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Some Acronyms in This Issue

ILO-	International Labor Organization
IDPs-	Internally Displaced Persons
IMNA-	Independent Mon News Agency
MOGE-	Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
NMSP-	New Mon State Party
SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council
VPDC-	Village Peace and Development Council

News

Villagers Forced to Guard at Night and Work by Day at Army Base

IMNA, August 2, 2008

The Burmese military battalion in Khawzar township southern Mon State is forcing villagers to work and do sentry duty near Kumai village on a daily basis.

According to a Kumai villager in Ye Township, five villagers were forced to work at the Light Infantry Battalion LIB No- 299 based in their village during daytime and guard the village at night.

LIB No-299 has been confiscating land since 1999 in southern Ye Township paying small amounts of compensation for crops but not for the land. And the army has issued an order for land confiscation again since February.

"I have to go at least twice a month to work. We have to arrive at the battalion at 6 in the evening and we are let off next evening," he added.

If they don't want to go for duty, they have to hire other people to go to the battalion by paying about 5,000 Kyat at a time.

The Kumai villager said "villagers would like to find other jobs when there is not enough work to be done at the plantations. They have to



Villagers Forced to fence the Burmese army's barracks for local Battalion in Ayu Taung village, Ye Township

Concern Over NMSP Ceasefire

In mid-May, the ruling regime SPDC officially announced that they won the Peoples Referendum with 92% of the vote. However many opposition and ceasefire groups in the country have reported the referendum as a sham.

The SPDC will move forward with its 7-point road map and will soon call for the registration of political parties to contest the 2010 Elections. Since many opposition parties and armed ceasefire groups do not trust the Referendum or the Constitution, it is likely they will oppose the elections.

Another main concern is that the SPDC will pressure ceasefire groups to lay down their arms or to put their armies under the command of regional Burmese Army commanders. It is likely that if pressure is put on ceasefire groups to disarm, those committed to fight for the establishment of the Democratic Federal Union of Burma will break the ceasefire. Civil war will resume.

In this situation, there is serious concern that conflict generated human rights violations will be widespread in ethnic areas. As a result, a new cycle of internal displacement will occur in many border areas of Burma. In order to prevent this situation, the help of the international community is necessary.

leave their work to go for the battalion duty." The villagers have to work inside the battalion where they clear the bushes near the army building and rebuild the Ye-Tavoy highway road by force.

Villagers are also forced to work in the quarters of the army officers who do not provide any food to them. Villagers have to bring their own food.

If those on security duty do not have information that strangers are around the village during patrolling, army officers punish them by torturing and beating them up.

The LIB No-299 has out up a signboard saying ' Army Land ' in the areas of local land owners - Nai Win, Nai Maung, and Nai Thawar this year. The three owners are afraid their land will confiscated though the army has said they will not.

In 2007, the LIB No-299 put motorcycle owners in jail when a Captain died in an accident after colliding with a villager's motorbike while going to investigate an explosion about two miles from Kumai village.

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At Least Nine Youths Arrested After Bomb Explosion in Telecom Office

IMNA, August 2, 2008

At least nine youths from nearby villages where a bomb exploded on July 30 in the telecommunication (auto exchange) were arrested on suspicion of involvement.

According to a villager whose friends were arrested, the police and soldiers raided the homes of the youth at night. The bomb damaged five window panes of doors and windows. No one was injured.

"Two youths from my quarter were arrested on suspicion. One is a driver the other a local youth," a youth from Nyaung Gone village said.

The authorities have beefed up security in the area and also switched off the power line and are keeping a close watch on the movement of youth.

Many youths are fleeing to evade arrest and many villagers in Kyone Pake, Wet tae, Nyaung gone, Kyaik Ye are scared.

"We can be framed by the authorities because they are raiding homes and seizing many things," a leader of the Mon National Democratic Front (MNDF) in the area said.

Most of the Thai cordless telephones on the hill in Nyaung Gone village were seized by local authorities.

Police and soldiers setup check points in Cin Hna Gaung (Two elephants), and are seriously checking travellers as they believe four more bombs would be planted.

Local analysis said, their experience says the authorities will keep these youths as hostages to prove to senior officials that they have arrested the bombers.

