Burma's deadly crop!  page 3

The Killing goes on! page 4
The regime that eats it’s own

Burma’s conflict is not between the regime and opposition political parties or armed groups. It’s between military dictators attempting to impose total control over the lives of Burma’s civilian population. In cities the peoples show their opposition by taking active part in political dissent and with noncompliance of laws. In rural areas such as Karen State villagers resist by fleeing to jungle hideouts, evading forced labour orders, disobeying forced relocation and helping armed resistance fighters such as the Karen army in their struggle for a free democratic Burma. In response, and to bring villagers into line, the regime uses its soldiers to destroy villagers and farmlands. Any form of resistance against its obsession with control is met with brute force. Crops are burnt and villagers forced to work as slave labour. Burmese army soldiers extort money, food and building materials from villagers. Teaching ethnic languages in government schools is a crime. Fertile farming land is destroyed and rendered useless as the army buries thousands of landmines into it. To maintain their control over citizens the regime uses the law to make reading leaflets and joining political parties an illegal act. It uses its army and police force to keep the people subservient. The ceasefire between the KNU and the regime has done nothing to stop the Burmese army increasing their activities against ordinary civilians. The regime fears the will of the people and in spite of its great military power cracks are starting to appear. Under pressure from ASEAN members and constant condemnation by the international community has created division. In response, the regime has started to eat it’s own. Former head of Military Intelligence and Prime Minister, Kyin Nyunt, is now under arrest and the shadow of a death sentence. His supporters among the intelligence agencies must now count themselves as opposition. Recent terrorists styled bomb blasts in Rangoon, that killed many people, are said to be the work of former MI officers.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
Researchers, from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, estimate 1,500 people a year are blown up by landmines in Burma. These shocking statistics don’t show the many years of trauma and suffering landmine victims and their families have to endure.

Pwe Paw had half his right leg amputated after he stepped on a mine returning to his village after a hard day’s work in his rice fields. “In the past Burmese soldiers forced me to build roads, fences, clean their huts and cut the grass around their camp. Now I’ve lost my leg to one of their mines.”

Pwe Paw says he now faces an uncertain future. “I don’t know how I can feed or work for my family. I don’t know how I will survive.”

Burma’s deadly crop

Burmese army soldiers use landmines against villagers to control their movements. The army, mines roads and walkways used by civilians. According to an Australian defence studies expert, Andrew Selth, the Burmese army has mined roads and tracks in and out of Thailand to stop the flow of people and supplies crossing the border.

The Thai Royal Army has estimated about 70 percent of the 2,041 kilometre border between Thailand and Burma has been mined.

Armed opposition groups also lay mines, but according to a Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) officer their objectives are very different from the Burmese army. “We use them to defend ourselves and Karen villagers at risk from attack from Burmese soldiers. We can’t afford to buy them, most of our mines are homemade or are recycled Burmese army mines. We are not in a financial position to use them indiscriminately.”

Following a recent attack by the Burmese army on a KNLA battalion in Karen State the retreating soldiers planted as many as 60 new mines. In Karen State men, women, children and animals are at great risk from stepping on mines. To add to this insane use of landmines, the DKBA, a militia gang armed by the regime is now using mines to protect their commercial logging and mining operations.

International groups opposed to the use of landmines blame Burma’s military for making Burmese people have the highest number of mine casualties of any country in the world.
Villager Saw Pa Thu Dee and his young daughter, Naw Paw Heh, were excited about going to the jungle to gather mushrooms and vegetables. Unknown to them, Burmese army Light Infantry Brigade 83 were patrolling in the area. The soldiers caught father and daughter and took them captive. After slapping Naw Paw Heh around they let the terrified girl go. Her father was tortured and tied up. He was taken deep into the jungle, shot, strangled and his throat cut. Naw Paw Heh ran back to the village, the gunshot echoing behind her. Concerned villagers asked her what happened to her father. Next day they went to the jungle to look for Saw Pa Thu Dee's body. They found it trussed with rope, they were too scared to recover it as Burmese soldiers usually booby trap bodies.

"Burmese soldiers tortured my father and hit me."

