"We fully subscribe to the human rights norms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here, I wish to underscore that the government does not condone any violations of human rights, and the type of democracy we envision will guarantee the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly the rights to basic human needs such as clothing, food and shelter." Burma's Foreign Minister Win Aung in his first speech before the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 1999.
KYAUK KYI TOWNSHIP: MOUNTAINS AND PLAINS APART

The following information outlines the current conditions in Kyauk Kyi Township, Pegu Division. It is extracted from an extensive report on the region by Saw Kweklok, a BI field worker and life-long resident of the area. This area is also known as Mone Township (see "Economics and Development in Mone Township," BI, May 1999).

Mountains and plains
The population in this area is divided between mountain and plains dwellers. Mountain dwelling people are all Karens. The greatest obstacle they face is military activities. As this area is still under Karen National Union (KNU) administration, Burma army operational policy in the mountains treats the entire population as the enemy and anyone can be shot on sight ["free fire zone"]. Whenever the Burma army enters an area, the people immediately flee and hide. There is absolutely no way that villagers dare to come face to face with Burma army troops. The army destroys and burns whatever things the villagers leave behind, whether houses, huts, animals, food or possessions. The mountain people are hillside farmers. After they harvest a crop, they prepare some place to hide it where it will be secure.

Land on the plains is good for agriculture, so people grow paddy, betel palms and many other crops. Landless people do subsistence labor. On the plains there are Karens, Shans, Burmans and Burmese Indians. These villages are under government administration, so soldiers can move easily from one place to the next. When they enter a village, they threaten people that if rebel groups attack them in the area then they will force the villagers to relocate.

Military operations
Since mid-1998, the army has intensified operations in both the plains and mountain regions. The government is targeting these areas for military operations because:

- They are remote and difficult to contact from the outside.
- They are part of a wide, lowly populated region, so it is easy to increase the number of soldiers.
- They want to cut trade and relations between plains and mountain dwellers.

In the mountains they have established camps for active columns which rotate every six months. These units move through villages in the mountain areas to prevent villagers from earning their livelihoods. They are joined by units from strategic columns that come both to wipe out armed opposition and also to undermine the livelihood of the people. The locally stationed units patrol for two or three days at a time and then return to their stations. The strategic units mobilize for months, and if out of supplies return to their stations where they rest and draw more rations before recommencing their activities.

On the plains they set up camps at vital locations and inspect passers-by. These units include permanent strategic columns that patrol villages to make it difficult for rebels to have contact with people on the plains. If the Burma army wants to penetrate into the mountain regions they request reinforcements from units in urban areas before doing so. They have increased the number of troops stationed in these areas, placing more restrictions on villagers' livelihoods and causing more villagers to depart for elsewhere. In the mountains they destroy villages and thereby force people to move. On the plains they place restrictions on the capacity of villagers to earn enough from their work, which means they don't have the time to become politically active.

Food
Due to the destruction of villages, possessions, food and paddy by expanding numbers of government troops this year, villagers have had to face food shortages. They not only destroy the possessions and food, but also the fields and plantations of villagers. In some areas villagers simply don't dare plant. After they have cleared fields and are preparing the land, soldiers interrupt them. They flee and for the remainder of the year face food shortages. Ordinarily, if mountain dwellers had insufficient food then they went to get rice from the plains. But due to increased military surveillance and changes in the national economic conditions, there have been annual price rises. Mountain villagers' problems pile up, one on top of the next. An accelerating inflation rate is one thing that seriously hurts them.

In 1999 many plains villages have had to relocate, so this has also affected regional trade and caused problems for both the lowlanders and the highlanders. In the plains, villagers are afraid to tend their lands as soldiers arbitrarily arrest, threaten and execute people. Therefore, arable land getting worked by villagers has diminished, and many villagers have had to flee the area. This situation began in the past, and continues to the present. This year a new unit entered the area and intimidated villagers so much that food problems have further accelerated as lowlanders and highlanders have been entirely unable and unwilling to make contact with one another.

