

## 6. Deprivation of Livelihood

The economic situation in Burma continues to deteriorate, leading to significant frustration among a people that are continually mistreated by the military dictatorship. The price of many commodities remains high, while inflation continues unabated. The price of basic commodities is so high that even civil servants are finding it difficult to make ends meet.

The usual salary of a normal civil servant such as an engineer, school teacher, or lawyer, is 1,500 kyats per month. However, the SLORC's tax policies leave the people with little if any cash to spare. The following is a list of the typical taxes that civil servants must pay:

|    |                                           |          |
|----|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | monthly charge for volunteer fire watch   | 30 kyats |
| 2. | monthly fee in lieu of portering          | 15       |
| 3. | monthly fee for sentries                  | 20       |
| 4. | monthly reduction for unpaid loans        | 150      |
| 5. | monthly reduction for rice quota          | 200      |
| 6. | monthly reduction for social welfare      | 20       |
| 7. | monthly reduction for civil servant shops | 10       |
| 8. | yearly fee for the water festival         | 50       |
| 9. | monthly fees for electricity              | 200      |

Therefore, at least 700 kyats alone must go to the SLORC. An ordinary family, consisting of three or four children of school age, has little left to make it through the month. One older civil servant said that when he receives his salary at the end of the month, sometimes there is only 9 kyats left after the fees and charges are removed. He said the largest amount he has ever received is 60 kyats. In April 1996, the SLORC began lending money to civil servants, requiring payment within a 20 month period. However, during this time, the rate of inflation on commodity prices has risen sharply and people have found it increasingly difficult to repay the loans.

Street vendors, small shop-keepers, and people who earn money from random jobs are perhaps the most frustrated with SLORC's tax policies. Small shop-keepers must pay 1,500 kyats a month in fees to the municipal department, as well as pay an extra 1,500 kyats in bribes to taxation officers. Other taxes imposed by the SLORC include a TV tax and deep well water tax. Anyone who owns a TV must pay 1,000 kyats a month in fees to SLORC, while people who possess a deep well water pump must pay 1,500 kyats a month.

These kinds of conditions exist throughout Burma, but the people in Burma's

outlying regions must handle not only the onerous tax policies and general economic underdevelopment; they are also at the mercy of SLORC's forced labor policies and the looting performed by SLORC soldiers. The descriptions below demonstrate how severely SLORC's policies have affected the people's livelihood.

### 6.1. Situation in Irrawaddy Division

The SLORC has begun using the resources of this region -- known for its rice cultivation -- to its own benefit, leaving people with little to spare. During 1996, the SLORC instituted a rice quota system in the Irrawaddy Division, under which a portion of each farmer's rice would have to be supplied to the SLORC (which the SLORC apparently then sent to China in exchange for weapons). In May 1996, many rice farmers were arrested because they could not meet the rice quota posted by the military authorities. A number of farmers were detained and sentenced to prison for this supposed "crime" for up to one year with hard labor.

Following the rainy season, all farmers in the Irrawaddy Division were ordered to grow dry-season rice. Farmers who had already planted and begun raising Soya bean crops for the dry season were forced to destroy their crops -- without compensation -- and plant the dry-season rice crop instead. If a farmer was unable to grow this rice crop, the farmer's fields were confiscated. (According to laws established under BSPP and which are still apparently selectively employed by SLORC, the State owns the land, water, and air; therefore the State is legally entitled to confiscate the rice fields of those farmers not meeting their rice production quotas. Thus, whereas previously a farmer could possess about 30 acres of rice fields, now the average is 12 to 15 acres.)

The name of the dry season production is "Theetatye," named for a growing method developed in China. The time frame for this crop production is about three and a half months. As a dry season crop, water must be pumped by machine from the rivers. The average production target for Theetatye rice is 100 baskets of unhusked paddies per acre. Production this year, however, averaged 45 baskets per acre. The reasons for the poor production figures were:

- Insects (which are more prevalent during the dry season)
  - Lack of fertilizer
  - Lack of fuel for pumps and other farm machinery
  - Lack of water pumps.
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In Mawata township, the LORC had agreed to distribute diesel fuel, fertilizer, water pumps, and hoses to the farmers. According to the arrangement, five acres of fields were to be allocated eight gallons of diesel and 75 kgs. of fertilizer per month. Diesel was to be purchased by the farmers at the official price of 28 kyats per gallon. The farmers, however, received only one delivery of seven gallons of diesel at 80 kyats per gallon. As for urea and/or phosphorous fertilizers, the farmers received nothing. On the black market, the price of urea is about 1,750 kyats per 50-kg bag; the cost of phosphorous is 1,200 kyats per 40-kg bag. Across the cultivation period for dry season rice, approximately five bags of each kind of fertilizer is required for a five acre area. Water pumps -- also not provided by the LORC -- must be purchased on the black market where they are expensive.

In addition to the costs that were supposed to be covered by the township LORC, all farmers also incurred the normal cultivation expenses of a growing machine (costing ten baskets of rice per acre) and a pair of oxen and a cart (costing 200 to 300 kyats per day). All of this is in addition to the 3,000 kyats per month that SLORC collects from all farmers in the region as a general fee.

Amidst these difficulties, each farmer was required to supply the SLORC with a quota of five baskets per acre. Given the costs required for cultivation, and the unfavorable conditions of the dry season, many farmers were not able to meet the quota. Many of those who did meet the quota had very little or nothing left over for themselves and their families.

The farmers unable to meet the quota requirements numbered around 15 to 50 per village (there are usually 100 to 400 houses per village). Rice quota stocks were collected in April. In May, action commenced against farmers who failed to meet the requirements of the quota system. These farmers were instructed to bring their own food supplies and were placed under detention in the police jail cells or, when jail cells were full, in school buildings. Once there, the requirements of the quota were again demanded of the detained farmers. Those failing to cooperate continued to be held in detention.

