

BURMA HUMAN RIGHTS YEARBOOK 2007
CHAPTER 16

**INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT
AND FORCED RELOCATION**

“National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.”

- Principle 3, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

16.1 Introduction

There is significant disparity in the nationwide figures of Burma's internally displaced persons (IDP) population. This is due in part to the difficulty in reliably cataloguing and recording IDP numbers and is further exacerbated by the nature of displacement throughout Burma, which tends to be cyclical; IDPs are continually being displaced, relocated, or forced to flee, until they settle in a relocation site, ceasefire area, or in hiding, only to be forced again to move due to conflict, land confiscation, or human rights abuses. Therefore, the concept of an IDP 'population' is a fluid one, as it continually swells and decreases dependant upon a range of factors. The most widely accepted approximation of IDPs in Burma is over one million persons.¹ More than half of those IDPs reportedly reside along the Thai-Burma border in eastern Burma.² Furthermore, reliable figures on IDP populations in various parts of the country are exceedingly difficult to come by. As may be seen elsewhere in this report, human rights abuses in certain states and divisions are far more widely documented than they are in others. This situation is further reflected throughout this chapter, where limited information on IDPs has been made available, particularly in Burma's central divisions. This should not necessarily be taken to indicate that there are considerably fewer IDPs or lower levels of displacement in these areas, but rather as an indication of a lack of dependable data from such areas.

The highest rate of displacement is believed to exist in eastern Burma, particularly in Karen and Shan States, where continued SPDC offensives are most concentrated. Ethnic minority areas, such as Karen, Karenni, Shan, and Mon States, have the highest rates of displacement, with conservative estimates putting the number of persons presently displaced in those states along with neighbouring Tenasserim and Pegu Divisions, at approximately 503,000.³ These areas typically experience continuing armed conflict and it is also within these areas that the SPDC pursues its brutal 'counter-insurgency' program that targets civilians to ostensibly undermine armed resistance groups. Abuses such as forced labour, extortion, extrajudicial execution, torture, forced relocation and other such human rights abuses that lead to internal displacement are the most prevalent in ethnic border areas. Furthermore, the distinct lack of SPDC assistance provided to IDPs obstructs the development of sustainable livelihoods for those who are displaced.



Karen IDPs hiding from SPDC army forces in eastern Burma. *[Photo: US Campaign for Burma]*

Deliberate policies which lead to forced displacement, whether through urban relocation programs, national development projects or ostensible counter-insurgency campaigns, testify to the junta's disregard for its internationally mandated "responsibility to protect" its citizens and illuminate the high humanitarian cost of sustained military rule. The SPDC employs tactics of forced relocation of ethnic minorities to allow for the construction of

NaTaLa villages (NaTaLa is the Burmese acronym for the Ministry of Border Affairs, but is used in this context to describe 'model villages'), particularly targeting the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Arakan State.

In December 2007, there was international recognition of the junta's record in violations of housing rights. The Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions named Burma as one of the worst violators of housing rights in the world, having evicted more than a million persons from their homes since 1962.⁴ The Director of the Centre observed:

"More than one million people have been dispossessed and are internally displaced in Burma – not because of a natural disaster but due to their own government's calculated and brutal actions. The SPDC's brutal campaign against ethnic nationality communities – confiscating their lands, attacking and burning villages, killing thousands of civilians, raping women and looting property – is in clear breach of international law. ... The military regime's 'Burmanisation' policy of ethnic cleansing and social engineering through forced relocation and land confiscation, which has led to the mass displacement of more than one million people from their lands and homes in Burma, is clear evidence of its complete disregard for human rights including the right to adequate housing".⁵

16.2 International Norms and Conventions

The standard definition of an internally displaced person (IDP), as codified by Article 2 of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and adopted internationally, is as follows:

*“[P]ersons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”.*⁶

According to the *Handbook for Applying the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, the distinctive feature of internal displacement is “coerced or involuntary movement that takes place within national borders,” with precursors to flight including “armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, and natural or human-made disasters”.⁷

Prohibitions against forced relocation and protections for internally displaced persons were first established under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 12 of the UDHR protects against arbitrary interference or attacks on the home, while Article 25(1) also accords the right to housing. These protections were reiterated in the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Article 12(1) of the ICCPR states that, “Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.” Meanwhile, Article 17(1) asserts that “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.” Similarly, Article 11(1) of ICESCR recognizes “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

The rights of IDPs were most explicitly stated in the 1998 United Nations Guiding Principles on Forced Displacement. Though not a legally binding document, the Guiding Principles elucidated the rights of IDPs from existing international humanitarian and human rights law. According to Principle 5, States’ authorities “shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to displacement of persons.” Furthermore when displacement does occur, Principle 5 dictates that States “have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.” Enforced prohibitions against the forced displacement of persons and adequate provisions for their protection when such displacement does occur are necessary requisites for the fulfilment of the legal requirement of international human rights instruments.

There are a number of international instruments in existence which aim to protect individuals from displacement and in the event that displacement should occur, to be provided for and protected from further displacement. However, to date, the only concessions that Burma has made towards international laws have been its accession to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Pursuant to these two instruments Burma is obliged to take appropriate measures to ensure women and children have access to adequate housing under Article 14(2)(h) and 27(3) respectively.

Furthermore, Article 17 of the 1977 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Additional Protocol II), states that:

“The displacement of the civilian population shall not be ordered for reasons related to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand. Should such displacements have to be carried out, all possible measures shall be taken in order that the civilian population may be received under satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition.”

Although Burma has neither ratified nor acceded to Additional Protocol II, the principles contained therein are now regarded as customary international law, thus making it binding on all States regardless of whether they have ratified the document or not.⁸

Unfortunately, despite the weight of international conventions, laws and norms favouring a prohibition against forced relocation, and the protection of the safety and security of IDPs, internal displacement and forced relocation continues to be commonplace throughout Burma.

16.3 Causes of Displacement in Burma

The definition of an IDP in the Guiding Principles suggests three distinct categories of displacement: displacement caused by armed conflict, displacement induced by State and private development, and displacement due to human rights abuses. These distinctions were explored in depth in a Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper, produced in February 2007, entitled *Burma: the Changing Nature of Displacement Crises*. The author of that report also describes three similar categories: armed-conflict-induced displacement, State/society-induced displacement, and livelihood/vulnerability-induced displacement.⁹

Conflict-Induced Displacement

Armed conflict has been a constant part of the Burmese landscape since independence in 1948. Though approximately two dozen ceasefires were struck between the regime and insurgency groups from 1989 to 1995, a number significant ethnic organizations still remained in conflict with the junta during 2007. In areas where such groups continue to operate, SPDC army units continue to mount military assaults on civilian villages. Thus, in eastern Burma armed conflict continues to be a considerable contributor to the displacement crises.

The term conflict-induced displacement can thus often be misleading, in that one automatically forms a mental image of conflict in a traditional sense and assumes that civilians with no active role in the fighting are being displaced when the conflict waged between two opposing armies spills over into their homes. However, this is typically not the case in Burma where the conflict is a low intensity war of attrition primarily targeting civilians, where displacement of civilian villagers is not a side effect of the conflict, but rather the intended outcome. Most skirmishes between the junta and resistance forces occur when the latter attempts to protect civilian villagers from attacks by SPDC army units to give them the chance to flee. In such cases, the villagers are not fleeing fighting between the SPDC and the resistance group, but rather it is that fighting which is giving them the opportunity to do so.

Generally, the consequence of armed attacks on civilian villages is that villagers are forced to relocate, either to take refuge in surrounding forest or other villages, move to a relocation site, or flee to neighbouring countries as refugees. They often continue to be endangered by armed conflict even after they flee.

Development-Induced Displacement

State and private development projects throughout Burma threaten to drastically increase the population of IDPs. The projects, part of the framework of the junta's rhetoric of post-conflict rehabilitation and economic enlargement, are almost always to the detriment of the poorest and most disenfranchised members of Burmese society. Poverty, which is most acute in the ethnic minority areas, is only exacerbated by the projects that are designed to provide military and financial stability to the regime. The projects are a means of the junta exercising power over the Burmese people and according to the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), are "*synonymous with control*".¹⁰

Small-scale infrastructure and amenity development, such as the establishment of military bases and constructions of roads, is linked to forced labour, extortion, and land confiscation. Larger projects of dam construction, mining and the establishment of hydroelectric power

facilities all lead again to land confiscation, forced labour, and environmental degradation, as well as posing the possibility of destruction and flooding of thousands of homes.

For example, the proposed construction of four dams along the Salween River, at Tasang in Shan State, and at Weigyi, Hatgyi and Dagwin in Karen State, along with 13 more in China, poses grave concerns for over 533,000 civilians living at the mouth of the river. The unique river, which is tidal for up to 75 kilometres inland from its mouth, nourishes hundreds of thousands of people, who use it as a source of drinking water, crop irrigation and fishing. The mixture of fresh and salt water at the mouth of the river is a delicate one, sustained by intricate canal systems designed by local villagers in order to protect crops from salt water and maintain supplies of fresh water.¹¹

The potential dam developments threaten not only the ecological balance, but consequentially the livelihood of the thousands of people who depend upon the river as a source of life.¹² An estimated 35,000 persons have already been displaced as a result of the construction of the dams.¹³ Salween Watch, a coalition of non-governmental organizations working to protect the river, estimates a further 83,000 persons will be uprooted from their homelands across Shan, Karenni and Karen states as the dams continue construction.¹⁴

Land confiscation is endemic throughout the country, and is linked both to the creation of 'model' villages and the forced relocation of ethnic minorities (For more information, see Chapter 15: Ethnic Minority Rights), and large-scale development projects, such as the construction of the UN-sponsored Asia Highway, which involved widespread land confiscation and forced labour during its construction.¹⁵

The problem of land confiscation was recognised by the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, Professor Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, in February 2007:

"[T]he Special Rapporteur has been very concerned about the 10 years of intensified military campaigns in ethnic areas of eastern Myanmar and its impact on the humanitarian and human rights situation, especially on civilians who have been targeted during the attacks. The situation should be considered in connection with the widespread practice of land confiscation throughout the country, which is seemingly aimed at anchoring military control, especially in ethnic areas. It has led to numerous forced evictions, relocations and resettlements, forced migration and internal displacement. Given the scale of the current military campaign, the situation may lead to a humanitarian crisis if it is not addressed immediately".¹⁶

Human Rights-Induced Displacement

The systematic and widespread violation of human rights is arguably one of the leading causes of displacement in Burma today. While many reports throughout 2007 continued to refer to “*civilians fleeing fighting*”, the reality remains that conflict in Burma is typically of a low intensity and what civilians are in fact fleeing from are the human rights abuses that invariably accompany increased militarization. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in areas of ethnic conflict. Furthermore, statements to this effect give the misleading impression that the villagers are fleeing from counter-insurgency measures taken by the SPDC against armed opposition groups and that the nature of the conflict has caused the violence to spill over into civilian villages, where the inhabitants, caught up in a conflict they have no part in are labelled as “*collateral damage*”.¹⁷ However, the “*fighting*” that villagers are fleeing from has not been between two opposing armed forces, but rather direct and deliberate attacks on unarmed civilian villages. The villagers therefore, cannot be considered “*collateral damage*” in these attacks, but rather the intended targets of them.

