

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

Notes: Names of people and places have, in some cases, been withheld or changed when deemed necessary to protect the victims, their families, or our information sources; however, the original source documentation contains complete and accurate information. Most of the events described took place in 1996, however, some events occurred in early 1997.

The following keywords describing human rights violations (HRV) have been used to index and cross-reference the report; the keywords appear at the beginning of each interview.

Assembly:	Freedom of assembly and association
Child:	Rights of child
Detention:	Arbitrary detention and enforced or involuntary disappearances
Displacement:	Internally displaced persons
Execution, Killing:	Extra-judicial, summary, or arbitrary executions
Expression:	Freedom of opinion and expression
Forced labor:	Forced labor and slavery
Judicial:	Judicial system and unfair trial
Livelihood:	Rights of livelihood (i.e., pillaging, extortion)
Minorities:	Protection of minorities
Movement:	Freedom of movement
Refugee:	Situation of refugees
Religion:	Freedom of belief
Relocation:	Forced relocation
Repatriation:	Forced repatriation
Slavery:	Forced labor and slavery (i.e., portering)
Torture:	Torture and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment
Women:	Discrimination and violations against women

Interview 1: Refugee

Name: "Saw Beh Htoo"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 28
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Buddhist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married with three children
 Address: Kwih Klay village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
 Date of Interview: February 2, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[When interviewed "Saw Beh Htoo" was staying in a hut just on the Thai side of the border.]

Q: How long did it take you to come here?

A: It took a day. Our village is to the west, near Kyaikdon. I've stayed here for one season, with my brother and sister.

Q: Did the SLORC come to your village?

A: Yes, they came. I was staying in the village when the SLORC came. I stayed about 25 days and then I came here. First I came alone, then I went back and called my family. I don't want to go back because the situation is not good.

Q: How many houses are there in Kwih Kalay village?

A: It has more than three hundred houses. Sgaw and Pwo Karen, Thai and Mon. About a hundred houses are Karen. Several families have come to stay here. The KPA come here all the time. They tell stories to try to get us to go back. They told me to go back to my village. He said, "You can go back, nothing will happen." I told him I won't go back, first I will stay here for 4 or 5 years and then maybe I will go back. I told him that I don't like Burmese soldiers.

Interview 2: Forced labor, Refugee

Name: "Saw Lay Ghay"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 30+
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Christian
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married with three children
 Address: Noh Dah Kee village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
 Date of Interview: February 22, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[When interviewed “Saw Lay Ghay” was staying in a hut just on the Thai side of the border.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here in October 1997, because the SLORC came into our village. After they came I stayed for less than a month. The SLORC told us to do so much for them that we couldn't do our own work, so we came here. Every day the SLORC told us to get rocks from the river and carry them up the hill. Their camp is on the hill, just near Lay Po Hta. We had to go every day to carry rocks. Every man in Noh Dah Kee village had to go every day.

Q: How many houses are in your village?

A: It has eleven houses. We came here with one other household. We came a secret way. Five households are still staying in our village. The SLORC [SPDC] makes the people work for them every day. The people have to carry rice up the hill for the SLORC whenever their rations come. I'm afraid to go back because the SLORC makes us work all the time, there is not enough food and I have no money to buy food. My house was made of bamboo, so I think it is probably destroyed by now. The Thai soldiers told us to go back but I am afraid of the SLORC. I will stay until the SLORC go back to their place. If they go back to their place I will go back to my village.

Q: Will you go back if the SLORC leaves and only the KPA stays there?

A: No, I am afraid to go back because the KPA also works with the SLORC.

Interview 3: Forced Labor, Refugee

Name:	“Saw Htoo Wah”
Sex:	Male
Age:	35
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Dta La Ku, sect group
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital status:	Married with two children
Address:	Kwih Lat village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
Date of interview:	February 20, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[When interviewed “Saw Htoo Wah” was staying in a hut near a Dta La Ku village in Thailand. The Dta La Ku are a minority in Kwih Kler and are sometimes persecuted by other Karens; they wear their hair long, tied in a top knot.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: Five months ago. We came because the Burmese persecuted us until we couldn't stay in our own village any more, so we came to live here near our religious center.

Q: How did they persecute you?

A: They forced us to work for them. They told us that they would go just over there [a short distance], but then they made us go for two to three days. They forced us to carry very heavy things. Although we could not carry the things, we had to try hard until we could no longer do. We had to carry bags of cement, bullets, rice and other food. We had to carry anything that they needed us to carry for them. They came and commanded the headman, and the headman called us. Because we love peace and we wanted to live in our village peacefully, we went and obeyed their orders whenever our village headman told us to go. Thirty people from Kwih Lat Der village had to go to do that. One person from each family.

Q: How many houses were there in Kwih Lat Der village?

A: About 30 houses I think. If people had not run away, there would have been more than that. For portering, not only the people from Kwih Lat Der had to go; the people from Kwih Kler, Kwih Chit Mu, Meh Tharaw Hta, and Maw had to go together. There were more than 100 porters on the trip. That trip was the very worst. I didn't count the times I had to go, but it was many times. Sometimes it took one day, sometimes one day and one night. When I was there I had to go two to three days at a time, or three to four days at a time. It was never the same. They told us they would only go for one day, and sometimes they really went for one day. Sometimes they spoke the truth, but often they did not. They always said to us that they would go to a nearby place, but sometimes they went to very far places. From Kwih Lat Der to Htee Hta Baw, from Maw to Kwih Lat Der, K'Yeh Theh to Kwih Lat Der, Kyaw Kwa to Kwih Lat Der.

Q: When did they start ordering you to be porters?

A: Since they started to come. They came last April [1997]. They have been forcing us to work ever since they came. When they arrived in the village all the villagers fled, so they called the villagers back into the village. At first they did not use the villagers as porters, but after the villagers had all been back in the village for a while they started. First they forced us to build buildings for them, then when that was finished they started using us as porters.

Q: Where was the Burmese battalion camp?

A: Their main camp is in Saw Hta [Azin]. They also had a camp in Kwih Lat Der and a camp in Ber Kler. And another in Pu Kler. The big men [senior officers] are living in Saw Hta. Their troops are changing often. One group comes up for two to four months and then they change. Right now [Infantry] Battalion 62 is living there.

Q: Are they building a road in Kwih Lat Der area?

A: Not yet. They're not building a road yet.

Q: Are there any DKBA soldiers in your village?

A: No, the DKBA has already left by now. There are KPA living there. When I was in my village they hadn't come yet, but now they are living in my village. Some people who go back and forth to our village told us that the KPA are in our village, walking around together with Burmese soldiers.

Q: I've heard that more than 2,000 people from Kwih Lat Der and Kwih Kler came to live here, but now more than 1,000 of them have gone back again, so why don't you go back?

A: Some people are still living here and some have gone back. My whole family is here. I won't go back yet, because we are worried about the problems they will make for us. That is why we dare not go back. I'm not sure how long I'll be here.

Interview 4: Forced Labor, Relocation, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: "Pa Boe"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 30
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Dta La Ku sect
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married with four children
 Address: Kwih Kler village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
 Date of Interview: February 20, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[When interviewed "Pa Boe" was staying in a hut near a Dta La Ku village in Thailand.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: My village is Kwih Kler. I guess it takes about three or four hours to walk from here.

Q: How many months have you stayed here?

A: I fled Burma and came here one or two months ago. I came because we had a bad time there, because they forced us to do their work until we had no chance to do our own work. They forced us to do many things such as portering, standing as sentries, and many other kinds of labor. We had to carry bullets for their sentry troops. Many people from Kwih Kler had to go.

Q: Where did you have to go as porters?

A: Sometimes to nearby places and sometimes far away. If they were sentry troops based nearby they would set us free sooner, but if they were going down to the town to change their troops then it would take many weeks. Sometimes they did not tell the truth. If they said that a trip would take two or three days, it really took one to three weeks. Many people had to face that. Some people coughed up blood after they came back from portering. If we had not come here we would still be serving as porters. When they first arrived [in February 1997], we ran away. After that we went back to the village to stay, and we've had to go as porters since then, until just before we came here. Now we do not dare go back.

Q: How many families live in Kwih Kler village?

A: At first there were more than 100 families, but now fewer families are left in the village. Some have left, but some still stay.