Personal Accounts

Voices From Forgotten Victims

In Southern Mon State, the conscription of people into forced labour remains extensive especially in the villages of the southern Ye Township. The authorities have been forcing the local inhabitants to work constructing roads and bridges, clearing the forest growth from the sides of the roads, and forcing people to plant the physic nuts plants along the village entry road, fencing the gas pipeline as well as guarding their villages in a rotating system. As a result forced labour, the local inhabitants have not had sufficient time to work for their own livelihoods. Most villagers in this areas are been facing many problems in their daily income and could not afford to feed their family members. According to a couple of Mon villagers who live near Khaw Zar sub town, Southern Ye Township, forced labour is too much.

Victims' Name : Nia Maung Aye and Mi Sein Kyi
 Age: 31 and 30 years
 Residential Address: Outside of Khaw Zar sub town, Southern Ye Township, Mon state
 Perpetrator: Army commander Kyaw Moe and his troops
 Date of event: Since 25th Feb, 2008
 Type of violation: Forced labour by Infantry Battalion # 31

“The villagers from our village (located near Khaw-Zar sub town) have to work as unpaid labourer every single month. Since the date of 25 February 2008 until present time, the local authority ordered all villagers who live either inside or outside of Khaw Zar sub town to involve in so called the local development projects led by Light Infantry Battalion No. 31 and the sub township peace and development council. The Col. Kyaw Moe of that battalion directly instructed the order since the above-mentioned period. After the order out, the village peace and development committee led by the village headman divided our village into three parts and each part were demanded to work in a rotating system.”

“For our household, we have to work at least three full days per month in the battalion. Normally we were ordered to clean the bushes, dig the hole for planting the physic nuts plants and repair the broken battalion's fence with the bamboo sticks. We had to bring our own food and water. There is no medical treatment when the villagers have accidents or injuries in the work site. They did not provide us any pills or medicine when people got sick. I saw some men were beaten by the soldiers but I don't know why they beat them.”

“I and my wife were also forced to guard the village with the “village' sentry team” in our village in the past four months. At that time, there was fighting between the Mon insurgency and government troops near the village, consequently the security in the area was tightened up. We are scared of both groups. There were 8 members in a security team and we have to start at 6 pm until to 6 am the next morning.”

“Most of us survive our livelihoods by growing vegetable, we do not have much times for looking after them. However, we have no choice. If we fail to work, we have to pay them. The payment is not very much but we cannot afford to pay because we earn less than the amount we have to pay. Therefore, we have to work by ourselves. Some villagers who are able to pay the money, locally known as ‘substitution costs,’ they just paid the village administration group to hire another labour to implement their duty. The amount of replacement of a labour started from 2,500 Kyat per day. Normally, what I found is people tried to replace children and woman by paying money to the village administration group. The last time I was forced to work was on the first week of last month and at that time, I have to clean the bushes near the sunflower plantation and clean the army barracks. Some of our crew has to work in the army's farm and garden.”

“Living close to the Burmese Infantry Battalion No. 31, we faced too many problems for our livelihoods to survive. Because we are routinely conscripted into forced labour by the Burmese Army and the sub township PDC troops, we lack the time to earn and thus we face reduced income from our daily work and increased debt. Furthermore, we also have to pay other form of payment or illegal taxes to the local army unit. So, we have no more extra income for medical treatment when we sick.”

According to the victims who live in the eastern part of Khaw Zar sub town, Extortion and illegal taxation has continued by SPDC's local battalion based in the area.

Name:	Mi Kun Bae'
Age:	50 years
Residential Address:	Kaw Zar sub town, southern part of Ye township, Mon State
Date:	12 th Feb, 2008
Perpetrator:	Lieutenant Colonel Ye Lwin and his troops
Violation:	Movement restriction and forced labour

"On 12th Feb, 2008, during the Burma Union Day, Lieutenant Colonel Ye Lwin and his followers from Infantry Battalion No. 31 which is based in Kaw Zar sub town, southern part of Ye township demanded the local villager not to travel outside of the village track for that day. He commanded every household in the villages to buy the Burma National flag to celebrate by holding those flags in front of every house. For those who have no flag in front of their house, they have to provide three bags of cement as punishment or fine. The Army has punished three of my neighbouring families because at that time, they were working in their farms outside of the village. This is heavy fines for us."