Villagers, Saw Yaki and Kyaw Mey Toe were also beaten by the same soldiers.

"The soldiers said we were in the Kawthoolei (Karen) army. They hit me so hard with their guns and fists. My teeth are loose and my lip cut."

The men were kept prisoner all night. Kyaw Mey Toe said they tried to strangle him.

"They used me as a boxing bag and I thought I would die when they choked me."

Death of a Union Man

Burmese army soldiers beat Saw Thoo Di, 52, a committee member of the Karen Agriculture Workers Union (KAWU) to death on 28 April at Nah Htee Kya-Inn Township, Karen State. Saw Thoo Di was part of a union delegation planning May Day celebrations in the district.

Just before he was due at a union meeting he went to the forest to dig for tubers and vegetables with his 14-year-old daughter. Soldiers of Light Infantry Brigade 83 stopped them. The soldiers released his daughter but continued to interrogate and torture Saw Thoo Di trying to get him to admit he was a Karen freedom fighter.

The soldiers killed him and then looted his home.

Karen agricultural workers spoke proudly of Saw Thoo Di.

"He was a good man. The FTUK and FTUB respected him for his courage, loyalty to his colleagues and his struggle for workers rights up until he died."
Augustine has no complaints

Saw Augustine’s left hand cannot move, nor can he squeeze his fingers. He looks like he has been through a war. His face is scarred, his arm smashed and he’s missing an eye. He says it was a small price to pay to defend his people. He’s now 46, second-in-command of Karen National Liberation Army Battalion 4 in Taungoo District. Augustin holds out his arm for inspection and takes out his black glass eye.

Augustine’s face is a mess. Scars run from his nose and up through his eyebrow.

‘I lost my eye in 1996, a year before my wife died, when I tried to disarm a landmine buried by the Burmese army.’ The mine exploded killing a commander, a soldier was wounded and Augustine was seriously maimed. ‘Even though my eye hurt, I never lost hope in our Revolution. When I look in the mirror and see my arm and missing eye I still feel the same.’

Augustine married at 28 and has three children.

“We never spent much time together. My wife lived in jungle hideouts while I had to defend my people. I felt bad, as she had to carry all our belongings and kids. I thought of our nation as family I had to protect.’

Augustine family had to do without while he was in the army.

‘I borrowed rice from villagers to help my wife survive. I paid it back later.’

In 1995 during the rice planting season Burmese army soldiers arrived at his village - Bu Sar Key. At harvest time the villagers couldn’t collect their rice crop and it went rotten in the fields. Families had to borrow rice to survive.

Saw Augustine didn’t have food to feed his family so he sent them to his sister in Karenni State.

On the way, near Ko-la-der village Burmese army soldiers shot at them and four villagers were killed. Augustine said he felt like what his ancestors used to say; “The rain comes where you go”.

Living on the run affected his wife’s health and she died in 1997. Their youngest son was four.

‘When there is no peace the opportunity for a soldier to have a normal life is not there. Even though I want to see my kids I dared not go back to the village. I have to hide.’

Sometimes his children come to visit him, but their grandmother who looks after them says the risks are great. Augustine has been a soldier since he was 15. He’s lost his wife and children but still manages to joke with his soldiers, that having one eye means he doesn’t have to close it to shoot his rifle.

‘When I joined the Karen Revolution I was told revolution is not easy, there was no wages and, did I still want to do it? I never wanted pay to help my people. I can’t complain. I still have my legs and one good eye and can still see the real world.’
**SPECIAL REPORT**

*Mae Tao Clinic (also known as Dr Cynthia’s Clinic) is busy. In 2004 it treated as many as 80,000 cases — people fleeing Burma’s economic disaster or the military conflict. A CIDKP reporter visited the busy Trauma Ward.*

The road to Mae Tao Clinic is crowded. Monks, cars and motorbikes wind their way past mothers with babies, injured factory workers and busy medics. In and outside the Trauma Ward patients lie on wooden beds. Some eat, some just sit and stare. The list of injuries include road accident, dog bite, landmine, gunshot and monkey bite. Senior Medic, Law Gwa says patients fear landmines the most.

