interests of the Pa'O people.<sup>72</sup>

## Multilateral Resistance Organizations

Despite the frequent splits and factionalism in the various armed ethnic resistance groups, political affiliations between different ethnic groups have allowed for the creation of several multilateral resistance organizations which have attempted to coordinate between the various ethnic minority groups in order to achieve a degree of unity between them and advocate for their collective concerns.

The National Democratic Front (NDF) was the first such group to form in 1976. Created by an in the interests of a number of ethnic organizations, the NDF was originally comprised of members of the Karen National Union (KNU), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Karenni Nationalities Progressive Party (KNPP), Chin National Front (CNF), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), Lahu Democratic Front (LDF), Palaung Liberation Front (PLF), Pa'O Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Wa National Organization (WNO). As with the majority of the multilateral resistance organisations, the efforts of the NDF were purely political and focused on the advocacy of a Federal Union of Burma and the equal rights and representation of ethnic minorities.<sup>73</sup>

In 1989, the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) joined the NDF in their advocacy efforts with a membership that also included members of a broader pro-democracy movement in Burma.<sup>74</sup>

Later, in August 2001, the United Nationalities League for Democracy – Liberated Area (UNLD-LA) and the NDF together founded the Ethnic Nationalities Solidarity and Cooperation Committee (ENSCC), which in 2004 was renamed the ENC. The stated goal of the ENSCC (and subsequently the ENC) was to facilitate tripartite dialogue between the SPDC, the Burman pro-democracy groups and the ethnic minority groups. In 2005, the ENC commenced work on drafting a constitution for a democratic Burma. Unlike the constitution being forced upon the delegates at the National Convention, the constitution that emerged from the Ethnic Nationalities Council was founded on principals of federalism and protected the rights and interests of Burma's ethnic minorities.<sup>75</sup>

## 15.3 SPDC Campaign of Abuses against Ethnic Minority Villagers

Throughout Burma, ethnic ceasefire agreements have rarely offered civilians any protection against violence and abuse. In many cases, the abuses have actually increased following the brokering of a ceasefire pact. Even when direct attacks and arbitrary killings are not occurring, the SPDC and their proxy ceasefire armies exploit ethnic villagers as forced labour, and also through the use of forced relocation, arbitrary arrest, extortion, land confiscation, destruction of property, targeting of food supplies, rapes, beatings and torture.

Control and manipulation of ethnic identity by the military regime can be loosely grouped into three main strategies: direct violence, economic deprivation and cultural assimilation. Of these three, direct violence is arguably the most obvious. SPDC army soldiers as well as ceasefire groups were guilty of performing extrajudicial executions, arbitrarily detaining villagers, and beating and torturing civilians in ethnic minority areas across the country. For example, in Karen State during 2007, as in previous years, SPDC army soldiers shelled villages with mortars and shot IDPs hiding in the forest on sight. (For more information, see Chapter 3: Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions).

In November 2005, the SPDC launched an intensive military offensive against civilian villages in northern Karen State. Unlike most previous campaigns, which have typically been conducted only in the dry season when soldiers can more easily move up and down the steep hillsides, the attacks on unarmed civilian villages continued into the rainy season when travel becomes difficult and the roads impassable to vehicles. Rather than withdraw back to their bases at the onset of the monsoon, the SPDC army columns remained in the steep and densely forested hills, mounting military assaults on undefended villages and hunting the internally displaced who attempted to elude them. SPDC army units fired upon displaced Karen villagers on sight, forcibly relocated those they could catch and deployed thousands of landmines targeted against those that they could not, burned whole villages and destroyed villagers' food supplies. These attacks continued, largely unabated into 2007.

The sustained nature of the attacks quickly caused this to be the single largest offensive conducted in the area in a decade. No offensives of this magnitude or intensity had been waged in Burma since the massive Karen offensives of 1997, in which hundreds of villages were razed and tens of thousands displaced. The Free Burma Rangers (FBR) estimated that by December 2006, approximately 25,000 villagers had fled their homes to hide in the forest where they hoped to avoid detection by SPDC army patrols.<sup>76</sup> During 2007 this number had swelled to over 30,000.<sup>77</sup> However, these numbers must be considered to exist on top of the approximately 120,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) already living in hiding in Karen State.<sup>78</sup>

The ongoing offensive in northern Karen State represents a continuation of a pattern of State-directed violence committed against the civilian population which the SPDC has practised in ethnic minority areas of for decades. In its efforts to wipe out armed resistance and control ethnic minority groups, the SPDC typically targets ethnic minority villages, in direct contravention of not only the Geneva Conventions, but various other international conventions as well, many of which have come to be regarded as customary international law and which the SPDC is thus obliged to obey.

Economic deprivation was also employed widely by the SPDC and by its allied ceasefire armies throughout Burma during 2007. SPDC army soldiers and ceasefire armies alike deliberately and routinely razed villagers' crops and food supplies. Roads were blockaded and food deliveries were not permitted to reach their destinations, creating food shortages

for those who had come to depend on them for their survival. However, perhaps the most pervasive strategy was through the use of extortion and forced labour. Throughout 2007, villagers were regularly called upon to provide their uncompensated labour to assist the military, building new roads and army camps, portering supplies, serving as guides and running errands. Villagers were taken away from their farms and forced to work with little to no regard for the agricultural seasons or the importance of timeliness in farming. As a result, many villagers were unable to harvest enough food to feed their families because so much of their time was spent performing forced labour for the military. (For more information, see Chapter 5: Forced Labour and Forced Conscription). Similarly, whenever soldiers have burned villager's fields and plantations, mounted patrols in civilian farming areas or set up camps near villages or their fields and plantations, it has had a direct impact on the financial life of the villagers.

Furthermore, an elaborate (and at times ludicrous) system of unofficial taxation, tantamount to little more than blatant extortion, has been exacted upon the civilian population by the SPDC and its proxies. Such "taxes" or "fees" may range from levies paid in Arakan State before a marriage permit will be granted, through to fines payable in numerous areas of eastern Burma for the destruction of State property after a villager steps on an SPDC-deployed landmine, many of which are deployed in areas known to be frequented by non-combatants. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood).

The third strategy used in the campaign against Burma's ethnic minorities by the SPDC has been their cultural assimilation into the Buddhist Burman majority. Commonly referred to as "*Burmanization*", one such tool used by the regime is the destruction of culturally important sites or buildings and the construction of more Burman-appropriate structures in their stead. For instance, in Chin State, Christian Chins are prevented from building churches or holding religious events. Many Christian sites in Chin State have been demolished and Buddhist pagodas and temples built on the site. Similarly, the Muslim Rohingya from Arakan State find it extremely difficult to secure official permission to repair existing mosques, let alone construct new ones. (For more information, see Chapter 8: Freedom of Belief and Religion).

The regime has also enacted certain draconian laws which prevent the expression of culture among many of Burma's ethnic minorities, which among other things, have prohibited the wearing of traditional ethnic dress, performing traditional cultural ceremonies, or even learning native ethnic languages. The Muslim Rohingya of Arakan State, for example, are prevented from adhering to their marriage traditions and wearing traditional dress when performing wedding ceremonies. Many Rohingya are prevented from marrying at all and must first apply for marriage permits from the regime, the cost of which is prohibitively high, and which are often arbitrarily denied anyway. Moreover, the Rohingya have been targeted for, what some researchers have referred to as, "*cultural genocide*" in that they have frequently been forcibly relocated off their land and into SPDC-designated sites to make way for Buddhist Burman settlers from central Burma so as to dilute the ethnic composition of the region through the establishment of these incongruously-named "*model villages*".

As shall be seen on the pages which follow, various strategies of direct violence, economic deprivation and cultural assimilation were employed by the SPDC and its allied ethnic ceasefire armies in the ethnic minority areas of Burma throughout 2007. By far the most extensively documented of these were those abuses which had been committed in Karen State, due not only to the large-scale military offensive which continues there, but also due to the extensive documentation network in place among the Karen. That said, the greater amount of evidence recorded for Karen State does not necessarily mean that the situation there is any worse than in any other part of the country. In other words, this should not be taken to mean that fewer documented incidences from other parts of the country equates to fewer human rights violations being committed in those areas.