"On 22nd Feb, 2008 during Mon National Day, the sub township administration group ordered the villagers not to go and work in their own farms for a week. Most of our farms are located outside of the village and we face many difficulties for our crops. Half of my plantations have been destroyed because of lack of water. We have been faced many, many times with this kind of restriction by the local authorities. Each time our plantation is damaged more or less. Most people are working in the forest because their gardens are in the forest. Nobody dared to complain about the travel restriction. This is the main reason why people frequently relocate to other places.

Some villagers want escape into the border areas because of the forced labour and extortion by the Burmese Army. The occurrence of forced labour has continued over the last five years. Most of the cases were committed by IB No.31 and LIB No. 343. I have been working consistently in IB No.31, building the barracks, fencing the compound, growing the castor oil plants and constructing the road for the army. I have not received any cash for doing such kind of work. This rotation system of forced labour has been happening around the area for over a decade. Sometimes I really want to escape from this cycle of slavery. Most of my friends relocated to Thailand as migrant workers. They said if I really want to get away from it all, come and live with them in Thailand. However, I could not. I have my farm, my family is here."

News

Army Orders Cutting Down of Rubber Plants Near Base

IMNA, July 30, 2008

A Burmese Army artillery battalion under the command of the Southeast Command forced local plantation owners to cut rubber plants along the army base.

Rubber plantations near Ah-bit, Youngdoug, Hneepadaw, Kwan-hlar, Set-thawe village southern Mudon Township and some villages in Thanpyuzayart Township were ordered to be cut down by artillery regiment No-318 based in Ah-bit village Mudon Township Mon State.

Over 6,000 rubber plants ready to produce sap and about 15,000 medium plants near the artillery battalion were identified to be cut down, according to an owner.

The owner said "The plantations owners don't want to cut it because their plantation could produce sap in the coming season. That's why the plantations owners have been bribing the Burmese artillery battalion to avoid cleaning up their plantations. " Most owners paid 700 Kyat per plant to the artillery.

Artillery regiment No- 318 confiscated approximately 200 acres to build their battalion base in the southern

part of Mudon Township since 2002 without paying compensation.

"He (the artillery officer) warned us that we can't sell our plantation to others. They would seize our plants when they wanted to" the owner said.

Currently the army authorities have allowed owners to walk across the army camp only from 6 am to 5 pm to go and work in their plantation beside the army camp.

The army forced them to make permit cards for allowing them to cross the army gate, a Youngdoug villager said, "They won't allow the travelers and local villagers if they cannot show the card".

The plantation owners had paid for their photographs to the artillery to get the permit cards.

A Youngdoug villager said the plantation owners are disappointed with the artillery because the plantation workers have start work from midnight to scrape the plant. Due to limited time, they face problems going to their plantation.

Report

Forced Labour Use by Burmese Army in Mon State from Mid-2007 to May 2008

I. Background Information

Since the involvement of International Labour Organization (ILO) in Burma from 1999-2007 to eradicate forced labour, the use of forced labour in big cities has been reduced. However, the SPDC authorities and especially local military commanders from various military battalions based in rural area, have not changed their behavior, they continue to use local ethnic Mon, Karen and Tavoyan villagers as forced labour.

Between 1999 and 2000, the ILO informed the Burmese military regime, to stop the use of forced labour. However, the use of forced labour has continued as normal practice in most parts of rural areas in Karen State, Mon State, and Tenasserim Division. HURFOM found that the massive use of civilians as forced labour for government infrastructure projects have continued in some SPDC controlled areas, especially by army commanders. In particular, the SPDC used hundreds of thousands of civilians in Mon State and Tenasserim Division for the construction of the 110 miles long Ye-Tavoy railway.

In 2002, after the ceasefire agreement between the New Mon State Party (NMSP), and the SPDC violations of human rights against the ethnic Mon people continued. In response several smaller Mon splinter groups formed in Ye Township (*in Mon State*) and Yebyu Township (*in Tenasserim Division*) declaring war against the Burmese Army. Consequently, the southern part of Ye Township and all of Yebyu Township became a conflict zone. The civilians in the areas not only suffered from human rights abuses as suspected being rebel-supporters, they also suffered from the continuous conscription for forced labour including the guarding of the gas-pipeline, villages, and for portering service.