In May 1996, at Wakema town, the local school was filled with detained farmers. Thirty-three farmers were seen, some handcuffed, some tied with rope, all guarded by police, marching down a road to be relocated. This was a demonstration that anyone who failed to give rice would be treated this way. The same thing happened in Myaungmya, Einme, and Pantanaw. In order to meet the quota, many farmers had to sell their assets including homes, paddy fields, and cattle to buy the necessary amount of rice from other areas to fill their quota. The rice was then sold to the Irrawaddy Division LORC. The farmers

who had nothing to sell other than their paddy fields abandoned their homes with their families. Some of the other farmers who were old and feeble committed suicide because they could not escape like the others. Due to the SLORC policies during the last harvest, the population of farmers in the area has decreased and consequently the paddy fields were left uncultivated. In an attempt to solve the problem, the SLORC later released the farmers who had been imprisoned for not providing enough rice. The farmers, however, were required to sign agreements for the fiscal year 1996-97 to supply SLORC with the pre-determined quota of rice from the new harvest plus the amount left unpaid by the farmers.

## 6.2. Situation in Shan State

The people of Shan State, where inflation has been severe, have found it difficult to provide for their families due to the extent of uncompensated forced labor requirements of the SLORC. Since early January 1996, people of Larngkhur in Shan State have been required to split rocks to pave the road to Wan Hart; even civil servants are not spared. Each person must finish seven pits (enough to pave a ten-foot square area) and anyone who is unable to perform the work must pay 300 kyats per unfinished pit.

People must work at the sites until they finish their quotas, even if overnight. Soldiers overseeing work at Wan Wawng Leng village required the villagers to provide them with bicycles and tape-recorders. When the Burmese army has a contract to build a road in this area, it always forces the civilian population to do most of the work without pay, while the officials pocket the money meant for hired laborers' daily wages.

Villagers around Siseng town have had to send two tractor-loads of water to the nearby military base every day. People have to take turns to fetch water to fill the loads. The villagers and the tractor owners get nothing in return.

Meanwhile, the prices of consumer goods in Shan State have reached ridiculous levels:

|                                   |                                         |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1 viss of pork                    | 400 kyats                               |
| 1 viss of small fish              | 480 kyats                               |
| 1 viss of big fish                | 400 kyats                               |
| 1 viss of chicken                 | 400 kyats                               |
| 1 viss of garlic                  | 200 kyats                               |
| 1 small sack of good quality rice | 2,150 kyats (1 viss is roughly 1.6 kg). |

A gallon of gasoline is 370 to 400 kyats on the black-market. Though the price is much cheaper at government-owned pumps, only those who have a written permit can purchase gasoline there, and even they can only get two gallons per car each month. (Source: SHAN)

Such prices must be paid by people who spend much of their time performing uncompensated forced labor. But these prices are nearly unaffordable even on a civil servant, teacher, or nurse’s salary of 1200 to 1500 kyats per month.

6.3 Situation in Chin State

The people of Chin State are the poorest in all of Burma. In this remote region, no local bus service exists and no transportation service is available to get to Central Burma. To make matters worse, the racial, ideological, and religious discrimination practiced by the SLORC have disproportionately affected these people, making an already difficult life even more unbearable.

Most of the Chin people are farmers, but the land in Chin State is not fertile. Though they are hard-working, it is not easy for them to make a living. Consumer prices in this area, though not as high as in Shan State, are still difficult for these very poor people to pay. Consider the following prices:

|                       |           |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| rice, 1 kg.           | 35 kyats  |
| meat, 1 kg.           | 200 kyats |
| cooking oil, 1 bottle | 80 kyats  |
| egg, 1                | 10 kyats  |
| tea, 1 cup            | 15 kyats  |
| sugar, 1 kg.          | 120 kyats |

The lack of purchasing power and consequent malnutrition make the Chin people prone to disease and ill-health.

To make matters worse, SLORC has military outposts throughout Chin State where ethnic fighting is common. Army personnel conscript local people to be porters or to perform other uncompensated forced labor such as building camps or constructing roads. As a result, villagers do not have enough time to work on their own land or otherwise make a living, however meager. Sometimes the conscripted porters are used as mine-sweepers or as the army’s bullet shields. Many civilians have died during their porter service for the army, leaving their children and wives as orphans and widows. The army regularly kills cattle, pigs, fowl, and takes vegetables from fields without paying for them.(Source:CHRO)

### 6.3.1. 1997 Students' Festival in Haka

The All Burma Students' Festival is scheduled to be held in Haka in December 1997. This is the biggest Students' Festival ever held in Chin State. This festival is organized by the SLORC, which has collected 5,000 kyats from each landlord and 2,000 kyats from anyone who is paying rent, not only in Haka town but also in all of Chin State. Each student has had to pay 50 pyas (1/2 kyat) every month since December 1, 1995. For this school year, every student will have to pay 100 kyats more as a contribution to the Festival. At the same time, the people of Haka are being forced to work in order to extend the football ground and to build a stadium and new roads. The people who have their homes along the main road leading to the Festival grounds were ordered to repair and repaint their houses; all the buildings in bad condition had to be removed. Besides forced labor for the Students' Festival, the people of Haka township must also work to repair the Haka-Falam road, the Haka-Matupi road, the Haka-Than Tlang road, and the Haka-Gangaw road. The people are complaining that they have no time to do their own work to support their families. (Source: *CHRO*)

### 6.4. Nyaunglebin District, Pegu Division

Western Nyaunglebin District is in the Sittaung river plain, while the eastern part consists of hills where the Karen National Union still operates. In an attempt to make it impossible for KNU forces to operate in the area, SLORC has recently been intensifying its military campaign against civilians in the hilly eastern part of the district, particularly in eastern Kyauk Kyi township (northeast of Nyaunglebin). Several more villages have recently been ordered to move from the hills to military-controlled sites on the plain. Many people are fleeing and have become internally displaced in the hills. As SLORC and DKBA forces are actively blocking the routes from this area through Papun district to the Thai border, people have no chance to make it to the border as refugees. Stuck in the hills, these people are left with no way to make a living. (Source: *KHRG*)

## 6.5. Situation in Karen State

### 6.5.1. Taungoo District

Taungoo District is in the far north of Karen State, consisting of a small plain area east of Taungoo with steep, rugged, remote hills further east covering the northern tip of Karen State. People in Karen villages in the plain just east of Taungoo are regularly used for forced labor at army camps or to perform clearing and maintenance work around Taungoo town. They have also been used extensively as forced labor on the Pa Thee hydroelectric dam just a few miles east of Taungoo, which is now completed. Ywa Gyi and Ta Thay Gone villages were forced to move without compensation to make way for the reservoir of this dam.