Please note that the list of incidents shown below is far from complete and should not be assumed to represent an exhaustive catalogue of the campaign of abuses perpetrated against ethnic minority villagers in Burma. This chapter would be long indeed if all such incidents were to be listed here. Such a catalogue would be a substantial tome in itself and is beyond the scope of this present chapter. That which is included below has been to illustrate the deliberate and discriminatory nature of these abuses. Please refer to other relevant chapters of this report for further information on special abuses or sets of abuses.

## Arakan State

There are approximately two million inhabitants of Arakan (Rakhine) State. The two predominant ethnic groups are the Buddhist Arakanese (Rakhine) and the Bengali-speaking Muslim Rohingya.

The Rohingya, for the most part, inhabit the northern region of Arakan State, near the border with Bangladesh. The Arakan Project, an independent NGO documenting abuses against the Rohingya, has characterised the area as one of acute poverty which is facing a “*chronic emergency*”, and the Rohingya as facing some of the highest levels of discrimination in Burma.<sup>79</sup> Burmese military campaigns against the Rohingya prompted large refugee flows into Bangladesh in 1978 and again in 1991-92. Approximately 20,000 Rohingya refugees remain in camps in Bangladesh.<sup>80</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 17: Situation of Refugees).

The Rohingya have no official status within Burma or in neighbouring Bangladesh. Bangladesh. Both countries refuse to claim them as their own, and as such, the Rohingya are a stateless people. As non-citizens, they are not allowed to travel out of Northern Arakan State and must request permission from SPDC authorities any time that they wish to leave their villages. (For more information, see Chapter 10: Freedom of Assembly, Association and Movement). Similarly, Fishermen in the town of Sittwe have to pay 500 kyat each to the immigration, military intelligence (*SaRaPa*) and the regional administration (*DaKaSa*) if they want to go out to sea to go fishing.<sup>81</sup>

Even at those times when Rohingya have purchased and are in possession of valid travel permits, they are not immune to extortion and arrest from SPDC army soldiers. Many Rohingya procure travel documents to move from the economically depressed Buthidaung Township to look for work in Maungdaw Township. However, they are vulnerable to exploitation as they return home, carrying the money they have saved. Troops at any number of checkpoints along the road often detain people and destroy their travel documents, thereafter demanding a fine from the person and stealing their money.<sup>82</sup> Restrictions on movement also apply to those seeking medical care for cases where treatment is not locally available due to the extremely low quality of healthcare services in the region. (For more information, see Chapter 7: Right to Health).

The restrictions on movement, combined with the restrictions on business activity perpetuate a state of economic depression in the area, and as a result, the Rohingya have struggle over the past few years to grow or buy enough food.

For the past several years, the Ministry for the Development of Border Areas and National Races has forcibly relocated the Rohingya off the land to make way for settlers brought in from other areas, usually from around Rangoon, but sometimes even foreigners from Bangladesh. SPDC army soldiers are frequently used to enforce such evictions and to pressure Rohingya farm owners to sign over their land, on occasion utilising torture and imprisonment to secure their signatures on ‘legal’ documents, which is ironic in that land

ownership documents do not exist in Burma and that the state retains ownership of all agricultural land.<sup>83</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood). Land confiscated from the Rohingya has typically been used to establish 'model villages', also known as *NaTaLa* (Ministry of Border Affairs) villages designed to dilute the ethnic composition of the areas by relocating Buddhist Burman settlers into areas traditionally inhabited by the Rohingya. According to one report, by August 2006, there were already 1,500 settlers placed in five model villages throughout Maungdaw Township.<sup>84</sup> Other sources have maintained that by the end of November 2006, over 40 Rohingya families had been displaced from their land and that more settlers were slated to arrive in the Taungbro area during 2007.<sup>85</sup>

On 27 March 2007, the NaTaLa called a meeting with villagers from Maung Nama, Magh Bill, Kwan Daine, Yet Nyo Daung, Thet Kin Manu, and Washilla Para villages in Buthidaung Township. At the meeting, the authorities announced that they would establish new model villages on their paddy fields.<sup>86</sup>

On 20 June 2007, the NaSaKa seized 140 acres of farmland from Rohingya villagers in Shwe Zarr village tract and a further 70 acres from Ashika Para of Maungdaw Township for use in the creation of a new model village.<sup>87</sup>

On 22 September 2007, 12 acres of farmland was confiscated from Rohingya farmers in Buthidaung Township without any form of compensation. The NaSaKa announced that yet another model village was to be established on the confiscated land in November 2007. One unidentified village elder from the area speculated that if "*The concerned authorities continue ... this trend to confiscate land from Rohingya farmers, there will be no Rohingya farmers in Arakan within five years*".<sup>88</sup>

During 2007, as in previous years, the Rohingya faced increasing levels of discrimination and cultural repression as the SPDC enforced regulations requiring Rohingya couples to apply for permission before they are allowed to marry.<sup>89</sup> A marriage permit can cost anywhere from 1,000 kyat to 150,000 kyat and involves extensive paperwork and lengthy delays of up to several months. In order to acquire a marriage permit, the couple must appear before the *NaSaKa* dressed in formal Burman attire.<sup>90</sup> They must either follow cultural traditions not their own, or else not be married.

On 3 July 2007, 27-year-old Mohammad Jamil was arrested by SaRaPa personnel and fined 40,000 kyat for having married without seeking official permission.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, on 29 July 2007, a Rohingya couple who had married in 2006 without official permission fled to Bangladesh fearing arrest. At the time Majuma Khatun was nine month's pregnant with the couple's first child and knowing that word of their marriage would get out, they fled to Bangladesh to have the baby there.<sup>92</sup>

Meanwhile on 5 November 2007, 23-year-old Abu Siddique was finally awarded permission to marry three years after having initially applied. It would seem that the only reason that permission was finally granted was the as a result of the payment of a 30,000 kyat bribe.<sup>93</sup>

On 20 August 2007, 30-year-old Abdu Radshid was fined 6,000 kyat and two gallons of kerosene by NaSaKa personnel after his wife gave birth to a still born baby. Purely looking to extort money from the couple, the NaSaKa accused Abdu Radshid of strangling the baby.<sup>94</sup>

## Chin State

Chin State is situated in the western hills of Burma bordering the northeastern states of India and is home to a population of approximately 500,000 people, with a further 50,000 Chin refugees estimated to be living in Mizoram State, India. Approximately 90 percent of the Chin population is Christian, which has caused them to be targeted for harsh discrimination along religious lines by the predominantly-Buddhist regime. (For more information, see Chapter 8: Freedom of Belief and Religion).

The region falls under the area of operations of the SPDC northwestern Regional Military Command which stations no fewer than six battalions in the State at any one time.

