

6. Deprivation of Livelihood

6.1 Background

In November 1997 the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta ruling Burma changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). However, there was no change in the four key leaders of the junta, and judging by the testimonies of villagers throughout Burma and the continuation of all of the regime's military operations, there has been no change in policy; in fact, the forced relocations and related abuses occurring in many rural parts of the country have only intensified, making it appear that the SPDC regime is even more ruthless and repressive than the SLORC ever was.

In order to gain the control, the military continues to expand at a rate far beyond the means of the junta or the country. In many regions, particularly the central and urban areas, the military has already established near-complete control, but in remoter areas, such as the ethnic areas towards all the borders, it has only partial or no control, and in some of these regions there is still armed resistance. The policy of the SPDC, and before it the SLORC, in the case of any form of armed resistance is to "drain the ocean so the fish cannot swim"; in other words, undermine the opposition by attacking the civilian population until it can no longer support any opposition. This is the fundamental idea of the "Four Cuts" policy (cutting supplies of food, funds, recruits and intelligence to the resistance) which General Ne Win initiated in the 1970s. The current SPDC plan for consolidating control over areas where there is resistance appears to consist of the following steps: (a) mounting a military offensive against the area; (b) forcibly relocating all villages to sites under direct army control and destroying those villages; (c) using the relocated villagers and others as forced labor for portering and building military access roads into their home areas; (d) moving in more Army units in and use the villagers as forced labor to build bases along the access roads; (e) allowing the villagers back to their villages, when they were now under complete military control and can be used as a rotating source of extortion money and forced labor, further consolidating control through "development" projects, forced labor farming for the army, etc. If resistance attacks still persist at this last stage, retaliation is carried out against villages by executing village elders, burning houses and other means.

Throughout Burma this process is at various stages; in eastern Tenasserim Division the SPDC is still on military offensive, while in parts of Chin State it is conducting initial forced relocations, and in central Shan State it is combining the two. In parts of central Karen State, which the SLORC/SPDC has now occupied for three years, the SPDC is constructing access roads and new Army bases with forced labor. In areas which the junta has controlled for longer periods and those where there has never been active resistance, the process is well into its last stage of systematic forced labor and economic exploitation of the local population.

Many villages now being burned by SPDC troops were first burned in 1975 when the "Four Cuts" were first implemented, and some villagers speak of having been on the

run from Burmese troops since 1975; but even these villagers say that in the past three years things have grown much worse. The direct attacks on the civilian population, characterized by mass forced relocations, destruction of villages and the village economy, and completely unsustainable levels of forced labor, have now become the central pillar of SPDC policy in ethnic rural areas of Burma. In the past, the regime would strategically destroy two or three villages at a time when there was resistance. For the last three years, the SPDC has perceived a possibility of armed resistance; it has delineated an entire geographic region and forcibly relocated and destroyed every village there is, as many as hundreds of villages at a time. In many cases, these villages have had little or no contact with resistance forces and do not even understand why they are being targeted.

Every army camp demands money from every village in its area, and usually this is calculated to amount to all the money a village can raise each month. With the arrival of new army camps, the amount increases proportionately. In 1995 the Karen Human Rights Group studied a group of 28 villages averaging 50 families in size and found that each village was paying an average of approximately 100,000 *kyat* per month to local army battalions just in established cash fees, not including extra fees to avoid forced labour, ad hoc extortion demands or forced contribution of food and other material goods. Ten thousand *kyat* is US\$15,000 at the official exchange rate or US\$350 at market rate, but for a subsistence farming community it is a very large amount of money. This sum continues to increase because of the constant expansion of the number of Army camps near every village. Just looking at this amount and considering the number of villages in Burma, it appears that at least 1 to 2 billion *kyat* per month is being extorted from rural villagers by SPDC field military officers, and this does not even include other sums which these officers make by selling rations and village goods, or by stealing the wages of their soldiers. These officers have no expenses while in the field. They remit a portion of their profits to higher-level officers and send the remainder to their families, most of whom live in Rangoon, Mandalay or other large towns. Their families can then use these billions of *kyat* flowing into the towns as seed money to start businesses, and it is these businesses which lead to the false impression of “economic growth” in the cities. In fact, all of the “growth” in the cities is financed by this steady flow of money and goods robbed from rural villagers, combined with the laundered profits of the narcotics trade.

The SPDC is systematically stripping rural Burma of all it can produce in order to finance a façade of economic improvement in the cities, while at the same time destroying the food production capabilities of most non-Burman ethnic areas. Even rural villages which have never been burned or forcibly relocated cannot sustain this system. Having to do so much forced labor that they no longer have enough time to farm, to hand over crop quotas which are often more than they can grow and cash which is more than they could ever normally obtain, and always facing the additional looting by SPDC soldiers, many villagers can only survive by selling off their livestock and valuables. When those are gone or when another Army camp comes to their area, they have no choice but to flee or face arrest. Many end up as beggars in the towns, internally displaced people in the forests, or “economic migrants” and refugees in neighboring countries. Over 80 per cent of Burma’s population live in rural villages, but the SPDC is looting the countryside until the village is no longer viable as a social unit. This is the key factor causing Burma’s current economic crisis. The SPDC apparently hopes to keep operating this unsustainable system, propping

it up with money from foreign investment and aid. This explains its current attempts to attract investment and aid money. However, without political or policy changes, any outside support will only prop up an unsustainable system and ensure a greater disaster in the future.

62 Situation of farmers in Burma

National multi-cropping programs were first implemented throughout Burma in 1992. It has aimed both to clear and cultivate additional fields, and to increase yields from established farms. To boost productivity, farmers throughout the country have been ordered to increase the number of crops planted a year, from one to two, and in some areas, even three crops. In many areas, salinity problems, high flood risks, and seasonal pest problems made multiple cropping inappropriate. It was nevertheless imposed on villages, with sometimes disastrous results, by regional and local military authorities who had production targets to meet. This order promises to increase their production, while costing farmers significantly in additional labor, irrigation fees and fertilizer.

Another kind of system imposed on the farmers in Burma is the paddy quota system. Which requires all farmers to sell a number of baskets per harvest to the SPDC at their set prices which is usually only 20-25 percent of market value. Paddy quotas set by the SPDC appear to be slightly different from one area in the country to the other, probably based on types of cultivated soil, and also from one year to the next. Some farmers from Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division, said they had to sell eight baskets per acre to the SPDC in the 1996-97 paddy tax year. However, during the same year, farmers from Thayet Chaung township, Tenasserim Division, and some from Irrawaddy Division, said they then had to sell 12 baskets per acre. The paddy tax rate was generally 12 baskets per acre up to the 1997-98 paddy tax year. The paddy quota is in effect a nationwide tax on farmers, the goal of which is to provide the SPDC with cheap rice to supply the military and civil servants. The SPDC provides farmers with some cash assistance to cover cultivation costs, but in many cases any benefits are eliminated by the fact that support is linked directly to Burma's paddy quota tax. Any farmers who cannot sell the tax paddy in full to the SPDC are normally subjected to arrest, torture and detention. They are not released unless they are able to fulfill their quota of paddy to the authorities. This is to say when a farmer does not obtain an adequate amount of paddy from his paddy fields, he or she must then purchase more paddy from the market so that he or she can sell to the authorities the full amount as required. In many places in Burma, farmers have to mortgage or sell off their own farmland or cattle to be able to pay the paddy tax as required.

In December 1997, the SPDC officially announced in the media that it will not buy or take yearly paddy tax from farmers. That meant the farmers could freely sell in the markets or to merchants at whatever price they liked. However, in reality, the SPDC authorities instructed the local authorities in the whole country to resume taking yearly paddy tax. Following the instruction, Mon State PDC authorities and military personnel have constantly forced the farmers in Mon State to sell their paddy at a price set by the authorities.