Just east and south of this area in the hills, since the beginning of 1995, SLORC has been conducting operation “Aung Tha Pyay,” an intensive “four cuts” operation aimed at burning villages, crops and food supplies, and shooting dozens of villagers on sight in their fields.<sup>1</sup> Additional Battalions were brought in from (Arakan) Rakhine State specifically for this purpose. Villages in the area from Bawgali (Kler Lah) to Bu Sah Kee have been especially targeted. Every village is forced to do unpaid labor on the Bawgali-Bu Sah Kee military supply road. Movement in the area is severely restricted and few people are allowed to go to Taungoo town for supplies. Some of the villages have been repeatedly ordered to relocate to Bawgali and other military camps in the area, though most villagers have responded by fleeing to the hills, where they are hiding in groups of two or three families facing possible execution if they are found. They are living on last year’s rice supplies which they managed to hide before SLORC could burn it, but very few people were able to plant a rice crop during the 1996 rainy season. They face probable starvation as the months pass. As in Nyaunglebin District, it is difficult or impossible for these people to reach the Thai border because they would have to cross Papun District where SLORC and DKBA are actively blocking access routes to the border. (Source: KHRG)

### 6.5.2. Papun District

Papun (Mudraw) district is adjacent to the Salween River and the Thai border. It consists mostly of small villages in remote hills. In the first part of 1996, all

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*1 Using a “four-cuts” strategy SLORC attempts to cut links of intelligence, food, money, and recruits between armed opposition groups and local civilians.*

100 villages in the area between Papun and the Salween River and south of Papun were ordered to move to SLORC military camps near Papun, Kar Boke and Par Haik, or to DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu (Khaw Taw), and told that if they did not move they would be shot on sight and their villages would be burned. Instead of moving to the camps, the villagers fled into hiding in the forest, and 1,000 to 2,000 crossed to Thailand as refugees. The situation in the region is now variable, with many villagers living tenuously in their villages but always fleeing to the hills when SLORC patrols arrive nearby. Many could not plant a crop this year and so face possible starvation in the coming year.

DKBA troops in this area are generally only operating in small groups attached to larger SLORC units. The DKBA soldiers act as guides for SLORC troops; when the column arrives in a village, SLORC soldiers give orders to the DKBA find and identify any “suspect” villagers and loot any food supplies they find. (*Source: KHRG*)

### 6.5.3. Pa-an District

SLORC is firmly in control in this region; during 1996 it has intensified its campaign to build a network of military roads throughout the region from the Salween River eastward to the Dawna Mountains. Many villages are being forced to work on two or three different roads at a time. Roads are generally being built to be wide enough so that two military trucks can pass. More battalions have been moved into the area, confiscating land, and using forced labor to build and maintain their camps. Muslims in the area have been particularly targeted for forced labor and portering, and the Muslim section of Nabu village has been destroyed. There is a small but steady stream of refugees fleeing the forced labor and extortion in the area to refugee camps in Thailand. (*Source: KHRG*)

### 6.5.4. Dooplaya District

Dooplaya District covers the region from Kawkareik southward to Three Pagodas Pass. Already, in the SLORC-controlled areas close to Kawkareik in the north and Kya In Seik Gyi in the west, villagers must constantly do forced labor, such as at army camps, cutting logs, or farming cash crops. In the south of the region many have been required to do forced labor planting rubber trees on army-confiscated land. Between Kawkareik and the Thai border, the Karen villages of Noh Poh, Ta Blu Ko Kee, and Tee Muh Hta were ordered to relo-

cate; some to the houses in these villages have since been burned. Some of the people have fled to Meh Kaneh village, while others have fled eastward toward the Thai border. Just north of Kya In Seik Gyi, the several spread-out hamlets making up Kya In village have all been ordered to move together to military-controlled sites along the Kya In Seik Gyi - Kawkareik car road. Anyone not moved by the end of December 1996 were to be shot and their homes burned. Over 100 households are affected. (*Source: KHRG*)

## 6.6. Situation in Tenasserim Division

The SLORC has created a new regional command called Coastal Command (similar to Southeast Command or Eastern Command -- sections of the army responsible for an entire large region of the country) under the command of recently-promoted Brigadier General Thiha Thura Sit Maung. Coastal Command has apparently been ordered to implement a major Four Cuts operation against villagers in Tenasserim Division. In mid-1996, SLORC ordered about 30 villages on the inland part of the coastal plain between Tavoy and Mergui to relocate to army-controlled sites along the Tavoy-Mergui car road (building and maintaining this road has involved extensive forced labor every year). This includes the large villages of Mazaw (40 km southeast of Mergui), Pyi Cha (80 km north of Mergui, near Palauk), and Pala (40 km northeast of Mergui, near Palaw), and other villages in those areas. SLORC provides nothing at the relocation sites, so many of these people have fled eastward across the hills to KNU-controlled areas along the Tenasserim River near the Thai border. Further south, halfway between Mergui and the southern tip of Burma (Kawthaung), most of the villages in the area are ethnically Thai, Burman, Muslim, or Tavoyan. (There are only three Karen villages in the area - Nan Ka Prao, Ze Daeng, and Kaw Bawt.) All of these villages have been ordered to move.