In 2005, the Burmese Army under Tactical Command No. 3 of Military Operation Command No. 19 based in Ye, tried to control the whole area of Ye Township and attempted to install administration in the area. First, the Burmese Army created a village, Khaw-za Sub-Town and installed their administration in this Sub-Town. Civilians from Khaw-za and surrounding villages have been forced to build a road that connects Ye Town and Khaw-za sub-town, build a public hospital, a high school, a police station and housing for government servants.

Since 2005, along with the SPDC's militarization policy and self-reliance program, land and properties belonged to civilians have been confiscated without compensation. Land confiscation has happened in various parts of southern Burma.

There are two gas pipelines in the southern part of Burma. The Yatana gas pipeline connects the Gulf of Martaban with Thailand that provides Thailand with natural gas¹. This pipeline was constructed in 1998 and the local Burmese Army troops still have to provide security for the pipeline. The second gas pipeline is Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline, which belongs to Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) operates in order to supply gas to a cement factory in Myaingkalay village in Karen State.

II. Continuous Use of Forced Labour in 2007 and 2008

During the time from mid 2007 up to May 2008, the use of forced labour by the local authorities and commanders of Burmese Army continued in southern Mon State especially in Ye Township². Coinciding with the increase in the number of soldiers in these areas, the use of forced labour also increased.

HURFOM is based in the Thailand-Burma border, its human rights worker often met with forced labour victims who have fled from their homes. Our human rights workers have collected information and conducted interviews with victims from the rural areas especially in Ye and Yebyu Townships.

¹ This Yatana gas pipeline was constructed by multinational oil and gas companies: France's Total, US's Unocal, Thailand PTTEP and Burma's Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). This gas pipeline is about 65 miles in length from Kanbawk area in Burma to Thailand.

² Ye Township also comprised of two other Sub-Townships: Khaw-zar (*in the southern part of Ye*) and Lamine (*in northern part of Ye*)

For its human rights data collection and documentation, HURFOM has provided a brief overview of the breakdown of the situation of forced labour in Mon State and Tenasserim Division.

- Forced labour conscription in bridge construction
- Forcible conscription for security of gas pipeline
- Forced labour in army business
- Forcible cultivation of castor-oil plants
- Forced recruitment into militia force

Compared with the situation during 2006 and 2007, the conscription of forced labour continued in Ye Township especially in Khaw-zar Sub-Township area and people from over 20 villages have suffered from the use of forced labour.

III. Details in Forced Labour Use

A. Forced Labour in Bridge Construction along Motor Roads

Bridge Construction for Military Control:

Since the end of January 2007, the local residents from Khaw-za Sub Township, Mon State have been forced to work as unpaid laborers on bridge constructions along the Ye-Tavoy motor road until April. SPDC's Infantry Battalion No.31 based near Khaw-za Sub Town forced the villagers in Ye Township to build parts of the bridge. With the cooperation of the local Township's administrative authorities, the commander of the local Infantry Battalion coordinated two groups of unpaid villager labourers and demanded each group be made up of 15 people that must include some local carpenters from the villages in the Khaw-za Sub Township.

Khaw-Za Sub Town has seen the construction of 16 bridges between the heights of 10-30 feet. There are also 30 bridges of with length less than 10 feet. The temporary bridges were originally built in 2002 before the SPDC operated military operations in the area and are now being repaired or rebuilt. Many civilians have been used in the reconstructions and many who could not afford to contribute their labour fled the area.

A site of many human rights violations:

- The construction of a 400 foot long bridge near Kabya-wa village;
- The second longest bridge, Paya-Taung, was 150 feet long and was built between Hangkan and Singu villages.
- There are another 14 remaining bridges, which are 20 to 50 feet in length.

According to a source closed to Ye Township's administration, the bridge construction projects were ordered by the Mon State's Military Operational Command (MOC) No. 19 based in Ye. It is also under the command of Southeast Command in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State. The bridges and roads are SPDC projects that they allege will bring about equitable development nationwide and ensure national unity.