Sathonelone
In October 1998, a previously unknown government allied army unit entered Kyauk Kyi Township. This unit is not the same as the others. The soldiers in this unit travel in small groups of five to ten personnel. They don't wear army uniforms. They carry the same kinds of weapons as the rebels, unlike the
Burma army. They don't have army camps, but each one moves around the areas it is designated to. They only operate on the plains. They don't carry their own food. Whenever they come into a village, the people there must feed them. This group was formed through the selection of soldiers in units active through the region. There are also a few DKBA (Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army) in their ranks, and a number of others who have "returned to the legal fold." They aren't under local strategic command control. As far as we are aware, they get orders from division and central command. The name of this type of unit is Sathonelone ("3 Sa's"), Sit Sone-hauk Sit-hsay-yay, (which translates approximately as "Military Investigators' Surveillance.")

Sathonelone units act on information that they have received, but they don't interrogate. If you have had anything to do with the rebellion, there is no way you will live to tell the tale. They won't tolerate anything to do with the insurgency. They tell villagers, "if you want to live, under no circumstances have anything to do with the rebels." They have executed at least 20 people in the plains whom they didn't trust. Due to their arbitrary executions, villagers are terrified of them and are thus unwilling to go and do their work, causing big interruptions to their livelihoods. Last season there was a drought, so between the poor weather conditions and Sathonelone interference, villagers were not able to collect sufficient paddy. Therefore, many have had to face food shortages even to the point of starvation.

**Village relocations**

In the middle of 1999, 7 villages in the area were relocated: Kawnee, Aungchanthar; Meetaingtaw; Mezalikon; Kyaungsu, Meyaung U and Myaung U-New Section. Kawnee was relocated by Sathonelone. The other villages had a total population of about 700 people. The other villages had a total population of about 700 people. The other villages were in good agricultural lands. The government relocated these villages because:

- They were east of the main Mone-Kyaung Kyai road and close to forested area so it was easy for rebels to have contact with the villages.
- They want to sever links between mountain and plains villages.
- They will expand the frontline in these areas in an effort to wipe out the rebels.
- They aim to locate villagers at a site securely under their authority where they can make whatever demands they like.
- They want to distance the villagers from their work sites, creating conditions of food scarcity among them and causing their old residences, fields to fall into disrepair and disuse.
- The military government troops can extort cash:
  - If the villagers really don't want to move and they can pay enough money to not be relocated, the soldiers can make money via these means.

**MILITARIZATION, TAXATION, EXTORTION**

The following register of taxation upon "Kyaing" village, Kyaung Kyai Township, gives an example of the pressure villages in remote rural areas face to fulfill arbitrary demands for cash and other compensation from the military. Saw Kwekloh recorded this material across a four-month period, from the second week of October 1998 to the first week of February 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Unit/Authority</th>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 October</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Cooking oil to the value of 3000 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 October</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Food to the value of 2000 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>Items to the value of 3600 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 October</td>
<td>IB 73</td>
<td>Cmdr. Khin Zaw</td>
<td>27 chickens, one cat and 800 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 October</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>950 kyat for curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>6000 kyat &quot;taxation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 November</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>500 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 November</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>860 kyat for curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 November</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>2 baskets of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 November</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>Items to the value of 2800 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 November</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Battalion Cmdr.</td>
<td>Items to the value of 350 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 November</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>1500 kyat &quot;donation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 November</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>10,000 kyat for road works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 November</td>
<td>IB 73</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2020 kyat &quot;taxation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>Township Council</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1000 kyat for the sports fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 December</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column 1 Cmdr.</td>
<td>One and a half baskets of rice and 750 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 December</td>
<td>IB 73</td>
<td>Column 2 Cmdr.</td>
<td>20 chickens, and rice to the value of 4480 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 December</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>1800 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 January</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>Betel nut to the value of 8000 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 January</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>1600 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 January</td>
<td>For &quot;returnees to the legal fold&quot;</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr. Kyai Tui</td>
<td>Three quarters of a basket of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 January</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>Betel nut to the value of 2000 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 January</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column Cmdr.</td>
<td>1350 kyat for curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 January</td>
<td>IB 39</td>
<td>Column 1 Cmdr.</td>
<td>Items to the value of 6250 kyat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>IB 35</td>
<td>Camp Cmdr.</td>
<td>10,000 kyat &quot;taxation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 February</td>
<td>Township Council</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>12,500 kyat for Union Day celebrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this four month period the total amount lost in miscellaneous items and cash was 79,870 kyat, 5 baskets of rice, 47 chickens and one cat.
WHERE RIGHTS CONVERGE: HUMAN SECURITY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