On 3 January 2007, it was reported that a young Chin woman was refused entry into a midwife training that she had already been accepted into for wearing pants. The young woman, whose name was not given, was among 20 women chosen for the training in Haka which was implemented by the National Working Committee for Women's Affairs (NWCWA). According to the source, the young woman was turned away from the bus which was to take the trainees to the venue for failing to wear a traditional Burmese sarong.<sup>95</sup>

On 24 January 2007, it was reported that in late 2006 the chairman of the Thangtlang Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) had ordered all female civil servants to clean and decorate a Buddhist monastery in Thangtlang. As the vast majority of Chin are Christian, many of these women reported feeling *"insult[ed] and humiliated"*. One of the women who had been forced to perform this labour told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that *"I think calling [us] to clean the monastery [was] just to humiliate us, because ... the Buddhists can clean this temple by themselves. But we are afraid of [having] our salaries cut if we don't go"*.<sup>96</sup>

In January 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #140, based at Leisen village, Matupi Township demanded rations from local villagers. Every household within the LIB #140 cantonment area was ordered to provide six chickens and two cups of rice to the soldiers, which the villagers were also ordered to deliver to the camp. The villagers often have little choice other than comply with these demands as they are often accompanied with threats that non-compliance will result in the destruction of their village. *"Such kinds of rice and chickens confiscation have been committed every month that the surrounding villagers of Leisen areas are badly affected their livelihood as they never get the cost of their property from the military"*, said one local villager.<sup>97</sup>

On 5 February 2007, Captain Win Zaw from LIB #268 ordered several villagers to serve as guides and to *"take responsibility for the security"* of Chin State Peace and Development Council Chairman Colonel Tin Hla. The odd phraseology of civilian villagers *"taking responsibility for the security"* of armed soldiers means that should the column be attacked by the Chin resistance, the villagers will be punished. Guides are also often used as human minesweepers and human shields. During the second week of February 2007, Colonel Tin Hla travelled between Falam to Teddim, at which point, four villagers from Tuisen-Phai village were forced to serve as porters and guides for the Colonel and his men. One of these four villagers later reported that in addition to accompanying the soldiers and carrying their loads, they also had to provide them with food: *"We [had] to bring rations for them and [had] to carry their belongings up to their battalion. We spent 2 days [with the soldiers], but got nothing for our wages"*.<sup>98</sup>

On 21 February 2007, Lieutenant Colonel San Aung, Tactical Operations Commander #2 for Chin State ordered the arrest of nine village headmen from local villages in southern Chin State following a CNA ambush in which three SPDC army soldier, including one officer, were

killed. The village heads were arrested for failing to report the movement of the CNA soldiers to the SPDC. The clash took place near Cun-nam village on 19 February 2007. Seeking revenge for their losses, San Aung ordered the arrest of the village heads from the following villages. Though the report maintained that nine village heads were arrested, only eight were listed.

1. Cun-nam village;
2. San Pyah village;
3. Way Laung village;
4. Si Wa Nu village;
5. Lin Song village;
6. Khaw boi village;
7. Dar Chung village; and
8. Tingsi village.<sup>99</sup>

On 16 February 2007, the Matupi Golden Jubilee Memorial Pillar was destroyed under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel San Aung. According to his edict, all memorial pillars, with the singular exception of the Independence Pillar have been prohibited in Burma. *“The order said that Matupi ... is in Burma, and in Burma no stone pillar is allowed to be built except the Independence stone pillar. So this stone pillar is illegal and must be destroyed at once”*, said a member of the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) who was ordered to participate in its destruction. Originally founded in 1949, Matupi celebrated its Golden Jubilee on 22 March 1999 and built the memorial to mark the event.<sup>100</sup>

In the first week of June, three people, two of whom were three-year-old children, died of diarrhoea in Pasin village of Matupi Township. Local healthcare workers reported that they had attempted to access the area to treat the sick and prevent any further deaths, but were blocked from doing so by the SPDC. Two other people from La Oo village in Thangtlang Township and a further two in Cakhang village near the Indian border also died *“because of their inability to access proper medical treatment”*.<sup>101</sup>

On 11 July 2007, three Chin youths were arrested and interrogated by SPDC army soldiers attached to LIB #233 under suspicion that they were members of the CNF. The three young men denied that they were presently affiliated with the group but had confessed that they had previously been CNA recruits but had fled the training camp *“as they were suffering with pain and poverty there”*.<sup>102</sup>

On 19 November 2007, it was reported that SPDC army soldiers from LIB #266, based in Lunglei village, Thangtlang Township had been patrolling the border areas and using *“villagers not only as guides but also forc[ing] them to carry army rucksacks full of and ammunition and food. ... Moreover, the soldiers [have] forcibly take[n] rice, chicken and vegetables from villagers residing along their patrol route”*. On 8 October 2007, a section of SPDC army soldiers, led by Major Myo Zaw Tant, forced 11 villagers from Sabawngte village in Matupi Township to carry rations and ammunition for them while on patrol.<sup>103</sup>

On 10 January 2007, prominent Chin activist and General Secretary of the UNLD, Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong was awarded the prestigious Martin Luther King Prize in recognition of his struggle for peace and justice in Burma. The award was presented to Lian Hmung Sakhong at a ceremony on 15 January 2007 in Sweden.<sup>104</sup>

## Kachin State

Kachin State, located in the far north of the country is believed to be home to approximately 1.2 million people. The majority of the Kachin population are Christian and thus the majority of the SPDC's persecution of the ethnic Kachin has mainly focused on their religion and on their conversion to Buddhism. (For more information, see Chapter 8: Freedom of Belief and Religion). To this end, the regime has set up several schools, referred to as *NaTaLa* (Ministry of Border Affairs) schools, which provide education free of charge, but have the ulterior motive of forcibly converting Christian students to Buddhism:

*"The junta ... opened a famous [NaTaLa] School in Putao Township and offers free education and accommodation to locals, ... [b]ut, all Christians have to worship and bow before Buddhist Pagodas and mention Buddhism as their original faith in the [NaTaLa] School ... application form".<sup>105</sup>*

Added to the oppression handed out by the SPDC, a number of Kachin armed ceasefire groups are also guilty of committing human rights violations against local communities in Kachin State.

On 12 March 2007, it was reported that SPDC army soldiers issued an order for the destruction of a Lisu cultural building in Zibidi village of Putao Township after evidence of SPDC army battalions confiscating land from local villagers had been shared with the opposition media. Local villagers from Zibidi village were ordered to demolish the Naw Literature and Culture Building as punishment for leaking information of human rights violations to the press.<sup>106</sup>

On 19 July 2007, the Kachin News Group (KNG) reported that over the past year, several well-known Burmese business tycoons had set up businesses in Kachin State, forcing local villagers off their land and destroying their crops in the process. Kachin State's lucrative teak and jade reserves have been at the top of their lists. According to local residents, the Rangoon-based Max Myanmar Company had *"recently occupied about 500 acres of jade mining blocks in Lonkin, Phakant Township. ... The occupied land includes paddy fields, agricultural fields and jade mining areas which were owned by local Kachin residents and business blocks"*. Moreover, the Yuzana Company, another Rangoon-based SPDC-allied crony company, had *"forcibly relocated local Kachin and Shan residents and destroyed their livestock and homes with the help of the Burmese military based in the area"*. Though the original report failed to mention it, those villagers who have been forced from their land have since been left without their primary, if not only source of livelihood and will face extreme hardships as they attempt to provide for their families.<sup>107</sup>

Under the junta's Paddy Procurement Policy, which they claimed had been terminated in 2004, local farmers in the Hukawng Valley were ordered to sell two and a half tins (26 kgs / 57 lbs) of paddy per acre to SPDC army units at half the prevailing market price. In October 2007, only weeks before their fields were due to be harvested, villagers were forced to sign documents promising to sell their allotted quota of *"dutiful rice"* to the SPDC for which they would receive only 2,500 kyat per tin at a time when the market rates in Myitkyina were 5,000 kyat for the same volume of paddy. One villager from Dumbang village who was forced to sign away his harvest to the SPDC told KNG that:

*"We now have a big problem selling rice to the army called the "dutiful rice" which is counted on the basis of total [acreage] of paddy fields owned by the farmers but not based on how many acres of active paddy fields owned".<sup>108</sup>*

Those farmers whose crops had failed, or who had only sown paddy on a small portion of the land that they owned faced extreme difficulties in providing their quota and having enough left for themselves. In some extreme cases, some farmers have been forced to borrow or buy additional rice to meet their quota when that which they harvested was not enough.<sup>109</sup>

In November 2007, the Kachin Development Network Group (KDNG) released a report on the dangers associated with the planned damming of the Irrawaddy River. The report, entitled, *Damming the Irrawaddy* argued that should the proposed Myitsone dam be built, 47 villages will be inundated and an estimated 10,000 people will become displaced, resulting in the loss of livelihoods and “exacerbating the existing problems of unemployment, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS in the area”. Yaw Na of the KDNG and chairperson of the Kachin Environmental Organization (KEO) added that:

*"The dam in Myitsone will not benefit [the] Kachin people. ... Obviously, we can see what will happen once the dam is built. The Burmese government will sell the power generated to China while local people are deprived of electricity. ... If the Burmese government was really concerned with environmental issues and wanted to go in for sustainable development of the country, there is no need for such a big dam to be constructed on the Irrawaddy River. It can build small dams to produce electricity".<sup>110</sup>*



Displaced villagers from northern Tenasserim Division gather at a temporary and covert 'jungle market' where they are able to trade goods without interference by the SPDC. Such markets provide displaced villagers with some of their only access to food and supplies which they are not able to grow themselves or otherwise acquire locally. [Photo: KHRG]

## Karen State

In late-November 2005, the SPDC launched its largest military offensive against the Karen since the massive offensive in 1997. These attacks have remained somewhat sustained since they began and continued into 2007.