Q: Where was the camp of the Burmese who forced you to be porters?

A: In Kwih Kler they had a camp, and we also had to go to their Saw Hta camp. I'm not sure how many soldiers they had because they changed their troops often. They're not the same as Karen soldiers- sometimes they changed once or twice in one month. So I don't know how many soldiers there were. They had many groups. Right now IB 62 is in the village.

Q: Were there other types of labor that you had to do for them?

A: We had to do many kinds of labor for them. We haven't had to build the motor road yet, but we will have to build one. There is a motor road in the village but it is not good.

Q: Were the villages in Kwih Kler area relocated?

A: Some people still stay in the village. Some people such as the Dta La Ku didn't like to stay in the village any more because they couldn't live according to their religion. There were many different kinds of religion in the village, so it was difficult for the Dta La Ku to practice their religion. In the village there were Baptists and Buddhists. The Dta La Ku wanted to go away but the village headman never allowed them to leave the village, so some Dta La Ku tried to run away secretly. Many families came with us, about ten families. In Kwih Kler there were not too many Dta La Ku people but there are still some families left in Kwih Kler. Some Dta La Ku people who came here also went back. Before they went back there were nearly twenty Dta La Ku families [from Kwih Kler] here.

Q: Many people already went back, so why don't you go back?

A: I do not dare to go back because I am afraid of the Burmese. I will go back when there is peace in my village, after the Burmese leave my village, because the Burmese treated us badly.

Q: How can you get your food here? Can you farm here?

A: Yes, we must farm.

Interview5: Relocation, Livelihood, Refugee

Name:	"Ni Reh"
Sex:	Male
Age:	60
Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Christian
Occupation	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with four children but six of them already dead
Address:	Saw So Leh village, Shadaw township, Karenni State
Date of Interview:	March 1, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[“Naw Wah” is married to “Ni Reh”. They were interviewed just after arriving in Thailand on March 1, 1998.]

“Naw Wah”: I lived in Saw So Leh village for 30 years. Two years ago the soldiers ordered the villagers to relocate so we went and stayed in Loikaw township, at Nwa La Bo consolidation village [relocation site] for three months. In Nwa La Bo consolidation village they didn’t give us any food, and they accused my husband of supporting the KNPP. The [Military] Intelligence called him and asked him questions very often, so we fled from Nwa La Bo consolidation village.

“Ni Reh”: We moved to Nwa La Bo consolidation village because the soldiers promised the villagers that they would provide rice, other rations and medicines. But then they only accused me of joining the Karenni rebels [KNPP], so after three months at Nwa La Bo I fled back to my village.

“Naw Wah”: When we reached our village again we saw only a burnt place. The Burmese had burned down the village, so all the houses and rice barns had disappeared. But we had some paddy in the jungle that we had hidden before they burned down the village, so we stayed and hid in the jungle where our food was hidden. We stayed in the jungle for two years.

“Ni Reh”: I didn’t want to go back to Nwa La Bo and I didn’t want to go to the Thai border either, so I stayed in the jungle near my village. Infantry Battalion 54 had burned down the village and they took three buffaloes, one pig, 20 chickens and 500 tins of paddy. In our village over 1,000 tins of paddy and more than 100 buffaloes, pigs, cows and chickens were lost. We ate wild vegetables and fruit and boiled rice for two years in the jungle. If we were sick we had no medicine to treat ourselves so we had to treat ourselves with natural medicines. Now the SPDC soldiers are trying to find us, they started coming to shoot at us very often and they also arrested some other villagers, so we fled to this refugee camp.

“Naw Wah”: The SPDC troops came to the jungle very often, so we had to hide all the time and we were worried that the SPDC soldiers would find us. So we couldn’t make a fire to cook and we were hungry very often. As adults we could bear it, but the children cried when they were hungry so we had to cover their mouths and spank them very often. They couldn’t go to school for two years. We heard that there was a school on the border [in the refugee camps] and we felt pity for our children, so we left our own village and fled to the refugee camp.

Interview 6: Arrest, Relocation, Forced Labor, Livelihood, Refugee

Name:	“Mi Su”
Sex:	Female
Age:	25
Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Single
Address:	Su Leh village, Shadaw township, Karenni State

Date of Interview: March 3, 1998
Source: KHRG

[“Mi Su” was interviewed just after arriving in Thailand at the beginning of March. On arrival she had to be sent to hospital with tuberculosis.]

In 1996 the SLORC forced the villagers to leave our village, so we moved to Nwa La Bo village in Loikaw township. In Nwa La Bo consolidation village [relocation site] the SLORC didn't give us any rations or any medicine, so we fled back to our own village. When I fled back the SLORC arrested my mother and my elder sister, so I kept going back to my village with another sister. When we reached our own village we saw only ashes, so we hid and stayed in the jungle near our village for two years. While we were hiding in the jungle we had no medicine so it was very difficult, but I didn't know how to come to the border so I stayed in the jungle and got tuberculosis.

Q: Why did you flee and come here in the end?

A: Now the SPDC soldiers are looking for the villagers and arresting them, so it is very difficult to stay there and we had to flee here. Now I stay at the refugee camp hospital to get treatment for tuberculosis.

Interview 7: Livelihood, Forced Labor, Arrest, Killing, Relocation, Refugee

Name: “Pa Hla Myint”
Sex: Male
Age: 30 +
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Dta La Ku, sect group
Occupation: Farmer
Address: Kwih Kler village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
Date of interview: February 20, 1998

[This interview was conducted with a group of villagers who had just left Kwih Kler village a few days earlier. In the first part of the interview, “Pa Hla Myint” read from his notes on events that had happened, which he had written on very small and concealable index cards. He kept his notes in the form of a ‘Ta’, a traditional Karen poem. The rhythm of the Ta does not translate into English, so we have translated his words without the rhythm.]

Listen from the beginning to the end please.

At the end of January 1997 we had to flee, we lost our things and our things were destroyed. We became poorer until we were not happy to farm to earn our livelihood. The things we had lost were: 5,300 pounds of salt; 13 baskets full of rice; three big tins of rice; a new bullock cart. After that we went back to our village to live again. When we lived in our house again, we again lost one mat; one big tin of rice; one pot; a pair of slippers; a bottle of kerosene; one basket. Moreover, we had to go and cut bamboo, and make the road

with our own hands. We had to dig out the mud on both sides of the road. We had to cut a lot of bamboo until there was enough to use [to build the SLORC camp]; we had to find bullock carts until we had enough carts. The carts, the cars, the elephants and motor-carts [small three-wheeled tractors] could never rest. After that, in the second week of April, they again needed four bullock carts with four people for one week to go to get the sand and brick to build pagodas. After that they could go back home. We must write down about every occurrence in our notes to tell our neighbors and friends. In Ber Kler which is near the border, they ordered 20 people from Meh Naw Dah to go and carry rice for the Burmese three times. The last time, there were about 300 small sacks of rice which were carried by 48 people. In each sack there were three big tins of rice [50 kg/110 lb]. They used us to carry rice like their slaves.

When IB 231 arrived in our place, they forced the people to build their bunkers, and to carry stones before building the bunkers. They ordered 40 bullock carts from us. We couldn't give 40 bullock carts because we never had them. So we had to gather our money and hire a truck. The weight of the big stones was 1800 pounds. So it was not easy to carry.

The school was still good but they were not satisfied. They ordered us to take off all the zinc [roofing] to build the school in another place. Then the zinc was not enough for the new school. So they ordered every villager to give money to them for the zinc. Each family had to give 400 *kyat*. The poor people who had no money had to borrow from their neighbors or sell their things to give 400 *kyat* to them. So it was a difficult thing for the poor people.

Another thing had to do with the farm-animal traders. They like to buy and sell farm animals because they get a good income, but their problem is that the SLORC disturbs them. At night the SLORC soldiers would arrest the traders. Some traders were clever and hid with their animals in the deep forest, so the soldiers could only arrest some of the traders. The traders who were safe were happy but the traders who were captured by the SLORC soldiers had to pay a lot of money; 10,000 *kyat* to the SLORC soldiers to be free. At night time the traders would not sleep, they would eat myin say [an amphetamine-type drug] and think about what they could do to earn a living. The SLORC stopped them from trading their farm animals. If the SLORC could capture them, they would have to pay 10,000 *kyat* to save themselves. So I don't want my people, my friends, to do this job.