‘They don’t care who planted it. Landmines know no friends. In 2004 we had a worker who was badly burnt and his legs broken when a logging truck was blown up by a landmine.’ Law Gwa says many patients make the long journey from Burma to Mae Sot for treatment.

‘When I ask why don’t you go to hospitals in Mong La Myen, Moe Ta Mah or Pa-An they say “we can’t afford to pay”. Feeding yourself in Burma is hard, finding money to pay a hospital is impossible for most people.’

Not all the cases are serious but because of a lack of basic health care in Burma even a simple dog bite can become life threatening. Daw Saw Yi, 55, is getting her ulcerated leg treated. ‘I was bitten by a dog, but I couldn’t get help in Myawaddy.’ Her husband, U Ba Ngan has come to the Clinic with her but he is scared.

‘The Burmese army took away my farm. They said the land belonged to them. Who can I tell, they are the law.’ Law Gwa says many Burmese migrant workers rely on the Clinic to help them when they get sick or have an accident. Saw Ang Ling from Kaw Ri village in Karen State was working with his wife in Chonburi when he was caught in a cotton turning machine. He was taken to hospital and then to the Clinic. He had to have his right leg amputated. Law Gwa says many children are the victims of burns or scalds.

‘We saw 75 burn cases last year - the majority were children under five. Motor vehicle accidents are also increasing as is domestic violence.’

The most recent report indicates the caseload has increased by 51 percent. And if the situation in Burma does not improve it’s going to get busier.
Border Clinic delivers for mothers

Mae Tao Clinic is busy. A constant stream of Burmese people flow in and out, they cry, cough and grimace with pain. Doctors and nurses talk, touch, examine and reassure people seeking treatment.

Sophia is a nurse in Reproductive Health (RH). She is 27, and has been working in the Clinic for eight years. ‘My duty is to look after pregnant women, help them give birth and educate them about health issues. After women deliver their babies they look after them until they’re one month old. If after one month they are ill we refer them to our In Patient Department (IPD).’

One of the many patients thankful for the service offered at the Clinic is Ma Kin Zar Win (not real name). Ma Kin Zar Win, 29, brought her nephew who had low blood pressure. She said he was unable to study and says she took him to Myawaddy Hospital for treatment but it didn’t help.

‘It was expensive. The doctor wanted a 1,000 kyat and the care was not good.’

Finding a 1,000 kyat in Burma is difficult. Wages are low and work is hard to find.

Friends told Ma Kin Zar Win to go to Mae Tao Clinic.

Ma Kin Zar Win took their advice and is impressed by the health care offered by the Clinic. “Nurse Pure Nay Way told me that some patients are asked to stay in the Clinic until their disease is cured or to rest after they give birth.”

Ma Kin Zar Win says. ‘When I gave birth to my two children I was alone.’

Stories like Ma Kin Zar Win’s are common at the Clinic.

A Karen villager describes how her seven-year-old nephew died.

“He should not have died, but our home to Mae Tao Clinic is so far, he died without help,” she said her eyes full of tears.

‘He was sick for only three days, but it was already too late, they couldn’t do anything.’

Clinic staff witness death, but they also help bring life into the world. Nurse Sophia says in 2004, the Clinic cared for 3337 pregnant women and 1602 babies were born. The rest of the women had their babies at home or at another location. Out of the 1602 babies born at the Clinic, 1,592 are alive and 27 died during birth.

Ma Than is one of the women satisfied with treatment given by Clinic staff. ‘When I was pregnant, the nurse gave me medicine to help with my pregnancy. I had injections at three, four and nine months. The nurse also organized a birth certificate. This proves when and where my baby was born.’

‘Last year we treated 580 women who had illegal abortions and had serious health problems as a result. We also had 121 women who mis-carriaged.’

The Reproductive Health unit also educated women about HIV risks and gave family planning help to 7534 women.