Despite claims made by the SPDC to the effect that the offensive is aimed at wiping out the armed resistance of the KNU, the vast majority of the violence has been directed at civilian villages. In many instances, SPDC army soldiers have actively avoided KNLA soldiers in favour of attacking undefended villages. During 2007, as in 2006, most of the attacks were concentrated in the three northern Karen districts of Toungoo, Nyaunglebin, and Papun Districts.

SPDC army soldiers have directly and deliberately attacked unarmed and undefended villages, firing upon civilians, shooting at farmers in their fields and shelling whole villages without warning from neighbouring hillsides with mortars and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs). Most villagers flee their villages whenever SPDC army soldiers draw near and return only after the soldiers have moved on. After the troops leave, the villagers return to harvest their crops and reoccupy their homes if they have not been destroyed. When soldiers burn the village they leave no home for villagers to return to. Similarly, when soldiers burn the fields, they leave no crops to harvest.

Knowing that civilians typically return to their villages after the troops have left, SPDC army soldiers often leave landmines in the village to target those who come back to their homes. Patterns of mine use by the SPDC have indicated that the mines are being deployed to deliberately target the civilian population and not the armed combatants of the KNLA. Mines have been laid in villages, along paths to and from the villagers' fields, in their fields and in other areas such as along the banks of rivers where villagers are likely to frequent.

The presence of landmines in Karen State is a very real threat and fear of those mines dramatically restricts the movement of villagers, which can be particularly detrimental when farmers are afraid to travel to their fields or to local markets.<sup>11</sup> The Thai-Burma border is also reportedly extensively landmined to prevent or deter the flight of refugees. (For more information, see Chapter 4: Landmines).

The SPDC has attempted to use this offensive to consolidate its control across northern Karen State where its grip has always been tenuous: All those living in areas beyond SPDC army control are to be forcibly relocated into areas where the military can maintain a presence. Meanwhile, all of those who refuse to comply are shot. During 2007, SPDC army units constructed several new army camps throughout the offensive area, many of which were built with the forced labour of local communities. Once these camps were established, the soldiers mounted patrols from them and fired upon anyone they encountered.

Since early 2006, many villages located in areas newly controlled by the SPDC have been forcibly relocated. Often troops arrive in a given village and give the residents a few days to pack their belongings and move to a designated site. At other times, no advance warning is given at all, and villages must relocate immediately, carrying only what they can carry on their backs. If they are seen in the area after the deadline to move, they are told they will be shot.<sup>12</sup> Once they have been herded into camps, villagers are constantly watched by SPDC army troops and all aspects of their lives are strictly controlled. Relocation sites are often fenced and villagers are not allowed to leave the area. Moreover, the sites are typically grossly overcrowded and very little, if any, arable land is left available to the new arrivals. (For more information, see Chapter 16: Internal Displacement and Forced Relocation).

Villagers are also often used as forced labour and are regularly the targets of extortion from soldiers.

Those who refuse to live under the SPDC and instead choose to live beyond State control in the forests of Karen State face considerable hardship as they attempt to remain hidden. Life in the jungle is especially difficult without permanent shelter during the monsoon season. Movement for the internally displaced, living in the forest, is often restricted by the movement of SPDC troops in the area, the location of SPDC camps, roadways, and landmines. However, most IDPs can manage to remain hidden from the SPDC army patrols that hunt them, either by moving regularly or by moving deeper into the forest further away from areas where the SPDC can maintain a presence. However these areas continued to decrease throughout 2007 as the SPDC expanded its sphere of control in the region.

Perhaps the most pervasive effect of the offensive in northern Karen State has been the decreasing availability of food. This can be said to be true both for those living in SPDC-controlled villages and relocation sites as well as for those living in hiding in the forests. Several elements of the military campaign contribute to the problem of food scarcity in Karen State and all of these elements combine to force people from their homes in hunger.

Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, SPDC army units have burned large numbers of agricultural fields, plantations and farmlands, with the purpose of deliberately ruining that season's crop. The proliferation of new army camps, in addition to the deployment of landmines and the regular SPDC army patrols have prevented farmers from preparing, sowing or harvesting their fields. Secondly, SPDC soldiers have also looted and burned many villages and homes, along with all possessions and food that they had contained. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood).

On 1 January 2007, village heads in Hin-teing village in Mergui-Tavoy District issued directives to local residents that they were not permitted to leave their villages without purchasing a travel pass from the army, at a cost of 500 kyat each. Villagers were also informed that those who were absent from the village for more than 3 months would no longer be recognised or registered as residents of that village. Implicit in this order is that those who are no longer registered as living in a village will be deemed as being a member of the resistance and shot on sight.<sup>113</sup>

On 2 January 2007, village headman Ti Reh from Phukra village in northern Karen State was shot and killed by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #250 at their nearby army camp. According to reports, KNLA soldiers had recently ambushed the SPDC unit and his torture and murder was conducted as retaliation for this. It is common practice for SPDC army soldiers to retaliate and attack the nearest village following any attacks that they come under from the KNLA, typically accusing the villagers of providing information to the resistance and thus being complicit in the attack. The soldiers also reportedly razed nine paddy storage barns to further make their point.<sup>114</sup>

On 5 January 2007, SPDC troops forced villagers to clear landmines between Thapanchaung and Htee-lo with their bullock carts. At about 1 pm, one of the carts was blown up by a landmine and 2 persons on the cart were killed.<sup>115</sup>

On 6 January 2007, Strategic Operations Commander (SOC), Kin Maung Oo, ordered IB #60 and LIB #351 to relocate residents of Ko Pu and Hsaw Mi Lu village tracts in Mone Township to Kyauk Kyi. The order followed a KNLA attack on an SPDC army unit in the area. The villagers were forced to destroy their own homes as part of the relocation.<sup>116</sup>



A displaced Karen woman from in Hsaw Htee township, Nyaunglebin District, pictured here with her children in February 2007. She is shown here with her baby slung over one shoulder and her husband's M79 40 mm grenade launcher slung over the other. Her husband, a KNLA soldier, went to tend to the family's fields, entrusting his wife with the weapon to protect their children from SPDC army patrols. *[Photo: KHRG]*

In February 2007, SPDC army Battalion Commander Than Hteik, operating in Kyauk Kyi (Ler Doh) Township, of Nyaunglebin District, introduced a charge of 2,000 kyat for passes that permitted villagers to travel outside their villages for a period of up to ten days.<sup>117</sup>

On 4 February 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #349 clashed with Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) troops in the Kyo Gyi area of Nyaunglebin District, in which several SPDC army soldiers were killed. In response, the battalion demanded each village in the immediate vicinity pay a 65,000 kyat fine. The villages forced to pay this fine were:

1. Po Pin Goe;
2. Kyaw Su;
3. Li Pi Wei;
4. Thi P'yaw Dah;
5. Pyi Su;
6. Wei Mu;
7. Hay Tha Wei;
8. Kyo Gyi;
9. Pyi Taung Tha;
10. Ywa Ka La; and
11. Htoe Wa Zet.