The Tavoy-Mergui car road is still under repair with forced labor. Villagers must wade into streams, collect stones for the roadbed, sort them by size, and manually break them. Work continues on the Ye-Tavoy railway, though there are reports that SLORC has now given one million kyats to each battalion and ordered that their soldiers do the work for pay. (Some battalions appear to be doing this, though other battalions did it for a few days and then began keeping the money and ordering villagers to do forced labor once again.) This SLORC initiative may be the result of pressure advanced by the oil companies working in the region -- TOTAL and UNOCAL -- who have received a lot of negative international press due to the benefits they receive from the SLORC's forced labor policies at the Ye-Tavoy railway project. The companies may even have given SLORC the money to pay for the construction and the labor involved.

Both TOTAL and SLORC officials have told villagers in the pipeline area that TOTAL will bring machines to build the 10-mile section of the railway from Ain Da Ya Za to Kalein Aung (only a small segment which crosses their pipeline route). The oil companies are trying to avoid direct blame for forced labor, while actually doing nothing to alleviate the system of forced labor. The oil companies have tried to hire labor but SLORC usually forces villagers to do unpaid labor anyway, with or without the knowledge of the companies. People were forced to participate in unpaid four-day shifts on pipeline-related projects, at jetty and army camp facilities, hauling pipeline supplies arriving by sea at Ka Daik, constructing helipads for oil company helicopters at Ka Daik and 52-Mile (near Mi Kyaun Laun), and building the "pipeline road" (the service road alongside the pipeline) from Hpaungdaw to Kanbauk and Ain Da Ya Za to Mi Kyaun Laun.

People in the area also continue to suffer increased forced labor and extortion due to the increased military presence in the area to protect the pipeline. The oil companies have been pressured over this, and their response was to decree that they would pay villagers who are forced to do military portering labor for SLORC. Just before the past rainy season, groups of villagers fled to Thailand to escape the forced labor requirements. Some who had been forced to be military porters for up to one month were requested by the SLORC to appear at the oil company office. There they received retroactive payment for their work, only to have it taken away again by the soldiers. Others who had not worked as porters had been rounded up in their villages, taken directly to the oil company office, forced to say they had been porters and then forced to hand over the money they received to the soldiers. (*Source: KHRG*)

## **6.7. List of Incidents**

**6.7.1.** Throughout January 1996, Columns 1 and 2 of IB 55 entered villages in Taungoo district such as Klaw Mu Der, Shar Shee Po, and Plaw Pu where they looted villagers' belongings and killed livestock. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.2.** In January 1996, troops from IB 63 entered Wah Tho Ko, Kaw Po Kee, Meh Baw Kee, Toh Meh Kee, and Noh Bo Lah villages in Meh Wai village tract and looted the villagers' food, money, belongings and livestock. They also destroyed villagers' belongings and looted rice in Lu Thaw Ko village. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.3.** On January 1, 1996, IB 24 and DKBA began burning villagers' rice

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barns in hill areas in Thaton district. They began by burning a total of 4,950 baskets of paddy belonging to 38 villagers in two villages, and killed villager Maung Aye Moe. (Source: KHRG)

- 6.7.4.** On January 1, 1996, a military column of LIB 105 and DKBA went to Maw Kee village in Papun district and shot and wounded a 29 -year-old villager in both legs. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.5.** On January 3, 1996, 300 soldiers from LIB 105 led by Second-in-command Tun Aung Sein and 2nd Lieutenant Win Tin, entered Klaw Hta, Baw Thay Hta, Meh Wah, and Thay Ko Der villages, in Papun district and burned all the rice barns; they returned to Papun on January 6, 1996. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.6.** On January 11, 96, troops from columns 1 and 2 of IB 55, led by Captain Thein Tint, destroyed Tee Ler Ghaw village in Taungoo district, including villagers' homes and belongings. They also looted several tins of rice, 40 chickens, chilies, salt, and a big pot. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.7.** On January 24, 1996 in Kyu Bay Sheit, SLORC Commander Than Soe ordered each village in the area of Nyaunglaybin district to pay a fine of 8,000 kyats because he said they were in contact with the KNU. All large villages were also ordered to give 350 baskets of paddy; small villages had to give 35 baskets. SLORC Commander Than Soe only paid 100 kyats per basket to the villagers, but then milled the paddy into rice and sold it for 450 kyats per basket. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.8.** On February 7, 1996, Column 2 of IB 59 (based in Naw Soh village) burned 20 houses in Ku Lu Der village. In Kaw Thay Der village in Taungoo district, they demanded that each house give them 1,000 kyats. They also took 19 cows worth a total of 120,000 kyats and ordered the villagers to drive the cattle across a minefield in order to clear it. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.9.** On February 25, 1996, IB 24 battalion commander Thein Tin said that local villagers in Taungoo district did not report casualties from KNLA landmines, so as punishment, he fined Noh Ber Baw village 30,000 kyats and T'Ru Wah village 20,000 kyats. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.10.** On February 27, 1996, Company #2 Commander Po Oo was leading a column from IB 51. They entered Kaw Tee Kee village in Thaton district and forced 24 villagers to hand over a total of 83 baskets of rice,

two chickens, and two viss of dried fish. (*Source: KHRG*)