Inside the ward a baby cries, a child laughs and a tired nurse takes a break before the next baby is due.
Burmese army and DKBA soldiers attacked and destroyed a health clinic at Hti Per village in Karen State. Villagers escaped by hiding in the jungle. The soldiers from Burmese army Light Infantry Brigade 205 and DKBA 999 and 555 smashed medical equipment and the villagers rice stock.

A officer from the Karen National Liberation Army, Captain Gu Thaw said the clinic was the target.

‘We managed to warn the villagers but were unable to save the clinic. It was the only health care for the villagers, now they have a four or five-day walk to get medical help. They broke all the equipment, it will be very difficult to replace.’

Captain Gu Thaw says the ceasefire is hard to make sense of.

‘If we are attacked we have no choice but to defend ourselves, if we don’t they will go further and force more villagers from their homes. This latest attack is just one of many we have had to face in recent months.’

**Army target's clinic**

**Taungoo District**

1 May 2005: Soldiers from Burmese army Light Infantry Brigade (LIB) 39, led by Soe Win, demanded a person from each household in Thout-ye-kee, Moe-kee, Ler-kha-plo, Mae-yaw-po-lee Mar-de-po-lee and Keh-chaung village to clean bushes and weeds around the bases of electrical pylons.

May 2005: Troops of SPDC IB 48, shot up Kwee-soe village injuring villagers from Bu-lo-klow village and Kwee-pna village and Saw Eh Htoo had gone missing until the time of this report.

8 May 2005: Over 400 soldiers from Burmese army LID 66 arrived at Klaw-mee-doe village. They ordered Hu-mu-doe and Keh-doe village heads not to allow their villagers to stay in farm huts. Villagers were ordered to stay in the village and banned from gathering vegetables outside.

8 May 2005: Four trucks full of Burmese army soldiers arrived at Nyaung-ywet village and Wah-thoe village. These troops destroyed the villagers’ farmlands to prevent them from growing crops.

12 May 2005: Burmese army LID 66 and LIB 108, based at Paw-mu-khee went into Haw-poe-loe village and arrested villagers without reason. The villagers were Saw Achoe from ...continues page 9
Trained to rob, rape and burn!

Paw-mu-khee, Ma U Pet aged 65 from Mwee-loe village and Aung Soe Moe’s mother aged 55. Troops stole rice stores, money and farm animals.


16 May 2005: Bo Myint Win of Burmese army LIB 75 based at Klaw-mee-doe camp, ordered each Klaw-mee-doe household to cut 10 poles of bamboo. On the same day of Bo Khiaing Soe of LIB 599, ordered Ka-zer-doh village head to send a list of all families in Ka-zer-doh village to Kwee-lay army camp.

Burmese army strikes Karen gold!

A Free Burma Ranger’s relief team documented and photographed a gold mine under the control of the Burma Army in Shwegyin area Bago Division. The mine is located north of the town of Shwygyin and west of the Shwygyin River.

The Rangers said the Burmese army receives payment from the gold mine operators.

‘By running military offensives in the area they have expanded mining operations into lands traditionally held by the Karen people. Not only does the Burma Army profit from these mines and rob the Karen people, the mines wreck the environment.’

Gold mining along the Shweygyin River and its tributaries has increased in recent years after attacks orchestrated by the Rangoon regime gave them control of the Shweygin River area.

‘Private companies operating under license of the regime have placed as many as 30 hydraulic mining machines on the Shweygyn River. Each mine produces an average of 1.5 kilograms of gold a month and each operation pays 500,000 kyat a month per machine to the Burma Army Southern Commander, General Ko Ko.’

The Rangers say the Burmese army also plan to mine east of Shweygin along Nyaunglebin and Papun District borders. ‘Karen people believe that one of the motivations behind continuing army attacks and operations is to secure and expand gold mining in their areas.’
Karen children displaced by Burmese army have no security

In spite of a ceasefire agreement between the Karen National Union and the Burmese regime, soldiers continue to attack and abuse villagers in Karen State. A Karen medical relief team spoke to Inside News about the Burma army attacks.

Free Burma Rangers recorded attacks and human rights violations in three Townships, Mone, Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee in Nyaunglebin District. ‘Security is a big concern for civilians in this district. A Karen man told one of our relief team members: “Most of all we need security, we need medical care and educational help”.’