May 13, 1997, Tuesday night.

At 10 o'clock the Burmese showed a movie for the villagers to watch. A few minutes passed by and they turned off the movie projector and shot their guns, and they shot their heavy weapons four times. The shells fell in the village. Two shells exploded but the other two did not. Then they fired Chinese rockets many times [107mm Chinese ground-fired rockets]. Then they said that the villagers were trying to attack them, but actually the villagers didn't do that. They were just looking for a way to attack our religion.

They forced four people to take turns doing sentry duty. The people have to make fences for the SLORC; have to be porters and have to do the work that the SLORC orders them to do. In rainy season Mae Naw Dah River was flooded. They ordered people to go and carry things with their bullock carts. They forced the bullocks to cross the river with the carts, through the flowing river. So the cart and the bullocks started floating away with

the water. The people had to cut off the rope tied around the necks of their bullocks. It took 100 people to help those bulls and carts. In August 1997 Karen people, both Sgaw and Pwo, had to suffer big problems. The problem was going from Meh Tharaw Hta monastery to Htee Hta Baw village. One bag was 1 mer 8 viss heavy [1 viss=1.6 kg, 1 mer = 10 viss; i.e. 18 viss, a total weight of 28.8 kg/63.3 lb]. We had to carry those cement bags. Then we ran away to escape from the problems. So we ran over to Thailand. The Thai soldiers drove us back to Burma which filled us with despair. We went back the first time and it got worse for us. We went back the second time and we reaped our paddy [refugees in this area were forced back to Burma several consecutive times by the 9th Division of the Thai First Army]. Some were finished but some were not finished yet. After three days a land mine exploded and Paw Eh Pa died. He was Dta La Ku sect group. We honored his body by cremating him. He stepped on the landmine when he went to his own crop early in the morning, about half past five on January 3, 1998. Everyone in the village knew about that. His coconut crop became the Burmese soldiers' crop. He had to die for his crop, so we pitied him a lot.

After every harvest the SLORC [SPDC] soldiers don't allow us to dry our paddy, so we villagers are in trouble because we have no rice to eat. We have to go hungry. In 1998 on February 5, we cooked Yah Hu in the big wok [a mixture of sticky rice, sesame, coconut, oil, peanuts and other ingredients turned slowly in a wok until crispy brown as a festive snack; usually done by the whole community together at this one time each year]. But a problem occurred. The monk told us that we all must not eat Yah Hu. He said, "If you want to eat it, go back and cook Yah Hu in your own house". He ordered us to put water on the fire, to blow out the fire and to beat the big jars and pots into pieces. He told us that everyone must bring the food to the monastery. Anyone who did not bring his food would get his name written on a list by the monk. [The SPDC troops had probably ordered the monk to hand over all the 'Yah Hu' to them.] That is the end of my notes.

[Note: in the continuation of the interview below, the 'second man' is another villager from Kwih Kler, and the 'third man' is a village elder in the area.]

Q: When did you leave Kwih Kler and come here?

"Pa Hla Myint": Three days ago. Right now the Burmese are doing nothing. It is better than it was in rainy season. Now the problem is for the Dta La Ku people. Dta La Ku can't carry weapons and become soldiers. Everyone knows that we do not make good soldiers. First they came to make the family list [of all families in his village]. But after we gave them our family information, they changed our family list to the KPA list. Thirty-one households of Dta La Ku put their family names on the list but later they said that it was not a family list but a Peace Army list. They said the families who are on their list must become soldiers. So we bravely stood up to them and told them that we would never enter into the Peace Army. We told them, "If you want to kill us, we agree to die, but we can't do their 'peace' work." They needed us to become soldiers. They would teach us through their training, they would give us guns. So we said that we couldn't do work which involves carrying weapons and shooting people. "If you kill us we agree to die." We don't want to go into battle. So they got angry with us and told us that they would report us to Than Shwe and the UN. We said: "do as you like, if you want to report to Than Shwe, we don't mind

[Than Shwe is Chairman of SPDC].” If you want to kill us we will let you kill us, but we must not go into battle in our lifetime. That is our problem.

Second man: Lone Shwe [a KPA officer] said that if we don’t do as the others do, it means we are their enemies. Yes, he said that.

Third man: First the KPA told us that they wanted to know how many families of Dta La Ku are in each village: Kwih Kler, Maw, Kwih Lat Der and Kyaw Kwa. They needed to know how many men 40 years old and above there were, and how many men and boys between 15 and 40 years old. After they obtained this information they told us that every male person between 15 and 40 years old must become a KPA soldier. They hadn’t told us that at first. That is why we are not happy.

“Pa Hla Myint”: To get people into the KPA they didn’t say that people must become KPA, they just said that they wanted to know how many families there are in each village and how old the people are. After that, they said that men 15 to 40 years old must become KPA. Only the Dta La Ku. They will take everyone, because they already know our number and our ages.

Third man: After that when they started to collect the names for soldiers, they lied to us by saying that many Dta La Ku people from Maw already joined the KPA, and when they came to Kwih Lat Der they said that many people from Kwih Kler had already joined. The people from Kwih Lat Der and Kwih Kler couldn’t understand anything that was going on. Only when we met each other and talked together did we know that no one had wanted to join and that they had lied to us. They said, “People who won’t obey our orders must be our enemies.”

Second man: Because of this 43 Dta La Ku people from Maw and 12 people from Kwih Lat Der joined the KPA at first. The KPA said that people who did not join the KPA like the others already had must be their enemies.

Q: Do you think that KPA and KNLA are fighting each other now?

Third man: If the KNLA comes and shoots them, I’m sure that they will shoot the KNLA back. If you have a gun then others will think you are their enemy, and everyone wants to shoot you. That’s why we don’t want to carry guns. I want to say this. If you are not carrying weapons and I’m not carrying weapons, we see each other and sit together and talk to each other in peace. If you and I are both carrying weapons, then it is not easy for us to sit together. We will have to be afraid of each other and stay far from each other. If neither of us has weapons, we don’t need to be afraid of each other, we will sit closely and talk to each other. So it is not easy for us to answer [groups which ask them to take sides]. If we carry weapons, the other groups will think about us, “Are they our enemy?” And then they dare not come to sit with us. So we don’t want to do bad things like that. Real peace is to sit together like this.

Q: How many KPA soldiers do you think there are now?

Third man: The KPA is really quite new so there are no more than 300 soldiers who have

passed the training. Most people are not interested in the KPA. There were 12 people from Ker Kee village who joined. The KPA recruits have already gone for training now, but none of the Dta La Ku people have gone. We already held a meeting with them and told them that the Dta La Ku can't become soldiers. They reported it to the Burmese operations commander, but he told them, "I won't crush the Dta La Ku by forcing them to join the army, because they are practicing their religion which prohibits holding arms." But the KPA leader said that the people who live in this area must not remain separate from the KPA. He never agrees with the operations commander. So the Burmese commander told him, "I can't do it, but if you can do it, go ahead." The KPA commander said he would go ahead. We are angry with him because he is our own race. When we went for a meeting with him the other day, they talked about the militia, nothing else. They said the Dta La Ku must join the KPA or its militia.

Q: How do the KPA get bullets and food?

Third man: They get all of them from the Burmese. They have their own camp at Saw Hta [Azin]. Their headquarters used to be the Saw Hta women's office [the Karen Women's Organization, connected to the KNU, had its office there before the SLORC occupation in February 1997].

When they called the first meeting to build up the KPA, they explained that the villages along Ser Yah Kloh and Ta May Kloh [rivers] belong to the KPA and the Burmese, so they said they will develop the villages there to become towns. They will develop the road so they can travel in all seasons. They will do logging, and they said they will share the money with the villagers. They said they will destroy the KNU because it gives problems to the SLORC and makes villagers become soldiers. They said if there is no KNU there will be peace in the area, so if we see some KNU people we must send them to the KPA to become KPA.

Q: Are the Burmese or KPA working on the motor roads?