The following day, on 5 February 2007, the same SPDC army soldiers accused villagers from adjacent Kyo Gyi village of attacking his unit the previous day. He apprehended ten of the villagers, shot three pigs and smeared the blood on the detained villagers, before demanding 20,000 kyat from each of them. The villagers were then released, but threatened against spreading news of the incident. Battalion Commander Tha Tet also forced villagers from Li Pi Wei, Htoe Wa Zet and Hay Tha Wei to fund the purchase of a new motorbike, at a cost of 1,200,000 kyat. It was also reported that persons from these villages were being forced to pay 1,000 kyat for passes, allowing them to leave their village to work in their fields.

Moreover, Colonel Maung Gyi also demanded money from seven villages in this area on 5 February 2007 to cover the costs of roofing thatch to be used in the construction of a new SPDC army camp. The affected villages and the amounts that they were obliged to pay are as follows:

1. Htoe Wa Zet, 120,000 kyat;
2. Kyauk Se Yik, 120,000 kyat;
3. Thu K'bee, 50,000 kyat;
4. Taw Kyaw Paut, 120,000 kyat;
5. Lei Wei Gyi, 50,000 kyat;
6. Aye Net, 200,000 kyat; and
7. Kyo Gyi, 120,000 kyat.<sup>118</sup>

According to a report released on 23 February 2007, three civilian buffalo traders from Dooplaya District were shot and killed by an SPDC army soldiers from IB #36 on 28 December 2006. The three victims were reportedly dressed in KNLA soldiers' uniforms before they were shot to mask the fact that they had knowingly killed civilians simply so that they could steal their money. The soldiers reportedly made off with 15 million kyat. The names and ages of the three victims were:

1. A Lupoe, 41, from Lo Shan village;
2. Neing Htaw Ko, 43, from Htee Hto Kaut village; and
3. Pah Pae, 34, from Mae K'wa village.<sup>119</sup>

On 15 April 2007, 18-year-old Saw Bleh Kloh Htoo was arrested and executed by a column of SPDC army soldiers comprised of soldiers from LIB #371 and LIB #372, operating under MOC #5 near the Yaw Tho Ber IDP site in Tantabin Township, Toungoo District. Prior to beating him to death, the soldiers had tortured him by putting out his eyes and slicing his mouth open with a knife.<sup>120</sup>

On 17 May 2007, 27-year-old Naw Bu Ru was killed by SPDC army soldiers while cutting grass in her field in the Pana Eh Per Ko area of Papun District. The soldiers dumped her body in her field hut and burned it along with the hut.<sup>121</sup>

On 7 July 2007, four villagers from Blut Doh village were stopped by a column of SPDC army soldiers from LIB #378 and LIB #388 who demanded to be shown the way to Wah Do Ko village in Nyaunglebin District. Three of the villagers refused the order and were summarily executed by the soldiers. The sole surviving villager accompanied the soldiers as a guide and was ordered to walk ahead of the column as a human minesweeper. Five days later, one of the soldiers was killed by a landmine, and in the confusion created by the blast the villager was able to escape. (For more information, see Chapter 4: Landmines). The names of the three villagers who were killed were:

1. Saw Htoo Htoo;
2. Saw Mya Doh Moo; and
3. Saw Po Eh Do.<sup>122</sup>

On 12 July 2007, SPDC army battalions under the second command's headquarters had reportedly forced villagers to build more than five new military camps in Toungoo District.<sup>123</sup>

On 30 July 2007, two villagers, aged 30 and 12, were foraging for bamboo shoots close to the village of Sa Le in Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaunglebin District when one of them stepped on an SPDC landmine. In spite of the fact that the victim lost his foot, he was fined 10,000 kyat by the SPDC for the destruction of military property.<sup>124</sup>

On 13 August 2007, SPDC army soldiers with IB #83 and IB #77 attacked Ga Yu Der village in Papun District, burning down 14 homes and forcing more than 80 villagers to flee from this one village alone. The troops then continued moving north, burning down several homes in

Lay Po Der. After crossing into Toungoo District, the soldiers attacked Lay Kee village, burning down many homes and forcing hundreds of people into hiding.<sup>125</sup>

On 19 November 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #218 and LIB #219, attacked Ler Wah village in Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaunglebin District, strafing it with machinegun fire. As the villagers fled into the forest, the troops moved into the village, ransacking homes, stealing belongings, and destroying food and other property that they were not able to carry away with them. They then set up a temporary camp close the village for several days, and placed landmines in the village before returning to their camp.<sup>126</sup>

## Karenni State

Karenni State, located in the east of the country, is home to a number of armed ethnic groups, both those allied with and those opposing the military regime, and has also been the site of some of the country's most intensive military offensives and human rights abuses. Unfortunately, little information regarding the human rights situation in Karenni State is made public, yet this by no means should be taken to indicate that Karenni State is free of such abuses. The lack of information, rather reflects both that relatively few organizations are actively working to document these abuses and also that the media has tended to shy away from this little-known-of area in favour of neighbouring Karen State where literally dozens of groups are working to document these abuses.

According to the *Kantarawaddy Times*, starting on 1 May 2007, the SPDC launched a fresh offensive in Karenni State in conjunction with ongoing road construction works to repair the old colonial road linking Mawchi with Toungoo in Karen State. According to the report, four SPDC army battalions operating under Military Operations Command (MOC) #7, along with two other unnamed battalions were involved in the operation.

*"The Burmese Army has been using its battalions for the road construction even as its military operation in Karenni State continues. As a result, local people are facing severe difficulties which have always been the fallout of such onslaught. Forced labour, human rights abuses, rape and use of [landmines] are common in such operations. ... Local people have been fleeing and hiding in the jungles because of the presence of the army and these internally displaced people are bereft of food and shelter".<sup>127</sup>*

In June 2007, *Mizzima News* reported that a group of over 30 Karenni villagers had recently arrived at the Thai-Burma border where they sought entry into Karenni Camp 1 in Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand. This latest group reportedly brought the number new arrivals to the refugee camp to more than 200 since the SPDC had begun a new offensive in the area at *"the beginning of summer"*. The new arrivals reported the fresh wave of attacks and fear of arrest under suspicion of being affiliated with the KNPP as their primary motivations for flight.<sup>128</sup>

In the month spanning 8 October to 9 November 2007, approximately 50 Karenni villagers were arrested by the SPDC under allegations of having assisted the KNPP. On 4 October 2007, SPDC army troops from LIB #530 were ambushed by KNPP soldiers near Chitkeh village, during which four SPDC army soldiers were killed and a further five injured. Two days after the clash the SPDC started arresting local villagers for *"aiding frontline Karenni soldiers during the skirmish as well as [for] failing to keep the Burmese troops informed"*. However, according to Khu Oo Reh, the Joint Secretary of the KNPP, *"those who have been arrested are civilians and have no connection with the KNPP"*, adding that *"They [the SPDC army soldiers] regularly do this kind of thing. ... They tell [the] villagers that the Karenni*

*soldiers cannot survive without the villagers' support. They also accuse the villagers of feeding Karenni soldiers".*<sup>129</sup>

In November 2007, it was reported that there were an estimated 81,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living throughout Karenni State. According to reports, this number includes those in urban areas and an estimated 30,000 living in hiding in the forests, but the vast majority were those *"living in chronic poverty in ceasefire areas administered by Karenni ceasefire groups, including the KNPLF"*. Khu Oo Reh, Joint Secretary of the KNPP added that *"Those IDP[s] are from all over Karenni State, not only in the jungle, but also in the urban areas. They [the civilians] have been surviving as IDPs for years. Some are still hiding in the jungle and some have escaped to the Thai-Burmese border"*. Meanwhile, the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) reported that there were as many as 28 SPDC army battalions operating in Karenni State at that time, accounting in part, for such high levels of displacement.<sup>130</sup>