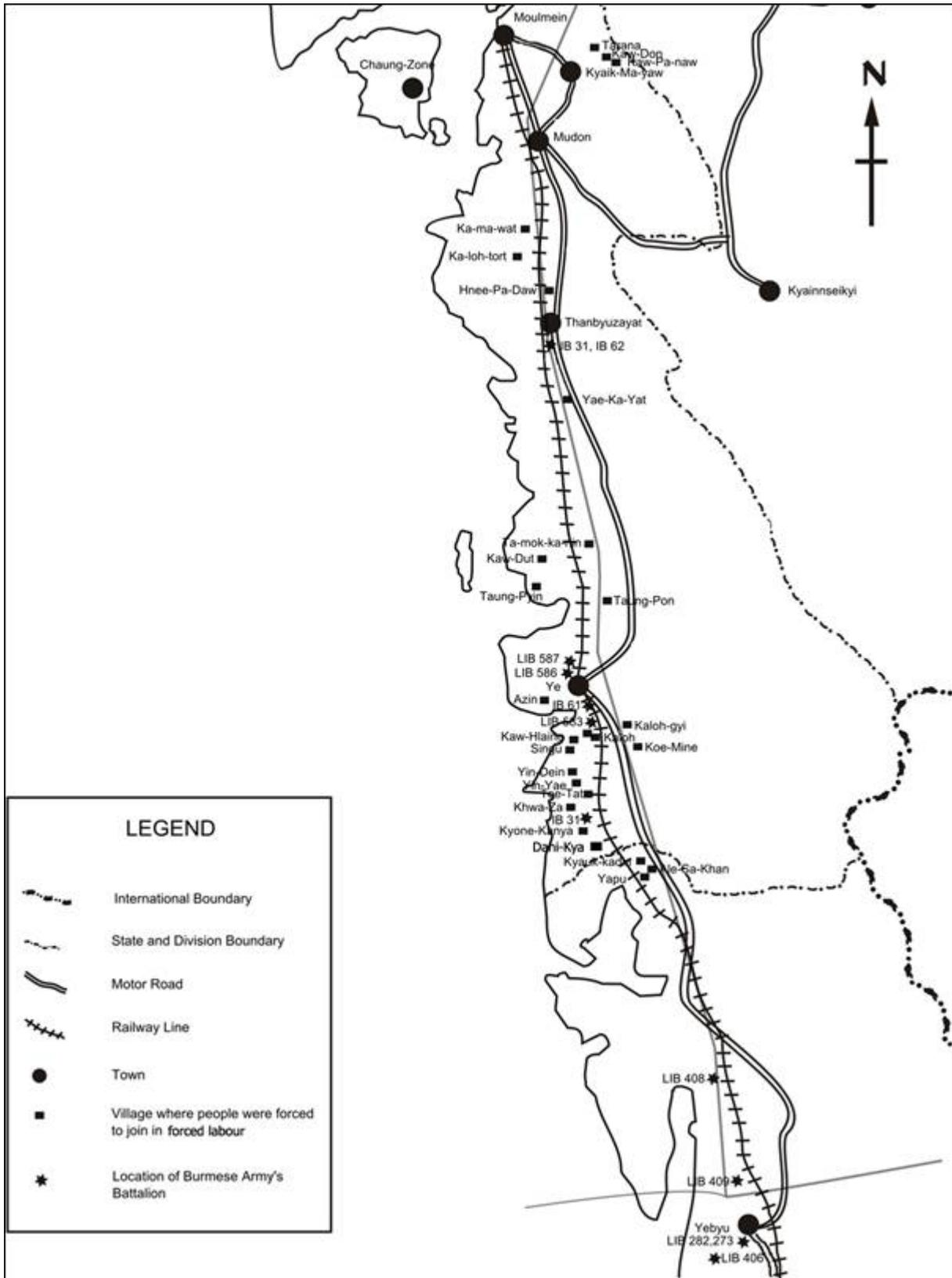
Forced Local Carpenters:

In the building of these bridges, many local carpenters were forced to work in rotating shifts. A local carpenter who was forced to contribute labour in Paya-taung Bridge related the following account:

“If we build a bridge, the villagers have to collect the stones from the valley. They have to collect the sand from the stream. The group of constructors had to start the work first. After that, we have to start the part of works for carpenters. They have to do again when we finished our part. We take turns one after another. We work when they stopped and they work when we stopped”.

With the cooperation of the local Township's administration groups, the commander of the local Infantry Battalion coordinated two groups of unpaid laborers and demanded each group be made up of 15 people that must include some local carpenters from the villages under the Khaw-Zar Sub Township.