The government set price for any kind of paddy is about 350 *kyat* per basket, and the authorities instructed the local authorities in Mon State to appoint a paddy-purchasing

committee and set up paddy purchasing centers in the whole state. Paddy-purchasing committees were responsible for receiving full amounts of paddy set by the authorities. These committees aimed to exert pressure on the farmers to sell set amounts of paddy to the respective and nearest paddy-purchasing centers in time, or to take paddy from the farmers' houses by force with cooperation from the local military battalion if the farmers failed to sell the set amount. These committees could treat the farmers as they liked if they could not get set amount of paddy from them. They always issued warning orders to the farmers to be sure they sold their quota of paddy to the centers, and if the farmers did not bring their paddy to the centers, they could use force. In many cases, these committees collaborated with the military or the police, forcibly confiscating farmers' belongings when the farmers were not able to sell their quota of paddy to the authorities. The following are the some of the examples of extrajudicial actions by the paddy-purchasing committees in Mon State. Similar reports come from other parts of Burma.

On February 4, 1998, township paddy-purchasing officials U Pe Kyi, U Tin Win, U Aung Ba Ye and 10 armed soldiers from LIB 209 went into Kamawet village, Mudon township, broke paddy stores of three farmers and looted all the paddy from the stores for allegedly failing to sell their quota of paddy. The amount looted from the three farmers was more than the amount they were required to sell to the authorities, but the authorities did not give any payment.

On February 14, 1998, Kalort-tort village track paddy-purchasing committee members and a commander from LIB 209 went to Thaungpa village, Mudon township, Mon State, and looted about 500 baskets of paddy from farmers without payment. On February 18, 1998, the same group went into the village and asked 40,000 *kyat* from six farmers, also taking two oxen from two farmers who failed to sell paddy. The group told the two farmers to pay a ransom of 8,000 *kyat* per ox if they wanted their cattle back.

On April 3, 1998, paddy-purchasing officers and militia groups went to Tagundaing village, Mudon township, Mon State, and tried to loot paddy from the farmers. After they were not able to get the set amount of paddy, the group demanded a ransom of 200,000 *kyat* from the farmers who were unable to sell the full amount of paddy sought by the authorities. They said they would buy paddy with their cash to substitute for the paddy that the farmers were required to sell to the paddy-purchasing center. Seven farmers, namely Nai Tun Tin, Nai Haling Lon, Mi Than Shin, Nai Soe, Nai Aung Thwin, Nai Tun Chain and Mi Ngwe Kyin had to pay the ransom.

While the SPDC authorities paid 350 *kyat* per basket, the price in the markets was about 600-700 *kyat* per basket. Since January 17, 1998, Mudon township authorities had started to purchase paddy from farmers and set a quota of 12 baskets per acre for every farmer in the region. There were 11 centers in Mudon township, Mon State, and 850,000 baskets of paddy were required for purchasing. Similarly, in Thanbyuzayut, Chaungzone and Ye townships in Mon State, the SPDC authorities set up centers to purchase paddy from the farmers and estimated 450,000 – 500,000 baskets of paddy were required to be purchased. (**Source: HURFOM**)

The SPDC is also increasingly placing restrictions on the kinds of crops grown by the local farmers, forcing them to grow crops for the troops which they will either consume themselves or sell.

6.3. Unfair Levies and Taxes

The entire population of Burma, particularly rural people, is normally subjected to innumerable “taxes” or “fees” of both the official and unofficial kinds, predominantly levied by local authorities civil and military besides the “monthly” and “emergency portering” taxes and fees. Taxes and fees of the official kind are levied by the authorities under the guise of providing necessary support to officially-sanctioned “community work” on government sites. In the levying of these “official” taxes and fees, it is commonplace that local SLORC/SPDC authorities also levy their own, “unofficial” fees for private benefit.

Even the middle-class merchants, who make up just a small fraction of the rural population, are barely able to meet the demanded for taxes and fees. Consequently, the poverty-stricken rural majority experience unparalleled hardship under the constant and heavy burden of all these “official” and “unofficial” taxes and fees. Such people are forced to obey any order given to them by the local military and civil authorities and are forced to comply with any demand made by them. Whenever local SLORC/SPDC or SPDC authorities- whether they be civil or military- make demands for the contribution of labor, this population has no choice but to accede to these such demands, regardless of whether they are reasonably able to spare time and money. Rampant corruption among government officials and civil servants, and the traditional misuse of their authority, have doubled the burdens of the rural population and have increased their suffering.

6.3.1. Labor Taxes

Where the authorities use forced labor on state-sanctioned infrastructure or development projects, we find an additional range of taxes and fines that are often imposed in the name of substituted labor-hiring fees or donations. Such “donations” are forcibly collected from those towns, villages and households that cannot perform or contribute labor. Most if not all of this extorted money is just stolen from forced laborers by local SPDC civil and military personnel, who are entrusted with the implementation of projects and with the supervision of forced labor camps. None of the forced laborers working on the many infrastructure or development projects in and around Burma have been officially recruited or paid by the responsible authorities.

6.3.2. Porter Taxes

The SPDC-controlled military normally levies a porter tax of both a “regular” and “emergency” kind from the rural population, which constitutes at least two thirds of the entire population of Burma. This rural population, especially in ethnic nationality or non-Burman regions, has been far more seriously affected by such policies of extortion than before. A “porter” fee or tax is not a tax paid by a porter, but a tax paid in lieu of actually becoming a porter. On those rare occasions, civilians are given the freedom to choose. In theory, individuals, households or villages must pay a regular “monthly” and “emergency portering” tax merely to remain free from having themselves conscripted into the military as porters. In practice, however, mere payment of all these “monthly” and “emergency

portering" taxes does not mean that people remain free from portering or associated military abuse.

Members of the SPDC army, especially those controlling rural areas, normally incur a great deal of private benefit by levying these taxes on the local population. Such taxes can vary from as little as 500 *kyat* per household per month to as much as 3,000 *kyat* or more. (*Source: MIS*)

64. Situation in Northern Pa-an District, Karen State

An SPDC campaign to destroy Karen villages in northern Pa-an district has already led to the displacement of several thousand villagers, and over 3,000 of these villagers have crossed the border into Thailand. The area they are fleeing is on the eastern slopes of the Dawna Range close to the Thai border, part of Dta Greh township (Dta Greh is called Pain Kyone in Burmese, and the SPDC considers it part of Hlaing Bwe township).

Sixty to 100 km (40-60 miles) further south in Myawaddy and Kawkareik townships, many villagers have been fleeing their villages because of being forced to serve as human mine detonators and these existed a threat to relocate their villages at harvest time in late 1998. However, in Dta Greh township the campaign to forcibly relocate or destroy the villages already began in August and is now in full swing. There has been sporadic fighting between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and SPDC units in the area, and more intense fighting around the KNLA 7th Brigade headquarters further south. It appears that the SPDC has now resorted to its standard military strategy of destroying all villages in areas of perceived resistance.

In August approximately 1,500 villagers from the affected area fled across the border to Noh Bo in Thailand, and in September another 1,665 refugees crossed into Thailand in the Mae U Su area. The September refugees came from the villages of Tee Gker Haw, Wah Mi Klah, B'Nweh Pu, Po Paw Lay, Meh Lah Ah Hta, Meh Lah Ah Kee, Meh Keh, and Klay Po Kloh. Refugees are also reported to have come from Po Ti Pwa, Ma Oh Pu, and Tha Pwih Hser villages. As yet the total number of villages affected by the campaign is unclear.