Third man: In Saw Hta they're working on the motor road, but they haven't finished it to Kwih Kler yet. They came up from Rangoon and Moulmein to Kya In Seik Gyi, then on to Ber Kler and the border. The children counted 31 trucks but we heard that the number is really more than that. We heard 50 to 60 trucks were coming. Thirtyone trucks reached the border so far. Five of them were four-wheel drives; three of those carried Burmese soldiers, and two of them carried KPA. We heard that the new road will go to Kyo G'Lee and Kwih Ta Khoh. They've brought 500 prisoners to help them. They brought them from the jails in town. They're using both machines and people to build the roads.

Q: I heard that the SPDC wants to build a road from Saw Hta to Htee Hta Baw.

Third man: Yes, they have plans but it has not started yet. They will start at Kya In Seik Gyi and build to Saw Hta and Ber Kler. They also want to build an all-season road to Htee Hta Baw. I heard that they'll need 500 people to build that road, but we haven't seen it yet.

Q: Have you heard any news from Htee Hta Baw area [further south, toward the Three Pagodas Pass]?

Third man: Many of the villages have been destroyed between here and there, such as Htee

Mu Ku, Lay Wah Chut, Kyaw Kwa, and Kyay Loh Neh. There are no people in Htee Hta Baw, Htee Po Chut and Htee Po Maw. The SPDC stays around there now. It is in Waw Raw township. Down there the people still stay in the villages near the Thanbyuzayat road [to the Three Pagodas Pass], but I heard that they have many problems. They have to be afraid of both SPDC and KNU.

Q: Do the SPDC stay in Kwih Lat Der now?

Third man: Yes, they are camped in Kwih Lat Der right now. They have about thirty or forty troops. Their Battalion number is 62. They stay with the KPA. There are four KPA there. Those KPA used to be KNLA soldiers, but then the SLORC arrested them and they went to be DKBA for a while, and now they have become KPA and they stay with the SPDC troops. There are about 47 houses in Kwih Lat Der. Some villagers are still staying there; for example, if there are four or five people in a family then maybe two or three of them have fled to Thailand and the others are still in Kwih Lat Der. Now our people are in a terrible situation from all sides. We must be afraid of the Thais as well as the Burmese.

Q: How do you feel to stay here?

“Pa Hla Myint”: It’s nice for us to stay here but the problem is food. If we had enough food here we would never go back to our village to see their faces again.

Second man: The people from here sent us back to our village because they didn’t have food to share with us. We’d rather not go back. We’ll try to live here and just go back to our village to get our food stocks and bring them here.

“Pa Hla Myint”: The people from our village taunt us, they say, “Look, the squirrels are coming to steal food. They are thieves.” They call us “squirrels” because of our hair. We feel upset to hear that, but we pretend that we don’t hear. We go on and retrieve our food.

Second man: You can call us thieves, but we never steal other people’s things. We only go back to take our own food from our own farms.

Q: Do you want to say anything else?

“Pa Hla Myint”: What I really want to say is that I want our brother Burmese to keep the Dta La Ku together in a safe place which is free from portering, forced labor and battle. We don’t want to be soldiers. I can’t understand why they don’t let us have a place like that. Burma is very big and I think that in such a big land there must be a safe place for us somewhere. But we can’t ask them for it because there are no educated people among us who can go and ask them. I hope our English brothers will help us by saying that for us. We are hoping for help from our English brothers.

Interview8: Livelihood, Forced Labor, Relocation, Arrest, Torture

Name:	“Saw Lah Htoo”
Sex:	Male
Age:	24

Ethnicity: Karen
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married no children
 Address: K'Ma Kler village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
 Date of interview: February 22, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[“Saw Lah Htoo” fled his village during the 1997 SLORC offensive and now works in a shop in the Thai Karen border village of Ber Kler, immediately opposite a major SPDC Army base.]

Q: Do you know the news from Kyaikdon?

A: Yes, I know. I hear the news because the traders came and told me. The Burmese are assessing the value of the land of everyone who lives in Kyaikdon. Some plots cost 50,000 *kyat*, and some cost 30,000 *kyat*. On the expensive pieces of land, the roofs of the buildings must be zinc. Everyone has to buy their land back from the SPDC. For example, if they appraise my land for 50,000 *kyat* I must buy it from them for 50,000 *kyat*.

Q: How much land do you get for 50,000 *kyat*?

A: I don't know the exact measurements, but it is just enough to build an ordinary house.

Q: Do the people who stayed in Kyaikdon and never fled also have to buy their own land back?

A: Yes, they have to buy it. People who never had land can also buy it for the same price, so they are actually better off than the landowner, because they didn't own the land before. At K'Mah Kler, the SPDC came and took all the betelnuts and coconuts. The villagers couldn't get any money for it because the SPDC took them all. They also took all the chickens. If the villagers tried to stop them they showed them a knife or a gun.

Q: Do the villagers have to do any forced labor?

A: Yes, the Burmese force the villagers to do things. The villagers have to give money to buy petrol and oil because the Burmese are building a road with machines but they say they have no petrol, so the villagers have to give them money to buy the petrol. Villagers who don't have any money to give have to build the road. They are improving the road from Kyaikdon to [Kya In] Seik Gyi.

Q: Can the villagers in that area stay in their villages or are they forced to move?

A: The people in Kyaikdon do not need to move because their village is big. But a woman just came a few days ago and told us that the Burmese forced them to move from Meh Naw Dah Hta to Kwih Kler because there were only a few houses in her village, but she never moved. She said, “I have my house here so I will stay here.” The others moved but she alone stayed behind. The Burmese stole her hammock.

Q: Do the people still stay in the villages just across the border here?

A: Yes, there are villagers there. The Burmese don't torture them but they steal the villagers'

chickens and other things. They don't torture them because they are afraid that the villagers living near the border will run to Thailand.

Q: Where are the SPDC camps?

A: They have a camp here at the border and another one at the old headquarters gate [near Kwih Kler, an hour away]. There are also camps at Meh Tharaw Kee and Ywa Plaw. The Battalions are No. 545 and No. 62.

Q: Can the villagers move around freely?

A: They can move around, but they need a movement paper. They have to ask permission from the SPDC officers. It depends on the officer. If the villagers need to go somewhere for five days then they have to ask permission for five days. Usually they can get passes for three days. For one pass they have to pay 50 baht. Villagers come here often from Kyaikdon, Saw Hta, Meh Dah Hta, Meh Dah Kee, Kwih Kler, Th'Ray Kee, and Kyaw Kee. They come in passenger cars and on foot.

Q: Can the villagers prepare their fields?

A: No they can't, because they have to build the road and do other forced labor. The Burmese have ordered them to work on the road to make it much better. Each person has to go to work for them for five days, then come back to his own work for two days. You have to work very hard, because you only get two days to work for yourself and then you have to do five days' work for them.

Q: Do you think more people will flee to Thailand?

A: They couldn't survive there [in Burma] but they don't want to come here, firstly because they have their own land and possessions to think about, and secondly because the Thais don't allow them to come. It's not easy for them to come.

One man who came here and went back home was caught by the Burmese and they tied him up, hung him in the air and then lit a fire under him. He didn't die because he had good medicine. Now he stays in Thay Pu Law Htwee. People don't want to go back [to Burma]. I ask them why. They say that they don't want to carry [loads as porters] any more. If people come here the SPDC collects tax from them [along the way]. If they stay there the SPDC tortures them and takes their things. Some people stay there just because the KPA tells them to stay, or because they decide to join KPA. The SPDC controls that group of people. They created it as a new group. The KPA sent people here to Noh Po [refugee camp] and said that the SPDC is asking us to go back because the SPDC will give us peace. They said if we go back we will get peace for sure. It is not for sure at all, and they cannot get peace for us that way.

Now they want to get more KPA members. They told people that if they join the KPA they won't have to do anything, that if we join the KPA the Burmese won't abuse us or use us for forced labor and we can stay freely. They said if you join they will mark your house and no one there will have to do forced labor. Now they are gathering people and giving training.

Q: Does the DKBA stay in this area?

A: No, they don't stay here any more because the KPA told them to leave. The KPA aren't afraid of the SPDC, the SPDC gave power to them so they think they can do everything, but one day the SPDC will take the guns back from them, I'm sure of it. If all the people go back to Burma then the SPDC will take back the guns from both the KPA and the DKBA. They just want the KPA and DKBA to attack people in Thailand until everyone comes back, then they will take back all their weapons. The KPA and DKBA don't like each other.