It is correct that IDPs in this category are not necessarily ordered or physically compelled to move or relocate. However, due to arbitrary arrest, forced relocation, extortion, forced labour, torture, to rape and extrajudicial execution, villagers are effectively left with no choice but to leave as the conditions thrust upon them make it exceedingly difficult to survive. This type of movement is referred to as “*distress migration*” or “*migration for survival*”.¹⁸

One villager, from Bilin Township in Thaton District, Karen State, described his relocation: “*I couldn't endure the continuous forced labour and highly demanding of SPDC any more so on 17 March 2007 I left my village and come to refugee camp*”.¹⁹ Similarly, a villager from Ma Gyi village in Ye Township, Mon State, remarked that:

*"We wanted to spend the rest of our lives in our native villages, but that is impossible. We had no money to feed our kids, we weren't allowed to go where we wanted and we could not refuse to do things we didn't want to do. That is why we decided to flee".*²⁰

Once interned in an SPDC-controlled relocation site, IDPs are kept on the brink of starvation through an extensive system of extortion and demands for food, labour and other goods. Furthermore, the villagers' freedoms of movement are also strictly regimented; in some cases stripped entirely. This is done ostensibly to impoverish the villagers to such a point that they cannot provide material support to resistance forces even if they should want to. Ultimately, when the demands become too great and food too scarce, many villagers flee from relocation sites to live as IDPs in the forest.

Those living beyond SPDC-control as IDPs do not have to contend with forced labour or extortion, but must flee ahead of any advancing SPDC army units. If seen by SPDC army patrols, IDPs are often fired upon. By refusing to comply with SPDC demands and living beyond their control, IDPs in conflict areas are thus considered as enemies of the state which must be either rounded up and relocated to state-controlled relocation sites, or simply shot on sight. SPDC army patrols also systematically destroy any hidden settlements in the forests where IDPs have been living as well as any food supplies or crops that they discover in an attempt to starve them out of the hills.

16.4 Destinations of the Displaced and Forcibly Relocated

Relocation Sites

Central to the policy employed by the regime in ethnic border areas is the SPDC's forced relocation campaign. In areas suffering from ethnic conflict, territory may be divided into three coloured zones: 'black' areas that are controlled by resistance forces; 'brown' contested areas; and 'white' areas where all traces of armed resistance have been eliminated. The SPDC army's primary objective is to rid the country of all black and brown areas where resistance groups operate by turning them all into white areas wholly controlled by the SPDC. In areas where resistance groups operate, any village that is located in an area beyond direct military control is often forcibly relocated into areas that are controlled by the SPDC. Such 'relocation sites' are typically located along road corridors, adjacent to existing SPDC army camps so that the soldiers can regiment the freedoms of the villagers interned there, monitor their movements and exploit them as forced labour to porter military supplies along those roadways. Villages are typically only given a week, or in many cases even less, to dismantle their homes, gather all of their belongings and move all that they can to the relocation site. Villagers who remain behind after the appointed time has elapsed can be shot on sight.

Upon arriving at the site, villagers are typically not provided with anything by the SPDC. They are generally only assigned a small plot of land on which they must construct their home. Villagers must even provide their own building materials as the SPDC does not provide these either. It has been reported in some cases SPDC army soldiers have instructed villagers specifically not to take their belongings with them; that they will have the opportunity to return to collect their belongings later. However, as soon as the villagers have left, the soldiers have returned to the village and looted everything of value and eaten their fill of whatever food was left behind while the villagers are denied permission to ever return to their village to salvage what remained.²¹ To ensure that the villagers do not attempt to secretly return to their homes, the soldiers often litter relocated villages with landmines or simply burn the whole site to the ground.

Most relocation sites are grossly overcrowded, lack any existing sanitation facilities, are typically located "*on barren land*" that does not lend itself well to agriculture, and often have poor access to fresh drinking water.²² Furthermore, being as overcrowded as many relocation sites are, all available arable land in the region is already under cultivation, and the new arrivals, denied the right to return to their villages or fields, struggle to acquire enough food for their families. As such, SPDC-controlled relocation sites fail to meet the minimum requirements for villagers to establish and sustain a livelihood.

Once interned in a relocation site, villagers are seldom granted permission to leave to tend to crops, travel to markets in neighbouring villages or visit friends and relatives. SPDC authorities have ordered the residents of many relocation sites to fence the entire site, leaving only one or two gates allowing access or egress. These gates are often overseen by SPDC army soldiers and the names of everyone entering or exiting the site are recorded. For most relocation sites, the only way that a villager is allowed to travel outside is when he/she is in possession of an SPDC-issued travel permit; obtained only after payment of a fee. While some travel passes authorize travel of up to one week, many only permit villagers to be away from the relocation site during the hours of daylight, typically between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. However, possession of a valid travel permit does not guarantee safe passage. For example, Rohingya villagers in Buthidaung Township of Arakan State are regularly apprehended by SPDC authorities who destroy their travel passes and accuse them of travelling without proper documentation so that they can extort money from them.²³ In areas of ethnic conflict, villagers found travelling outside the relocation site are often

accused of having been in contact with resistance forces and are often fired upon on sight without so much as even checking their documentation.²⁴

Furthermore, the increased proximity of villagers to SPDC army soldiers significantly increases the likelihood that they will be subjected to human rights abuses. Villagers interned in SPDC-controlled relocation sites are regularly called upon to provide forced labour for the military, constructing and maintaining roads and military camps (of both the SPDC and ceasefire armies), portering supplies along those roads to outlying camps, serving as guides and human minesweepers in military operations, and as servants, messengers and errand runners for the soldiers. (For more information, see Chapter 5: Forced Labour and Forced Conscription). The villagers also face countless other demands for money, food, building materials and other goods. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood). Villagers have also been beaten and tortured by the soldiers when the endless stream of demands is not met. (For more information, see Chapter 2: Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment).²⁵

According to the available figures, the total known population of relocation sites in eastern Burma during 2007 decreased by approximately 9,000 to 109,000 from 118,000 of the previous year. This is believed to be partly attributable to villagers' attempts to returning to their homes, or resettling elsewhere in Tenasserim Division and Shan State.²⁶

States and Divisions	IDPs in Relocation Sites	
	2006	2007
Karen State	4,300	9,70
Karenni State	6,400	4,800
Mon State	500	7,200
Eastern Pegu Division	6,400	12,200
Southern Shan State	31,300	24,100
Tenasserim Division	69,100	51,000
Total	118,000	109,000

TBBC estimates of internally displaced persons living in relocation sites in eastern Burma during 2006 and 2007.²⁷

IDP Hiding Sites

Many villagers in ethnic minority areas choose to live in hiding from the SPDC and their proxy ceasefire armies on account of the abuse they have suffered at the hands of such groups. Many villagers, knowing all too well how they will be treated if found; constantly flee in the face of SPDC army patrols. According to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) IDP survey, an estimated 99,000 civilians were hiding in the remote mountains and forests throughout eastern Burma during 2007.²⁸ However, some argue this estimate to be conservative and does not take the fluid and cyclical nature of repeated and short-term displacement into account. Those who adhere to this alternate view would place the number of internally displaced living in hiding in the forests considerably higher.

This particular group of IDPs maintain a strong affinity with their land and would rather remain in hiding and hardship within the vicinity of their destroyed or abandoned villages than relocate to SPDC-controlled relocation sites or flee to neighbouring countries.²⁹ By not only refusing to relocate when ordered but also by fleeing deeper into the forest where they hope to live beyond the reach of the SPDC, IDPs living in hiding are considered to support resistance groups and as such are looked upon the same as arms-bearing combatants.

Conditions facing IDPs in hiding differ from those in relocation sites in that by avoiding all contact with the military, they are not obliged to perform forced labour or comply with demands for extortion. However, IDPs in hiding must remain ever vigilant and prepared to flee from approaching SPDC army columns who mount sweeps through the forest in search of them. Their food supplies and hiding sites are systematically destroyed when discovered and if seen by the soldiers, they will be shot on sight. Necessity therefore dictates that IDP hiding sites must be small and well hidden deep in the forest where it will be hard for patrols to find them. However, this is not always the case and rapid military expansionism has meant that many IDP hiding sites are only an hour's walk away from the nearest army camp. Some are even closer.

Being temporary settlements that must be abandoned at a moment's notice should the need arise, IDP hiding sites typically lack all but the most basic of village infrastructure. Access to clean water and healthcare is often limited and as a result disease is rife. Incidences of IDPs dying from easily preventable and readily treatable diseases such as diarrhoea are high. (For more information, see Chapter 7: Right to Health).³⁰

Displaced persons in hiding sites have repeatedly stated that their greatest concern is their lack of food security. The systematic destruction of their food supplies and their inability to freely travel to markets has made it extremely difficult for IDPs to obtain sufficient food supplies.³¹ IDPs thus grow small cash crops of betelnut, dogfruit, cardamom, or other similar crops which they surreptitiously sell in markets despite the danger to themselves so they can buy rice for their families. Most IDPs in hiding will also conceal small food caches in the forest in preparation for the inevitability that they will need to flee again.

Eastern Burma records the highest number of IDPs living in hiding. This is due, in part, to continued armed conflict in the area and the heavily forested and mountainous terrain lying along the eastern border with Thailand where IDPs can more easily secrete themselves. However, reliable information for other parts of the country is not available, and this fact does not necessarily reflect that this issue is smaller in those other areas.

States and Divisions	IDPs in Hiding	
	2006	2007
Karen State	49,100	51,600
Karenni State	9,300	10,000
Mon State	300	600
Eastern Pegu Division	147,400	18,700
Southern Shan State	13,300	13,700
Tenasserim Division	5,600	4,400
Total	95,000	99,000

TBBC estimates of internally displaced persons living in hiding in eastern Burma during 2006 and 2007.³²

Ceasefire Areas

While the estimates for the amount of IDPs living in relocation sites decreased in 2007, the numbers of those in areas controlled by ethnic ceasefire armies actually increased during 2007. Of the approximately 500,000 persons displaced in eastern Burma in 2007, more than half, or 295,000, were located in ceasefire areas. This represents an increase of 8,000 for the same area over the previous year.³³ According to the TBBC, the increase, the largest of which was observed in Karen State, was in part due to the expansion of the area of influence of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the newly-formed Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLA PC), both of which operate in Karen State. (For more information, see Chapter 15: Ethnic Minority Rights). The TBBC maintains that, IDPs are relocating into these ceasefire areas by the relative degree of protection provided as compared to living under the control of the SPDC.³⁴ While in many cases, ceasefire areas may provide a temporary respite from human rights violations perpetrated by the SPDC, most ceasefire authorities are unable to adequately provide for IDPs who have taken refuge in areas under their administration. In their 2006 report on internal displacement in eastern Burma, the TBBC stated:

*“[T]hese areas can not provide a sustainable solution for the internally displaced due to population density with limited access to sustainable agricultural land, SPDC restrictions on travel outside of ceasefire areas, and the inability of ethnic nationality authorities to support resettlement or compensate for livelihood assets lost”.*³⁵

However, this is not the case in all ceasefire areas; in some areas, villagers have reported suffering equal, if not greater, human rights abuses from the DKBA as compared to the SPDC.³⁶

States and Divisions	IDPs in Ceasefire Areas	
	2006	2007
Karen State	45,900	55,600
Karenni State	63,600	66,200
Mon State	41,000	41,600
Eastern Pegu Division	0	0
Southern Shan State	131,000	126,000
Tenasserim Division	5,500	5,600
Total	287,000	295,000

TBBC estimates of internally displaced persons living in ceasefire areas in eastern Burma during 2006 and 2007.³⁷

16.5 Humanitarian Assistance

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement clearly state that the SPDC is under obligation to protect and provide aid to those who have been internally displaced. Principle 3(1) clearly states that “*National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.*” The adequacy of humanitarian assistance can be measured in its effectiveness to address the immediate difficulties faced by IDPs while supporting the longer recovery processes of those effected, while promoting positive change in the attitudes and structures that neglect human rights and contribute to such harm. Such principles, however, are inconsistent with the policies of the SPDC towards IDPs. The SPDC fails to provide any form of humanitarian assistance to IDPs, primarily because their displacement is the desired result of the conflict, not a consequence of it, coupled with a complete denial of the existence of the problem.