In September SPDC troops, reportedly from LIB 44, formed three columns of approximately 100 soldiers each and went separate ways to destroy villages. Villagers from Meh Keh testify that the SPDC column positioned itself on a hill outside the village and fired several mortar shells into the village without warning, causing all the villagers to flee. The troops then entered the village, looted the houses, killed and ate the livestock, and burned down the houses and paddy storage barns. Testimony from other villages agrees that this is the pattern being used by the SPDC troops. Villagers confirm that at least four villages have been completely destroyed in this way: in Meh Keh 27 houses were burned down, in Meh La Ah Uta 24 houses were burned, and the villages of Tha Pwih Hser and Bo Toh Pwah were also completely destroyed. One house from B'Nweh Pu village was destroyed, as well as varying numbers of houses in other villages.

However, most villagers who have fled the area say that their villages never received any orders to leave, but were simply attacked without warning. The only news they had heard was word from local KNLA troops that SPDC columns were heading for their villages and might make trouble. In Tee Gker Haw village, soldiers of the Democratic Karen Buddhist

Army came to the village first and told the villagers, “Just stay here and don’t run away.” The villagers stayed, but when the SPDC column arrived they immediately began looting houses and shooting livestock. Most of the villagers ran off, and those who were caught by the SPDC column were taken away as porters. The village was thoroughly looted but was not burned. The villagers reported that there were 10 or more DKBA soldiers with each of the SPDC columns, probably fulfilling their usual role as guides and giving information about hidden food supplies and likely hiding places of the villagers.

Those who have fled report that most of the villages in the area are now abandoned; even those which have not yet been attacked have been abandoned out of fear. Only a few people remain in some of the villages which have not been destroyed, mainly the elderly or others physically incapable of fleeing to the hills. Many villagers remain internally displaced high in the hills. There are many landmines in the area which have been laid by all sides - the KNLA, DKBA and SPDC. Several villagers have already been seriously wounded by these mines while fleeing. One woman who had her leg blown off has been evacuated to Mae Sot hospital in Thailand.

KNLA units are active as guerrillas in the area, but there is no regular or heavy fighting. The villagers report that the SPDC columns are still around their villages, and believe that they are planning to establish a new Army camp in the area. There are already two existing SPDC Army camps near Meh Lah Ah, at Kyih Lay Kyo and Wah Bway Kyo. The villagers say that in the past, SPDC troops at these camps did not try to destroy their villages but raided regularly to capture porters and loot food. This time, most villagers fled their villages to avoid being captured as porters, not realizing their villages were to be destroyed. The villagers say they have no idea why the SPDC has suddenly decided to destroy their villages.

65. Situation of Southern Pa-an district, Karen State

The region commonly known as Pa-an District forms a large triangular area in central Karen State, bounded in the west and north by the Salween River and the town of Pa-an (capital of Karen State), bounded in the east by the Moei River where it forms the border with Thailand, and in the south by the motor road from Myawaddy (at the Thai border) westward to Kawkareik and Kyone Doh. Pa-an District is also known as the Karen National Liberation Army’s (KNLA) 7th brigade area. The western parts of Pa-an district and the principal towns have been controlled by the SPDC military junta for 10 years or longer, while the eastern strip adjacent to the Thai border has come largely under their control over the past three years. The easternmost strip of Pa-an district near the Moei River is separated from the rest of the district by the main ridge of the steep Dawna Mountains.

The KNLA still has extensive operations east of the Dawna and in the mountains itself, while the plains further west are primarily controlled by the SPDC and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). On both sides of the Dawna range there has been continuous low intensity fighting, as well as some larger battles, between the KNLA and the combined forces of the SPDC and DKBA, and this fighting has intensified over the past year. Some villages were previously forced to move by the SPDC in retaliation for this fighting, but in most cases the SPDC battalions realized that without the villagers to use as a shield and as

forced labor they were only more vulnerable to attack, so the villagers were gradually allowed or ordered to return home. Until recently most villagers were somehow managing to survive in the area. However, in the middle of 1998, there was a sudden flight of villagers in southern Pa-an District. Most have fled into the forests to become internally displaced, while some have fled to the Thai border. At this stage it is difficult to estimate numbers, but it appears that 5-10,000 villagers are affected, and several hundred of these have already arrived at the Thai border.

There are several reasons for this sudden flight. The first of these is a general increase in forced labor for SPDC and DKBA troops in the area. This includes forced labor building and maintaining army camps and roads, as sentries and messengers, and as porters to support both SPDC and DKBA troops patrolling and fighting the KNLA in the region. The villagers have had to do this kind of labor before to a lesser extent, but what is terrifying many of them into fleeing is that they are increasingly being used as human minesweepers during their forced labor as porters.

Landmines are being used extensively throughout the area by all parties to the conflict, the SPDC, the DKBA, and the KNLA. The KNLA generally lays its mines slightly off the pathways and notifies local villagers of which routes are mined, but the SPDC and DKBA lay mines indiscriminately on pathways, around farm fields and in abandoned villages without notifying anyone. Villagers' cattle are regularly killed by these mines. When a villager's cow steps on an SPDC mine, the owner must keep quiet because if the SPDC finds the owner he is fined "to pay the cost of the landmine." Villagers in the area are more and more frequently being maimed or killed by these mines; due to the difficulty of getting medical help, most of those who step on the mines die. Now the combined SPDC/DKBA columns in the area are sending their forced labor porters out in front of the column to detonate mines, and in many cases are specifically rounding up women in villages to march in front of columns and act as human mine detonators. Even if the villagers know which paths have been mined by the KNLA they do not know the precise locations of the mines, and if they do or say anything which indicates they know the route is mined, then the SPDC troops will accuse them of being KNLA collaborators and torture or execute them. Villagers from Taw Oak village report that at least six people from their small village died in the past year from landmines, particularly from being forced to act as human mine detonators. In Sgaw Ko village, a few months ago an SPDC patrol demanded that a group of women from the village go with one of their patrols to detonate mines, but the village headman would not allow it but instead he went in their place. He was killed by stepping on a landmine. Fear of being killed by landmines is giving villagers no choice but to flee their villages to avoid forced portering and above all being required to act as human minesweepers.

Another reason causing people to flee is an increase in looting and extortion, particularly by SPDC and DKBA troops. For some time now DKBA troops have lost their material support from the SPDC and have been forced to live off the villagers, and now SPDC troops throughout Burma are receiving rations only sporadically, in some areas not at all. This has led to a general increase in the looting of villagers' rice, livestock and belongings, demands for money, and forced labor on projects to grow food and make money for army units. People in some villages have been forced to hand over one bullock cart and a bullock team per family to the army, a very expensive demand if they do not have a cart. Earlier this year, the DKBA held a meeting and said that they would build a new office in

Myawaddy town. They ordered all villages to cut logs and undertake forced labor building the office or pay 3,000 *kyat* per family. SPDC officers notified villagers in Pah Klu village that every family would have to pay 700 *kyat* per month in extortion money for the next year. This came at a time when villagers had already sold all their belongings to pay previous demands and were suffering a bad year for their rice crop because of the lack of rain early in the growing season. At the same time, they had to continue handing over rice to KNLA units in the area. They were just not capable of supplying all sides at once.

Many villages in the area already have a curfew of 4 p.m. imposed by the SPDC; they are only allowed to go to their fields in the morning with only enough rice for their lunch, and they must be back in the village by 4 p.m. (or by sunset in some villages) or they will be arrested and beaten or tortured, or shot on sight if seen outside the village. For many villagers whose fields are far from the village, this is making it impossible for them to grow a proper crop. At this time of the year they would normally live in their field huts to tend their fields and drive off wild pigs and other animals.