During March, the Burmese army increased their troop numbers in Mone Township. ‘Light Infantry Brigades 11 and 116 reinforced the Burmese army soldiers already stationed there. They have since increased their patrols and attacks.’

Burmese army soldiers from Ka La Wah Lu camp attacked KNLA troops in the area. On the 4 April, 2005, villagers from Ler Kla Village fled fighting in their area. There is now more than 100 displaced villagers.’

Attacking villagers was not enough for the Burmese army officers they also demanded money. The list of crimes include:

- **Burma Army LIB 599 Deputy Battalion Commander Ya Naing Soe** extorted 60,000 Kyat from villagers selling buffaloes and cows.
- **2 April**, Battalion LIB 111 opened fire on a group of villagers on their way to collect food. The villagers fled but one man, Saw Day Day, was shot and wounded by troops.
- **8 April**, soldiers from LIB 590 and led by Company Commander Tin Maung Htun entered Saw Thaw Gyi’s logging hut in Bo Dae Kyaung (a logging area in Mone Township) and stole 30,000 Kyat. The soldiers burned down the logging hut and all of the materials inside including another 20,000 Kyat.
- **12 April**, Burma Army LIB 599 ordered villagers (one person
Villagers resist attacks

from each family in 4 sections of a village) to build a canal in the Mone Township area.

• 19 April, Burma Army LIB 264 led by Kyaw Nay Cha Oo demanded 30 ox carts from Pa Ta Lah Village Tract so the BA troops could move their supplies to their camp. The villagers were forced to bring the carts to Auk Chay Goe for the troops.

• 20 April, Burma Army (BA) Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 111 troops from Ga Baw Tu Camp fought with Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers three times.

• 22 April, the Burma Army extended their operations, attacking villagers at Kwee Lah Village Tract, Ler Doh Township. The villagers who fled are now in hiding.

• Late April, over 100 villagers fled from Kwee Lah village and are still in hiding. This area is a free fire zone.

• Late April, over 100 villagers fled from Kwee Lah village and are still in hiding. This area is a free fire zone.

• 24 April 2005, Burma Army LIB 264 entered Baw Ko village and demanded 3,000 Kyat and one sack of rice from each rice mill in the village. They also demanded five ox carts from the villagers to carry logs.

• Burmese army soldiers from Mu Theh (Ka Baw Jo) camp attacked KNLA security forces in the vicinity of Hsaw Ka Der. The army built a new camp at Ma La Daw using forced labor. This camp is now an operational base from which the army launches patrols.

If you want to learn more about the situation in Karen State visit: www.khrg.org

Photo: FBR
Traveling in Karen State is dangerous. Deep jungle, landmines and fighting between the Burmese army and the Karen Army makes it so. Saw Hti Gay, 26, has worked as a reporter for the Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) for three years and has made many trips into his beloved Kawthoolei.

In May this year he visited: Pa-An district, Myawaddy and Hlaing Bwe township. On the way he had to avoid Burmese patrols, climb mountains and cross flood-swollen rivers. Saw Hti Gay says.

‘In Kawkareik area it was dangerous, we had to be careful. Burmese and DKBA soldiers were everywhere.’

Saw Hti Gay mission was to document the economic, health and education situation under the informal ceasefire agreement between the Karen and Burmese armies.

‘Villagers said there is less fighting but the Burmese military regime still force them off their land. They are ordered to work for no pay and if they refuse they have to pay a fine of 2,000 kyat a day.’

Saw Hti Gay found paid work was hard to find. Villagers had no income but still had to buy food and other necessities to live.

‘Villagers lucky enough to practice animal husbandry had chickens, pigs and buffalo they could sell to buy salt and fish paste but even that is not enough. The army extorted what little money they had for payment of fines.’

Saw Hti Gay said it is very difficult for people to support themselves and their families. ‘They don’t have enough food; sometimes they eat only rice, salt and chilli. There is no medicine or clinics for the villagers to get health care.’