The SPDC has consistently restricted the access of humanitarian agencies into conflict-affected areas because of the political sensitivity of these regions. Clearly the regime does not wish for the international community to bear witness to the atrocities that are responsible for in these areas. International humanitarian assistance to IDPs in these areas has been repeatedly denied. Meanwhile, in many areas experiencing ethnic conflict the demand is being met, at least to a degree by local humanitarian organizations who clandestinely travel into these areas to deliver aid to those in need. While some of these organizations are affiliated with resistance groups, many of them remain independent.

While Burma has been the subject of much criticism by the international community, there has been a reluctance to intervene in the situation. The situation in Burma clearly represents the perpetration of severe human rights violations and crimes against humanity, the contravention of a variety of international laws and norms, a risk to international peace and security. Yet to this point, neither the United Nations nor any other international organisation has seen fit to intervene. This is despite the fact that a report released in 2005, commissioned by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Vaclav Havel, which compared Burma with other countries where the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has intervened, including Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, revealed that Burma was the only country which met all five criteria to warrant intervention.³⁸

The situation is exacerbated by the inability of certain States to support a stronger stance towards the military regime. Their ties to the regime in respect to arms supplies and investments in large scale oil and natural gas reserves severely impedes the impartiality of their decisions, and has led such states to argue that Burma poses no threat to international peace and security. This was evidenced on 12 January 2007, when a resolution calling for the restoration in democracy in Burma and an end to human rights violations came before the United Nations Security Council and was subsequently vetoed by Russia and China - their first joint veto since 1972.³⁹

16.6 Situation in Arakan State

While there is little actual armed conflict in Arakan State, there has been an increased military presence there in recent years, which has brought with it an increase in forced labour, confiscation of farmlands and development. Arakan State is one of the most militarized regions of Burma, and as such forced labour is commonly used for tasks such as building and repairing transportation routes, maintaining army camps, sentry duty and portering loads for the military. Land is frequently confiscated without compensation for use as army camps, farms and commercial projects. According to a survey conducted by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) published in May 2007, over 50 percent of respondents from Arakan State named “*land confiscation*” as a reason for their displacement.⁴⁰

A second cause of displacement in Arakan State during 2007 was the completion and settlement of almost 60 'model villages' in northern Arakan State.⁴¹ Also known as NaTaLa (NaTaLa is the Burmese acronym for the Ministry of Border Affairs, but is used in this context to describe 'model villages') village projects, these model villages are primarily constructed on land appropriated from the ethnic Rohingya. The formation of model villages is part of a program of “*demographic engineering*”, orchestrated in order to dilute the Islamic population in Northern Arakan State, which is comprised primarily of the Muslim Rohingya. The villages are built to house the Buddhist Arakanese, who are often forcibly relocated from their own homes in other parts of the country to take part in the program.⁴²

The new settlers, commonly referred to as NaTaLa villagers, are often unhappy to have been resettled, and many of them, having been brought from urban areas in central Burma, are unfamiliar with land cultivation, consequently abandon their homes and land after only a number of years. In spite of this, the land is not returned to the original Rohingya owners.⁴³ (For more information, see Chapter 15: Ethnic Minority Rights). One NaTaLa villager remarked:

*“We are provided farmlands which were seized from Rohingya villagers and we have no knowledge of how to grow paddy. We are also provided rickshaw, tractors, but, these are not useful to us. We are frequently afflicted by malaria and we have no other earnings. We were forced to come here. So, we want to flee from this place”.*⁴⁴

In January 2007, SPDC army authorities forcibly relocated several Rohingya families from the newly-constructed Taungbro sub-town, for the construction of a new model village. The model village, which was being built to upgrade border trade with Bangladesh, involved the construction 120 houses, and had incurred the displacement of an estimated 1,000 persons by the time construction began in January 2007.⁴⁵

On 1 February 2007, NaSaKa personnel and local police destroyed approximately 30 Rohingya homes located in Wards #3 and #4 of Taungbro to make way for the construction of a new model village, said to contain 120 homes. Villagers were given no compensation for their loss, nor were they provided with a resettlement site or even permission to construct new homes.⁴⁶

In March 2007, 300 carpenters from Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships were ordered to cease work on their present construction works and relocate to a model village construction site in Taungbro, north of Maungdaw. According to one carpenter, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the carpenters “*postponed all construction work for the local people in the area as the government authority ordered us [carpenters] to come to the Taungbro model village for the construction of 120 houses*”. The carpenters were summonsed to complete the

construction of 120 houses in the model village in order to allow for the relocation of 120 Buddhist Burman families prior to the commencement of *Thingyan*, the Burmese New Year festival, in mid April. Though not explicitly stated in any of the original reports, it is highly likely that these carpenters were building the same NaTaLa village which had displaced dozens of Rohingya families in January and February 2007. See incident above.⁴⁷

On 1 March 2007, 60 households in Nadine village, Mrauk U Township, were ordered by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #378 to relocate as their village fell within an army cantonment area, despite the fact that it had existed there “*since time immemorial*”, and that the cantonment area had only been set up “*in recent years*”.⁴⁸

On 27 March 2007, the inhabitants of six villages in Buthidaung Township were called to a meeting and informed that their paddy fields would be confiscated for use in the construction of new model villages. Villagers were forbidden to grow any paddy on their fields and were not offered any compensation for their land. The confiscation began on 4 April 2007, as the army hoisted red flags around confiscated lands, declaring that new settlers would be relocated there as of 5 May 2007. The villages which received this order included:

1. Maung Nama village;
2. Magh Bill Nama village;
3. Kwan Daine Nama village;
4. Yet Nyo Daung Nama village;
5. Thet Kin Manu Nama village; and
6. Washilla Para village.⁴⁹

On 4 March 2007, approximately 500 NaTaLa villagers arrived in Sittwe (Akyab), the capital of Arakan State, *en route* to the new model village in Taungbro where they were to be resettled. The people of Sittwe were reportedly forced to welcome the new settlers and to donate medicine and clothes to them. Such rallies are often filmed and shown in the State-controlled media as proof that the population supports the SPDC and its policies, though the truth is anything but. Although it was not stated in the original report, it is quite likely that these NaTaLa villagers were being resettled to a new site which had evicted several dozen Rohingya families in January and February 2007. See incident above.⁵⁰

On 4 April 2007, a further 447 new settlers arrived at the Taungbro model village, via Sittwe and Maungdaw. This latest resettlement brought the total number of families who had relocated from central Burma to the 36 model villages in northern Arakan State to 2,692.⁵¹

In July 2007, Thandwe, Taungup and Gwa Townships, all in northern Arakan State suffered severe flooding due to unusually heavy rainfall. Much of these three townships were reportedly submerged under water. The residents of three wards of Buthidaung Township were also moved to higher ground and forced to reside in school buildings until the flooding subsided.⁵² Approximately 5,000 persons in Thandwe Township were also displaced by the floods.⁵³ The majority of roads across Arakan State were completely submerged, bringing travel and communication to a halt.⁵⁴ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) began distributing medicine, clothing, cooking utensils and water purification tablets to assist in the emergency relief efforts.⁵⁵

Due to the heavy rains in July 2007, people throughout Rathedaung Township quickly experienced a severe shortage of rice. This resulted with many poorer families being forced to desert the area and move elsewhere in search of food. Persons from the following villages were affected:

1. Reboke village;
2. Resoe Chaung village;
3. Anyat Tuang village;
4. Tai Taboke village;
5. Kyauk Ran village;
6. Thatpi Kya village;
7. Pea Thadu village;
8. Maung Pru Wra village;
9. Kharu Chaung village;
10. Nga ran chaung village;
11. Re myat village;
12. Kyak Tan village;
13. Lai Gun village; and
14. Lamon Din village.⁵⁶

16.7 Situation in Chin State

As in Arakan State, the increased militarization of Chin State, and with it forced labour, land confiscation and heavy taxation, has been the root cause of displacement and forced relocation in Chin State.⁵⁷ According to a report released in February 2007, an estimated 50,000 residents of Chin State had fled their homes throughout 2006, with many migrating to foreign countries or other states in Burma. An unidentified civil servant in Chin State stated that *"there are no other options for a career except farming in Chin State. Now, forced labour and recruitment of child soldiers is the main occupation of Chin people. In a condition like this nobody wants to stay in Chin State"*.⁵⁸

In addition, religious discrimination is a problem, with land reportedly being confiscated from Chin Christians for use by Buddhists. Further, the people of Chin State, like many throughout Burma, are subjected to coercive agricultural policies, requiring them to cultivate tea and physic nut (jatropha and castor) plants, and these projects have led to considerable relocation and migration throughout the state.⁵⁹ (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood).