Q: Do you think people can all go back to Dooplaya and live there peacefully soon?

A: No. We can't survive there. People who live in Burma are not happy to stay, some say that if the KNU fights the SPDC then they will fight the SPDC too. They should give people rights and democracy. If there is no democracy we will be their slaves forever. Whatever they tell us to do we must do, if they say don't move we must not move, if they say we must die then we die. We cannot live like that. We've been here for one year now. When No. 44 Division came to our village we fled to escape it and came here. If the SPDC stays there forever then we will stay here forever. We don't like our lives here but at least we live our lives.

Q: What about here, you said that the Burmese came and took one old woman's betelnut!

A: The SPDC soldiers came and took betelnut from Ber Kler on the Thai side. They climbed right up people's trees and took the fruit. Then the headman told them not to come and steal like that so they didn't come again. [There is a major new SPDC army base directly across the border from Ber Kler. At the time of the interview SPDC soldiers in mufti were crossing the border and hanging around the village every day.] They came and stole the betelnut, then they sold it to other people because they have no money. The Thai soldiers did nothing, they just said they wouldn't allow the SPDC to come any more but the SPDC soldiers still come very often. They come every day, they even come to my shop with pistols. They wear simple clothes like ours but they come with pistols. It is the officers who carry the pistols.

Q: What do the Thai soldiers do if they see the pistol?

A: The Thais don't do anything because they are very afraid.

Q: What do the SPDC soldiers usually buy here?

A: They usually buy alcohol and clothes. They come and sell charcoal and cattle. If they get money they buy fish and chicken to eat. It is the privates who burn the charcoal, because they have no money. But the officers get their money from the villagers. For example, if people come here to buy things they have to pay the officer 10,000 *kyat* as tax. People who come to sell cattle have to give them 200 baht for each cow. Here 10 *kyat* is worth 1.5 baht, but they usually pay in baht.

Q: Do the SPDC soldiers make much trouble here?

A: When they come we have to be careful and watch them every second because they steal things, they steal from every shop if they get the chance or if you're not looking for a moment. When they come they carry bags, they ask to see something and while you're

getting it they try to slip other things into their bag. They also try to steal money from people. Their officer says nothing about it. Two weeks ago one officer came to sell some charcoal, then he drank alcohol together with some villagers. He wanted more to drink but the shopkeeper wouldn't give it to him, and he beat the shopkeeper. Later the Ber Kler headman told him to go back.

Q: Do you think the Burmese would like to capture Ber Kler?

A: Yes, for sure. People here are afraid. There are [Thai] soldiers but they never say anything because they are too afraid. Sometimes they drink with the Burmese officers.

Q: I heard the Thai officers say that many more SPDC troops have come. Is it true?

A: Yes it is true. Two new divisions came, and they also brought so much food that it should be enough for one year. I don't know exactly how many soldiers came.

[Another man from Dooplaya, "Pa Lah", 35, married with two children, added the following:]

The SPDC said that if the KNU comes and shoots at them, they will attack and burn Noh Po [refugee camp]. They've said that many times now. Their officers say it to the villagers. Also, all the Muslims around Saw Hta and Kyaikdon must become Buddhists, because if they don't the SPDC says they will kill them. They already beat one foolish [mentally handicapped] Muslim man. Many Muslims used to stay in Pa Klaw Nee village, near Kyaikdon, but now they've had to move. They can stay near Kyaikdon, but they have to become Buddhist. So now there are many Muslims pretending to be Buddhists.

[One month later on March 24, we interviewed shopkeeper "Saw Lah Htoo" again about new developments:]

A car was just destroyed by a bomb, just above Kwih Kler. It happened this week, on Sunday [March 22]. It was a bomb buried in the ground [a vehicle mine laid along the road by the KNLA]. I don't know exactly whose bomb it was. The car blew into two parts. A child died and the driver was hurt in his chest. The child was about nine years old. His village was Taw Wah Law.

Q: After that happened did the Burmese do anything?

A: The Burmese didn't do anything. I didn't hear anything from the Burmese.

Q: Do the villagers from Dooplaya still come and pay visits here, in Ber Kler?

A: The villagers still come to visit but it is very difficult for them to get a pass, and now they can't come by car, they must come on foot. I think maybe they are worried that bombs will explode and destroy the cars. Usually about 10 people come at a time, but not all from the same village. They come from villages such as Saw Hta, Meh Kwih, Kyaikdon and from the villages near the border.

Q: What news have the people from Kyaikdon brought this month?

A: Now the people there must carry rations for the Burmese. If a villager has a vehicle he

must use it to carry rations for the Burmese. If the car is destroyed by a bomb the Burmese won't do anything for him, he must take care of it himself.

Q: The car that was destroyed this week, was that a villager's car or the army's car?

A: It was a villager's car carrying rations for the Burmese. Now the Burmese use the villagers' cars to transport their supplies because they think the KNLA will not shoot at the villagers' cars but they would shoot at the Army's cars. [In the area the SPDC officers use villagers for transport, calculating that this will decrease the chance of landmine attack or ambush, that if the road is mined villagers will die instead of his men, and also so that they can keep or sell off fuel supplies for personal profit.]

Q: Do the villagers have to help the Burmese every day?

A: Yes, every day. They have to do forced labor on road construction, one person from each house all the time, and the people who have cars must wait around to drive for the Burmese whenever they need them and wherever they want to go. But these car owners must buy the petrol themselves. The Burmese never buy the petrol for them.

Q: Do the villagers still have to work on the car road?

A: They have to build the main roads and also rebuild the streets in Kyaikdon. They have to improve the roads and streets, the Burmese are digging the earth with bulldozers in the betelnut plantations, they are destroying all the betelnut trees but they never pay anything to the villagers. The villagers even have to buy the fuel for their bulldozer! They never buy their own fuel.

Q: Last month you said all the villagers in Kyaikdon must buy their own land, is that still true?

A: Yes, every villager had to buy their own land. They each had to pay 30,000 to 50,000 *kyat*. People had to sell their belongings to get the money to pay for their land. And on land which is 50,000 *kyat* [in the central part of the village] they ordered that the owners must put zinc roofing on their houses. As for the betelnut plantations, if the owner stays close by they can get the fruit, but if not then the KPA takes all of it. They also demand taxes on all the crops. The KPA took all the houses and crops of everyone who fled to Thailand, and they sold those houses. The KPA are staying together with the Burmese. The KPA are staying in K'Ma Kler. The Burmese are also staying there, but in their own camp. They work together.

Q: Does the KPA force anyone to become soldiers?

A: Yes, two or three people from each village must go. If people can't go then they must give money to the KPA. Now the KPA is doing training at Kwih Kalay, below Kyaikdon. Just a few days ago we heard that some KPA soldiers already ran away to escape the army. The KPA is helping the Burmese.

Q: How do they help the Burmese?

A: They help them by planning how to attack Noh Po [refugee camp]. We heard that the KPA and the Burmese will go to attack Noh Po camp. Maybe they will go together.

Q: Are there any DKBA in the area of Kwih Kler, Saw Hta and Kyaikdon?

A: No, there are no DKBA there. All the DKBA moved back to 7th Brigade area [Pa'an District, 100 km further north; the SPDC ordered the DKBA back after it gave authority over most of Dooplaya to the KPA].

Q: Do you think the Burmese will attack Noh Po?

A: As I told you before, they are looking for a way to attack Noh Po. The Burmese told the villagers in Saw Hta that they will attack Noh Po. They've been telling them for a long time that Noh Po will be attacked. [Part of the reason for this may be to discourage Dooplaya villagers from fleeing to Thailand to stay in Noh Po.]

Q: Who will attack, the Burmese or the KPA?

A: The method of the Burmese is that even if they attack, they will always say it was the KPA or DKBA who did it. They will never say it was the Burmese. Even if KPA or DKBA won't go with them the Burmese will still say it was KPA or DKBA, because they will just mimic the DKBA or the KPA when they attack.

Q: If they go to attack Noh Po, do you think they will make problems for Ber Kler villagers along the way? [Ber Kler is over 10 km from Noh Po, but it is along one possible attack route.]