The reason likely to cause the vast majority of the villagers to flee over the next several months is forced relocation. Some villages have already been forced to relocate to Ker Ghaw, where there is a significant DKBA presence, and in late 1998 the DKBA told village elders from Taw Oak, Pah Klu, Sgaw Ko, Kwih Lay and the entire Meh Pleh Toh area that all villages in this region would be forced to relocate after the rainy season, as soon as the harvest was completed (i.e. about December). They were told that they would be allowed to move to a designated army-controlled relocation site or to any garrison town where they might have relatives, but that if they stayed in their home area “you will be targets for our guns.”

6.6. Situation in Taungoo District, Pegu Division

Taungoo district (named Taw Oo in Karen) forms the northern tip of Karen State, sandwiched between Karenni State to the east, Shan State to the north, and Pegu Division to the west. The vast majority of villagers in this region are Karen. Many live in small villages which are difficult to reach in the very steep and forested hills covering most of the district. Further west, the hills taper off into the gentler terrain of the Sittaung River valley near Taungoo town.

In the east of the district, the SPDC has steadily increased its troop presence in this previously inaccessible area over the past two or three years. Several villages in the region were destroyed to force the people to move to SPDC-controlled areas, and villagers throughout the hills of Tantabin (Taw Ta Tu) township were forced to build a road from Baw Ga Li Gyi (Kler Lah) to Bu Sah Kee, opening up much of southeastern Taungoo district to the SPDC army. Several army camps were subsequently established along this road, at Kaw Thay Der, Naw Soe, Si Kheh Der and Bu Sah Kee. The new road is not passable during rainy season, so villagers have to perform forced labor as porters carrying supplies to and from all of these army camps. Then they have to do forced labor rebuilding the road after every rainy season. They also face regular demands to supply labor to the army, and suffer from regular looting and extortion of money.

As in other areas, SPDC forces try to undermine KNLA activities by targeting the villagers. Most villages which do not have an SPDC camp and are not along motor roads

have been ordered to relocate; more than 10 villages have been ordered to move to Baw Ga Li Gyi (Kler Lah) alone since the beginning of 1998. Rather than move as ordered, most people still stay in their villages or the surrounding forests, dodging the SPDC patrols which come through the area. Those who moved as ordered were provided with nothing at the relocation sites and could only build small bamboo huts in which to live. Unable to farm or earn a living and with no support, many of them have fled back to the forests around their villages. People found hiding in areas around the outlying villages, and villages which are perceived as uncooperative, have been treated brutally. Villagers found in their fields in outlying areas are either grabbed to become porters, shot dead or robbed on the spot.

Larger villages along the motor roads, such as Kler Lah (Baw Ga Li Gyi), Kaw Thay Der (Yay Tho Gyi) and Naw Soe, are under tight SPDC control and have army bases adjacent to the village. These villages are known as Nyein Chan Yay (“Peace”) villages, in reference to an informal agreement existing between the village elders and the local military that they will cooperate with all SPDC demands and in return will not be forced to relocate or have their houses burned. The leaders of these villages receive constant demands for “porter fees” and other forms of monetary extortion, food and materials. The Army also sends regular demands for porters, and to avoid sending people on long-term frontline portering duty the villagers have to pool their money and pay labor agents to hire itinerant laborers from Toungoo town to fill the army’s demands. However, even after paying all this money the villagers regularly have to carry army rations to outlying camps; women often do this forced labor because the men fear that they will be held for several months if they go. The villages also have to provide rotating forced laborers for army camp labor and to act as messengers. All vehicles transporting goods or passengers to and from Toungoo have to pay bribes to all of the SPDC checkpoints along the way. This causes the price of rice to be 1,000 *kyat* more per sack in Kler Lah than it is in Toungoo, and has also led to a shortage of transport, because some drivers have left to find work elsewhere. Villages which are slow in complying with demands for money and forced labor are threatened with having their people and vehicles prohibited from travelling to Toungoo, or with having their homes burned, despite their designation as “Peace” villages.

People in the “Peace” villages have also had to perform forced labor clearing the route for a new road from Toungoo to Mawchee, over 100 km to the southeast in southern Karenni State. Much of the actual road construction is being done with bulldozers, but villagers have been forced to do all the initial clearing of the road route by hand. Many farmers with fields along the route could not plant a crop in 1998 for fear of being taken for additional forced labor by the soldiers along the road. Construction is still continuing and is far from complete, and there have been reports that construction is also ongoing from the Mawchee end of the road using the forced labor of Karenni villagers.

The SPDC is currently intensifying its clampdown on the outlying areas of the district, and this results in even further restrictions on the “Peace” villages. Even sleeping away from one’s house at night can result in arrest for “contact with insurgents.” In the brown areas of Taungoo District, the “appropriate action” taken against such people usually means execution, or at the very least prolonged detention under torture. The prohibition against sleeping in field huts makes life very difficult for villagers in the cropping season, especially those whose fields are a significant distance from the village. The restrictions on

travel to Taungoo make it very difficult for traders to bring any goods into the area or for villagers to shop for required items in town. In practice, this restriction is used to extort money from traders before allowing them to travel and to “tax” everything they transport. In addition, there are at least six army checkpoints along the road from Baw Ga Li Gyi (Kler Lah) to Taungoo, and every checkpoint demands money or goods from passing drivers. Villagers in the area complain that, as with Kler Lah previously mentioned, this causes rice to cost 1,000 *kyat* more per sack in Baw Ga Li Gyi than it does in Taungoo; instead of 2,000 *kyat* per 50-kilogram sack it costs 3,000 *kyat*, a 33 percent increase. Other goods have similar mark-ups in their prices. Even in Taungoo the prices are already soaring due to commodity shortages in Burma, making this mark-up even harder to bear. To make matters worse, the few vehicles in the villages are often commandeered by the military or banned from travelling on the road whenever there are military operations ongoing, and whenever a village fails to send money or forced laborers as demanded; one of the most frequently used punishments is to ban the people and vehicles of the village from travelling. There are very few vehicles in the villages to begin with, but some of the vehicle owners have already moved to the plains because they can no longer face all these restrictions and pay all the extortionate fees required to transport people and goods to and from Baw Ga Li Gyi.

In Baw Ga Li Gyi (Kler Lah) village tract a complex system has developed of forced labor, fees to hire substitutes for forced labor, and “porter fees,” which is simply extortion money paid to the army with the understanding that failure to pay is punishable by arrest and an indefinite term of forced labor. This village tract is a group of over ten villages administered by the Village Tract PDC in Baw Ga Li Gyi, a large village of several hundred households. The Village Tract PDC is clearly working closely with the local SPDC battalions; the PDC officials receive orders from the battalions, then pass them on to the elders of all villages under their administration, sometimes with extra demands tacked on to enrich themselves. Initially the local battalions issue orders to the Village Tract PDC demanding numbers of forced laborers for a specific purpose. Knowing that the villages do not want to provide the labor and will be slow to comply, the Village Tract PDC often hires day laborers through agents in Taungoo, pays for their “car fees” (i.e. transport costs) to Baw Ga Li Gyi, and supplies them to the SPDC military. The Village Tract PDC then issues orders to the villages under their administration to pay their share of the cost based on the relative size (determined by the number of households) of their village; for example, a village may be ordered to pay for 10 of the 80 people hired by the Village Tract PDC. The amount is usually 4,000 *kyat* for each short-term porter plus 250 *kyat* for his “car fee”. At any given time there are well over 100 people doing forced labor assignments for the army camps in this village tract alone, and this only includes the regular monthly demands for rotating laborers.