Queen Saw spake in his ear “Consider the state of the realm. Thou hast no folk nor people, no host of countrymen and countrywomen around thee. They fear thy dominion; for thou, O king Alaun, art a hard master. Bore not thy country’s belly. Abase not thy country’s forehead. Fell not thy country’s banner. Pluck not out thy country’s eye. Break not thy country’s task. Sully not thy country’s face. Cut not thy country’s feet and hands!—But thou wouldst not hearken to my words; and now it is hard indeed for the realm and villages to prosper!” Then said the king again, “What mearest thou?”

From The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma (Translation by Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce, 1967)

With so many pressing issues on Burma’s human rights agenda why was the People’s Tribunal* formed to study food scarcity and militarization? Arbitrary arrests, executions, disregard for the 1990 election, and the existence of political prisoners are all human rights problems. Nevertheless, food scarcity and militarization are national trends which describe the experiences of ordinary Burmese from every race, religion, and political belief in each corner of the country. More importantly however, studying these two issues provides an important model for comprehending human rights and human security beyond the boundaries which usually delineate our understanding.

There are many ways to describe the complex problems facing people in rural Burma. The totality of suffering found throughout this heavily militarized and sometimes desperate landscape has been described in terms of democracy, authoritarian rule, cultural conflict and even poverty. Another way to capture the entire picture is to speak in terms of human security, and those conditions which preclude or threaten it. One possible advantage of this perspective is that it helps to merge the two major categories of human rights, which are often estranged from each other. Human security encompasses civil and economic rights, freedoms which are usually delineated in terms of democracy, authoritarian rule, cultural conflict and even poverty. Another way to capture the entire picture is to speak in terms of human security, and those conditions which preclude or threaten it. One possible advantage of this perspective is that it helps to merge the two major categories of human rights, which are often estranged from each other. Human security encompasses civil and economic rights, freedoms which are normally associated with terms like “democracy.” It also deals with economic, social and cultural rights, the sometimes forgotten category of human rights which until recently has found little articulation in the international human rights movement. Fifty years after the formal establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is a growing realization that the false division between civil and economic rights leads neither to true democracy nor a better standard of living. Just as urban-led political reform movements around the world have often failed to address the basic rights of the poor, poverty eradication strategies which fail to address injustice in the structures and policies of state ultimately protect or even reinforce those oppressive structures.

Therefore, the Tribunal has chosen two issues which integrate basic human needs for food, land, livelihood, and control of natural resources with those political causes which impede their realization: military rule, lack of popular participation and mis-allocation of the national budget. Bringing the causes and effects together this way not only helps to depict the present situation, but points out those challenging issues critical to re-building Burma as a democratic society in the future. These include: land reform, community control over local resources, and decentralization of bureaucracy.

Food is the most basic economic right. Without food there is no life; and from this truism comes a human rights tenet: without sufficient food, people cannot attain the health, happiness and dignity which are their birthright. Food is universal, transcending class, race and creed. Similarly, freedom from hunger is a universal wish native to human experience. The Tribunal notes that this right is not achieved by apportioning “a morsel of food for every hungry mouth,” but by guaranteeing food security, a cornerstone of human life which ensures health and vitality for all. By choosing to investigate the right to food, the Tribunal affirms this universality, and argues that basic economic rights should supersede politics, underscoring food as a right permitting no compromise and no derogation.

Emphasizing food also clarifies the difference between campaigning for human rights and campaigning for political change, two related but separate agenda. One easily loses this distinction because Burma’s odious government seems to embody everything a state should not be. Nevertheless, by putting all blame on the current government we mix fact with fiction. While government responsibility in violating human rights is fact, the inference that change in government will undo systemic human rights abuse is fiction. Burma’s military government has incorporated denial of food into the policies, structure and routine operations of state. Ethnic conflict is entrenched in cultural life. Corruption and exploitation are social realities.