A: They probably won't make problems for the Ber Kler villagers. But last month they told us that if we shelter any refugees from Noh Po or KNLA soldiers then they will shoot at Ber Kler. They also said that if they know any KNLA are coming to Ber Kler they will kill them here.

Q: How can they attack Noh Po if the Thai soldiers stop them?

A: We can't trust Thai soldiers. They do not dare to shoot. They will never shoot, even when their duty is to shoot.

Q: Do Burmese soldiers still now come to Ber Kler village?

A: Yes, they come every day. They still come to buy food. The Thais [soldiers and Border Patrol Police] don't dare to say anything against them. They're always watching when they come to do shopping. I see their corporals and sergeants coming with them and observing the situation. Last month I saw pistols on their waists every time they came. The day before yesterday one of the Thai villagers here left a gun in the back of his truck, and a Burmese soldier stole it. I'm not sure what, I think it was a pistol. Then the gun owner told the headman, they went to ask for the gun and they got it back.

Q: Now there are Thai soldiers everywhere near here and they say they will fight the Burmese if they cross into Thailand. Are the Thais in the village here part of the army or the Border Patrol Police?

A: They are border police. They just sit at their gate which is by the border. They don't dare go into the forest. They're even afraid to stay here in the village! They're not brave.

Q: Do the villagers who come here from Kwih Kler, Saw Hta and Kyaikdon still want to

stay in their villages, or do they want to flee to Thailand?

A: They would prefer to live in their own villages. It is not easy for them to flee to Thailand. The problem if they come here is that the Thais will drive them back to Burma. The Thais already drove many of them back once when they came last time. So although they must live as slaves in Burma and they don't like to live like that, they must live that way. But if the KNLA go to their places to fight the Burmese, they will still help the KNLA to shoot the Burmese. That is what they think in their minds and in their hearts. They really hate the Burmese, and they can't live their lives in either Thailand or Burma. So if the KNLA go to fight many of them will stand up to fight too. But if the KNLA don't go to help them they don't dare do anything by themselves, because the Burmese will kill them.

Last month my sister came and told us that a Burmese soldier came into the movies. He touched a girl's chin and the girl slapped him. Then he slapped the girl who slapped him. Afterwards he was sent to the commander to be punished. And in a shop in Saw Hta a Burmese corporal stole a longyi [sarong] when the shopkeeper wasn't looking and ran away with it. The shopkeeper sent her child to go and get it back but the child couldn't get it, so his mother went to the corporal and shouted at him, and only then she got it back. They do bad things. Now they are logging around Saw Hta, sawing the logs into timber and sending it to the towns to sell. The villagers have to do that for them, and the villagers have to press sugar cane for them when they want to drink it. Many villagers have to go and do that. Everyone is afraid of them and dares not say anything. When they order the villagers to give them chickens and the villagers don't agree, they point at the villagers with guns or knives. They always threaten the villagers like that.

Even when we were in our house [just after the occupation, before they fled] they came to our house and demanded chickens. We let them take what they wanted, but when their sergeant came with a big truck he saw our coconuts and took the coconuts without asking permission. Then he went and took his soldiers' gun and shot at the coconuts [in the tree] to destroy them. They never ask for anything nicely, and if you speak they tell you, "You are very clever to speak, so I will kill you." They threatened people and said, "Now you are in our hands. If we decide to kill you, you can't do anything." They oppressed us until we couldn't stand it anymore, so we came here. If we could stand it we would still live there. If the Burmese live there forever we will live here forever, here in Ber Kler, we won't go back. We don't want to go back before there is peace in Burma, but we will go back when there is peace, when Burma becomes a democratic country.

Interview 9: Refugee, Livelihood, Killing

Name:	"Saw Lah Po"
Sex:	Male
Age:	25
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 1 child aged 21/2 months
Address:	Wangka village, Myawaddy township; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 15, 1998

Source:

KHRG

[Saw Lah Po's house is in Section 1, right on the eastern edge of the camp where the main attack force entered. This side of the camp faces Thailand, not Burma; the attackers were brought by truck all the way around the camp to the Thai side to launch their attack.]

Q: What happened that night?

A: It was March 10 at 12:30 [at night; actually March 11] when they came into the camp. We heard the noise of a car but we could not see exactly. First I heard dogs barking. Then the soldiers arrived on the other bank of the stream but they hadn't started shooting yet; they were lining up and setting up their mortars. When I saw them, we started to run and then they saw us and they fired their guns. They fired guns first and then the shells of big weapons started to land. Then the soldiers separated themselves into two groups in front of my house. There were more than 10 soldiers in each group. They started to burn the houses as soon as they entered the camp. I told my family, "Don't take anything, run!" I ran off with my wife and my child. My wife did not have time to put her slippers on and neither did my mother-in-law. I couldn't carry anything, not even our blankets. They fired a lot with guns and then they fired big weapons. A shell landed near the hospital just in front of us, so we turned left. We ran into the bed of the stream and stayed there. We dared not come back so we stayed there until the shooting stopped. Then we came back.

Q: Do you think they were DKBA?

A: We dared not look. We ran off so we don't know, but I think the Burmese and the DKBA were mixed together.

Q: Did you see Thai soldiers?

A: This time we didn't see them, they didn't come here. That night they didn't come to our side of the camp.

Q: Did you see anyone killed or injured?

A: In Section 2 one pregnant woman was hit by a shell so she couldn't move, and then she burned to death in the fire. Her name was Ma Pein, we called her Daw Pein, she lived in Section 2. She was over 30 years old. She had one child. Now the child stays with his father. She was dead but her husband didn't know if she was dead or alive. The fire burned her so badly he couldn't recognize her, but when he saw her sarong he knew that it was his wife. In Section 2, two people died - the other was a child, who was wounded in the head. He died in the hospital, so we didn't see him. His name was Pa Lah Ghay. I don't know exactly how old he was, maybe three or four years old [sic: he was 7, and he died en route to hospital].

My mother was also wounded. She was wounded in the back by a shell. It was in Section 2. I think it was not a M79 grenade that hit her, it was a shell from a mortar, a 21/2 inch shell. They fired the mortar from near the mango tree. Now she is in the hospital but she can talk, she is not in a coma. She won't stay too long in the hospital. She will come back and stay here. My mother's name is Paw Nay. She is in her fifties.

Q: Where do you live now?

A: Now I live in the field [the open field in the middle of the camp] because the camp leaders told us to live there. At night time we sleep here but we are afraid. The Thai soldiers don't stay anywhere near where we are staying. We have to look out for ourselves, and if we see anything strange we have to get ready to run. We dare not stay here.

Q: If the Thai soldiers say that you have to move to Beh Klaw or to Burma what will you do?

A: If I must go to Burma I won't go, I dare not go. I also dare not go to Beh Klaw now, the situation there is not good.

Interview 10: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Naw Eh"
Sex:	Female
Age:	38
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 3 children
Address:	Kyet Paun village, Hlaing Bwe township, Pa'an district; now in Huay Kaloke
Date of interviewed:	March 15, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[Naw Eh's house is in Section 7, beside the main gate which faces west toward Burma. The initial 'reconnaissance' group entered the camp past her house, while the main force attacked from the opposite side of the camp. Her house was in one of the few parts of the camp which were not burned.]

Q: When and how did they come to the camp?

A: First on March 10 at ten or eleven o'clock at night, a Thai soldier came into the camp with a motorcycle. He wore civilian clothes with military trousers. He went to see the section leader, whose name is Pyay Kyaw. Then he went into the camp and after he came back he stopped and told us, "Stop weaving your roof because it is too dark, go to sleep." [They were in their house making leaf shingles to repair their roof.] Then I went to sleep with my daughter, and after a while a truck went past, between some motorcycles. There were three motorcycles in front of the truck and four behind. The car looked like a military car but it looked like an old one. It was green with stripes you could see it because it was full moon. It was very big, like a military truck. It could contain 20 people, and it was full of soldiers. They were all wearing shirts with two pockets, striped [camouflaged] uniforms and they had guns. They came from the main road to Wangka [the border], from the direction of the two Thai gates. They had to pass through the main gate. After that this road goes to all the sections, it goes to Section 1, Section 2, Sections 4, 6, and 8...