## Mon State

The New Mon State Party (NMSP), the strongest Mon opposition group, signed a ceasefire deal with the regime in 1995, after which the Mon people had expected peace and development from the military regime. However, the progress that many had anticipated never came. Instead, human rights violations have continued over the years since including the widespread confiscation of civilian land. As a result, many Mon farmers became so impoverished that they fled the country with starvation looming ominously overhead. The mass exodus of the Mon allowed for the broad resettlement of the area by ethnic Burmans, drawn to the area by economic opportunities and the availability of land, which over time has diluted the ethnic composition of the area so that the Mon are no longer the demographic majority in Mon State. The regime's strategy in the area has actively discriminated against the Mon, impoverishing them and causing them to flee the country, only to be replaced with more ethnic Burmans who the SPDC entices to the area with generous financial incentives. The population transfer has taken place quite rapidly and has many local community groups worried about the preservation of the traditional way of life for the Mon in the face of the increased Burmanization of their traditional homeland.<sup>131</sup>

In an apparent attempt to further weaken the Mon culture, the SPDC as decreed that the teaching of the native Mon language is forbidden in Mon State. During 2006, a senior SPDC official from Kyaik Mayaw Township said that *"Teaching the Mon language is a barrier to national development and solidarity. The SPDC will not achieve its objective of rural development in the area because of the Mon language teaching"*.<sup>132</sup>

To compensate for the gap in education which exists in Mon State, Buddhist monks in Mon communities have partnered with the Mon Literature and Culture Committees (MLCC) to provide self-funded summer schools for Mon students. The project allows many underprivileged Mon children who cannot afford the tuition fess charged at State schools with some basic primary-level education and literacy skills that they would otherwise be without.<sup>133</sup> Although, in April 2007, it was reported that while the number of students in Mon State learning the Mon language was on the rise, the number of Mon students in neighbouring Pegu Division studying the Mon language had *"dropped sharply"*.<sup>134</sup> (For more information, see Chapter 12: Right to Education).

On 6 June 2007, the Independent Mon News Agency (IMNA) reported that five Mon cultural organizations would likely face closure after their permits were denied for renewal. Among the groups whose permits were terminated were the Moulmein Mon Literature and Culture Sub-Committee, the Kyaik Mayaw Mon Literature and Culture Committee and three other

unnamed local organizations. *"This is the military's suppression of ethnic rights which helps develop its own literature and culture. It is ethnic cleansing,"* said one of the founding members of the MLCC. Meanwhile, Nai Suthorn, Chairman of the Mon Unity League (MUL) added, *"It is wrong. I again say that the military government is repressive. It has banned community welfare organizations and developed its own organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA)"*.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, in May 2007, it was reported that all Dhamma (Buddhist scripture) teachings provided in Khaw Zar Town were ordered to only be taught in Burmese from that point on. One monk explained that *"Almost everything was changed including the title. We were ordered to change it into Burmese. We have been reading Buddhist teachings for a couple of years, but this is the first time we were forced to change the signboard title [into Burmese script]"*.<sup>136</sup>

On 7 June 2007, an unidentified SPDC army officer issued a curfew order to villages in southern Ye Township preventing them from travelling to their farms. Village headmen were under orders to prohibit all access to or egress from their respective villages after 6:00 pm. According to the source, Mon resistance forces had visited the village of Brong, prompting these new orders to be issued to prevent villagers from returning to their farms from where they could support the opposition movement.<sup>137</sup>

In the beginning of July 2007, SPDC army soldiers from IB #31 ordered the approximately 100 households of Bayoun-ngae village in Khaw Zar Sub-Township to relocate. The villagers had been accused of supporting the opposition Monland Restoration Party (MRP), although, what evidence the SPDC had of this was not stated. All of the homes were ordered to be destroyed and according to one of the villagers, some of the homes had already been burned soon after the order was issued.<sup>138</sup>

Also in early July 2007, an SPDC army unit opened fire on a civilian family's home near Three Pagoda's Pass. On 2 July, soldiers from LIB #308 had been caught in an ambush by KNLA soldiers in which nine were killed and another ten wounded. Soon after, these soldiers had been replaced by IB #18, who, having learned of the attack were nervous and opened fire with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades on the hut situated in a rubber plantation near Chanug-zone village after reportedly mistaking its inhabitants for KNLA soldiers. The inhabitants, all of whom were civilian, were lucky to have escaped unscathed.<sup>139</sup>

On 28 November, the IMNA reported that villagers in the Thanbyuzayat and Three Pagodas Pass areas sold all of their food supplies *"at throwaway prices"* out of fear that they would have been looted by patrolling SPDC army soldiers. One villager reported that *"The current price of paddy is 200 [Thai] baht per basket, but they just sold it for 70-80 baht per basket"*. Another villager said that *"now they had money and could go anywhere and stay away from Burmese soldiers"*.<sup>140</sup>

## Shan State

On 5 February 2007, SPDC army soldiers attached to IB #99 (Sein Aung commanding) patrolled through the Wan Saang village tract in Laikha Township, apprehended approximately 20 villagers they encountered working in their farms along their way and forced them to porter loads for the unit. According to the report, the soldiers maintained that *"it was farmers like them that were providing Shan soldiers with rice and other food stuff, and forced the villagers to serve as porters and go with the patrol."* On the same day, the soldiers also encountered 37-year-old Naang Zing who they also detained, claiming that she

was the wife of an SSA-S soldier. The villagers were detained for the next two days and forced to porter supplies, while Naang Zing was gang raped repeatedly “*all night every night by several SPDC troops taking turns one after another*”. After a few days, the soldiers released the porters but shot Naang Zing dead and left her body in a deserted farm near Paang Nim village in Nam-Zarng Township.<sup>141</sup>

In February and March 2007, villagers of Naa Kawng Mu village in Murg-Ton Township were forced to carry bricks, sand and water to an SPDC army camp every day for several weeks by soldiers from IB #65 for use in the construction of new buildings.<sup>142</sup>

In March 2007, villagers from Naa Poi village tract in Laikha Township were ordered to construct an SPDC army camp adjacent to another camp that they had been forced to build at the end of 2006. According to the source, the order came from IB #64. The villagers were required to first clear the land, level the ground and cut all of the wood and bamboo was to be used in the construction before they were ordered to build several barracks and other buildings, along with the fences which encircled the camp. The work reportedly took several weeks to complete, with villagers from as many as eight different villages working on rotational shifts so as not to interfere too much with the maintenance of their own livelihoods.<sup>143</sup>

On 8 March 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #574 accused villagers Saai Khaao village in Kunhing Township of cultivating opium and presented them with the choice of either going to jail, being relocated to Kunhing or pay a fine. Unsurprisingly, and surely to the pleasure of the soldiers, the villagers opted to pay the fine. The villagers were thus forced to pay an exorbitant fine of two million kyat by the following day. However, the villagers were only able to come up with 1.5 million kyat, although the soldiers seemed to be satisfied with this amount and left, taking five villagers with them as porters to carry their loads.<sup>144</sup>

On 9 April 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #526 opened fire upon a group of Shan villagers on the banks of the Mae Sai River without prior warning or provocation. Of the four villagers, two of the group were killed, while the other two managed to escape.<sup>145</sup>



The terrain of Loi Taleng, Shan State. This photo shows the close proximity of an opposition SSA-S base on one mountain, and an SPDC-allied UWSA base on the next. The camp locations are indicated by the bare patches of ground on the ridge tops.  
[Photo: SHAN]

## 15.4 Abuse of Ethnic Minorities by Armed Ethnic Groups

Many ceasefire groups in Burma are guilty of committing human rights abuses against, not only members of other ethnic minorities who live within their territories, but also against their own people; the same people that they claim to represent and protect. In signing a ceasefire pact with the regime, many groups have come to function as proxy armies of the SPDC. In return for “peace” and local autonomy, certain business concessions and material support, some ceasefire groups have aided the SPDC in their efforts to control the local population. Some of these groups have even fought alongside the SPDC during military offensives against resistance groups or local populations. However, this is not as one-sided as it would at first seem. By supporting the SPDC through militarization and oppression, ceasefire groups are able to expand their own zones of political and military control, and ultimately, villagers must fear not only the SPDC but the ceasefire groups as well.

### Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)

On 10 January 2007, DKBA troops led by Than Ma Na based in Pa’an township, Ta-way village tract, forced the village heads of 8 villages to recruit new soldiers for the SPDC. If the village head could not recruit, they had to pay kyat 550,000 as this was the gun purchasing price for each new recruit. The following villages had to provide recruits:

1. K’ru-she (10 persons);
2. Pwa-gaw (10 persons);
3. No-aw-la (10 persons);
4. Doh-law-plaw (10 persons);
5. Ha-ta-yeh (2 persons);
6. Hta-thu-khee (2 persons);
7. Kyaw-kay-khee (2 persons); and
8. Po (5 persons).<sup>146</sup>

On 14 January 2007, DKBA troops led by Saw Lay Htoo forced 50 Lay-kay villagers to build the road to Mying-gyi-ngu abbot’s pagoda.<sup>147</sup>

On 20 January 2007, DKBA commander Hla Maung ordered 7 villages to provide labour to carry their supplies. Each person had to work for 10 days carrying supplies. The following villages were affected:

1. Tei Mwee Du;
2. Win Shat;
3. Day Law Soon;
4. Koo Sit village;
5. Nat Koo Nar;
6. T’Dwee Koh ; and
7. Poh Baw Koh.<sup>148</sup>

On 28 January 2007, Hla Maung of the DKBA demanded money from the following villages in Papun District:

1. Day Law Pu, 14,500 kyat;
2. Wai Tha, 1,500 kyat;
3. Htee Ber Kar Hta, 1,500 kyat;
4. Klaw Day, 13,000 kyat;
5. Kler Kho, 17,000 kyat;
6. Nar Koo Nar, 15,000 kyat;
7. Ku Thay, 15,000 kyat;
8. Noh Law Su, 15,000 kyat;
9. Klaw Hta, 15,000 kyat; and
10. Loe Klo Hta, 12,500 kyat.<sup>149</sup>

In January 2007, DKBA Brigade #333 officer Kyaw Min told Gk'Ma Moh villagers that the monk U Thuzana, head of the DKBA and based at Myaing Gyi Ngu in Pa'an District, had sent 4,000 bricks to Htee Lay Kaw village for the construction of a new pagoda at Gkyah Htee Yoh Koh Poh. This pagoda was to be constructed upon the summit of the Htee Lay Koh village mountain in Bilin Township. Along with the construction of the pagoda itself, the DKBA also organised the construction of a road which ran from a pagoda at Meh Say to the Htee Lay Kaw pagoda. Construction of the pagoda and road began in January 2007. DKBA Brigade #333 soldiers gave village heads written orders in which DKBA Brigade #333 ordered them to provide villagers for labour, and threatened to 'take action' if the villagers failed to comply. As part of the construction work, the villagers were forced to carry lime, water, sand, bricks and cement from the base of the mountain to the summit. The forced labourers reported that it was extremely difficult to climb up the side of the mountain as it was a very steep slope and they feared slipping and falling down along the way. Moreover, those who worked on the road construction had to bring their own tools and were told to clear every last tree stump in the construction area.<sup>150</sup>

On 10 February 2007, DKBA troops led by Than Tun Oo ordered a person from each household in Shwe-oak village and Taw-heh village tract to carry sand for building a pagoda.<sup>151</sup>

On 22 February 2007, Hla Maung of the DKBA instituted the collection, once every ten days, of money from the following villages in Papun District:

1. Day-pal-pu, 14,500 kyat;
2. Wae-sar, 14,500 kyat;
3. Htee-per-kar-hta, 12,500 kyat;
4. Klaw-doe, 13,000 kyat;
5. Kler-kho, 17,000 kyat;
6. Na-ku-na, 15,000 kyat;
7. Ku-seik, 15,000 kyat;
8. Noe-sue, 15,000 kyat;
9. Klaw-hta, 15,000 kyat; and
10. Klaw-lo-klo-hta, 12,500 kyat.<sup>152</sup>

On 7 March 2007, DKBA's Hla Maung, ordered one person from each of 7 villages to serve as porters for the military. The following villages were affected:

1. Kler-wah;
2. Wa-mee-day;
3. Klaw-hta;
4. To-lwee-kyo;
5. Day-baw-kaw;
6. To-thaypu; and
7. The-gaw-kyo.<sup>153</sup>

On 30 March 2007, troops of the SPDC-aligned DKBA attacked villagers in northern Dooplaya District, Karen State. During the attacks one unnamed man died after stepping on a DKBA-laid landmine.<sup>154</sup>

On 6 April 2007, a combined force of DKBA #907 Battalion and DKBA headquarters battalions moved into the Kawkareik Chaung-pya area, and burned down all paddy barns they came across. Those persons whose property was destroyed were:

1. Saw De Hgay, 80 baskets of paddy;
2. Saw Eh Kalu, 115 baskets of paddy;
3. Naw Lepoe, 50 baskets of paddy;
4. Kyaw Win Maung, 60 baskets of paddy;
5. Tee Taru, 120 baskets of paddy; and
6. Par Kay, 100 baskets of paddy.<sup>155</sup>

On 10 April 2007, 82-year-old Saw Thar Char from Mi Pa Ler village in T'Nay Hsah Township of Pa'an District was shot and killed by DKBA soldiers.<sup>156</sup>

In April 2007, DKBA soldiers tortured and beat Saw Tha Chin before shooting him in Gaw Khaw Law Kho village in Dooplaya District. This attack reportedly took place in the context of a larger series of attacks on suspected KNU locations in the region that had begun on 30 March 2007. The photograph shown below displays Saw Tha Chin's body as it was found under his house.<sup>157</sup>

On 29 April 2007, two villagers from Keh Law Mah Kee village were wounded after one of them stepped on a DKBA-laid landmine in Dooplaya District of Karen State. Saw Hai Bluh, 30, was killed in the blast, while his unnamed companion survived, albeit with severe injuries.<sup>158</sup>

On 24 November 2007, a combined column of DKBA soldiers from #333 Brigade, #999 Brigade and #907 Battalion entered K'Toe Hta village in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, where they burned down the home of Saw Pa Toe. According to reports, his home was worth at least 500,000 kyat. The soldiers then killed a goat belonging to Naw Mu Poe, worth 25,000 kyat, burned down a hut belonging to Naw La Bu Mo, worth 20,000 kyat and shot cows belonging to Naw Mo Kee before leaving the village. The cows did not die, but Naw Mo Kee then had to buy 30,000 kyat worth of medicine to care for her cows.<sup>159</sup>

Also on 24 November 2007, a column of DKBA soldiers entered Thaw Paw Oo Kee village in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. They burned down to the home of Naw Ma Kin La, and killed ten of her goats and one ox, leaving in their wake more than one million kyat in damage. In the same village, the soldiers burned down a hut belonging to Naw Ma Sa La, reportedly worth more than 20,000 kyat, and another hut which belonged to Naw Pay Gay worth 70,000 kyat. These soldiers then killed a pig belonging to Naw Ta Loe and an ox belonging to Saw Pa Mu Wa.<sup>160</sup>

## Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)

On 22 July 2007, a joint column of LIB #427 and Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) soldiers shot and killed a Karenni villager from Pruso Township under allegations that he had contact with the Karenni resistance movement. Nye Reh Po Htya, 42, was apprehended in his home in Htee Byah Nye village and beaten by the soldiers. The village and village tract chairpersons tried to petition the soldiers for his release, who attempted to plead his innocence, stating that he was just a villager and had no affiliations with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). All such attempts, however, failed and he was executed in the village cemetery later that same day. He is survived by his wife and four children.<sup>161</sup>