When the Burmese authorities forced them to work, the carpenters have to go very often to the bridges to provide their professional skills: such as laying lumber on the floors, adjusting poles, and building short walls. However, the local carpenters have less time to do their own jobs. The carpenter also explained this:



Location Map of Southern Mon State, which this report covers:

“The time left to do our own work is less than two weeks in a month. If we compare their work to our work, their works are more. We have to build the bridges. For now, we have finished building three bridges. There are two bridges between Khaw-Zar and Tar-Bound. There is one bridge between Han-Gan village and Singu village. We don’t want to go to the bridge between Han-Gan and Singu. It is about 15 miles away from our village. But, the leader of Khaw-Zar Township asks us gently to work for half a day. We go to work because we afraid they (the soldiers) punish him or us. Actually, the bridge is not finished in a working day. So, we have to sleep there. It is finished the next day. I remember that it is the first time that they treat us full meals over there. Normally we have to provide our own meal here”.

“It is very difficult situation for me to survive as a carpenter in this village. They (the local authorities) need me to work in their bridge construction project. But I have my private work to do for my family to survive. How can I refuse their order? I decided to hire another man who can go and work instead of me at a cost of kyat 5,000 per day. I have to pay 15 days to complete my obligation. If people don’t participate in the bridge construction work, they have to contribute cement for the bridge. People are afraid of such punishment”.

There were two more bridges. One bridge is between Toe That Ywa Thit village and Singu village. It is over 40 feet long. Another bridge is between Toe Tat Ywa Thit village and Yin -Yae village. It is over 35 feet long. Villagers in both locations were forced to contribute their labour for building the bridges.

Forced the Local Villagers, and Collection of Sand and Stone

In order to construct the bridges, the Army requires one person per household to work on construction sites daily. The Army has no selection criteria, taking men, women and children as labourers. Women and children are used to stockpile materials for building, such as sand and stone, from the river outside the village.

The local Mon carpenters continuously explained:

“The bricks are taken from the farm which is in the north of the Khaw-Zar. These are the bricks from the battalions but the villagers had to buy them. For the cement, they took one bag from one person after another. For example, they may find a villager who went outside the village or go to his/her garden without any permission and they would then arrest the villager by accusing him/her of giving illegal taxes to the rebels. At that time, the villager has to be punished or arrested. At minimum, he/she has to give one bag of cement.”

Hla Maung, a 35-year-old Yin-Yae villager said that the local military unit provided them only 20 cement bags per bridge. They ordered them to repair two bridges in southern and northern Toe Tat Ywa Thit village. The length of each bridge is over 20 feet. Both wooden bridges are very old and about to collapse.



Child labourers collecting stone for bridge construction in Kaw-zar sub Town, Ye Township

He said the local administration collected money, about Kyat 15,000 from each house in Toe Thet Ywar Thit, he also collected between Kyat 2,000- 8,000 per house in Yin-Yae village. Toe Tat Ywa Thit has over 200 households and Yin-ye about 400. This was in order to buy more stones, cement and other building materials.

The man also explained how the Burmese Army via village administration has used the forced labour:

“My village has four quarters. Three quarters had to procure three huge poles for the bridge and the fourth quarter had to collect construction material such as sand, stones, cements and wood for the bridge construction.”

When building bridges, the SPDC provides a mere ten percent of the cement necessary for the construction leaving it up to the villagers to provide the remaining ninety percent from their own pockets.

According to a HURFOM field reporter, each family had to pay a set amount of money. Each house was forced to pay Kyat 2,000 for the truck's fuel and in the village; the local authority demanded a total of Kyat 600,000, according to a villager in Yin Tang village. However, the families of the government employees, members of the village administration group and members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) were exempt

Commandeering Trucks:

Private vehicle owners in Khaw-Zar Sub Town and two private passenger trucks have been forced to provide two trucks for the Army to transport workers to building sites. The trucks are used in the transportation of forced labourers and are to be ready at 9 a. m. every morning. There has been no compensation to the owners of the vehicles. Failure to comply with these orders means facing a fine of Kyat 15, 000 per a day.

Accordingly, to an anonymous truck owner who lives in Yin-Dein village, Khaw-Za Sub Township:

“This has been happening since the first week of February of this year in our village. The order was given by commander Bo Ba Lay (Major Kyaw Zay Ya) from Infantry Battalion No. 31 based in Khaw-Za Sub Town. He demanded all private truck owners in each village in Khaw-Zar Township to supply two trucks per day for his battalions to use and one for Township PDC office use”.