When I saw the truck I couldn't sleep, I was afraid that maybe it was DKBA or

Burmese soldiers. The Thai had told the section leader that the situation was not so good, and when I went to my friend's house he'd also told me that the situation was not so good. The truck stayed in the camp about half an hour, and after I'd been asleep for just a moment it came back. Now there was only one person on each motorcycle and three people in the cab of the truck. I didn't see the others. When they came there were no lights on the truck but the motorcycles had their lights on, and there were three soldiers on each motorcycle. When they came back there was one person on each motorcycle and only the first motorcycle had its lights on. Also, they were noisy when they came but when they went back they were silent [she indicated that on their way into the camp they were revving their engines, but on the way back they were idling and going slowly]. A few minutes after they came back, the electric lights at the Thai checkpoint turned off, and after that the shooting started.

After the Thai soldiers [on the motorcycles; she believes that they were Thai] had been away for a while we heard the gunshots and we fled. They fired mortars and guns, all together. I couldn't do anything, I just called my daughter and told her, "Run, run, where is your father?" We couldn't do anything, I was with my daughter but my husband was on security duty that night. They have to guard, 10 persons each night [Refugees have their own camp security patrols].

We heard explosions from Section 1 and Section 4, we were afraid and we ran. They fired big weapons and guns. I heard the sound of heavy weapons over there and over there [pointing all around]. They fired shells across our section and they landed in the bean field. Maybe some landed in the camp, I don't know. We were afraid. When we ran into the field a shell landed in front of us and we ran quickly. We shouted, "Run, run!" Some were shouting, some were running, some were crying, some were running but they had no sarong. We ran to the school in Section 7 and continued on to Thai Huay Kaloke [the Thai village beside the camp]. I fled to the Thai village and my legs were shaking.

After their guns had been firing for a while my husband came back home carrying his rice. He put it down on the ground and ran without it to the Thai village. When he arrived at the Thai village he said he didn't know if the shooters were Thai or Burmese. I don't know myself if they were Thai or Burmese soldiers. They were wearing striped [camouflaged] uniforms and their hats looked like Burmese soldiers' hats.

When the camp was burning I stayed in the Thai village because no one was going back so we dared not go back. The Burmese and the DKBA went back at 2 a.m. and we went back to the camp at 5 a.m. When the explosions stopped my husband and some people went back to the camp but I dared not go back.

Q: Did you see the Thai soldiers when you ran?

A: Yes, I saw the Thai fire engine. Before the burning we didn't see the Thai soldiers in the camp, but after the burning they came in groups of 10. The other truck and the motorcycles did not come back after the soldiers had finished shooting.

Q: Do you think that when the truck first came the Thai soldiers were staying at the checkpoint?

A: I don't know, maybe they knew that the DKBA and the Burmese soldiers would come. When they were coming the Thai said to me, "The situation is not so good so don't weave your roof. It is the time to sleep, why don't you sleep?" Maybe they had an agreement with

the DKBA and the Burmese soldiers. I dare not speak about that. We are afraid of the Thai soldiers.

Q: Do you think that this time the Burmese soldiers came with DKBA?

A: Yes, I think they were Burmese and DKBA. They said, "Within three days you all have to go back to Burma. If you don't go back we will come again and kill all the people". A woman who stays in Section 1 told me that. So that whole night we were afraid [the third night after the attack]. We were afraid, we were shaking and we thought that we would die, and that night the Thai soldiers said, "No one can go outside the camp to sleep. If you go outside the camp the Thai police will come and attack you and send you back to Burma". The Thai soldiers asked, "Why do you go to sleep outside the camp?" [Many refugees wanted to spend the night in the fields outside the camp.] But the [refugee] section leader said, "Those refugees who want to go and sleep outside the camp can do so." We didn't know if the DKBA and the Burmese soldiers would come again. We were afraid of the DKBA but we were also afraid of the Thai soldiers, so we dared not go outside the camp to sleep. We fled over near to the school and hid there. The mosquitoes and the insects bit us, we slept like that and the cars came. Three cars came, the first had its lights on and the others had no lights. They looked like the car which came three days before. I don't know if they looked like Thai cars or Burmese cars because I have never seen a Thai car. But the car that came the first day and the cars that came three days after looked the same, and there were a lot of soldiers with big weapons. We thought maybe they had come to tell us to go back to Burma so we were ready to run, and we didn't know if they were Burmese or Thai soldiers. We were afraid. There were all wearing striped uniforms. When I saw the cars I thought that we were all going to die. Maybe it was about midnight, I had my watch but I didn't look. We were shaking and I was together with my friends. My friends told me, "Don't say anything, we live in the Thai's country so the Thai will kill us."

Now we run every night. I don't know if they will come back, we are afraid and we go and sleep outside every night. We are afraid of Thais, Burmese, and DKBA; everybody. We are afraid and we have to run away and sleep outside. The Thai soldiers said, "Don't stay here. Gawlaw [white foreigners] won't look after you. Go back to Burma." We are afraid. The Thai soldier who talked to us was the one who stays at the checkpoint. He told us, "I told you to go back to Burma and you haven't gone. Why do you trust the Gawlaw? We are bigger than the Gawlaw. If we block the road then the Gawlaw's rice won't be able to come. If we send you, you must go back. You have a country. Why don't you go back? Why are you so happy to stay here?" We are not happy to stay here! We can't stay in Burma so we come and stay here. If we had our country why would we come and stay in their country? Why do they speak to us like that? "If we block the Gawlaw's rice you won't be able to receive it." The section leader explained what they said to us because we can't understand Thai language. I want to hate the Thais but I dare not. I'm afraid.

Q: Do you still dare to stay here?

A: I don't know, where the people decide to stay I will follow them. If the others go to another place I will follow, but I will never go back to Burma again. We were not happy in Burma, the Burmese made us suffer. My brothers and sisters live in Burma, but I'm afraid of the Burmese. The Burmese treated us badly and the DKBA also. When the Burmese hit

us, the DKBA just watched and they didn't do anything. I had to build the road, the Burmese soldiers said that the foreigners would come and inspect the road that the Burmese wanted to show them. They said that the foreigners would come and look at Ku Baw Chaung, Du Yaw Baw Chaung, T'Nay Hsah Baw Chaung, Paung Ye Bu, and Baw Chaung. So we had to build the road and we had no time to rest. Someone from every house had to go. If we didn't go we had to pay 200 Kyat. How could we give them 200 Kyat when we had no money? I had nothing, no money, but I had to buy rice, 500 or 600 Kyat for one basket. Now it is 1,500 Kyat for one basket! We had to build the road near the mountain, and it was very stony. We built the road from my village to Daw Lan and to Thaya Gone. The Burmese soldiers stay in Daw Lan and Thaya Gone. After that we had to build the road from T'Nay Hsah to Nabu. They said the foreigners will come and that the foreigners don't like it when the roads are not good. So the soldiers told us to work. We had to build the road in the afternoon but they didn't want us to have lunch. They hit us. They kicked me. If we took a rest they also shouted at us. If we went and protested to DKBA they just said we had to work with discipline. I couldn't work, I wanted to take a rest, I was very tired and I nearly died, so I came to the camp and I have stayed here for one year already. I arrived in this camp when it had all been burned and everything was lost [after the January 1997 burning]. Nobody gave me clothes, I stayed with my cousin, I was not registered in the camp. Slowly, I started to work and I asked my friends to give me some clothes.

Q: What do you think about the DKBA?

A: The DKBA don't remember anything. They looked like drunkards. They have taken medicine [drugs]. They looked like fools. When they take the medicine they don't know anything and we are afraid that they will kill us. We dare not go near them. We are afraid of the DKBA and of the Burmese. The Burmese are friendly to the DKBA, but what they will do one day to the DKBA we don't know.

Interview 11: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

1. Name:	"Saw Lah"	2. Name:	"Naw Wah"
Sex:	Male	Sex:	Female
Age:	52	Age:	43
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen	Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian	Religion:	Christian

Family: Married, 3 children aged 15, 17 and 20
 Address: Wangka village, Myawaddy township; now in Huay Kaloke
 Date of interviewed: March 16, 1998
 Source: KHRG

["Saw Lah" and "Naw Wah" are husband and wife. They stay in Section 1 of the camp, where they have lived for 14 years.]