Under this system even small villages must pay 30,000-80,000 *kyat* per month, and many simply do not have the money to do so because of all the other SPDC demands they have to meet. As a result, most villages fall behind in their payments, and once payments fall behind by a couple of months the Village Tract PDC often tells the village “we will no longer take any responsibility for you” and reports the village to the military for the inhabitants’ failure to “perform their duty”. A military column might then storm the village to loot and burn houses as punishment.

In addition to these fees, villages must give money directly to the military under the name of “porter fees” and other “fees” whenever they are arbitrarily demanded. Soldiers from the camps on the outskirts of the villages regularly wander into the villages and demand or steal livestock, food, valuables and money. Army camps send written demands for rice, meat, vegetables, fruits, cheroots, condiments, and building supplies such as bamboo and roofing leaves. When livestock is taken, the village head often collects money from all the villagers in order to reimburse the owner; in this way the heavy cost is distributed more tolerably among the villagers. Livestock is taken so often that some villages have a regular contribution system for this, with each family having to contribute a certain amount after each visit by the troops, the amount set by the village head depending on how much livestock has been stolen. One villager reported that in Taw Ma Aye village in the “white” area among the Sittaung River, those who cannot pay this contribution are ordered by the village head to take rotations of forced labor more often than other villagers.

In some areas the people are still staying in their villages, but flee to the forests whenever they hear of a SPDC patrol coming close. Many do not even dare stay in their villages, especially if their homes have already been burned. They stay in small groups in their farm-field huts or in the forest near their village. These people also watch out for any sign of SPDC patrols coming, and flee further into the hills when necessary. When the patrols come they pass through villages, loot whatever valuables they find, and sometimes burn houses if there are signs of habitation. They seek out the shelters of villagers in hiding and burn any they find. They also look for the rice supplies which villagers hide in paddy storage barns deep in the forest; when they find these, they take whatever they can and force their porters to carry them, then burn or destroy what remains. Villagers report that in some cases they have simply set the forest on fire, possibly to burn out those in hiding or their food supplies, and that these fires have spread to betel-nut and cardamom plantations and destroyed them.

Many people in the area are surviving by continuing to tend their gardens of cardamom peanuts and their betel-nut plantations. They then take these cash crops to the “Peace” villages, where they can sell them for money and buy rice to carry back into the forest with them. It is an extremely difficult and dangerous way to survive. Whenever SPDC patrols come close, they have to flee and can lose their crop, and as a result many people do not have the money required to buy rice to survive. Even if they can get a crop, if there are too many SPDC troops along the paths to the “Peace” villages, then they dare not go for fear of capture. If they make it to the “Peace” villages they are at great risk. As mentioned above, people in these villages are kept under tight restrictions and family lists are regularly checked; if the army finds out that villagers have come from outlying areas, they will be arrested.

6.7. Situation in Nyaunglebin District, Pegu Division

Nyaunglebin (known in Karen as Kler Lwe Htoo) district is a northern Karen region straddling the border of northern Karen State and Pegu Division. It contains the northern reaches of the Bilin (Bu Loh Kloh) River northwest of Papun, and stretches westward as far as the Sittaung (Sittang) River in the area 60 to 150 km north of Pegu (named Bago by the SPDC). The district has three townships: Ler Doh (Kyaukyi in Burmese), Hsaw Tee

(Shwegyin), and Mone. The eastern two-thirds of the district is covered by forested hills dotted with small Karen villages, and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) operates extensively in this region. The western part of the district is in the plains of the Sittaung River basin; here there are larger villages of mixed Karen and Burman population, and this area is under strong SPDC control. For several years now SPDC forces have tried to destroy Karen resistance in the eastern hills, largely by forcing villagers to move and wiping out their ability to produce food. Many villages in the parts of these eastern hills bordering Papun District have been destroyed since 1997 as part of the SPDC campaign to wipe out Karen villages in northern Papun and eastern Nyaunglebin districts.

Finding itself unable to suppress Karen resistance activity in the eastern hills of Nyaunglebin district, early in 1997 the SPDC began a campaign to wipe out all Karen civilian villages in the hills. Where villagers could be found, they were ordered to relocate westward into the plains; where they could not be caught, their villages were shelled without warning, looted and then burned to the ground, while villagers found afterwards were shot on sight. Most villagers fled into the hills to live in hiding in small groups of families while trying to grow small patches of rice, and many others moved westward as ordered into the plains, either to stay with relatives or to garrison villages along the main roads as the SPDC troops had demanded.

Many of the people who moved into the plains have now fled back into the hills. They say that they returned to the hills because they could not survive in the plains; they had no land to plant, there was no paid labour to survive on, and they could not face all the demands for forced labour and money from the SPDC troops. Some had died because they were not used to the water and the illnesses in the plains. Even though they knew their villages had been destroyed, that they would have to live in hiding and that they would be shot if found by SPDC patrols they still returned. Now they join the thousands of Karen villagers who have lived internally displaced in these hills since 1997.

In the hills the villagers are hiding in small groups of a few families in high valleys and other remote places. Apart from trying to grow small patches of rice, they have little or nothing to eat; most meals consist of a small amount of rice or thin rice gruel, combined with salt or chillies if they are lucky enough to have these, and some forest leaves or sour cucumber soup (which just consists of cucumber boiled in water with a bit of salt; cucumbers are grown among the rice in hill fields). As in many other areas, much of the already small rice crop was destroyed recently by the lack of rains early in the season and the plague of insects brought on by the drought.

SPDC patrols come through the hills as often as two or three times per month, burn any rice storage barns they find, shoot at villagers they see in the fields or the forests, and burn any shelters they find. When they find belongings they loot them and destroy whatever they do not want or cannot carry, even smashing the bottoms out of cooking pans. From September to November 1998, before the rice was ready to harvest, SPDC patrols went through many of the hillside rice fields they found pulling up the paddy plants by the roots, stomping them down with their boots or cutting them with machetes and scattering the grains on the ground.

The displaced villagers are always fleeing from one place to another to avoid the patrols. Some villagers say they will not build a proper shelter with a raised floor until the rainy season, because in the dry season the SPDC patrols are almost certain to find and

burn it. They have no change of clothing and few or no blankets, and have to sleep around fires in temperatures which can drop to 10 degrees Celsius or lower in the cool season. They have no medicines and speak of treating gunshot wounds by applying sesame oil after repeating incantations. These villagers dare not go down into the plains for fear of arrest as “insurgents”, and it is difficult or impossible for most of them to get to Thailand because they would have to pass through all of northern Papun district, where SPDC troops have destroyed even more villages and are patrolling to shoot villagers on sight. However, a small group of just over 100 refugees managed to make this difficult journey with the help of the KNLA and arrived in Ban Sala refugee camp in Thailand on January 10, 1999. Many of these were from Ler Wah and Tee Mu Hta villages of Ler Doh township, both of which were shelled and burned by SPDC troops in November 1998. The troops also shot at the villagers and burned the entire rice supplies of many families in these villages, giving them little option but to flee to Thailand.

6.8 Situation in Papun district, Karen State

Papun (Mudraw) district is bounded by Nyaunglebin district in the northwest, Thaton district in the southwest, and the Salween River and Thailand to the east. Over 100 villages in northern Papun District have been systematically shelled, burned and destroyed since 1997 by SPDC troops trying to eradicate support for Karen resistance in the region. About 100 of these were ordered to move, but many of the villages never saw the order because the villagers always flee when SPDC troops approach. In response, the SPDC launched a campaign simply to destroy all villages without warning.