On 11 August 2007, Platoon Commander Nah Reh of the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), together with five SPDC army soldiers based in Shadaw Township, slaughtered and ate a pig owned by a local resident. They informed witnesses to the incident that anyone who claimed they owned the pig would be arrested, fined and detained. The pig was reported to have had a market value of approximately 200,000 kyat.<sup>162</sup>



Young children pounding rice for the family's meal in their village in Karenni State.  
[Photo: Burma Issues]

## Karen National Union (KNU)

On 18 December 2007, the junta-controlled *New Light of Myanmar* reported that members of the KNLA ambushed a passenger bus as it travelled between Kawkareik and Myawaddy in Karen State by detonating a landmine under it before opening fire on those aboard. Eight passengers were reportedly killed with a further six injured. The state-run media criticized the KNU for "*constantly committing all destructive acts such as undermining [the] stability of the State, community peace and tranquility [sic.] and prevalence of law and order, killing and bullying innocent people, detonating bombs, armed robberies, collecting extortion money, and burning public property*". Though the KNLA claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was conducted in retaliation to an earlier DKBA attack on Tah Oh Kee village, they denied targeting civilians, but rather DKBA members who were on board.<sup>163</sup>

## Karenni Solidarity Organization (KnSO)

Starting on 20 May 2007 and continuing into June, Karenni villagers in Mawchi Township were forced to construct a new army camp for the SPDC-allied Karenni Solidarity Organization (KnSO). *"We have to go to work with our own food. We don't get any money. The real difficulty is that it is time to work in our farms in June and July"*, said one villager who had fled the area due to the forced labour demands and the problems they were causing for his livelihood, adding that, *"Two to ten people from all the villages near Maw Chi are called to work. Summoning the number of people depends on the size of the village. They are forced to dig bunkers and set up fences"*.<sup>164</sup>

## Monland Restoration Party (MRP)

In October 2007, two civilian villagers from Bayoun-ngae village in Ye Township were killed and a further two injure following a landmine explosion near the village. The SPDC was quick to blame the deployment of these mines on the Monland Restoration Party (MRP), who admitted deploying landmines against the SPDC, but had denied that they were responsible for this particular explosion.<sup>165</sup>

## United Wa State Army (UWSA)

For at least the last two years, members of UWSA, a ceasefire group, have been using villagers as forced labour at their rubber plantation in Me Ken village tract in Murng-Ton Township.<sup>166</sup>

## 15.5 Official List of Ethnic Minority Groups in Burma

The following list is the SPDC list of the 134 'officially' recognized ethnic minorities from the eight main ethnic families in Burma. Please note that while this is the official list, some ethnic minorities, such as the Rohingya and the Kuki, for instance, have been deliberately omitted from this list as they are not recognized by the junta as being native to Burma and are not provided with citizenship.

### Burman

1. Bamar
2. Dawei
3. Beik
4. Yaw
5. Yabein
6. Kadu
7. Ganan
8. Salon
9. Hpon

### Chin

10. Chin
11. Meithei (Kathe)
12. Saline
13. Ka Lin Kaw (Lushay)
14. Khami
15. Awa Khami
16. Khawno
17. Kaungso
18. Kaung Saing Chin
19. Kwelshin
20. Kwangli (Sim)
21. Gunte (Lyente)
22. Gwete
23. Ngorn
24. Zizan
25. Sentang
26. Saing Zan
27. Za How
28. Zotung
29. Zo Pe
30. Zo
31. Zahnyet (Zanniet)
32. Tapong
33. Tiddim (Hai Dim)
34. Tay Zan
35. Taishon
36. Thado
37. Torr
38. Dim
39. Dai (Yindu)
40. Naga

41. Tanghkul
42. Malin
43. Panun
44. Magun
45. Matu
46. Miram (Mara)
47. Mi-er
48. Mgan
49. Lushei (Lushay)
50. Laymyo
51. Lyente
52. Lawhtu
53. Lai
54. Laizao
55. Wakim (Mro)
56. Haulngo
57. Anu
58. Anun
59. Oo Pu
60. Lhinbu
61. Asho (Plain)
62. Rongtu

## **Kachin**

63. Kachin
64. Trone
65. Dalaung
66. Jinghpaw
67. Guari
68. Hkahku
69. Duleng
70. Maru (Lawgore)
71. Rawang
72. Lashi (La Chit)
73. Atsi
74. Lisu

## **Karen (Kayin)**

75. Kayin
76. Kayinpyu
77. Pa Le Chi
78. Mon Kayin (Sarpyu)
79. Sgaw
80. Ta Lay Pwa
81. Paku
82. Bwe
83. Monnepwa
84. Monpwa
85. Shu (Pwo)

## **Karenni (Kayah)**

- 86. Kayah
- 87. Zayein
- 88. Kayan (Padaung)
- 89. Gheko
- 90. Kebar
- 91. Bre (Ka Yaw)
- 92. Manu Manaw
- 93. Yin Talai
- 94. Yin Baw

## **Mon**

- 95. Mon

## **Arakanese (Rakhine)**

- 96. Rakhine
- 97. Kamein
- 98. Kwe Myi
- 99. Daingnet
- 100. Maramagyi
- 101. Mro
- 102. Thet

## Shan

103. Yun (Lao)
104. Kwi
105. Pyin
106. Yao
107. Danaw
108. Pale
109. En
110. Son
111. Khamu
112. Kaw (Akha E Kaw)
113. Kokang
114. Khamti Shan
115. Hkun
116. Taungyo
117. Danu
118. Palaung
119. Man Zi
120. Yin Kya
121. Yin Net
122. Shan Gale
123. Shan Gyi
124. Lahu
125. Intha
126. Eik Swair
127. Pa'O
128. Tai Loi
129. Tai Lem
130. Tai Lon
131. Tai Lay
132. Maingtha
133. Maw Shan
134. Wa

## 15.6 Ceasefire Status of Various Armed Ethnic Groups

Group	Ceasefire Status
Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)	---
Chin National Front (CNF)	---
Communist Party of Burma (CPB-Arakan State)	1997
Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)	21 December 1994
Kachin Defence Army (KDA)	13 January 1991
Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)	1 October 1993
Karen National Union (KNU)	---
Karen National Union / Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLAPC)	11 February 2007
Karen Peace Force (KPF)	24 February 1997
Karenni National Defence Army (KNDA)	1996
Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)	1994
Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	1995
Karenni Solidarity Organization (KnSO)	October 2002
Karenni State Nationalities Peoples' Liberation Front (KNPLF)	9 May 1994
Kayan National Guard (KNG)	27 February 1992
Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)	26 July 1994
Lahu Democratic Front (LDF)	---
Lahu National Organization (LNO)	---
Myeik-Dawei United Front (MDUF)	---
Mon Armed Group (MAG)	---
Mon Army, Mergui District (MAMD)	1997
Mong Tai Army (MTA)	2 January 1996
Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army (MNDAA; 'Kokang')	21 March 1989
National Democratic Alliance Army – Eastern Shan State (NDAA-ESS; aka 'Mongla Group')	30 June 1989
National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)	---
National United Party of Arakan (NUPA)	---
New Democratic Army - Kachin (NDA-K)	15 December 1989
New Mon State Party (NMSP)	29 June 1995
<i>Nyein Chan Yay A'Pweh</i> ('Peace Group')	8 November 1997
Palaung State Liberation Party (PSLP)	21 April 1991
Pa'O National Organization (PNO)	11 April 1991
Pa'O People's Liberation Organization (PPLO)	---
Rakhine State All National Races Solidarity Party	6 April 1997
Rohingya National Alliance (RNA)	---
Shan State Army - South (SSA-South)	---
Shan State National Army (SSNA; aka SSA-Central)	1995
Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization (SSNPLO)	9 October 1994
Shan State Progress Party (SSPP; aka SSA-North)	2 September 1989
United Wa State Army (UWSA)	9 May 1989
Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors (VBSW)	---
Wa National Organization (WNO)	---

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