In Kawkareik area if they have serious health problems they have to travel to Thailand

‘Villagers use the military hospital or go to the mobile health clinic. If they go to the mobile health clinic they are punished by the Burmese soldiers.’

Saw Hti Gay was surprised to see how many villagers and children suffering from asthma.

‘They couldn’t breathe, there’s no medicine available in Burma to treat the wheezing.’

Hti Gay said most of the schools in the districts only went as far as primary level. ‘Children who have finished Grade 4 have to leave their village to continue their studies in town or in a border camp. Many teachers had not studied beyond 10th Grade. There is no salary for teachers. Getting paid depends on the economic situation of the villagers, but teachers will sacrifice their wages if it helps their people. Hti Gay said schools have no reading books for students.

‘Instead of learning for three hours, kids study only one hour and the other two hours are spent copying the teacher’s book because there are no text books.’

Schools are built by donations from outside organizations but the funds were insufficient.

‘In mix administration areas they get some books and pencils from the Karen Education Department, but it is not enough.’

Hti Gay said on the trip he saw five landmine victims and wounded survivors of a DKBA assault by unit 555.

‘They attacked 20 cattle dealers. Some of their animals were shot. The DKBA have no income so they have become bandits.’

photo: pthornton
Mahn Sha spells out KNU mine policy

KNU general secretary, Pado Mahn Sha La Phan hit out at criticisms that Karens use landmines in the same way as the Burmese regime.

'If we could solve our conflict by political means there would be no need for landmines or guns.' Mahn Sha said the KNU have a six-point landmine policy.

1) We use landmines to defend our people, our land and our base camps. 2) Our landmines are small, handmade plastic pipe or bamboo, they only have a six-month lifespan. 3) If the enemy attack we use, when they retreat we remove them. 4) If we put landmines in, we inform villagers where they are. 5) Our landmines are small, they are designed to wound, slow the enemy and to delay their troop movements. 6) We don't want to use mines, but because of our situation - our army is small - we use with restriction.'

Mahn Sha said if the Burmese army stopped their attacks the KNU would not use mines.

'If they stopped killing our people we wouldn't need to defend ourselves, within one year we could remove all Karen landmines.'

Mahn Sha said it is important the international community continues to pressure the regime to stop using landmines.

'They have to keep it in perspective, the Karen use of mines is vastly different than that of the Burmese military. They target civilians, we don't, our people can't go back to their villages because of Burmese mines. The Burmese have factories producing hundreds of thousands of mines.'

Mahn Sha said if the ceasefire is genuine then peace is possible, but he warned.

'We Karen have a saying, "when we make a door we need to make sure we use good wood. If we use bad wood we will have no security". This applies to any ceasefire talks, we won't settle for anything less.'

Mahn Sha said the Karen are committed to a genuine peace.

'Karen soldiers are the bravest. They deserve peace. Karen people have to keep fighting for our freedom, but I believe we will be successful.'
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Naw Dah, 56, was born in Pa Heik village in Mu Traw District. She has two brothers and two sisters and she is the youngest. Her parents were farmers. She studied in Taungoo district passing 10th standard. She continued her studies and trained to become a medic. At this time the Burmese army were killing many of her people and she wanted to help. She started working in the community in 1967. She was shot in the leg by Burmese soldiers and today, still carries a limp as a reminder. When she was 23 she got married to a Karen soldier. They lived in Manerplaw, and had four children. Naw Dah joined the Karen Women Organisation (KWO). After 20 years of marriage she divorced her husband. She has since remarried.

‘We are from different religions, he’s Buddhist and I’m Christian but it’s not something we argue about. We need to be tolerant of each other.’

They have now lived in Thay Ka Ya for 10 years.

‘It’s safe and a good place to live. It feels like a real village. I have many friends. Here we are all poor and there’s no one richer than the next. We grow rice and can find food in the jungle. It’s close to the Burmese army, but the KNLA protects us. The ceasefire has not made much difference. The Burmese army abused villagers before and they still do the same now.’

Naw Dah is sad Burma is without democracy.

‘We need freedom, we need peace and we need tolerance. We want our own land, our culture and our home. Tell the world this is what we want.’

All we need is peace!