- 6.7.11.** In March 1996, the land between Min Dauk pier and Ahlone Lay Pin monastery in Monywa township was confiscated without compensation. The area was renamed Badon New Ward and redistributed to SLORC Northwestern region military command members and their immediate families and associates. (*Source: ABSDF*)
- 6.7.12.** In March 1996, Strategic Commander Col. Aung Naing Htun ordered all motor vehicles in Kaw Thay Der and Kler Lah in Taungoo district be given to Kler Lah and Naw Soe military camps, where they were to remain on standby for military use. (*Source: KHRG*)
- 6.7.13.** In March 1996, DKBA and SLORC troops stole four buffaloes from Noh Kaw Tay village, close to Nabu, Karen State. The owner of the buffaloes heard that his animals were driven to Thailand by the DKBA; he asked the DKBA officer to take action. The replied, "if you have no evidence, you must pay 400,000 kyats and also be killed." Then the buffalo owner went to the SLORC army officer, who said, "it is the time of organizing [i.e., supporting and enlarging the DKBA], so we cannot take action against them." (*Source: KHRG*)
- 6.7.14.** Lo Baw village in Karen State was looted on March 5 by soldiers of LIB 355,357, and IB 230, led by Major Aung Kyaw and Major Than Soe; Day Law Pya village was looted by LID 88 troops led by Lt.-Col. Aung San Chit on the same day; and Meh Bleh Wah Kee village was looted on March 7 by troops from LID 88, led by Major Ye Tun. These three villages alone reported huge losses in rice, oxen, cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens totaling 350,000 kyats in value. Villagers reported that all their personal and household belongings were also looted, even items as small as spoons. SLORC soldiers returning from sorties into the villages were seen using 15 bullock carts at a time to transport their stolen loot. (*Source: KHRG*)
- 6.7.15.** Between March 1 and 7, 1996, SLORC IB 355 troops , (Commander Maj. Aung Hla), 521 troops (Commander Maj. Nay Win), and 257 troops (Commander Pan Ket; 2nd in command Aung Thein), all of which are operating as part of #1 Strategic Command under Col. Tin Thein, combined with DKBA troops, traveled through villages in Tee Wa Klay village tract in Thaton district looting each village. This was part of their week-long looting raid as they searched for KNU troops who attacked at Ker Ghaw on February 28; the troops never actually looked

for any KNU troops. Villagers supplied a list of at least 71 families who were robbed a total of 179 chickens, 18 pigs, 17 goats, six dogs, two cats, 47 baskets of rice and sticky rice, 76 baskets of paddy, 38 viss (61 kg.) of salt, 11 viss (18 kg.) of chilies, three viss (5 kg.) of fishpaste, one large tin of biscuits, one viss of betelnut, four tins and six viss of tobacco, 61 pots, 47 plates, 26 spoons, 12 machetes, four axes, three saws, four hoes, one torchlight, 330 kyats in cash, and other miscellaneous items including kitchen and household utensils, clothing, fishing nets, ropes, and water containers. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.16.** On March 9, 1996, a combined force of LIB 20 Column 1 and DKBA troops went to Kweh Kaw, Baw Paw Lay, Toe Toe Kee, K’Paw Hta, and Ko Hta villages in Thaton district and destroyed 240 baskets of unhusked rice as well as seven rice fields. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.17.** As of March 25, 1996, the entire LIB 344 was based around Than Daung in Karen State and along the roads. All of LIB 539 was based around Leik Tho; all of IB 234 was based in Plaw Mu Der and the fields of Shar Si Po. The entire LIB 439 was based around Kaw Thay Der, Naw Soe, and Si Kheh Der. Five companies of IB 59 and one company of IB 911 were based in Plaw Mu Der, Tha Kwee Soe, and Bu Sah Kee. These SLORC troops have all been engaged in burning rice crops and stocks wherever they find them and destroying villagers’ property, burning vegetable plots, commandeering carts and vehicles, and conscripting porters every day. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.18.** As of March 23, 1996, the Battalion commander of IB 234, under #3 Strategic Command, entered Shin Pa Taw village in Taungoo district and burned 28 teak houses, Byamaso monastery, and 2 rice barns. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.19.** On March 25, 1996, LIB 439 battalion Commander Lin Naing stayed in Naw Soe village in Taungoo district. He ordered Kaw Thay Der village to buy and carry food worth 10,000 kyats to Naw Soe village so the soldiers could celebrate Armed Forces Day on March 27. (*Source: KHRG*)

**6.7.20.** On April 11, 1996, Capt. Soe Myint Aye of IB 97 from Kyaw Ko camp went to Wa Plaw Wah village in Thaton district and opened fire on the village. No one was injured, but the troops confiscated 120 baskets of rice, by claiming that it was rice intended for KNU troops. They forced the villagers to carry this rice to Kyaw Ko army camp. The next day

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the same column burned down four houses in Tee Law Thi village. (Source: KHRG)

- 6.7.21.** On April 26, 1996, Column 2 of LIB 439, led by Maj. Than Win, confiscated three flintlock guns (only usable for hunting small animals) from villagers in Wah Tho Ko village and set fire to part of the village. They opened fire, injuring a Ler Ko village elder, Pu Shwe Aye, a 70-year-old man. The soldiers killed a buffalo worth about 20,000 kyats for their meal. On April 27, 1996, the same column burned down two village houses and destroyed three other houses in Naw Thay Der village. On April 28, 1996 the column went to Kaw Mu Der village and stole two air-guns, a bicycle, a sewing machine, and other valuables. They destroyed villagers' belongings that they could not take with them. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.22.** On May 3, 1996, IB 59 troops based at Bu Sah Kee village burned down a rice barn belonging to the village headman, Saw Lah Wah Mu. One hundred baskets of unhusked rice were also destroyed. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.23.** On May 25, 1996, the column from IB 234 arrested a Pa-O woman who was working in her orchard near Sait Lah Kyaut Pya, between Shan Shi Boh and Meh Taw Der in Karen State. They burned her farm hut and looted all her belongings. The troops also burned down Saw Maung Myint's orchard and hut, looted, and destroyed all of his belongings. (Source: KHRG)
- 6.7.24.** On June 3, 1996, a military column of IB 103 and 433 led by Captain Nyo Win, torched Min Win village and Shan Thay village in Palaw township, Tenasserim Division. No notice or reason was given. Altogether 22 houses and one primary school in the villages were burned while soldiers looted villagers' property. Troops took more than a hundred baskets of paddy and wantonly shot a number of cattle and buffaloes. (Source: ABSDF)
- 6.7.25.** Hniar Ling, age 45, former village LORC chairman of Nga Lang village, was called by the commander of Than Tlang camp for a meeting on July 12, 1996. While he was travelling to Than Tlang he was told that there would be no meeting and that he would be arrested if he continued his journey. He therefore, did not attend the meeting. Due to his absence at the meeting, the Commander Saw Hlaing sent troops to Nga Lang village in order to arrest him on October 5, 1996, but
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fortunately he managed to escape. Another group of troops led by 2nd Lieutenant Win Than was sent to arrest him on October 9, 1996; again he managed to escape. Since he was evading the SLORC, he was dismissed from his post as village LORC Chairman of Nga Lang. The SLORC soldiers accused Hniar Ling of being a member of the CNF, which means certain death if he is found. He has therefore left his village and gone into hiding. His whereabouts are still unknown. (Source: CHRO)