According to Nai Win Aung (not real name); a 45-year-old truck owner from Khaw-Zar Sub Town, his truck has been used without compensation several times. He heard that the order to commandeer vehicles was conceived by U Kyaw Moe, Township PDC Chairman of Khaw-Zar Sub Town and Bo Ba Lay from IB No. 31. The local authorities also passed this order on to each village public transportation association in Khaw-Zar Sub Township and demanded sixty trucks per month from them to use in the battalion and township administration groups.



Commandeering Truck and unpaid villagers labor on road construction in Kaw-zar sub Town, Ye Township

He explained as:

“We have to arrive at the battalion and township PDC's office compound at 9:00 a.m. They normally use the trucks for taking villagers to their work site, carrying wood or fuel for the battalion owned brick mills, carrying bricks back to the battalion and transporting military troops to Ye Town or wherever they would like to go. If the truck owners failed to carry out their duty, they must pay Kyat 20, 000 as a fine to the battalion”

Currently, gasoline prices are so high, the local truck owners are very tired of losing profits, and they use many expenses in the government projects.

In Mon State, the State authorities' commandeering of private motor vehicles for VIP transport or for military uses, without compensating the owners, is a very common form. The practice is particularly widespread in Southern Burma.

B. Forced Labour for Army Business:

Timber Collection and Making Bricks

Since 1997, after the percentages of food rations and battalion expenses were cut by the government, the Southeast Command ordered the local military battalions to run their own businesses to seek income. As a

result, thousands of acres of land in Mon State were confiscated and the crops from this land were taken by soldiers.

For the Burmese Army based in Ye Township, especially IB No. 31 in Khaw-zar Sub-Town has created a business making bricks to sell for the bridges, which they were ordered to build in early 2007 and 2008.

IB No. 31 has also been responsible for ordering villagers to cut down and collect a specific type of timber that is used for firing bricks. There are three brick kilns, two are owned by No.31 Infantry Battalion and one belongs to the Deputy Commander. Two are located in Khaw-Zar Town and one in Yin-ye village. To continue the production of bricks everyday, the kiln needs wood. Most villages in Khaw-Zar do not get money from the army for transporting the wood.

The cost of sending wood to the factory is about Kyat 5,000 per vehicle. "We were forcibly made to work for the army battalions," a worker in Khaw-Zar said. The army sells machine made and hand made bricks for Kyat 35 a piece, in and around Ye area. If customers buy army bricks, they send it to the customers' house in requisitioned vehicles.

C. Forced Labour in Castor Oil Plantation

After the onset of the rainy season as of June in every year, the military regime has ordered people to grow Castor Oil plants. They also force the people to buy the seedlings at an inflated price. Mon State authorities ordered every Township to replace the castor oil plants, which died because of weather or animals' bites.

In early June 2007, The Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) in Kyaikmayaw Township were instructed by Mon State authorities that each family must grow 300 Castor Oil plants or pay Kyat 90,000 (US \$ 72) to the local authorities. This means, the villagers have to buy castor oil plants from the local authorities and plant them in their farms or near their houses.

Depending on the economic status of residents in Thanpyuzayat Township, TPDC authorities were selling Castor Oil seeds in early June 2007. A family is told to plant three kilograms of the seeds and has to pay Kyat 3,000 (2.5 US \$) per kilogram. Even a poor family has to pay about 9,000 Kyat to the authorities to get seeds and grow them in their house surroundings and farms.

However, in Mudon Township the TPDC only ordered plantation owners along the highway to grow castor oil plants. Recently a Kyone Paik villager, near Mudon town was forced to clean the grass and make way for planting along the main road so that it looks good when the military leaders visit and come along the road. The regime started the project two years ago to produce bio diesel to reduce importing diesel.

State owned television channel, MRTV is advocating the cause almost everyday by broadcasting how to grow the plant. However, local people in southern Burma do not seem to accept the government project. They are just growing what the government assigns and no one looks at it as a business project. Many Castor Oil plants which were planted last year, died.

D. Forcible Conscription of Security Guards

(1) In Mudon Township

In late 2007 from September to December and again from January to March 2008, the local authorities in Mudon Township were concerned over the potential sabotage of the Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline; consequently, they forced local villagers to guard the gas pipeline. Since many men are busy with their farms or plantation, many women and elderly persons are forced to guard the pipeline.