In June 2007, it was reported that an order had been made for the demolition of seven houses on the corner of Thangtlang and Falam Roads in Haka, the capital of Chin State, in order to allow for the construction of a new college. Three of the homeowners were identified as Mr ZaPiang, Mr Liantum and Pastor Ngunkhar. The owners of the homes were not compensated for their loss.⁶⁰

16.8 Situation in Irrawaddy Division

Data concerning the causes and effect of displacement in Irrawaddy Division is scarce with few groups working to document the situation in this area. Much of the displacement in Irrawaddy Division during 2007 was as a result of natural disaster and severe weather conditions. August 2007 saw numerous problems caused by extreme weather, including heavy rainfalls and cyclones. On 4 August 2007, a small cyclone struck Lawputta Township causing the widespread destruction of over 60 buildings, including a school, killing two children and leaving hundreds homeless.⁶¹

In mid August 2007, an unnamed dam near the Irrawaddy River broke, resulting in extensive flooding which submerged thousands of acres of farmland and numerous villages, leaving thousands of persons from Bassein, Henzada, Maubin, and Pantanaw Townships homeless.⁶²

In August 2007, the area surrounding villages in Bassein, Maubin, Daw Wartawsal and Nat Swe was purposely flooded by the SPDC when they opened a floodgate in the Inn Chaung irrigation channel. A farmer from the area reported that *"Between 5,000 and 10,000 acres of farmland [had] been destroyed so far ... I had about 60 acres of crops planted and about 40 of those are still under water"*.⁶³

Heavy rains lashed the villages of South Pyapon, North Pyapon, Kyonpyaw, and Pantanaw Townships throughout August 2007, causing a number of serious landslides and forced hundreds of persons to evacuate. One resident of Pantanaw Township reported that, *"villagers from those places where landslides occurred are now dismantling their houses. There were about 500 to 600 families living in each village"*.⁶⁴

In all about 10,000 homes were affected by the floods. Eight schools were closed, and an estimated 40,000 acres of irrigated rice paddies were destroyed. It was further reported that at least 18 villages were submerged underwater.⁶⁵

16.9 Situation in Kachin State

The early 1990s saw the formation of a number of ceasefire agreements between the junta and local insurgent groups operating in Kachin State. This subsequently brought about an end to widespread armed conflict in Kachin State. Following the signing of their ceasefire agreement with the regime in 1994, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) orchestrated the resettlement of more than 60,000 displaced persons throughout Kachin State.⁶⁶ Since that time, the KIO has successfully implemented resettlement and development programs, and according to the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University, the living conditions of the people of Kachin State have improved markedly under the ceasefire. However, forced displacement is still a common occurrence across the state, primarily due to land confiscation, natural resource extraction, and large-scale development projects, undertaken by the SPDC and local authorities.⁶⁷

In May 2007, residents of Myitkyina Township reported the widespread unlawful confiscation of civilian-owned homes, plantations and lands by the SPDC, under what the Kachin News Group (KNG) called a “*fake land ownership grant*” scheme devised by SPDC lawyers and officials at the military base in Myitkyina. U Tin Aung from Shanzu (North) Quarter lost ownership of his home in 2004 when presented with a ‘fake grant’ by pro-junta lawyers Daw Khin Sein, wife of a military officer, and Daw Khin Hle Hle, a legal officer of the SPDC office in Myitkyina. U Tin Aung remained in his home but in May 2007, was facing pressure by the junta to vacate his home to allow for its sale to a Chinese drug businessman in Myitkyina, Kong Li (a.k.a. Kyaw Myint) for 80 million kyat. Although U Tin Aung was issued eviction orders from the junta, he continued to resist the confiscation.⁶⁸

Myitkyina Township is the site of the Myitsone hydroelectric power project, which threatens to destroy 47 villages, and displace up to 10,000 persons as a result of flooding its construction would cause.⁶⁹ The project, which proposes to dam the Irrawaddy River near Myitsone, reportedly continued construction throughout November 2007. The project is conducted jointly between the junta and the Chinese government.⁷⁰

In May 2007, the villages of Wai Khar and Kaung San in Pha Kant region were compelled to relocate due to mining activities of Myanmar-Taguang Company, jointly owned and controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), and the junta-affiliated Htoo Trading Company. The villagers described their reasons for relocating: “*The soil [stockpiled from the mine] has piled up and is almost overrunning the area. The soil is being dug up in Hone Pan by the Myanmar-Taguang Company. Villagers have moved to the old mine site because they are afraid that the village will be overrun with soil*”. It was reported that U Tay Za of Htoo Trading Company paid an amount of compensation to the villagers of Kaung San after forcibly removing them, although the amount that was paid was not stated in the original report.⁷¹

In July 2007, Rangoon-based company, Max Myanmar, run by SPDC-affiliate U Zaw Zaw, began works in the profitable jade mining area of Lonkin, in Hpakant Township. The company occupied 500 acres of jade mining blocks, including paddy fields, agricultural fields and jade mining areas which had previously been owned by local Kachin residents and business blocks. This move followed the forcible relocation of Kachin and Shan residents in 2006 when the Yuzana Company, chaired by U Htay Myint purchased over 200,000 acres of land from the SPDC.⁷² Yuzana Company was again credited in July 2007 with seizing agricultural tracts, and destroying homes, churches and orchards in the Hukawng Valley. The valley is especially vulnerable to the confiscation of land by corporations and the SPDC given the lack of official land ownership grants possessed by the local inhabitants. The absence of ownership rights has allowed the junta to sell large areas of land to mining and other corporations. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood).⁷³

In late July 2007, approximately 2,000 persons were displaced due to serious flooding in Bhamo Township, which had damaged approximately 200 homes. *“About 2,000 people living on the outskirts have moved and are now temporarily staying in a monastery and in school buildings,”* reported one Bhamo Township resident.⁷⁴

In July and August 2007, heavy rains disrupted transport Hpakant and Seng Tawng Townships in western Kachin State, as the Uyu River broke its banks damaged the road linking Hpakant with nearby towns and villages. Local villagers relocated into the nearby mountains, where others residing in the area provided them with food. The area is well known for its jade and gold mines and, according to a local villager; the overflow of the Uyu River is a result of the mining companies disposing of sediments from the mines directly into the river. The sand and stones that are dumped into the river by the mines interfere with the flow of the river in the wet season.⁷⁵

In November 2007, the Yuzana Company was granted a contract by the junta to rebuild a section of the historical World War II-era Stilwell Road (also called the Ledo Road) through northern Kachin State, linking Indo-Burma-China Road, which stretches throughout Kachin State. The effect on the residents of Kachin State is not yet known.⁷⁶

16.10 Situation in Karen State

Longstanding conflict between the Karen National Union (KNU), the SPDC-allied Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), and the SPDC is the cause of much of the displacement throughout Karen State.⁷⁷ November 2005 saw the commencement of a continuous and intensive military offensive against the Karen of northern Karen State. Though the SPDC and numerous commentators have argued that the offensive is part of the SPDC's larger counter-insurgency campaign, the primary targets have been unarmed and non-combative civilian villagers. Conservative estimates put the number of newly displaced persons who have become so as a direct result of the offensive at between 27,000⁷⁸ and 30,000⁷⁹ civilians and civilian fatality figures at more than 24 persons in 2006 alone.⁸⁰ These numbers, however, fail to take into account the thousands of villagers suffering from long-term and cyclical displacement common to the region. Meanwhile, the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) have placed the fatality rate between January 2006 and November 2007 at 370 persons,⁸¹ while the TBBC has put the number of villages in eastern Burma that were destroyed, forcibly relocated or otherwise abandoned in 2006 at 232.⁸²

During 2007 it was estimated that there were 116,900 displaced persons throughout Karen State, in addition to a further 30,900 in eastern Pegu Division which under the Karen system of demarcation represents Nyaunglebin District and was also subject to attacks under the offensive.⁸³

According to a working paper released by the Refugee Studies Centre of Oxford University, between February 2006 and January 2007, approximately 25,000 persons were displaced following SPDC attacks in the northern districts of Karen State, namely Toungoo, Nyaunglebin and Papun Districts.⁸⁴ The Free Burma Rangers (FBR), likewise, have estimated that approximately 11,000 persons were newly displaced in Nyaunglebin District, with 6,000 persons displaced across Shweygyn and Kyauk Kyi Townships and an additional 5,000 IDPs in Mone Township.⁸⁵

The beginning of 2007 saw the increased and broadened presence of the SPDC in northern Karen State. The region was the site of increased military enlargement and infrastructure development by the SPDC, utilizing forced labour, extortion of food and supplies and restrictions on civilian movement and trade in order to strengthen its stronghold in the area. To carry this out, the SPDC had established an additional 33 new army camps in Papun, Nyaunglebin and Toungoo Districts.⁸⁶ Military activity in the region primarily targeted the civilian population and focused on areas where displaced communities were residing. Displacement has been a natural consequence of the military expansion as civilians flee to avoid all contact with the military for fear of being shot or sight or apprehended and forced to perform labour on army projects.⁸⁷

Moreover, the proposed development of a series of hydroelectric dams on the Salween River where it passes through Karen State threatens to exacerbate the displacement problem in the area. According to the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), the construction of the three dams which are proposed to be built along the Salween River would "*block the escape of refugees and cut off supplies of relief aid from Thailand to the internally displaced*", in addition to cutting the supply lines of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) who often protect displaced villagers from SPDC and DKBA attacks, thus ultimately leading to increased levels of displacement in the region.⁸⁸

In Toungoo District, many villagers, faced with SPDC restrictions on movement and labour, impediments to trade and travel, and forced labour, all the while under threat of injury or death from the SPDC for not strictly complying with SDPC demands have chosen to adopt a life of flight in the forests. In order to thwart the efforts of displaced villagers living in hiding

in the rural areas, the SPDC employed tactics such as controlling roadways to block access to food and medicine.⁸⁹

In an effort to further improve and expand military infrastructure in the Toungoo District, the SPDC implemented frequent patrols of the forest trails in the area surrounding the Toungoo Kler Lah-Mawchi vehicle road. Local villagers were forbidden to travel along forest trails or to tend to their paddy fields and other crop plantations outside of the hours of 6:00am to 6:00pm.⁹⁰

The TBBC have estimated that 30,800 civilians were living in hiding in Papun District alone during 2007. There, SPDC army units maintained a significant presence in order to prevent displaced villagers from attempting to return to their homes or fields. Furthermore, the military continued to patrol forest areas in order to seek out and attack displaced communities, employing a shoot-on-sight policy.⁹¹ According one villager from Lu Thaw Township, Papun District:

“We have to run at least five times a year. The whole village faces a food shortage problem because we had to leave our place of work and our belongings when we fled to the hiding site. We were only concerned with escaping from the SDC troops.”⁹²



A Karen IDP carrying his son and belongings after fleeing SPDC and DKBA attacks on 8 March 2007. [Photo: FBR]

Another significant factor affecting displacement in Papun District is the ongoing construction of a new road that when completed will link Bu Sah Kee village in southeastern Toungoo District with Pwa Ghaw village in northern Papun District.⁹³ This road, similar to others like it throughout Karen State, will serve the SPDC at the detriment of local villagers by facilitating the rapid mobilization of troops along it as they hunt down the internally displaced who refuse to live under direct SPDC control.