**6.7.26.** Between July and September 1996, the headmen of most villages throughout all of Than Tlang township were arrested by the SLORC Army and accused of having contact with the CNF. At various times during these three months, headmen were called from Than Tlang township to the town of Haka by Colonel Thein Lwin, Chairman of Chin State LORC, and Major Saw Hlaing, Chairman of Than Tlang Township LORC and commander of LIB #266 camp in Than Tlang. Those who came to Haka were arrested and detained in the Haka police station. Those who could pay 20,000 kyats were released immediately. However, the leaders of at least 11 villages (the villages of Thang Zang, Banawh Tlang, Tlang Pi, Tlang Lo, Far Rawn, Cawng Thia, Tlang Rua, So Pum, Hriang Khan, Thau, and Tlang Te) were detained longer because they could not pay. (Source: CHRO)

**6.7.27.** On October 9, 1996, Second Lieutenant Win Than, commander of Hriphi post, Than Tlang township, LIB 266 based in Haka, led a group of 20 troops to Nga Lang village to arrest former village LORC Chairman Hniar Ling. Without any warning the troops surrounded the village. At about 5 p.m. that day, Bawi Kung from Haka town and his two friends "Pa Sui" [not his real name] and Dawt Hlei Thang were on their way back from Mizoram State, India. They were planning to spend the night at Nga Lang village. As they were approaching the village, SLORC soldiers suddenly fired many rounds upon them, without any questions or warning. Bawi Kung was wounded and later killed by the troops. Dawt Hlei Thang was arrested and taken away along with the soldiers; nothing is known of his whereabouts or well-being. "Pa Thang" managed to escape. The headman, church secretary, and other villagers were beaten; the village was ransacked and the troops took 16 porters and four horses to carry away their loot. (Source: CHRO)

**6.7.28.** On October 9, 1996, Pu Lian Ham, a Chin civilian from Nga Lang village, Than Tlang township, Chin State was arrested by SLORC soldiers led by Second Lieutenant Win Than of LIB, based in Haka, on his

way from his farm. He was handcuffed without being asked anything. He was not allowed to sit down; he was forced to stand against the wall in his house. His children and his wife were prohibited to speak to him. Soldiers searched everything in his house. They found a box made of steel and could not open it, so 2nd Lt. Win Than shot the lock with his pistol and opened it up. They found 10,000 kyats which belonged to the church committee; the money was set aside for the construction of a new church. The soldiers stole all of the money. Pu Lian Ham pleaded that this money did not belong to him, that it was a fund for building a new church. The soldiers ignored his pleas. Moreover, they stole 7,000 kyats worth of medicine from his house (the villagers pool money together to buy medicine because no medicine is available from official SLORC sources.) (*Source: CHRO*)

**6.7.29.** On October 9, 1996 LIB 266 troops led by Second Lieutenant Win Than entered Nga Lang village and tortured all the villagers. They stole whatever they liked. A cattle trader was shot dead by the troops in the village. The soldiers took 16 porters and four horses from the village to carry their rations and weapons to go on to Khua Bung village, a 14-mile journey. (*Source: CHRO*)

**6.7.30.** In October 1996, a platoon of soldiers led by 2nd Lt. Win Than arrived to Nga lang village, Than Tlang township. They tortured the villagers and took all their belongings such as rice, money, and cattle. They stole 3,600 kyats, two tins of rice, and other valuables worth approximately 2,500 kyats from the house of Hla Thang. (*Source: ABSDF*)

**6.7.31.** On November 27, 1996, Aung Naing Tun, the commander of Tactical Command 1 arrived with his troops at Bawgali village in Taungoo District and forcibly collected 800 kyats per household for porter fees. Bawgali village has 340 households, so the military made off with 272,000 kyats. All the money collected went to Commander Aung Naing Tun. Further extortion was carried out by the troops under his command. The following are the villages that were forced to pay porter fees of some amount per household to Commander Aung Naing Tun:

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Kaw Thaytae (150 households) | 45,000 kyats |
| Kawsoekho (80 households)    | 64,000 kyats |
| Wathokho (24 households)     | 12,000 kyats |
| Kalaw Medaw (50 households)  | 56,000 kyats |
| Lelko (unknown)              | 16,000 kyats |

(*Source: ABSDF*)