The situation in northern Papun district remains very similar to what it was earlier in the year. Most villages have already been completely burned and destroyed, but SPDC patrols continue going through the area to burn any trace of villages which still remain, destroy food supplies, and the shelters of villagers who are hiding in the forest. These patrols have reportedly mined and booby-trapped the burned remains of some villages, because they know that villagers are in hiding nearby and that they frequently return to scavenge for food, belongings and materials in the burned ruins of their villages. Villagers sighted in the region are sometimes taken as porters, but are more frequently shot or otherwise executed on sight. In Lu Thaw township, at least two more villagers were executed on sight in September. The vast majority of villagers are living in small clusters of shelters and hiding deep in the forests and high in the hills, trying to reach their old hillside rice fields or to clear small new ones in the hills. These fields have not yielded much, especially with the lack of rain this past rainy season. In September, SPDC patrols were sent through Lu Thaw township to destroy rice crops where possible, and much of the crop was cut down with machetes or stomped on by the troops. Villagers in hiding in the forest are living primarily on roots and jungle leaves. Even in areas where SPDC troops seldom arrive, such as the Day Pu Noh area, there is almost no rice available and villagers are surviving on rice soup, sharing around whatever rice they can find or buy from town. Although villagers in this region are much closer to Thailand than in the other districts, most of them do not want to go because of their very close attachment to their land, their extreme fear of landmines and SPDC troops along the escape routes, and their fear of abuse and forced repatriation by Thai troops who they know may await them on arrival at the border.

6.9. Situation in Thaton district, Mon State

Thaton (Doothatu) district straddles the border of Karen State and northern Mon State. Being close to the coastal road and railway lines, this district is under quite heavy SPDC control, and the DKBA also has a significant presence in the eastern parts of the district. Only small Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) units can operate in the area, so while there is sporadic fighting in the area the villages there have not been systematically destroyed in retaliation. Several Karen villages near the Belin and Donthami rivers were forced to relocate to larger villages in 1997. Some of the people from the villages in the Donthami area are now reportedly trickling back to try living in their old villages or the surrounding forests. It is as yet unclear whether SPDC and DKBA troops will allow this to continue.

When fighting occurs, the normal response by SPDC troops is to detain and torture local village elders. This is accompanied in the area by fairly regular and systematic looting, demands for money and forced laborers as porters and at army camps. The future of villagers in this area will largely depend on the degree of activity conducted by the KNLA; assuming that the KNLA continues to operate there, it is likely that the SPDC will eventually clamp down further on the villagers by conducting further forced relocations.

6.10. Situation in Shan State

In central Shan State, the SPDC has destroyed over 1,400 villages since 1996, making over 300,000 people homeless. The campaign began by relocating and destroying about 400 villages in an attempt to undermine the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA). Villagers were given three to seven days to move to army-controlled sites, after which many of their homes were burned and anyone seen in their villages was shot on sight. When this operation failed to have any effect on the SURA, the SPDC expanded the relocation area and also forced many of those already relocated to move again, to even more crowded and tightly controlled sites. By early 1998 this forced relocation campaign had expanded to cover all the villages in an area of 7,000 square miles, totaling over 1,400 villages, and the area is still being expanded despite the fact that many of these villages have never had any contact with Shan opposition groups. The SURA has now joined with other groups to form the Shan State Army (SSA) and is seeking negotiations with the SPDC, but the junta has refused negotiations and vows to crush the Shan groups. The villagers are starving in the relocation sites, where the SPDC gives them nothing and uses them as forced labor building army camps and an air base, and maintaining and guarding roads into the area. Many villagers can be seen begging for food along these roads, while many others have been shot on sight or massacred by SPDC troops because they try to return to their villages to find food. An estimated 80,000-100,000 refugees from the region have already fled to Thailand and more continue to do so, but there are no Shan refugee camps in Thailand so they have no option but to enter the illegal workforce, ending up as cheap labor on plantations, construction sites, in sweatshops and as bonded labor in Thai brothels. The SPDC freely allows the ethnic Shans to flee into Thailand, and has now begun a practice of stripping them of their Burmese identity papers as they leave, probably in order to ensure that they can never return.

6.11. Situation in Karenni State

In Karenni over 200 villages have been forcibly relocated and destroyed since 1996, after the SPDC broke a cease-fire agreement to attack the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). Almost every hill village in the entire state has been destroyed. First the army issued orders that all villagers move to military-controlled camps within seven days or be “considered as enemy”. Patrols then went from village to village, burning and destroying everything and capturing or killing any villagers found. Some villagers are still struggling to survive by hiding in the forests, but most have fled to the towns or gone to the relocation sites, where they live in starvation conditions and are used by SPDC troops as forced labor maintaining army camps and as servants for soldiers. Since the beginning of 1998, SPDC troops have swept and destroyed villages in the south of the State where the relocation orders had not previously been strongly enforced, and have now begun expanding the relocations to include villages in northern Karenni State, along the Shan border, which had previously not been relocated because they are in an area partly controlled by the Karenni Nationalities People’s Liberation Front (KNPLF), a group which has a cease-fire deal with the SPDC.

6.12. List of Incidents

- ◆ On January 9, 1998, an SLORC column led by Major Htin Kyaw Thu from LIB 540 under the Operation Command 3 came to Beh Gaw Weh village, ThanTaung township, Karen State, and demanded a pig and 20,000 *kyat* in cash. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On January 12, 1998, SPDC troops led by column commander Major Kyi Min Oo from LIB 540 came to the cardamom fields of Dhe-doh village in Taungoo district, Pegu Division, and burnt down the huts together with cardamom seeds kept inside. The loss from the burning was estimated to be 150,000 *kyat*. The soldiers then entered the village and took the rice, salt, cooking oil, chickens and pigs of the villagers with making any payment. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On January 12, 1998, troops led by commander of LIB 547 looted three baskets of rice, 58 *viss* of betel nuts and five cattle from Gadoeta village of Kawkareik township, Karen State. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On January 19, 1998, troops led by Captain Saw Aung and Captain Aung Lwin of IB 355, came to Htee Klee Thu village in Kya-in township, Karen State, and looted 4,000 *kyat* and three chickens from the village. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On January 29, 1998, a military column from LIB 540 came to Tee Tabaw village in Htantabin township, Pegu Division, and burnt down four houses, looted cash and other items from the villagers. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On February 20, 1998, troops from LIB 709, 701 and IB 39 burnt down plantations of cardamom and betel nuts of the villagers from Gor Theh Doe, Khu Ler Doe, Si Hkeh Doe, Ploh Mu Doe, Ta Kwee Soe and Bu Sa Khee, Taungoo district, Karen State. (**Source: KIC**)
- ◆ On February 27, 1998, Captain Tin Maung Shwe from LIB 118 under Division 44, ordered Kru See and No Awlan villages in Thaton district, Mon State, to cut timber for

building a military camp and said the village failing to do so would have to pay 15,000 *kyat*. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ In the last week of February 1998, every village in the 10 townships of Mon State was ordered to provide 10,000 *kyat* each for the celebration of the 24th anniversary of Mon State Day in March. Mudon township PDC issued an order on February 23, 1998, requiring the villages in each township to contribute 11,000 *kyat* each for a music competition, sports competition and a beauty contest on Mon State Day. (**Source: MIS**)