In the first three months of 2007, displaced villagers living in the hills of Lu Thaw Township, Papun District, especially those in Kay Pu, Naw Yoh Htah, Ler Mu Plaw and Saw Mu Plaw village tracts, were subjected to attacks on their hidden cash crops, paddy storage barns and community infrastructure by SPDC troops. In the Saw Mu Plaw village tract, SPDC forces also deliberately burned villagers' paddy fields and plantations. The attacks devastated the villagers' means of survival and livelihood and forced them to gather limited supplies and continue to flee.⁹⁴

Between January and June 2007, approximately 4,000 persons from Papun District fled their homes across the Yunzalin River, in an attempt to reach Thailand where they had hoped to enter one of the refugee camps.⁹⁵

On 6 January 2007, villagers from Ko Pu and Hsaw Mi Lu village tracts in Mone Township, Nyaunglebin District, were forced to destroy their own homes and relocate to Kyauk Kyi. The orders were given by SPDC Tactical Operations Commander Khin Maung Oo and carried out by IB # 50 and LIB #351, in retaliation to an earlier KNLA attack on LIB #351.⁹⁶

On 7 January 2007, SPDC army troops responded to an attack by the KNLA the previous day by entering the Aung Soe Moe village in Nyaunglebin District, and ordering 673 persons from 160 families leave the village by 12:00 pm that day.⁹⁷ The villagers lost 100 viss (160 kg / 352 lbs) of chicken and 10,000 coconuts.⁹⁸ Those displaced lived in the surrounding forest or with relatives until the third week of January, when they were forcibly relocated to Kyauk Kyi. Most of the residents of Aung Soe Moe village had been forcibly relocated there from Mone in 1974 and 1975. The troops responsible for the relocation were reportedly from IB #60 (Major Saw Lay commanding), and LIB #351 (Colonel Chit Htan commanding), both operating under Strategic Operations Command (SOC) #2 of Southern Regional Military Command.⁹⁹

On 8 January 2007, an SPDC army column comprised of troops from LIB #307 and LIB #602 attacked the Baw Kwaw area in Lu Thaw Township, Papun District, resulting in the displacement of over 200 villagers from Baw Kwaw Thay Kho Der villages.¹⁰⁰

On 10 January 2007, two displaced civilians, who had previously fled from the Yay Ghoh Kee area of Papun District, attempted to return to their abandoned village to recover their belongings, when they were fired on by an unidentified group of SPDC army soldiers. Both men escaped uninjured.¹⁰¹

On 30 January 2007, SPDC army soldiers attacked Hsaw Wah Der and Kaw Thay Der villages in Toungoo District, forcing the villagers from the area to flee from their homes.¹⁰²

It was reported in January 2007, that almost 3,000 villagers had fled SPDC army attacks and were heading for the Ee Htu Htah IDP settlement located on the Burmese bank of the Salween River, where it marks the border with Thailand.¹⁰³

According to a report released by the Free Burma Rangers (FBR) on 3 February 2007, at least 21 civilian villages in Toungoo District had been completely abandoned as a result of continued SPDC army attacks. Those villages listed by FBR included:

1. Htee Loh (May They Thein) village;
2. K'Ser Doh (Taung Gyi) village;
3. P'Thar Day (Pla La Gone) village;
4. Mwee Loh (Sin Pweh Daw) village;
5. Kaw Po Lo village;
6. Tha Pa Kee (Tha Pa Tha La) village;
7. Kheh Der (Mya Ga Chaye) village;
8. Hu Mu Der (La Mein Bega) village;

9. Ler Kla Der (O Be Chaye) village;
10. Klaw Mi Der (Yay Ta Gone) village;
11. Yer Loh (Mya Chaung) village;
12. Klaw Baw Der (Ha Tho) village;
13. Plaw Mu Der (Ku Lo) village;
14. Bu Sah Kee village;
15. Ta Kwee Soe village;
16. Plaw Mu Der (Pia Ma Do) village;
17. Si Kheh Der village;
18. Ku Ler Der (Ku Law) village;
19. May Daw Ko (Mon Tha Gyi) village;
20. Ka Lay Htu village; and
21. Hsaw Wah Der village.¹⁰⁴

In February 2007, FBR reported that there were 1,970 IDPs from the following villages living in hiding in the small wedge of land situated between the Toungoo-Mawchi and Kleh Lah-Bu Sah Kee roads in Tantabin Township, Toungoo District:

1. Hsaw Wah Der village, 360 persons;
2. Ha Toh Per village, 220 persons;
3. Tha Aye Kee village, 160 persons;
4. Ho Kee village, 200 persons;
5. Sho Ser village, 170 persons;
6. Hee Daw Khaw village, 200 persons;
7. Wa Soe village, 180 persons;
8. Klay Kee village, 70 persons;
9. Bu Kee and Bu Sah Kee villages, 140 persons;
10. Thay Ko Der village, 70 persons;
11. Si Kheh Der village, 130 persons; and
12. Ta Kwee So village, 70 persons.¹⁰⁵

On 5 February 2007, SPDC army soldiers operating under MOC #8 attacked Thay Thoo Kee village in Kay Pu village tract, Papun District. Villagers were attacked with mortars as they left a Christian church service. A 43-year-old male received wounds to his liver, lungs and stomach, while two others, a 15-year-old and 16-year-old, were reported to have suffered minor injuries. Local villagers fled into the surrounding forest following the attack.¹⁰⁶

On 8 February 2007, a column of SPDC army soldiers from LIB #387 and LIB #276, operating under Military Operations Command (MOC) #21 (Brigadier General Soe Nway commanding), entered Baw Kwaw area of Papun District, forcing villagers from Baw Kwaw, Thay Koh Mu Der, Ber Ghaw, Th'Lay Ghaw Der and Lay Poe Kaw Htee villages to flee into the surrounding forest. Civilians were reluctant to return to the village to retrieve their food supplies for fear of being shot on sight by the SPDC army soldiers.¹⁰⁷

On 16 February 2007, an SPDC army attack on the Saw Tay Der area of Mone Township in Nyaunglebin District, resulted in the displacement of 121 persons from Saw Tay Der, Ker Po Doh and Play Kee villages. As soon as the shooting began, the villagers grabbed what they could carry and fled into the surrounding forest where they hid from the soldiers.¹⁰⁸

On 20 February 2007, an IDP community hiding in the Hsaw Mu Plaw area of Lu Thaw Township, Papun District was shelled by SPDC army soldiers without provocation or warning. The soldiers attacked the hiding site by firing ten mortar shells into it, sending the villagers running for their lives.¹⁰⁹

On 23 February 2007, 663 villagers from 119 households in Kho Pu village, and 629 villagers from 116 households in Saw Mi Lu village, were forcibly relocated to Kyauk Kyi, Nyaunglebin District. The relocation ordered by SPDC Tactical operation Command (TOC) #2 Commander Khin Maung Oo, and carried out by IB #60 (Major Saw Lay commanding) and LIB #351 (Colonel Chit Htan commanding).¹¹⁰

On 26 February 2007, 12 field huts and the farms that they were in were burned by SPDC army soldiers near Hsaw Law Hta, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District.¹¹¹

Commencing on 5 March 2007, more than 1,000 persons, comprising over 200 families from Weiladaw, Noh Gaw and Patala village tracts in Nyaunglebin District, were forced to relocate to the Tetu relocation site. The site is administered by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #350 (Thet Kaing commanding), with Thet Naing Aung holding responsibility for the site. The site's conditions have been reported to be very poor, medicine expensive and residents are required to compensate the army with 15,000 kyat a year for the land which they occupy at the site.¹¹²



IDPs fleeing an attack on Th'Dah Der village, Papun District, Karen State. [Photo: FBR]

Also commencing 5 March 2007, civilians from the following villages in Nyaunglebin District were forced to relocate to Pa Deh Khaw forced relocation site, under the orders of Bo Thet Khaing, the commanding officer of LIB #350:

1. Kaw Tha Say village;
2. Shu Kin Tha Ya village; and
3. Gomyit Tha Ya village.

Meanwhile, the following villages were relocated to the Pa Aye forced relocation site, also located in Nyaunglebin District:

1. Ma U Bin village;
2. Tone Ta Dah village;
3. Leh Kau Wah village; and
4. Shwe Dan village.

Many of these villages were previously relocation sites, to which the villagers had been forcibly settled since 1997.¹¹³

Commencing on 7 March 2007, residents of Saw Thay Der, Theh Baw Der, Khe Bo Der and Kyauk Pyar village tracts in Nyaunglebin District, were forced by a column of SPDC army soldiers from LIB #375, #376 and #377 to work on the construction of a new motor road. As a result, 1,500 villagers fled the area.¹¹⁴

On 8 March 2007, a joint column comprised of DKBA and SPDC army soldiers attacked Wa Kwe Klo and Kah Law Ghaw villages in Dooplaya District, resulting in the displacement of more than 600 villagers. The attacking forces included more than 300 SPDC army soldiers from IB #81, operating under Light Infantry Division (LID) #22, and were accompanied by a number of DKBA troops. Those who were displaced hid in the area for several days while the troops patrolled the area, and only began returning home on 11 March 2007 once the soldiers had moved on.¹¹⁵

On 8 March 2007, villagers of Ta Nay Pa village, Nyaunglebin District, were evicted from their homes due to the construction of the Kyauk Na Ga Dam. The villagers were reportedly relocated to the Than Byu Jaung relocation site.¹¹⁶

Also on 8 March 2007, 140 local villagers from Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District were displaced following an attack by SPDC army soldiers operating under LID #22 in conjunction with the DKBA Battalions #906 and #907. The soldiers shelled Kler Law Kyeh village with mortars and strafed it with machinegun fire in retaliation to an earlier KNLA ambush on a DKBA column in February 2007. It is common for both the SPDC and the DKBA to attack unarmed civilian villages in retaliation to attacks made against them by the KNLA. That same day, a further 200 villagers were displaced in Dooplaya District by fighting between soldiers from DKBA #907 Battalion and KNLA #201 Battalion.¹¹⁷

On 10 March 2007, fighting between a joint column of DKBA and SPDC army soldiers and the KNLA in Dooplaya District, resulted in the death of 14 combatants and caused the displacement of at least 300 civilians who fled across the border into Thailand.¹¹⁸

Between 15 and 21 March 2007, SPDC army soldiers from IB #379 and IB #380, under MOC #1, attacked a number of undefended civilian villages in the Saw Ka Der area of southern Mone Township, Nyaunglebin District. This resulted in an estimated 1,400 villagers fleeing their homes and taking refuge in the dense forests where they hoped to evade detection by the SPDC.¹¹⁹

On 21 March 2007, SPDC army soldiers attacked Th'Dah Der and Hta Kaw To Baw villages, Papun District, killing three male villagers and causing the displacement of over 400 villagers.¹²⁰

On 26 March 2007, villagers from Kaw Thay Der (Yay Tho Gyi) village in Toungoo District were forcibly evicted from their homes by SPDC army troops operating under MOC #5. The original report failed to mention the number of villagers who were relocated, but had stated that they were taken away to an unknown destination in at least ten trucks. It was suspected that the villagers were taken to Bu Sah Kee, also in Toungoo District, where SPDC army soldiers were constructing a new forced relocation site. It is believed that this relocation site will be populated with villagers who will then be forced to work on the construction of a road linking Bu Sah Kee with Kay Pu and Pwa Ghaw villages in Papun District.¹²¹

According to a report released in March 2007, the SPDC was in the process of making arrangements for the construction of a new town at Pwa Ghaw in Lu Thaw Township, to allow for the mass relocation of villagers residing in the surrounding hills.¹²²

Due to the development of Shwegyin Dam, which has flooded over 3,000 orchards, in March 2007 the military relocated the villages of Ta Nay Pah and Kyauk Naga, both in Nyaunglebin District, to Yin Aye Myaung and Thepyu Chaung, causing the displacement of between 400 and 500 persons.¹²³



Destroyed homes in Aung Soe Moe village, Nyaunglebin District, Karen State. [Photo: FBR]

On 4 April 2007, more than 900 villagers were forced into hiding in the Kheh Der area of Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaunglebin District following an increase in SPDC army activity in the area, and the killing of 28-year-old Saw Wee Ti.¹²⁴

Between 4 and 29 April 2007, a number of homes were burned down in the following villages, causing the displacement of civilians from up to 16 villages in Papun District. Though the list below shows only eight villages in which homes were razed, other nearby villages, hearing this news, fled in advance of the SPDC army column for fear that their village may be next. Those villages that were razed include:

1. Taw Ku Mu Der village, on 4 April 2007;
2. Bo Na Der village, on 7 April 2007;
3. Htee Bway Kee village, on 22 April 2007;
4. Htee Si Khee village, on 22 April 2007;
5. Si Day village, on 24 April 2007;
6. Kay Pu village, on 28 April 2007;
7. Gleh Mu village, on 28 April 2007; and
8. Thu Ta village, on 29 April 2007.¹²⁵

Between 6 and 8 April 2007, a joint task force of DKBA and SPDC army soldiers attacked a number of KNLA bases and IDP hiding sites in Pa'an District located along the Burma-Thai border. According to reports, eight columns of SPDC army soldiers from LIBs #355, #356 and #357, accompanied by two columns of DKBA soldiers from #999 Brigade, rained approximately 80 mortar shells down on the KNLA bases.¹²⁶ Estimates of the number of civilians living in nearby villages affected vary, with some reports stating that 400 were displaced,¹²⁷ while others have maintained that this number was closer to 500.¹²⁸ Whatever the total number was, at least 250, mostly women and children, crossed the border into Mae Ramat District, Thailand. The displaced persons constituted approximately 140 Karen families from the following villages:

1. Loh Di Tah village, 30 families;
2. Thay Kai Yah village, 50 families;
3. Tha Koh Klah village, 30 families; and
4. A further 30 families from areas near the fighting.¹²⁹

On 15 April 2007, Yaw Tho Ber village, an IDP site in Toungoo District, was attacked by a column of SPDC army troops from LIB #371 and LIB #372. According to reports, two displaced villagers, 24-year-old Saw Da Lalu, and 18-year-old Saw Bweh Klotoo were killed. (For more information, see Chapter 3: Extra-Judicial, Summary or arbitrary Executions).¹³⁰

A number of these newly displaced families were attacked once again on 20 April 2007. Villagers from Thay Kai Ya were able to return to their villages some two weeks after the initial attacks, while others continued to be subject to attacks by the SPDC and DKBA.¹³¹

One of the largest SPDC army operations in the first half of 2007 occurred on 28 April 2007. SPDC troops commenced successive attacks on villages in the Tha May Khi and Kay Pu areas of Lu Thaw Township, Papun District. The attacks began at approximately 7:10 am when two SPDC army battalions attached to MOC #1 fired a number of mortars into Plo Law Kloh village, injuring 55-year-old Saw Maw Tay Kay. Later that same morning, mortars were launched on Kay Pu Plaw village at approximately 10:00 am, after which the troops entered the area and burning down a number of buildings and 11 farm huts in Kay Pu village tract. Further attacks followed throughout the day, including an attack by SPDC army soldiers operating under LID #88 against Kleh Mu village, in which the entire village was razed to the ground. The offensive continued the following day at Kay Pu village, where five homes were burned down, and at an IDP hiding site in the Si Day area, which was also burned to the ground.¹³² It was estimated that 26 houses were destroyed in the Si Day area.¹³³

During the sustained SPDC army attacks on civilian villages in northern Papun District throughout April 2007, villagers Saw Aw Hkar, 61, was killed and Maung Tin Khay, 55, was injured. It is believed that SPDC army soldiers from LIB #103, #301, and #416, along with IB #13 were those responsible for these attacks. According to reports, the following villages were among those that were fired upon and shelled by SPDC army soldiers:

1. Bo Nar Der village;
2. Taw Khu Mu Del village;
3. Htee Bwee Kee village;
4. Htee Thay Khee village;
5. Kay Pu village;
6. Ka Lal Mu village; and
7. Sue Htar village.¹³⁴

An unnamed spokesperson for the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen Persons (CIDKP), speaking in relation to the above incident, reported that SPDC army soldiers had:

"[R]esorted to heavy artillery fire, firing about 65 shells in the area starting [on 28] April. They attacked villages. Their aim is to ensure that nobody lives in the area. [O]ver 4,300 villagers from 18 villages are now in hiding in the jungle and spreading out. [They are] used to hiding in the jungle they are now living under trees".¹³⁵

SPDC army attacks on civilian villages in Mone Township throughout April 2007 caused an estimated 4,000 persons to flee their homes in fear of the attacks. On 28 April 2007, 150 villagers from Yaw Kee village fled into the forest following an attack on their homes by an SPDC army unit. The soldiers, suspecting that the villagers were still hiding in the surrounding forest, continued to patrol the area and periodically shelling the areas in which they believed the displaced persons were hiding.¹³⁶

On 30 April 2007, an unidentified SPDC army unit fired 12 mortars into Kay Pu village, Papun District targeting displaced persons believed to be hiding there.¹³⁷

On 11 May 2007, SPDC army soldiers attacked and razed five villages in the Ler Wah area of Nyaunglebin District, displacing 540 villagers in the process. One report maintained that, *"Nobody can go back to work. Villagers are hiding in jungles. They are living under trees and plastic sheets"*.¹³⁸

In the same series of attacks in May 2007, SPDC army troops also burned villages in northern Papun District, resulting in thousands of villagers being displaced from their homes. According to KNU General Secretary, P'doh Mahn Sha, *"They burnt down villages in Khae Oo [Kay Pu], an area located on the edge of northern [Papun] District. About 4,200 villagers from 28 villages fled their homes"*.¹³⁹

On 13 May 2007, 119 villagers from 16 families in Yaw Kee village, Mone Township of Nyaunglebin District, once again were forced to flee their homes to escape SPDC army patrols in the area and the sporadic mortar attacks fired upon their village by those soldiers.¹⁴⁰

On 16 May 2007, SPDC army troops attacked Bler Ghaw village in Papun District, with mortars and automatic rifle fire, killing 18-year-old Naw Gkoo Roo. To evade the attacks, the villagers in the area fled to a safe location deeper in the forest.¹⁴¹

Confiscation of land remained a significant cause of displacement in Karen State. In May 2007 there were reports of the junta confiscating an unspecified quantity of land from villagers of Kawkareik Township for a development project in Naungbo village.¹⁴²

On 3 June 2007, all 50 families from Tha Kaw Tha Kae village in Nyaunglebin District were forcibly relocated by SPDC army soldiers. Soon after settling in their new homes they were again uprooted on 7 August 2007, at which time they were forced to relocate to the Doo Dah relocation site.¹⁴³

On 9 July 2007, the villages of Bar Htar and Bar Balu Khoki villages in Kawkareik Township were forced to relocate by the DKBA's #907 Battalion. Bar Htar village, comprised of 30 households, was forced to move to the Mae Kanel relocation site, although some villagers chose to remain in hiding in the jungle rather than relocate. A KNU spokesman drew a link between the forced relocation and an earlier skirmish between the DKBA and the KNU, which had resulted in a number of DKBA casualties, claiming that the relocation orders were issued in retaliation to this. However, the commander of #907 Battalion, utilizing a Ingauge often employed by the SPDC, denied that the villagers were being forcibly displaced, but instead maintained that the DKBA was merely *"clearing the area of robbers and thieves (and) working for local development"*.¹⁴⁴

On 10 July 2007, more than 100 homes in Kawkareik Township were ordered to relocate without compensation by the DKBA. The civilians hailed from Tha Blut Ko Kee, Tha Wor Poe and Palah Tah villages, each of with approximately 40 homes. The villagers of Tha Blut Ko Kee and Palah Tah were ordered to relocate to Mae Ka Nae within three days, while the villagers of Tha Wor Poe were to travel to Htee Mu Hta village. The villagers were told that once they arrived in Mae Ka Nae and Htee Mu Hta they were not to leave the relocation sites. DKBA soldiers indicated to the residents of the villages that their homes would be burned within three days of their relocation orders, and any villager who remained in their hometown would be shot. The forced relocation was reportedly linked to the construction of a new road from Thingannyinaung to Kawkareik.¹⁴⁵

On 20 July 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #542 and LIB #346, both operating under MOC #9, attacked villages in the Hsaw Wah Der area of Toungoo District, causing many villagers from the region to flee into the forest.¹⁴⁶

On 28 July 2007, SPDC army soldiers based at the Pwa Ghaw Lo army camp set out to patrol through the Wa Doh Hta, Pway Kee, and Saw Muh Blaw areas of Papun District in search of IDPs who were in hiding in the area. The displaced villagers were forced to flee even deeper into the forest to avoid the troops who hunted them, although as they did, the soldiers looted all property that the villagers had left behind.¹⁴⁷



Villagers from the area of Saw Kah Der village in Mone Township, Karen State, hiding in the forest in a temporary shelter after their village was attacked without provocation or warning by SPDC army soldiers. [Photo: FBR]

On 8 August 2007, villagers from seven villages in the Kyauk Kyi area of Nyaunglebin District were again forced to relocate to a relocation site. These same seven villages had only returned to their homes in early July after agreeing to pay 7,000 kyat per month to the local SPDC army battalion supposedly to safeguard them from being ordered to move.¹⁴⁸

On 8 August 2007, 14 homes in Kheh Yu Der village in Lu Thaw Township, Papun District, were burned and destroyed by SPDC troops stationed at nearby Kay Pu village. As a result, persons from the following villages were forced to go into hiding:

1. Kay Pu village, 460 persons from 69 families;
2. T'May Kee village, 110 persons from 17 families;
3. Kheh Yu Der village, 79 persons from 14 families; and
4. Khu Lar Der village, 206 persons from 33 families.¹⁴⁹

On 10 August 2007, an SPDC army unit shelled IDP hiding sites located near T'Kaw Toh Baw and Th'Dah Der villages in Papun District. The villagers were unable to remain in the area due to heightened SPDC army activity in the region, and subsequently fled deeper into the forest on 11 August 2007.¹⁵⁰

On 12 August 2007, an SPDC army patrol came upon an IDP hiding site near Leh Bpeh Kyo village, Papun District and burned the entire site to the ground.¹⁵¹

Over a period of ten days during August 2007, an estimated 1,000 persons in northern Karen State were displaced as a result of continuing attacks by the IB #83 and IB #77, both of which were attached to LID #88. At least five villages in Papun District were burned in early August 2007, in attacks that included the shelling of villages with mortars. Two further villages situated along the border between Toungoo and Papun Districts were also burned to the ground in mid-August. On 13 August 2007, 14 homes were burned and more than 80 villagers fled from Ga Yu Der village. A further 700 persons fled three nearby villages in fear

of an impending attack. Later that same day, SPDC army troops attacked Lay Po Der and Lay Kee vilages, burning homes and forcing hundreds of persons to flee in fear.¹⁵²

On 15 August 2007, displaced persons taking shelter near Leh Kee, on the border demarcating Karen and Karenni States, were attacked by SPDC army soldiers who burned the IDP site to the ground. It was estimated that approximately 200 villagers were forced to flee, including 28 displaced persons from Karenni State.¹⁵³

In mid August 2007, civilian villagers living in the Mwee Loh and Maw Nay Pwa areas of Toungoo District were forced to flee their homes into the surrounding forest following attacks by SPDC army soldiers.¹⁵⁴