- 6.7.32.** In mid-December 1996, SLORC Commander of Murng Ton-based LIB 225, IB 65 Commander Major Hla Myint, Major Than Aung and Murng Ton SLORC chief Major Than Aung Khin sent their troops to seize land which has long been used as farms and rice fields along the eastern side of the road around a deserted village Wan Nar Leng. They also seized more than 350 acres of peanut, sesame, and sugar cane plantations along the western side of the road south of Murng Ton township. The landowners, who inherited the land from their ancestors, have been working there for generations; SLORC troops ordered them to stop their farming. The troops divided the land among former officers of the Mong Tai Army (MTA). (*Source: SHRF*)
- 6.7.33.** In early January 1997, SLORC LIB 549 troops and the DKBA fined Thee Wah Pu villagers in Pa-an district, 250,000 kyats because a small battle broke out in the village resulting in one killed and one wounded on the SLORC side. Every day about thirty ox carts were ordered to clear mines along the Ta Nay Cha-Kaw Kareik road. All the villages in the Ta Nay Cha township have to “volunteer to work” for the SLORC troops five days a week. A statement issued by the LIB 549 was as follows: 1) Anybody who has any contact with resistance forces will be severely dealt with and 2) If there is any explosion or shots fired in the vicinity of any village, that village will be relocated immediately and a heavy fine paid. (*Source: KIC*)
- 6.7.34.** On January 4, 1997, Major Maha Aw (former head of people’s militia in Murng Paeng who joined the MTA in 1993), with the help of Burmese troops, ordered a Toyota 4-wheel drive truck, owned by Zai Suay Pa of Me Ken, to carry his family, his belongings, and some of his followers from Murng Sart to Murng Harnng. Since early January, he forced about 50 villagers from Murng Harnng to clear 30 acres of the land - some of which was recouped by the villagers - after which he paid them very low wages, only 8,000 kyats for ten days work. So far, 15 ex-MTA families have been settled, using the villagers to clear and measure the lands which SLORC troops have seized from the people in Murng Harnng, Murng Ton township, eastern Shan State. (*Source: SHRF*)
- 6.7.35.** Since the offensive against the KNU began in Mergui-Tavoy District on February 8, 1997, SLORC troops have burned down Myitta, Kwe Waw Wah, Kalat Kee, Ka Nal Pose, and other villages. (*Source: KIC*)
- 6.7.36.** On February 8, 1997, SLORC LIB 219 Commanded by Lt-Col. Aung

Ko Ko, burned unmilled rice belonging to the following villagers in Mae Baw Kee village, Thaton district: 1) Saw Pah Er (75 baskets), 2) Maung Kya Ngay (60 baskets), and 3) Pa Baw (75 baskets). On the same day, the soldiers killed and ate buffaloes belonging to Maw Loh Pha from the same village. (*Source: KIC*)

- 6.7.37.** On February 9, 1997, Saw Say Phaw, a Christian Pastor from Kaletgyi village was taken away to Hein Du Chaung village SLORC's LIB 25 led by deputy commander Aung Myint, without any explanation. The pastor was beaten in front of U Maung Sein Hla's house until his hands and legs were fractured; he was later shot. U Maung Sein Hla was also beaten for allegedly providing food to KNU soldiers; he remains in critical condition. (*Source: FTUB*)
- 6.7.38.** On February 9, 1997, SLORC IB 25 set fire to 16 houses in Kalatkee village and executed an innocent villager named Saw Paw Na. (*Source: KIC*)
- 6.7.39.** On February 10, 1997, the two villages of Now Baw Kee and La Kyo Ko were relocated to Htaw Klaw Kee village by SLORC IB 63, which is also located in this village. The entire village was fenced in the villagers are now virtual prisoners. They leave only to be used as forced laborers working on a road being built by SLORC troops in this region. (*Source: KIC*)
- 6.7.40.** During the second week of February, deputy commander Aung Myint also ordered Gaung Say Chaung village, Ka Taung Ni village, Kaletgyi village and Kmoonchun, all on the east side of Kan Chaung River, to move from their village to the west side or face persecution. During the last week of February, troops from IB 25 arrived at Gaung Say Chaung village and looted the homes of U Phee Hla, U Pho Thalone, U Sue Naw, U Saw Dar, U Saw Tin Aye, U Saw Three, and U Khin Maung. The troops also burned the paddy barns in the villages. (*Source: FTUB*)
- 6.7.41.** On February 12, 1997, the same regiment burned down five houses and a Christian church in Ka Nel Pose village. The commander also ordered the execution of seven sick SLORC soldiers and 20 porters. (*Source: KIC*)
- 6.7.42.** On February 16, 1997, SLORC IB 273 burned down Ka Neh Hqae (Pyar Thar Chaung) village in Paw Kin River valley, Ban Chaung vil-

lage in Paw Klao River valley, and Phaung Daw village. The villages were accused of supporting the KNU. All farms belonging to the villages were torched and the farm animals were taken away by troops. (Source: KIC)

**6.7.43.** On February 17, 1997, Ka Witt Hta village was burned down and many villagers were forced to serve as porters for the SLORC's IB 17 and 101. The whole village population has fled. (Source: KIC)

**6.7.44.** On February 17, 1997, advancing SLORC troops also set fire to Ka Saw War and Ka Maw Htar villages. Htee Pho Lay and Lo Ray villages were burned down on February 18. Some plantations were also destroyed by the troops. (Source: KIC)

**6.7.45.** On February 20, 1997, the SLORC reinforced its unit in the hills, in the eastern part of Pyinmana district. Troops from IB 34 arrested Karen from the hill villages in the eastern part of Tantabin township of Taungoo district and forced them to carry food for the troops. They were released only on payment of 2,000 kyats fine. SLORC IB 34 ordered four Karen villages of Shazeebo, Zeebyergon, and Tawgoo in Taungoo district to send 25 men per month to serve as porters. In addition, the troops forcibly demanded 1,000 and 2,000 kyats from each household. Sometimes, the troops arbitrarily arrested the villagers and demanded 2,000 kyats for release. At present, the SLORC's IB is moving among Karen villages in the hills of the eastern part of Tantabin township and harassing the people. (Source: KIC)

**6.7.46.** On February 27, SLORC IB 51 entered Toe The Kee village and summoned the villagers and ordered them not leave the village. Then the