◆ On March 3, 1998, company commander, Zaw Win Han and troops from IB 29, came to Htee Theler village in Papun district, Karen State, and looted 50 baskets of rice and four sacks of salts from the villagers. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On March 8, 1998, a column of LIB 538 led by deputy commander Zaw Tun Tin came to Maw Ku Doe village in Taungoo district, Pegu Division, and burnt down two paddy barns belonging to Saw Pan Ka and Saw The Moo which contained a total of 250 baskets of paddy. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On April 10, 1998, a company from IB 63 entered Kyi Po Khee village, Pa-pun district, Karen State, and burnt down all the houses in the village. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ Between April 12-14, 1998, troops from LIB 349 and IB 30 arrived at the area of Yai Mu Plaw village tract and burnt down six villages, namely Kaw Moe Paw Doe, Baw Leh Doe, Tee Tha Doe, Lar Eh Doe, May Pwe Hta and Ta Ku Doe. Altogether 83 houses, 25 baskets of paddy and 3,386 baskets of rice were burnt down and 30 buffaloes were killed. Two elders who could not walk were burnt alive in their houses. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On April 22, 1998, troops from IB 59, IB 30 and LIB 349 entered Hsaw Naw Khee village killing 27 buffaloes and two pigs. The troops burnt down 12 houses and nine paddy barns containing the total of 1,900 baskets of paddy. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On April 27, 1998, troops from IB 231 led by Captain Thant Zin forcibly took 15 buffaloes from Meta Khale village in Kya-in-seik-kyi township, Karen State. The troops demanded 70,000 *kyat* from the owners as ransom. (**Source: MIS**)

◆ In May 1998, the Navy 401 Yan Naing Group under the Tenassarim Navy Headquarter forcibly took over 40 acres of farmland from eight villagers from Ka Daik and Maw Ngan village at Kanbauk district, Tenasserim Division. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In May 1998, Col. Min Swe from Strategic Command 3 based in Kahtawni village, Ban Chaung tract, Tavoy township, Tenasserim Division, summoned the village headmen from Kahtawni, Kyauk Htoo, Thabyu Chaung and Maung Padu villages and ordered them to provide 6,000,000 *kyat* for funds for LIB 379 and 542. (**Source: Yoma 3**)

◆ In May 1998, IB 245, under the commander of Lt-Gen. Thein Sein, confiscated 500 acres of cultivated land in the area of Wan Khok and Kaeng Phawng villages in Keng Tung township, Shan State. The land was to be used for Keng Tung Regional College. (**Source: SHRF**)

◆ On May 1, 1998, No. 2 Tactical Command ordered the villagers from Dali, Aung Chantha, Tong Thai, Shwedo, Kyar Inn, Tagay, Bisakit, Htihuthan, Mekkatav, Mae Tala and Yathaya in Kya-in-seik-kyi township, Karen State, to provide a total of 213 tons of ironwood and to contribute labor for bridge construction. (**Source: MIS**)

◆ On May 2, 1998, policemen from Mudon Police Station took away the paddy from the barn of U Aung and Daw Aye Mi from Kamawat village, Mon State. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ On May 4, 1998, troops from LIB 707 entered Por Htar village, Papun district,

Karen State, and looted one pig, five hens and three pots from Gay Nay Htoo Pah, three boxes of medicine, four tins of rice and one radio from Pa Roe Pah, three boxes, one sewing machine, a pig and 15 pots from Pah Kye Pah, five goats, three tins of rice and seven hens from Pah Lu Htan, and three cooking pots and 100 tins of rice from Maree Htee. **(Source: KIC)**

◆ On May 6, 1998, a combined force of LIB 704 and LIB 706 entered Htee Bway Khee area, Papun district, Karen State and looted 4,000 *baht* from Saw Hsaw Pah Wah, 14,500 *baht* from Naw Thoo Pa and 1,000 *baht* from Saw Nyar Bwe Say. They looted 3000 *kyat*, 1,000 *baht*, and 20 silver coins from Yoe Kho Moe and also looted 10,000 *kyat*, 5,600 *baht* from Saw Kay Dah. **(Source: KIC)**

◆ On May 10, 1998, troops from LIB 701 entered Kho Mu Der village, Papun district, Karen State, and burnt all the houses in the village. They proceeded to Kay Pu village and again burnt down all the houses in the village. They also destroyed two farm huts. **(Source: KIC)**

◆ On May 31, 1998, No. 2 Tactical Command Commander Myint Hlaing and troops from LIB 709 came to Hart Toe village of Htantabin district, Pegu Division, and burnt down 10 houses, a church, five huts, 150 baskets of paddy and 35 hill plantation fields. **(Source: KIC)**

◆ On June 22, 1998, a military column from IB 59, led by commander Hla Than Maung, extorted 20 kg of rice from each household in Humu Doe, Ler Gla Doe and Glome Doe villages in Taungoon district, Karen State. **(Source: KIC)**

◆ In July 1998, 10,000 acres of farmland from the villages along the Thaton-Belin motor road were confiscated by the Division 44 based in Thaton, Mon State. These farmlands were taken by the military for their “10,000 Farmlands Project” for the division. The villages whose lands were confiscated were Mayagone, Mi Chaung Ai, Kalaung Inn, Shwe Yaung Pya, Ah Win Gyi, Zee Win, Cahung Zauk, Ye Wei, Kama Sai, Donwon, Taphet Swe, Shwe Hlwe, Taung Lay, Shwe Ein Ton, Dauk Yak, Khe Mauk, Tattu Gone, Kyat Khee Khat, Thit Cha Taung and Ka Dee, located along the Thaoton-Belin motor road in Mon State. **(Source: HRDU)**

◆ In July 1998, IB 61 ordered the villagers from Kyaung Tike village in Ye township, Mon State, to provide over 200 bamboo baskets for military operations. Each basket was 1.5 ft wide and high enough and to carry the mortar shells. Other 16 villagers in the Kyaung Tike village tract had to give 3,000 *kyat* each to the military. **(Source: Yoma 3)**

◆ In early July, 1998, LIB 408 Commander Lt-Col. Thet Hnin Oo summoned the owners of betel nut plantations from Ye Bon, New Lain and Kyauk Shut villages in Tenasserim Division. The Commander ordered the owners to sell 50 betel nuts from each betel plant without fail. The battalion would pay 50 *pya* for each betel nut which was much lower than the market price. Those who failed to sell betel nuts as demanded, would be punished and would not be allowed sell betel nuts in markets in Tavoy. **(Source: HRDU)**

◆ In the first week of August, 1998, SPDC LIB 547, 548 and 549 under the command of Operation Control Headquarters 12 based in Kawkareik, Karen State, confiscated 450 acres of farmland from 35 villagers in Nabu village tract, Kawkareik. The soldiers used the owners of the land to work for the military battalions without compensation or pay. **(Source: HRDU)**

◆ On August 12, 1998, village headmen from 18 villages in Kyaung Ywa tract in Ye

township, Mon State, were summoned to attend a meeting. The village track PDC chairman U Tun Ye ordered the villages to collect 22,000,000 *baht* for building a hospital in Kaung Ywa which was a part of a “Civil Town” project. (**Source: Yoma 3**)

◆ On August 25, 1998, about 3,800 acres from Daw Phaw Kale, Daw Phru Soe, Daw Htani, Daw Htanee and Nar Lee Lay were confiscated by the IB 102. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In September, LIB 408 stationed at Mintha village in Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division, forcibly ordered the Mintha villagers to sell 0.10 *viss* of lead per person daily. The soldiers bought one *viss* of lead for 450 *kyat* while the market price was 800 *kyat*. Those who failed to sell lead to the military were punished by having to dig a 10 ft wide and one ft high pit each along the Ye-Tavoy railway road and build the railway. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In early September 1998, IB 104 called the village headmen from eight villages in Myin Kan Baw village track, Tavoy township, Tenasserim Division and ordered them to pay a crop tax. Villagers had to pay 18 *kyat* for each betel nut plant, 15 *kyat* for each coconut tree and 5 *kyat* for each mango, jack fruit, and lime tree. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ Starting from September 13, 1998, people in Mon State had to pay 700,000,000 *kyat* for the disabled and handicapped soldiers of the SPDC army. The full amount would be levied and paid to the Southeastern Military Command by the SPDC authorities. As a result the SPDC authorities in Ye township levied 60,000 *kyat* for each trading business, goldsmith shop and mini-market shop, 50,000 *kyat* for each Toyota Hilux car, 10,000 *kyat* for each small-sized trading boat, 6,000 *kyat* for each rubber plantation, 10,000 *kyat* for each betel nut plantation, and 5,000 *kyat* for each grocery shop and teashop, beauty parlor and workshop in Mon State. All the money was given to the military battalion commander of IB 61 and LIB 343. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ On September 13, 1998, LIB 328 based in Murng Noong, Murng Khart township, Shan State, issued an order confiscating 60 acres of cultivated land belonging to the villages of Wan Tap, Wan Long and Wan Tong villages in the areas. The land was to be used to build a golf-course, a pond and a park for military personnel. (**Source: SHRF**)