A report released by KHRG on 21 August 2007 maintained that SPDC army units operating in Toungoo District were undertaking a systematic campaign of attacks on the food supplies of civilian villagers in the area, in an attempt to force villagers to relocate to “*peace villages*”. Far from being peaceful, the ‘peace villages’ of northern Karen State are those which lie under SPDC control and are subject to forced labour and other demands.¹⁵⁵

On 7 September 2007, SPDC army soldiers attached to MOC #5 ordered seven families from Saw Mu Der village, Toungoo District to move to the nearby Ba Ya Na Thi relocation site adjacent to the village of Tha Pyay Nyunt.¹⁵⁶

On 22 September 2007, 147 persons from 24 households in Mergui-Tavoy District were issued orders to relocate and were provided with only six days in which to do so. The order, issued by LIB #555 (Major Myo Myint commanding), demanded that villagers from the following villages vacate their homes by 28 September 2007. The original report, however, failed to mention if the villagers were ordered to relocate to a specific site as directed by the SPDC, or if they were simply told to vacate the village. The villages which received this order were:

1. Baw T’Ka Ru Kee village;
2. Kah Hee Plaw village;
3. Tah Poh village; and
4. T’Mah Lay village.¹⁵⁷

On 13 October 2007, the village of Yaw Kee, Toungoo District was burned to the ground by SPDC army soldiers, destroying ten homes and a church. Following this attack, and as a result of continuing SPDC army activity in the region, the majority of villagers living in the nearby Tha Aye Loh River and Klay Loh River valleys fled the area.¹⁵⁸

On 6 November 2007, a joint column of SDPC army soldiers from MOC #1 and LID #88 shelled vilages in the Yeh Mu Plaw area of Papun District with mortars, having a direct effect on the displacement of an estimated 1,000 villagers.¹⁵⁹

On 15 November 2007, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #218 and #219, attached to LID #11, carried out several attacks on IDP communities in Kwee Lah and Kheh Der village tracts in Kyauk Kyi Township, Nyaunglebin District, causing the villagers from the area to flee deeper into the hills. Further south, one villager, 28-year-old Saw Lerk Gay, was killed in the attacks near his village of K’Dee Mu Der, while at least 300 persons, including at least 100 children, from Ler Wah and Ta Hoe Aung vilages fled the assault.¹⁶⁰

In November 2007, SPDC army units were reported to once again be attacking internally displaced communities in Ler Wah area of Nyaunglebin District.¹⁶¹

According to a report released by KHRG on 16 November 2007, at least 18 villages from Kay Pu village tract in Lu Thaw Township, Papun District had been displaced due to ongoing attacks by SPDC army units operating in the area. As a result, over 3,800 persons were displaced. The findings of that report are summarized in the following table.¹⁶²

	Village name	Households	Males	Females	Total Population
1	Sho Bper Koh	55	133	237	370
2	Taw Kee Muh Der	14	141	128	269
3	Bo Na Der	17	52	62	117
4	Thay Thoo Kee	55	156	200	356
5	T'Yuh Kee	26	89	96	185
6	Kay Pu	61	208	262	470
7	T'May Kee	17	55	56	111
8	Gkaw Hter Der	17	52	48	100
9	Ploh Kee	26	117	94	211
10	Ta Keh Der	15	55	45	100
11	Baw Lay Der	47	159	154	313
12	Kheh Yuh Der	15	48	35	78
13	Beh Thaw Loh	26	106	108	214
14	Kuh Hla Der	33	107	99	206
15	Htee Bway Kee	17	53	51	104
16	Htee Hsee Kee	18	61	75	136
17	Si Day	22	78	81	159
18	Lay Kee	45	154	155	309
	Total	526	1,824	1,986	3,808

On 1 December 2007, SPDC army soldiers burned the rice storage barns and homes of displaced villagers in the Th'Aye Kee area of Toungoo District. Homes in Ka Lo Ta and E'Kar Ta villages were also reportedly burned, forcing their residents to flee for safety.¹⁶³

Also on 1 December 2007, an SPDC army column from LIB #277, comprised of 180 soldiers, attacked Baw Gaw Kwee in Kwee Doh Kaw village tract in Mone Township, Nyaunglebin District, and mortaring several other nearby villages. Later that same day, SPDC army soldiers from LIB #450, moving in a column of 200 men, mortared a number of villages in the Law Day area, forcing villages in that region to also flee into the forest. Villagers from the following villages were forced to flee:

1. Kyauk Pya village;
2. Teh Nah Hta village;
3. Nya Mu Kee village;
4. Law Day village;
5. Thay Kay Lu village;
6. Nwa Hta village; and
7. Kaw Bee Lay Ko village.¹⁶⁴

16.11 Situation in Karenni State

Conflict between the Karenni Army (the armed wing of the Karenni Nationalities People's Party; or KNPP) and the SPDC continued in 2007, with the SPDC employing a strategy of relocation as part of its counter insurgency campaign, following much the same tactics as those used in Karen State (see above). According to the TBBC, an estimated 79,300 persons were displaced in Karenni State as at the end of 2006.¹⁶⁵ That number swelled to approximately 81,000 by November 2007, with at least 30,000 of those persons hiding in the forests throughout Karenni State.¹⁶⁶ The TBBC further maintained that the number of displaced persons living in forced relocation sites had decreased slightly, from 6,400 in 2006 to 4,800 in 2007.¹⁶⁷ According to Khu Oo Reh, Joint Secretary of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP),

*"Those IDP 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".*¹⁶⁸

On 1 May 2007, the SPDC resumed work on the reconstruction of the Mawchi-Toungoo motor road. In conjunction with this, SPDC army units renewed attacks on Karenni villages lying along and adjacent to the road. Local villagers were forced to work on the reconstruction of the road and were subjected to a variety of human rights abuses, including rape and increased exposure to landmines. Many such persons subsequently fled the area for fear of their safety. *"Local people usually hide in the jungles when the SPDC's forces come to their area,"* said an officer of the Karenni Social Welfare and Development Committee (KSWDC).¹⁶⁹

In May 2007 it was reported that over 1,300 displaced persons in the Mawchi region were suffering from severe malaria, without any access to sufficient medical treatment.¹⁷⁰

Fresh attacks on Karenni villagers in June 2007, resulted in the displacement of at least 200 villagers. Many of these villagers, unable to hide from roving SPDC army patrols and survive in the forests of Karenni State fled their homes for the relative safety of one of the Karenni refugee camps in Mae Hong Song Province, Thailand.¹⁷¹

Much the same as in other states throughout Burma, state-sponsored development projects by private enterprises continued to lead to high levels of displacement in Karenni State. In October 2007, it was reported that over 3,000 acres of farmland had been confiscated from villagers in Karenni State to make room for an industrial estate.¹⁷²

16.12 Situation in Magwe Division

In May 2007, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (iDMC) published a report which looked at displacement in SPDC-controlled areas, and according to the findings of that report, heavy taxation, food insecurity, land confiscation, forced labour and a range of other human rights violations continued to be the primary motivators for relocation in Magwe Division during 2007.¹⁷³

Land confiscation without compensation occurred in a number of the townships comprising Magwe Division in 2007. According to the iDMC, much of the confiscated land has been utilized in the construction of “*Defence Equipment Factories*”, homes and farms for army personnel, pastureland of military-owned horses and mules, the construction of school buildings and sports grounds, extension of town housing, and for private military commercial gain.¹⁷⁴

In mid February 2007, villagers from Sabai, Kha Mahn, Yinma and Khin Mon villages, all in Gangaw Township, were ordered to move to Myauk District by 31 March 2007. The eviction notices were issued by local police officers and SPDC army soldiers from IB #50 in order to allow for the confiscation of more than 3,500 acres of private land, and affecting approximately 120 families. The land was reportedly confiscated to make way for the Pyintha dam project. The Pyintha dam project is due for completion during 2008 and is expected to flood large areas of inhabited land upon its completion. The relocation sites designated for the villages were reported to be less than ideal, as one anonymous villager stated, “*The place we are going to be relocated to is ... land which is not good for cultivation. We are still unable to get drinkable water from the wells there ... we will surely die from starvation or thirst*”.¹⁷⁵

Heavy monsoonal rains and storms along the Irrawaddy River in August 2007, damaged homes in Yenangyaung Township, leaving an estimated 5,000 persons who live on the banks of the river homeless. The SPDC offered no compensation or assistance to those affected.¹⁷⁶



Karenni IDPs fleeing from SPDC army attacks during 2007. [Photo: FBR]

16.13 Situation in Mandalay Division

According to a report published by the iDMC in May 2007, land confiscation has been the leading cause of displacement in Mandalay Division in recent years, closely followed by food insecurity, forced labour, and the perpetration of “*other human rights violations*”. Coupled with this, was the recent move of the national capital from Rangoon to Naypyidaw in November 2005, which also resulted in widespread land confiscation, and the resultant displacement of those who had once lived there.¹⁷⁷

On 27 October 2007, SPDC army officials stationed at the military airbase in Meiktila, summoned 350 landowners from 16 villagers and presented them with an order which they were forced to sign, permitting the military to seize 1,300 acres of their farmlands, which were being rezoned to make way for the construction of an industrial estate. The farmers were reportedly to be compensated with 18 kyat per acre for their losses. On 31 December 2007, it was reported that the SPDC had already seized over 1,000 acres of farmland from the region.¹⁷⁸



Karen IDPs from Ler Wah village in Nyaunglebin District of Karen State fleeing SPDC army attacks. Villagers from this area have been forced to flee numerous times over the past decade. [Photo: FBR]

16.14 Situation in Mon State

A ceasefire agreement between the military and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) signed in 1995 resulted in the forced migration of over 10,000 civilians within Mon State, many of whom crossed the border into Thailand seeking refuge. Since that time, ongoing military occupation and confiscation of farmland and widespread SPDC development initiatives have resulted in the continued flow of displaced persons through Mon State.¹⁷⁹ At the end of 2006 there were an estimated 41,800 displaced persons in Mon State, however, by October 2007; this number had increased to 49,400.¹⁸⁰

According to the TBBC, the majority of displaced persons in Mon State reside in areas controlled by the NMSP. Although many Mon had fled to Thailand following the ceasefire pact between the regime and the NMSP in 1995, they were subsequently relocated to three resettlement sites located just across the border inside Burma in 1996. The three 'Mon Resettlement Sites' of Halochanee, Bee Ree, and Tavoy; as of February 2007 accommodated 11,966 displaced persons.¹⁸¹ The vast majority of the remainder of persons displaced in Mon State reside in NMSP ceasefire areas in Ye township.¹⁸²

According to a report by the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM), an estimated 5,000 villagers from the southern tracts of Ye Township and the northern part of Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Division had fled their homes in the first half of 2007 alone.¹⁸³

In Mon State, much as in the rest of Burma, forced labour is one of the leading causes of displacement. According to reports, villagers living in Khaw-Zar sub-Township have been forced to work on SPDC infrastructure projects by SPDC army soldiers from IB #31 since January 2007. The work that they were forced to do included road maintenance, bridge construction and the fencing of a gas pipeline located along the Ye-Tavoy motor road. Unable to do their own work, villagers began fleeing the area; with approximately 1,000 to 1,500 reported as having done so in the first half of 2007.¹⁸⁴