During this time, one person from each household in Kalawthut, Kawn-ka-bue, Doe-mar, and Set-thawe villages has to undertake patrol duty every month from evening to midnight. Women and elders are pressed into guard duty more than able-bodied men to safeguard the gas pipeline.

"Women do guard duty because villagers are worried about threats to male members of the villages by Burmese troops," said a Kalawthut villager. But some villages like those from Hnee-padaw, Young-doung, and Kwan-hlar do not do patrol duty but have to pay the salary for the guards every month. One household

Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- Monitoring the human rights situation in Mon territory and other areas in southern Burma
- Protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly "Mon Forum" newsletters. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter. Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P. O. Box 2237, General Post Office
Bangkok 10501, THAILAND
E-mail: hurfomcontact@yahoo.com
Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

pays Kyat 2, 500 per month, a youth from Young-doung village said. "Villagers in three villages have to pay Burmese soldiers about Kyat eight million (about US \$ 6,557) per month."

Since the gas pipeline was laid in 2000, villagers along its route have been suffering various kinds of human right abuse such as restriction on movement, forced labor, patrol duty and are forced to pay taxes for security expenditure.

E. Forced Recruitment Into Militia Force

In 2007, under the SPDC's militarization policy, the local Burmese Army battalion has ordered every village headman in Mon State to send approximately 35 villagers for militia or *Pyithusit* training. Many villagers were forced to attend this training leaving their jobs at farms or plantations.

The military trainers trained the people how to fight armed insurgencies, how to break up the people if there are protests, if the country were to have another uprising, or if overseas countries were to invade Burma. To protect the country the military trains the people how to use guns. The people are trained by the local military based in their areas.

Pa-an Township, Karen State

The Light Infantry Battalion No. 310 of the Burmese Army is conducting the first trainings for all villages in the capital of Karen State in keeping with the Burmese military government's decision. The battalion has directed the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) to arrange the training for them.

Each village has sent 20 to 30 trainees to be included in the militia in the village, according to sources close to VPDC. The VPDC in the township do not have enough members in the militia so villagers are being trained. But most villagers in the township denied this because VPDC are hiring people



Recruited Local Villagers at Militia Training in Kamarwat Village, Mudon Township

for the training, a source revealed. To pay the hire charges VPDC is collecting money from the people. Ma Ma Hlaing's said, "I paid Kyat 3,000 to the VPDC of Kyone Pe village. Every family in my village paid Kyat 3,000 for 30 trainees." The training has been held for the last 16 days and the VPDC had to pay for all those sent to the training.



Unpaid Villagers Constructing in Ye-Tavoy Motor Road

The VPDC's had to buy shirts and shoes for the militia members. "We paid Kyat 6,000 to the army for a uniform for the militia members, a VPDC member said. They had to pay Kyat 2,000 per day for the trainees as ordered by the battalion. Most VPDC's don't want to do the training because they have to pay a lot of money. However, they have no option but to accept because they cannot defy the order, a VPDC source said.

V. Conclusion/ Suggestions

Burma ratified the ILO Convention 29 on Forced Labour and ILO Convention 27 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize in 1955. Despite this, the current military regime SPDC lacks political will to eradicate all practices of requisition of forced labour and offer the right to freedom of association.

Since there is no independent labour union in the country in order to organize for workers' rights and protect against the requisition of forced labour, the SPDC has ignored the advices and technical assistance provided by ILO.

As a local human rights organization, that has monitored 'human rights and labour rights' of the people in southern part of Burma, Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) would like to suggest that:

□ ILO in Rangoon office should have more access into the rural areas where the requisition of forced labour is a serious problem by the authorities and members of Burmese Army. The ILO needs to appoint local representatives in rural areas, in order to cooperate more closely with the local communities, to monitor the activities of the authorities and the Burmese Army. One consequence would be to reduce the socio-economic impacts of forced labour on communities.

□ ILO in coordination with the international community should try to pressure the Burma's military regime to form an independent labour or trade union in the country. ILO should provide technical assistance to that organization, in order to protect labour rights in general, including the requisition of forced labour; practice the right of freedom of expression and protect of the right to organize among workers.

□ If the regime still refuses the ILO Convention 29 and Convention 87, the appropriate pressure by the international labour unions should be applied to the regime as punishment.

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