The Tribunal was made possible by a team of grassroots researchers who spent two years documenting the nature of food scarcity and militarization according to the poorest segments of Burmese society: small farmers, landless workers, itinerant workers, ethnic minorities displaced by war, and refugees. Their efforts embodied one of the most important features of democratization, popular participation starting at the grassroots level. Two directives guided the researchers’ work: approach the right to food as a people’s issue, and build solidarity with informants.

*From The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma (Translation by Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce, 1967)

Man at winnowing rice at relocation site, Pegu Division (BI 1997)

Continued on page 5
The military government began these operations long ago, but the amount of suffering inflicted upon the population remained unknown for a long time for want of systematic information collection. Even now, our information under-estimates the severity of conditions, as there are many events taking place that we may not be aware of or unable to get full details about. The government's overall plan is to:

- Wipe out the rebels.
- Obliterate ethnic minority identity.
- Drag villagers into lives of poverty.

The October edition of Burma Issues will contain excerpts from the Tribunal report.

BL Staff

* The People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma. The Tribunal will release a report of its findings on 15 October 1999. Information on the People's Tribunal can be found at: www.hrschool.org/tribunal

Overview

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Saw Kwekloh

In the past, the people on the plains under military rule suffered before those in the mountains. But more recently the military has cut trade, mobilized increasingly large numbers of troops to depopulate mountain areas and expanded its land holdings and territory. Mountain dwellers feel that they cannot be separated from their lands. They know that if they move away, they will have to go far, and they will not be happy if they have to stay in another land, be it Thailand or central Burma. They believe that they can hide from passing Burma army columns in the jungle. Wherever they must flee to, they cooperate however they can.
Whenever people return to their villages after fleeing, they must clear the mines with a knife. The father leads the way and the children follow in his footsteps. BI fieldworker from Mergui Tavoy area.

The mountainous frontier areas of Burma have seen persistent armed resistance. This ongoing conflict has had a significant impact on how people live in these areas. It also affects the way people see themselves and how they find solutions to their problems. As repression rises, so the perceived options open to the oppressed seem increasingly limited.

The following excerpts are from a round table of five Burma Issues' friends on military and social conditions in Karen National Union (KNU) Mergui-Tavoy District (Tennasserim Division). Four of the five discussion participants were KNU soldiers in Mergui-Tavoy and three of them are residents of the area. Large-scale offensives by the Burma army in 1997 and continued military activity have led to mass population displacement and hardships for people remaining in the "free fire zones."

Mergui-Tavoy has long contained a variety of insurgent armies and ongoing conflict has led to widespread militarization in the region. Civilians identify the military as dominant in all parts of their lives, a social and cultural reality with ramifications beyond the proliferation of armed groups. Many people see no viable alternatives to military rule other than fighting or fleeing.

Motivations for joining insurgent armies are complex and varied. For those who grow up in civil war zones, becoming a soldier may appear for some to be the first and most obvious option available to act against oppression that is a daily part of life. Others join the military after trying to survive as a civilian in the war zones for many years. Other people have no choice about joining the military as forced conscription is a reality of life in conflict areas. Living in "free-fire zones" militarily affects even the very young.

"I was 12 years old when I became a soldier. I joined to fight the oppression of the Burma army. Sometimes my father had to go as a porter, to carry ammunition. Then he was accused of working with the KNU. They put him in jail. For this reason I decided to become a soldier. I was very young, and this was the only option I saw. Two years after my father was released from prison, he died. If you stay in KNU controlled areas, then they accuse you of being in the KNU, they beat you, and put you in prison, or kill you. So people automatically become soldiers. I knew my father did nothing wrong."

However, it isn't just people from the middle of the civil war zones who become soldiers. All of Burma experiences the effects of militarization and people outside of the "free-fire zones" have also been drawn into the military conflict.

"For me it was very clear. I wanted to be a soldier like my father - to become an officer in the Burma army. I always thought that by the age of nineteen, I would try to join the Defense Academy Service. My township [in Pegu Division] was controlled by the Burma army, and we got no news about the Karen State or resistance. There were no articles or statements about the revolution. But when I saw the Burma army kill people in the 1988 uprising, my ideas changed. I thought 'it's better to become a rebel.' I heard about the revolution. Many in my township left to go and fight. If not for the uprising in 1988, I would be in the Burma army. I was 16 years old when I joined the rebellion."