**Photo (29)**

**Public bus transportation in Rangoon. The high price of petrol and insufficient public services make the people's lives difficult. (Photo by Rosalie T. McKernan)**

troops arrested some men and women villagers, beat them up, poured boiling water on them and immersed them in water for no reason. (Source: KIC)

**6.7.47.** On March 2, 1997, SLORC IB 230 and DKBA Maung Han Shwe torched the house of Maung Chit Tu, a villager from Ta Maw Daw village. All the belongings in the house, worth about 35,000 kyats, were destroyed in the fire. They also took a pair of earrings worth about 5,000 kyats, 10 baskets of rice worth 5,000 kyats, and a saw worth 1,000 kyats. The group demanded 500 kyats each from the villagers who went to the forest to collect matured leaves for their house roofs. They threatened the villagers they would shoot them if they returned to the forest to collect leaves. They set the forest on fire so all the leaves were burned and the villagers have no leaves for the roofs of their houses this coming rainy season. (Source: KIC)

(Also see under “Personal Accounts,” interviews 1, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20-23, 25-28, 30, 35, 37, 39, 42, 47, 48, 51, 54, 55-59, 62, 66, 68, 69, 73, 75, 77, 78, 79, 83, 87, 90, and 91)

## 7. Rights of Minorities

Undoubtedly, the worst abuses against ethnic minorities have occurred in the context of Burma's ethnic armed struggle. Armed opposition by 17 ethnic groups has existed since Burma gained its independence from Britain in 1948. These groups have engaged in insurgency activities against the central Burmese government in order to gain greater autonomy or better -- complete independence. When the military government reasserted power in September 1988 after suppressing the pro-democracy movement, it pursued offensives against the military armed opposition groups. The newly-formed SLORC, also adopted a policy of negotiating cease-fires with individual ethnic groups rather than dealing with the "Democratic Alliance of Burma" (DAB), the umbrella organization which grouped them together.

In areas where cease-fire agreements have been reached, human rights abuses continue to be committed. In fact, in these "national reconciliation" areas human rights abuses have increased rather than abated. There has been no move on the part of the SLORC to engage in political discussions with opposition groups to reinforce the military cease-fire agreements. Under the terms of the cease-fire, some ethnic groups have been allowed to keep their arms and soldiers, however, SLORC had vastly increased the number of its soldiers in those areas.

These agreements do not represent a long-term solution to the ongoing conflict in part because the SLORC never abides by its agreements. As an expression of their dissatisfaction, the Wa, Palaung, and Kokang formed the Peace and Democratic Front (PDF), thereby only strengthening the opposition. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) has issued several press releases since their cease-fire complaining that the expected process of political dialogue had not begun. Indeed, one of the most recent cease-fires only lasted three months. On June 28, 1995, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) issued a statement alleging repeated violations of the cease-fire agreement that they signed with the SLORC in March 1995. The statement said that the SLORC has continued to collect "porter fees," arrested men to work as porters, and has increased its military presence in the KNPP area by an additional 2,000 soldiers. The statement continued, "should SLORC continue breaking the cease-fire agreement, and should it refuse to withdraw the troops -- it will be the SLORC -- not the KNPP that will have to assume the responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities." Two days later, fighting erupted near the border post and in 1996, the headquarters of the KNPP was overrun. In order to bring the KNPP into another round of "cease-fire," SLORC has relocated thousands of

Karenni civilians and forced another massive number of refugees into Thailand.

The groups still waging wars against the military government are as follows: the Karen National Union (KNU), KNPP, Chin National Front (CNF), and small “break-away” factions from other armed ethnic groups.

The KNU, one of the major ethnic groups still at war with the SLORC as of mid-1997, clarified its position with regard to the failed cease fire agreements. The KNU stated that it had entered willingly into peace negotiations with the SLORC between December 1995 and November 1996, however, it was clear that political dialogue was not on the SLORC’s agenda. The KNU stated that the SLORC refused to enter into honest dialogue regarding issues of ethnic nationality, affairs of the Union, and maintenance of peace. Instead, the SLORC insisted that the KNU surrender and “return to the legal fold,” which the KNU could not accept as a precondition. As a result of the failed negotiations, SLORC launched a massive offensive against the KNU and forced thousands of refugees into Thailand; the civilians fled their villages when they heard that SLORC troops were approaching -- they feared they would be taken as porters, tortured, raped, or murdered.

### **7.1. Lists of Cease-fire Agreements with the SLORC**

1. Myanmar National Democracy Alliance -- March 31, 1989
  2. Myanmar National Solidarity Party -- May 9, 1989)
  3. National Democracy Alliance Army -- June 30, 1989
  4. Shan State party -- September 13, 1989
  5. New Democratic Army (Kachin State) -- December 15, 1989
  6. Kachin Defense Army (KIA 4th Brigade) -- January 11, 1991
  7. Pa-O national Organization (Shan State) -- February 18, 1991
  8. Palaung State Liberation Party -- April 21, 1991
  9. Kayan National Guards (Karenni) -- February, 1992
  10. Kachin Independence Organization -- October 1, 1993
  11. Karenni National People’s Liberation Front -- May 9, 1994
  12. Kayan New Land Party -- July 16, 1994
  13. Shan State Nationalities Peoples Liberation Organization -- October 9, 1994
  14. Karenni National Progressive Party (cease-fire broke off) -- May 21, 1995)
  15. New Mon State Party -- June 29, 1995
  16. Mong Tai Army (Khun Sa) -- January 2, 1996
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17. Burma Communist Party (Arakan) -- April 8, 1997

For additional information on the ethnic minority situation in Burma see also the following chapters: Chapter 1, Extra-Judicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions; Chapter 5, Forced Relocation and Internally Displaced Persons; Chapter 6, Deprivation of Livelihood; Chapter 11, Freedom of Movement; and Chapter 13, Abuse of Women.