◆ On September 15, 1998, troops from LIB 9, LIB 3 and IB 81 under the command of Division 44 burnt down nine villages, 80 km east of Hlaingbwe town, Karen State. The villages were Haw Waw Pho, Day Law Hta, Day Law Le Kala, Day My Kwee, Hta Ouk Khee Hta, Tala All Lu, Wa May Kho, Par Day and No La Pho. As a result, 3,000 villagers became homeless. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ On September 25, 1998, troops from IB 25 led by battalion commander Myint Soe ordered Pasaw Oo, Pyeecha, Ler Padoe, Kahtawni, Wah Gone and Mawka Chai villages to give 50,000 *kyat* each to reconstruct their army camp. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ In October, 1998, 10 acres of farm land owned by U Chut kalar and over 30 acres of 10 other villagers from Sin Ku village, Kanbaw district, Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division, were confiscated without compensation by the LIB 401 stationed at the village. The soldiers also forcibly used the local villagers daily on their confiscated farms without pay. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In October 1998, acting on the order of the Golden Triangle Special Regional Commander Lt-Gen. Thein Sein, LIB 314 confiscated 5,000 acres of paddy cultivated land from the villagers at Yang Mon, Yang La, Wan Kung, Nawng Kom and Wan Lur villages in Kaeng Tung township, Shan State. In November, the inhabitants of these five villages

were forced to grow corn for the military's confiscated land. The villagers would have to take the responsibility for all aspects of the cultivation process, from preparing the ground to harvest. (**Source: SHRF**)

◆ On October 6, 1998, troops from IB 48 and IB 30 seized 50 men and women from Baw Gali village, Taungoo district, Pegu Division, and ordered them to carry food supplies to Busa Khee and Takwee Soe army camps. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On October 14, 1998, a column of the special forces led by Captain Maung Maung, composed of selected soldiers from IB 60, IB 48, IB 59, IB 53, IB 73 and LIB 351 under the SPDC Northern Military Command, destroyed and burnt the houses owned by U Soe and U Tin Win, village leaders of Thit Cha Seik village, Kyaukkyi township, Pegu Division. Because they could not find the two leaders. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ Between November 6 and 8, 1998, the SPDC mobile column of IB 104 and 280 composed of 200 soldiers destroyed the hill cultivations of local villagers in the eastern region of Tavoy township, Tenasserim Division. The villages whose plots were destroyed were Kami, Gaung Say Chaung, Ka Htaung NI, Kalit Gyi, Samuhtaw, Seikku and Kyauk Twin in the eastern region of Tavoy township. The soldiers claimed that the action was aimed to cut the food supply and communications for the KNU troops in the region. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In November, 1998, farms and plantations of the local villagers along the Ka Daik and Ohn Pin Gwin village, Kanbaw district, Tenasserim Division, were confiscated by the Navy 401 Yan Naing Group under the Tenasserim Navy Headquarters, without compensation. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ In November 1998, paddy was forcibly confiscated from the seven villages in Bein Chaung district, Tavoy township, Tenasserim Division, by the troops from SPDC LIB 379 and LIB 373 under the command of Military Strategic Command 5. Soldiers took away 1,250 baskets of paddy from Phaung Daw village, 1,200 baskets from Han Kapi village, 500 baskets from Pha Tha Ye Pu, 1,200 baskets from Ka Htaw Ni, 640 baskets from Tha Byu Chaung, 1,500 baskets from Pya Tha Chaung, and 700 baskets from Kyauk Htoo village. (**Source: HRDU**)

◆ On November 9, 1998, troops from IB 35 led by commander Kyaw Thein demanded 20,000 *kyat* from Malardaw village, 20,000 *kyat* from Yulor village and 10,000 *kyat* from Kumulor village in Nyaunglebin district, Pegu Division. These sums of money had to be handed over to the military every month. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On November 11, 1998, troops from IB 35 went into Ho-khee and Sho-ha villages in Taungoo district, Pegu Division, and saw villagers carrying cardamom seeds. The troops took away a total of 56 viss of cardamoms from the villagers. (**Source: KIC**)

◆ On November 16, 1998 the KNLA ambushed SPDC troops from IB 285 at Pyicha village, Palaw township, Tenasserim Division, and killed five SPDC soldiers, injured one, and destroyed one truck. After that, SPDC troops clearing the area, looted and attacked the villagers. Four villagers were wounded and some property of the villagers seized. The troops entered Pyicha village and looted Saw Too To's properties, worth 40,000 *kyat*, Naw Paw Hay's belongings worth 20,000 *kyat*, Saw Ser Ser's shop and other properties. After the clash, SPDC's IB 285, Battalion Commander Soe Myint Aung demanded 2,000,000 *kyat* compensation for his fallen and injured soldiers from Pyicha village. He also forced Pyicha villagers to clear the area near the motor road for one week. He allowed the villagers

to take a break of only one hour during each day's work. (*Source: KIC*)

◆ On November 20, 1998, Mang Win Pe, a private from the DKBA, went into Htee-si-baw village in Thaton district, Mon State, and extorted a wrist watch worth 19,000 *kyat* from Saw Maung Nyo. On that day troops from IB 8 led by commander Min Naing severely beat Saw Kyaw Thein, who was a village headman of Lah-aw-kher village, and also demanded one chicken from every house of that village. (*Source: KIC*)

◆ In December, 1998, LIB 406 based in Dauklauk village and LIB 407 based in Padauk Gone village in Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division, forcibly purchased the farm products from the local villagers at a much lower price than the market price. The soldiers threatened the villages with land confiscation if they failed to sell the products to the military on their fixed price. The military purchased one *viss* of dried betel nuts for 700 *kyat* whereas the actual market price was between 1,100-1,200 *kyat*. (*Source: HRDU*)

◆ In December 1998, 12 wards in the Kyauk-pa-daung township, Mandalay Division, were ordered to give 3,000 *kyat* for every water hydrant in addition to the regularly collected water tax. The people did not know why this was being collected. Despite payments of the tax, there is no water supply. (*Source: Inside Burma*)

◆ In December 1998, every household had to pay 100 *kyat* for the Miss Beauty contest and 100 *kyat* for military training at the IB 78. This military training was compulsory for four USDA members from every ward. (*Source: Inside Burma*)

◆ On December 6, 1998, a military column led by Major Aung Thein Oo from LIB 341 entered Narky Plaw village in Papun township, Karen State. The troops shot randomly and later burnt down the whole village. The troops took 1,000 baskets of paddy and burnt the entire barns in the village later. (*Source: HRDU*)

◆ On December 24, Linke township PDC secretary U Than Lwin and a team of paddy purchasers arrived at Pon Hton village in Linke township, Shan State. They ordered the villagers to sell them eight baskets each without fail. (*Source: HRDU*)