Conditions in the Army

One twenty-two year old ex-soldier reported that living conditions for some of the youngest soldiers differed somewhat from that of other recruits.

"Because I was so young when I joined the army, the leader sent me to school. The school was supported by the KNU. There were 30 students. We were called 'student soldiers.' In the rainy season we had to go to school, and in the dry season we had to go back to camp, attend military training and sometimes go to the front line to fight. (The dry season is the period when the Burma army typically launches offensives.) Our first aim was to learn how to use our weapons and fight Burma army soldiers. At first I didn't really want to study but my leader and the teachers encouraged me. They said that education was important, so over time I changed my mind.

"When I was in school most of the leaders and teachers said that the real enemy was not the Burma army troops, but that we were fighting Burman chauvinism. Most of the teachers were Karen, but had lived and been educated in Burma."

He reflected on this teaching many years later

"When I was about 21 years old, I captured 4 Burman people who were working on the Tavoy to Kanchanaburi road. There was a doctor, an engineer, a surveyor and a guide. They were building the road, and had come from Rangoon. The area was a "free fire zone". At first I started to shoot. Then I shouted out, 'if you are good guys, then surrender.' And so they surrendered. At that
time I hated Burmans. When I captured them, I changed my mind. They were human beings. I did nothing wrong. I did not kill them, but I took them to the Thai border and released them."

All of the discussion participants reported the difficulties they experienced in the army.

"Life in the army was generally hard. There were many difficulties such as not having much food, and sleeping in the rain."

"Sometimes we were so poor in the army that we even had to cook dog. If our camp was close to a road and a dog had been run over, we would cook it. Most people don't eat cat or dog, but we had to eat it. Army training was very hard. When we sat down to eat lunch, sometimes there was only salt for our rice. What else could we do? We needed protein...."

"But there were also some good things about the army. As soldiers we grew to really understand each other. We were comrades and friends. If we fought at the front line together, and someone got hurt, you would have to pull them out. We had unity, and trust. We slept together, ate together, and were a kind of family. Some people who were in the army had been in trouble before joining. They had been guilty of stealing and fighting, and someone got hurt, you would have to pull them out. We had unity, and trust. We slept together, ate together, and were a kind of family. Some people who were in the army had been in trouble before joining. They had been guilty of stealing and fighting, and then when they joined their behavior changed for the better. They were given a sense of discipline."

"Another good thing was we were able to help portsers who had fled from the Burma army. We gave them food, medicine, and directions where to go."

"Today the situation in the rebel army is just getting worse. As more and more people are killed, the age of people becoming soldiers gets younger and younger. Now they are 12 to 15 years old. Most villagers want to fight back against the oppression, but they have no ammunition. They see no option but to fight or die."

"Most people see the KNU as the only organized resistance to the Burma army."

**Living Conditions**

The roundtable participants also identified difficulties in the lives of civilians living in the area.

"Life is very hard in the mountains. There is no food, there is no security, and there is no way for people to plan for the future. This year bad weather has meant that people have even less food. In the dry season [December to March] there was rain which meant that people could not properly clear the land to prepare for planting. They couldn't burn the trees that were cut down because they were wet. And in the rainy time there was no rain, which meant that what had been planted suffered."

"The Burma army thinks that the villagers in this area are supporting the KNU, and that these farms are feeding them. Therefore Burma army soldiers force all the villagers into one place, and so they have to leave their gardens. They seek to relocate all villagers into one central area. At times, villagers will flee into the jungle when the Burma army arrives, returning later when they leave."

"Most villagers are people who have been forced to flee from other locations, and their lives are like refugees. They receive food and medical support from outside sources, sent through the leaders, and seem unable to organize things for themselves. They do sudden farming, but due to the poor weather conditions and climate they get very poor yields. There are some small house-front shops but prices are high and villagers can afford to buy little."

"Most people when we asked them what problems they had, only spoke of our enemies - the Burma army soldiers. They felt that if the army troops kept away, people would be able to produce enough food for themselves."