On 28 May 2007, SPDC army soldiers from Artillery Battalion (AB) #315 (Lieutenant Colonel Myint commanding) seized over 160 acres of rubber plantations from Wakali village in Thanbyuzayat Township. This act effectively stripped the livelihoods of the 26 villagers who had owned and operated the rubber plantations, each boasting a yield of at least 50,000 rubber plants.¹⁸⁵

In June 2007, SPDC army soldiers attached to MOC #19 established a new army camp in Ye Township. In the weeks that followed, over 300 civilians were forcibly relocated.¹⁸⁶

On 26 June 2007, 50 villagers in Bayoun-ngae village, Ye Township, were arrested following allegations that they were supporting the opposition Monland Restoration Party (MRP).¹⁸⁷ More than ten of the villagers were severely tortured during the interrogation, and all of the arrested villagers had to pay more than 20,000 Kyat to be released. Consequently, many other villagers began fleeing the village on 30 June 2007, and by 2 July 2008 most had escaped to Han-gan village.¹⁸⁸ Two houses were burned in the village.¹⁸⁹ At least 300 villagers from 100 households were forcibly relocated, although the authorities provided no means of resettlement. The relocated villagers were forced to abandon their farms and plantations, were subject to a curfew and did not have access to their cow carts and other heavy belongings.¹⁹⁰

16.15 Situation in Pegu Division

Please note that much of the information related to forced relocation and displacement in Pegu (Bago) Division has been included under Section 16.10: Situation in Karen State above. The demarcation of eastern Pegu Division is disputed. While the area is officially a part of Pegu Division, the KNU, and the Karen civilians who live in the area, refer to it as Nyaunglebin District of Karen State. (For more information on the disputed areas of demarcation of Karen State, please refer to the Notes on the Text in the appendices). For the purposes of this report, the HRDU has retained the names and systems of demarcation used by the villagers themselves.

Pegu Division remained a centre of ongoing militarization and development projects which caused significant human rights abuses, including forced relocation and displacement throughout 2007. A report released by EarthRights International (ERI) in February 2007 concluded that *“the heavy militarization of the region, the indiscriminate granting of mining and logging concessions and the construction of the Kyauk Naga Dam have led to forced labour, land confiscation, extortion, forced relocation and the destruction of the natural environment”*.¹⁹¹



Land belonging to U Than Lwin and Daw Nyunt Khin, confiscated by the SPDC in Pegu Division.
[Photo: The Burma Fund]

16.16 Situation in Rangoon Division

Like many of the more heavily militarized areas of the country, and in particular within the Burman-dominated divisions, precious little reliable information exists about internal displacement. During 2007, this was also the case for displacement in Rangoon (Yangon) Division. What little information was available suggested that human rights abuses, food insecurity, and extortion were among the leading causes for displacement throughout Rangoon Division.¹⁹²

Furthermore, in March 2007, the SPDC reportedly confiscated thousands of acres of rice paddies in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project area near Rangoon, however, no further information has been made available regarding how many farmers were displaced as a result. According to reports, the land is being sold to Chinese, Indian and Japanese investors. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood).

Following the September 2007 'Saffron revolution' protests, a number of rumours began to circulate that particular areas of Rangoon where demonstrations were conducted would be forcibly relocated as punishment. An eyewitness to the protests in Rangoon testified to the Human Rights Documentation Unit (HRDU) that the residents of Oak Street in Rangoon began to fear that they were to be forcibly evicted from their homes in October 2007:

"My wife told me that throughout October all the shops along Oak Street were ordered to close and the houses along the road were surveyed by municipal men. The people who lived along Oak Street were worried that they would be forced to move at any time. One rumour maintained that the block along Oak Street would be requisitioned and replaced with a park because the security forces were attacked on that street during the protests. Even though the Mayor of Rangoon announced on Myanmar Television that they have no plans to confiscate that block, the people who live there don't believe him".¹⁹³

Moreover, in December 2007, the Mizzima News Agency ran a story citing a monk who also maintained that residents living in the vicinity of the east gate of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon, where a number of protests were staged, were to be relocated "after aiding the monk-led protests on 26 September".¹⁹⁴

16.17 Situation in Sagaing Division

The construction of the Tamanthi Dam on the Chindwin River posed concerns to the people of northern Sagaing Division in early 2007. The hydroelectric project, partly funded by India's National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), is reportedly intended to send as much as 80 percent of the energy generated by it to India. The construction of the dam led to the forcible confiscation of approximately 17,000 acres of agricultural land from villagers in the surrounding area.¹⁹⁵

In the beginning of March 2007, 380 families in Leivomjang and Tazong villages, near the towns of Tamanthi and Homalin in the Chindwin River Basin, were forced to relocate due to the construction of the proposed Tamanthi Dam project. According to reports, SPDC army soldiers began destroying homes in these villages, forcing the residents to relocate to Laung Min village on the eastern bank of the Chindwin River. However, the SPDC-designated relocation site lacks both adequate housing and infrastructure for the new arrivals in addition to being extremely remote. One ethnic Kuki woman who was forced to relocate stated, in reference to the villagers' reluctance to move, *"Most of them refused to go to the new site and some when into the jungle to hide. Some are temporarily staying in farm huts. No one dares to remain in their village"*.¹⁹⁶

On 12 April 2007, four homes were confiscated and demolished in order to provide a training ground for SPDC army soldiers based in Kalay. The villagers were not compensated for their loss or, though the land was worth an estimated 140 million kyat, measuring 400 by 60 feet in size. Nor were they offered any alternative location in which to live. According to reports, the orders for seizure and demolition came from Captain Thain Phe of LIB #299. The following villagers lost their homes:

1. Mr Vum Ling;
2. Mr Hraing Kep,
3. Mr Zakam; and
4. Mr Than Cung.¹⁹⁷

On 14 April 2007, a number of other villagers in Kalay Township were also informed that their land would be confiscated and demolished by the junta to make way for the extension of the Kalay Airport and Kalay-Tahan roads. Locals living in the proposed road corridor for the Kalay-Tahan road extension were informed that they would have to relocate so that their homes could be demolished. A further 300 households adjacent to the airport were also designated for demolition. A Kalay local expressed concerns about the project, stating that *"the victims are under severe stress and pressure because they believe there is no way they will get compensation for their property"*.¹⁹⁸

16.18 Situation in Shan State

According to surveys conducted by the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), the most significant precursor to forced relocation and development in Shan State during 2007 was state-sponsored development and private enterprise. Coupled with conflict between the SPDC and ethnic ceasefire groups, such as the Shan State Army – South (SSA-S), continued abuses of human rights, and widespread militarization, it has been estimated that over 15,000 persons were displaced during 2007 in southern Shan State alone.¹⁹⁹ This number, however, is in addition to the estimated 175,600 internally displaced persons scattered throughout southern Shan State at the beginning of 2007.²⁰⁰

A further cause of displacement in Shan State has been arbitrary taxation and extortion. (For more information, see Chapter 6: Deprivation of Livelihood). The military demands or simply steals vehicles, livestock, cash, rice, and household goods, and anyone who refuses to cooperate faces the confiscation of their land and livestock or large fines.

As of June 2007, there were over 5,500 displaced persons housed in five IDP camps along the northern Thai border, all located adjacent to SSA-S encampments. According to the TBBC, the majority of new arrivals to these camps during the first half of 2007 were from Lisu, Lahu and Palaung ethnic minority villages, who had fled from abuses perpetrated by the SPDC and United Wa State Army (UWSA), which has been expanding its influence in southern Shan State.²⁰¹

In early 2007, SPDC army soldiers enforced a number of forced relocations of villages in Yaang Loi village tract, Mong Kung Township, which resulted in the following villages being displaced:

1. Kun Pan village, 50 households;
2. Nam Neb village, 40 households;
3. Yaang Loi village, 60 households;
4. Loi Saai village, 30 households;
5. Loi Mi village, 25 households; and
6. Haai Ngern village, 17 households.²⁰²

Since 1998, the proposed construction of the Tasang Dam and hydroelectric power plant in Shan State has been among one of the largest causes of widespread displacement in the state. Construction of the Tasang Dam is a joint venture between the junta and Thai engineering firm MDX. On 15 March 2007, Chinese company China Gezhouba Group was also contracted to partake in the initial construction phases. Over the past ten years, SPDC army forces have forcibly removed and relocated more than 60,000 villagers from areas surrounding the proposed dam site and projected flood zone. Those who chose to hide rather than face relocation faced torture, rape and murder as punishment.²⁰³

On 29 March 2007, the junta forced over 400 villagers, including school children, from Mong Ton and Mong Pan in Shan State to attend the celebration of the commencement of construction of the Tasang Dam. The villagers were transported in trucks, which had been commandeered from local villagers by SPDC army soldiers, and were forced to welcome high-ranking SPDC military officials arriving by helicopter at the dam site. According to Sai Sai, spokesperson of the Shan environmental organization, Sapawa, it was cruel punishment for the villagers, many of whom had been displaced by the impending construction of the dam, *"These villagers have already been driven at gunpoint from their homes and lands. Now they are being forced to clap and cheer while MDX joins hands with their oppressors to construct a dam that will flood their homes forever"*.²⁰⁴

In April 2007, pre-construction surveys were conducted for the construction of a new dam on the Paung-Laung creek in Mong Pan Township. Local residents were informed that upon completion of the dam, 18 villages in the area would be inundated and that the residents of those villages would have to relocate.²⁰⁵

In mid-June, residents of Mong Yu village in Muse Township, were ordered to leave their homes by 20 June 2007, and were forced to sign a relocation agreement, without any offer of compensation or alternative accommodation.²⁰⁶ The villagers were reportedly pressured into signing the relocation agreement by U Aung Naing Oo, the Mong Yu village chairperson. The village houses over 100 households of primarily ethnic Kachin and Shan families, of which at least 26 homes were issued orders to relocate.²⁰⁷ According to a report published on 25 June 2007, most of the villagers were resisting the relocation order.²⁰⁸

16.19 Situation in Tenasserim Division

According to a survey conducted by the TBBC, the IDP population of Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Division during 2007 was 61,000 persons, down from 80,200 from the previous year. The vast majority of, or 51,000 of these IDPs were interned in SPDC-controlled relocation sites spread throughout the division.²⁰⁹

The leading explanation given for the reduction in IDP numbers was that approximately 18,000 persons from over 20 relocation sites spread across Tavoy (Dawei), Thayetchaung, and Tenasserim (Tanintharyi) Townships had attempted to return to their original villages or resettle on nearby lands.²¹⁰

The most notable reported large scale relocation to have taken place in Tenasserim Division during 2007 came about as a result of attacks on civilian villages in Tenasserim and Bokpyin Townships by SPDC army soldiers from LIB #342 and IB #265. Approximately 1,000 persons had their homes and food supplies destroyed by the soldiers and consequently were forced to move into SPDC-garrisoned relocation sites or to seek asylum in neighbouring Thailand.²¹¹



Karen IDPs from Ler Wah village in Nyaunglebin District, Karen State fleeing into the forest ahead of an approaching SPDC army column with all of the belongings that they can carry. *[Photo: FBR]*

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²⁰⁹ Source: *Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma: 2007 Survey*, TBBC, October 2007.

²¹⁰ Source: *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Source: *Ibid.*