"They have very few plans for the future. At the moment they simply rely on their leaders for direction, or to make decisions. Either that or they flee to Thailand. This last point is one reason why some people do not produce rice. They think that if our enemy attacks, then they can leave to Thailand where they can get rice. They know that there are many NGOs in Thailand who will help them there."

**Mines**

An issue that has significantly affected the ability of the local people to feed themselves, and will continue to make it difficult for people to lead normal lives in the future, is the continuing placement of landmines.

"Before, if the villagers could not produce enough rice to live, they would go into the forest and hunt monkeys or wild pig. They would then sell these at the Thailand border, and with the money buy salt, rice and fish paste. But now the increase number of land mines has prevented people from going into the forests to hunt. It is very difficult."

"If the Burma army decides that the KNU is active in an area they declare it a 'free fire zone.' Throughout such zones they can set up mines, and they don’t care if there are villages there or not."

"So when villagers do return to their fields they often have to clean the area of mines. The Burma army lay these mines to scare people from tending their fields. People are obviously scared of the mines. Such fear is contributing to many farmers either ceasing to farm, and maybe even leaving for Thailand."

The civil war leaves few alternatives for people in the area. For most Mergui-Tavoy residents, survival means having to choose between joining insurgencies or fleeing, either to more remote parts of the jungle or to refugee camps in Thailand.

"I don’t want to be a refugee, I don’t want to be an IDP [Internally Displaced Person], I just want to be a free man. If you have a gun, then you can protect yourself. No one can touch you. They cannot make decisions for you. But in a refugee camp you are an animal in a cage. In a camp life is hard for a man who can think. There is no dignity."

"For young men and women, the camps are not a good place to live. There is no adequate education and no medical care for the younger children."

"Living in camps is better than living in a war zone, but if there were no war or human rights violations, then people would leave the camps and go back."

***Endnotes: "Militarization and..."***

1. An elite specially trained unit of the Burma Army.
2. For Information on the Tavoy – Kanchanaburi Road see Burma Issues, April 1999, "Bongti Tavoy: The shortest distance between two poles?"
3. Under the 'Four Cuts' policy villages are relocated and combined into larger centers more easily monitored by the Burma Army.
"Reliable Sources said that MAPT, an agency under the Ministry of Commerce has about 300,000 metric tons of rice stocks in hand for export. Nevertheless, with the decline in world rice trade with soft world rice prices MAPT will have to lower its rice prices lower than other Asian rice exporting countries in order to attract buyers. This is because of Burma's low quality rice compared to other Asian rice exporting countries." *From the September 1999 Global Agriculture Information Network Report of the US Agricultural Attache in Rangoon.*

"A youth asked the [Vice-Chairman], 'Paddy is cultivated twice or thrice in Myanmar. But the price of rice is soaring in Myanmar. Why?' The [Vice-Chairman], with negative views, with the style and voice of a real wise man answered, 'The price of rice is rising because of the way they are working is wrong. Persons in authority of the upper position are military officers. As they are military officers they lay down programmes in military style. Farmers are the most skilful persons in paddy cultivation... Today, there is no organization formed in accord with democracy to gather the masses of farmers to voice for them... ' His advice is ridiculous." *From the New Light Of Myanmar, 6 August 1999.*

"Myanmar is very often portrayed from outside as if vast violations of human rights are taking place, forced labour is rampant, free flow of narcotics exists and economic and social conditions are in chaos. These portrayals are in contradiction to the true situation...

Everyone who visits Myanmar can see the greenness of the country, peace and tranquillity prevailing throughout the nation, people leading their normal daily lives with happiness pleasure, and building their nation with zest and zeal. The people have full knowledge that they are on the right path to peace and prosperity. I would like to invite all of you to come and see yourselves. Seeing is believing!" *Burma's Foreign Minister Win Aung rebutting claims of human rights abuse in his country during his 25 September 1999 address to the United Nations General Assembly.*

"We are ordinary people struggling for our right to live ordinary, secure lives. The struggle for democracy in Burma gets so politicized, but what we are fighting for in the end isn't any particular political idea so much as the principal of good governance; the kind that allows the people freedom and security in the right balance." *Aung San Suu Kyi in an interview in late August 1999.*