Q: Can you describe what happened?

"Saw Lah": We decided to flee because we were afraid. I was afraid of the bullets. When

the house was burning we ran. What else could we do? Everything was burning. We saw the soldiers setting fire to the houses. We were hiding and we didn't know where to run. We hid just a short time, not more than 15 minutes. We were staying under the house and when I saw the fire I ran away.

“Naw Wah”: We were under the house. If the house was not burning we would not have run. Someone had told us that if they came it wouldn't be to burn our houses, just to find people [important people like camp leaders].

Q: What happened when you fled?

“Saw Lah”: They came from Section 1. We saw them, they started to burn the houses, one after the other. When they came they passed in front of us, and when they were some distance away we started to run. [At that time he was hiding beside the streambed in Section 2.] The other people had run and only the three of us were left: myself, my wife, and the woman who sells chicken in her shop. All my children had already fled. When we ran to the road in Section 2, a soldier touched me with his gun. He asked me, “Are you Buddhist or Christian?” He spoke Sgaw Karen. If I had answered that I am a Christian he would have killed me, so I answered that I was Buddhist. He didn't say anything when I said that I was Buddhist, he just took my things and then he said, “We told you to go back to Burma so why didn't you go back? I will kill you.” When he pointed his gun at me he saw my watch and he took it. He also took my wife's watch and a ring with a stone. He took everything, my bag and one camera, but there was no money in my bag. In my bag there was a Bible, but he didn't see it because he just took the whole bag. I was afraid they would see the Bible, but they didn't do anything because the commander told them to be quick about it and they went away. He was also Sgaw Karen.

“Naw Wah”: The one who touched us with his gun spoke Sgaw Karen. Some others also spoke Sgaw Karen but they were drunk so they didn't know what they were doing. They asked for money. I said, “I have no money.”

“Saw Lah”: After the soldiers left us we went to the stream. When we ran to the stream the soldiers came and asked some women, “Are you Christian or Buddhist?” I know these women because they stay with my sister. The women said, “We are Christians.” When the women said that, a soldier threatened them with his gun so the women said, “Oh we lied to you, we are not Christian, we are Buddhist!” and then the soldier didn't do anything. He took the women's watches and he asked for their money. One woman said, “I have no money” so they checked her neck [to see if she had a necklace]. Then they went back to the other side of the stream. I heard all that because they were hiding near us.

“Naw Wah”: The soldiers told some of the women, “If you are Christian we will kill you.” Nobody dared to say that they were Christian.

Q: How many soldiers did you see?

“Saw Lah”: I saw eight soldiers. We saw the soldiers when we ran. They didn't seem normal but they did not smell of alcohol. One was holding a walkie-talkie, maybe he was a commander. The one with the walkie-talkie stood near us. The other soldiers were

standing behind him. They were wearing striped shirts and their trousers were also striped, the same as the Thai soldiers, with hats. Their hats also looked like Thai soldiers' hats. [He indicated a baseball-cap style hat.] The colour of the hats was dark green. I didn't see any scarves or any number on their uniforms, I dared not look. They wore striped uniforms and jungle boots. They came in three separate groups. One group was in the middle, another on the left, and a third group was behind a tree [a tree near the stream at the back of Section 1; probably their mortar support group]. They all came on a logging truck.

"Naw Wah": Some other people saw a car. But we ran because we were afraid.

Q: Did you see their weapons?

"Saw Lah": AK; he touched me with an AK for sure [AK 47]. I know because the AK is short. The other ones had M16, G3, and 79. The Burmese use that kind of gun, I know it. Not G 4 but G 3, AR, AK, and 79; the one that they shelled with was a 79 [M 79 grenade launcher; G3 is the standard Burmese Army assault rifle, not generally used by opposition forces. AK 47, M16 and AR are commonly used by opposition forces, occasionally also by the Burmese army].

Interview 12: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Naw Eh Say"
Sex:	Female
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Pwo Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 4 children aged 2-12
Address:	Du Yaw village, Pa'an District; now in Huay Kaloke
Date of interviewed:	March 16, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Naw Eh Say" has lived in Huay Kaloke camp for 10 years. She now lives in Section 1.*]

Q: When did you start to run?

A: When I heard gunshots I started to run. Another house had already started to burn, and I saw that my house was burning. I don't know what time it was. I had no watch. We ran and hid in the ditch [a dry streambed] together with many friends. We heard shooting, ta-ta-ta-ta! so we dared not look. We stayed in the ditch, each on our own. Then the soldiers jumped down in the ditch, I don't know where they came from. One soldier touched all of us with his gun. We stayed quiet and he said, "Don't anybody run away." He spoke Sgaw Karen. He asked me, "Are you Christian or Buddhist?" I said "I'm Buddhist." Then he asked us, "Why don't you go back [to Burma]?" We said, "We have no money to go back." Then he touched me with his gun and he said, "We will find your bag." He asked me, "Did you put a gun in your bag?" We said, "No, we don't have any guns." We opened the bag, he looked in it and then he went away. I don't know which way they went, I dared not look.

Q: What did the soldiers look like?

A: I saw three soldiers. They were Sgaw Karen. They wore striped [camouflaged] uniforms. Their hats looked like soldiers' hats. Their hats were striped, with scarves tied around them. Not yellow, dark green scarves. I didn't see any badges on their uniforms. I dared not look, I was afraid that they would shoot me. I bowed to them. I bowed like we do to monks, I made them the Buddhist sign with my hands. I said that I was Buddhist. I pleaded with them, "Don't kill me." I was afraid.

Interview 13: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Ghay Htoo"
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Single
Address:	Pa'an District; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 16, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Saw Ghay Htoo" has lived in Section 11 of Huay Kaloke camp since 1996. He has only one leg and wears a simple prosthesis on the other.]

Q: Did anything happen before the night of the attack?

A: One night before, the Thai soldiers said, "You have to turn off the lights at nine o'clock." The second night [the night of the attack], they came at seven o'clock and told us to switch off the lights. They said, "Don't switch on the lights." Then some motorcycles came, they were not noisy. There were three persons on each motorcycle. Then they went back and disappeared, and after midnight they [the attackers] entered and fired their guns.

Q: Had the Thais ever come to this part of the camp at night before?

A: Yes, they came here before but they didn't come like that. If they came they usually had their lights on, but this time there were no lights.

Q: Then what happened?

A: I heard heavy weapons, they were shooting near here [Section 10 in the camp market]. They were firing heavy weapons from under a tree and they used the tree as cover sheets, 21/2-inch ones, landed here and over there. They fired them from Ah Na Mine Gone [in section seven near the main Thai gate]. I saw maybe six 21/2-inch shells. Three shells landed near me. Another 21/2-inch shell landed near my house and six persons got injured. Three landed in the pond. One landed near me and the explosion made me jump into the pond. Then I got out because I was very cold. Another shell from a big weapon landed first, and then I saw the soldiers. They also fired their guns, so people didn't know which way to run. A lot of people ran to the other side. I didn't run yet, I watched. The fire started in Section 1. The houses around mine burned, and then the fire spread to my house.

I stayed around here, beside the pond. After they had set fire to the houses, they came back and shot, shot, shot.... they came back in front of me and the soldier in the middle was holding a walkie-talkie. They spoke Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, and also Burmese, all mixed. I stayed like that. I wasn't afraid. As for me, if I die it is not a problem, I kept that in my mind. After I saw them something came into my mind - I wanted to shoot them. One soldier saw me and he was about to shoot me. I told him, "No, don't shoot me". He asked me, "Are you Thai or Sgaw Karen?" After he asked me that, he tried to shoot me, but his finger slipped from the trigger so he didn't shoot me. Then he said, "Oh, I didn't shoot you", and he went away. After many houses had already burned I started to run. I ran alone. I ran this way. When I ran there were no Burmese and no DKBA. I didn't see any soldiers then, everyone had disappeared.

Q: Did you see any Thais?

A: No. I saw 21 [DKBA/Burmese] soldiers, I counted them. I didn't see any other soldiers. I can't run well so I was sitting and watching, so I could count only the soldiers who passed in front of me. These 21 soldiers were wearing streaked [camouflage] jackets and streaked trousers, and some were wearing plain green ones. They were old uniforms, not new. There were more soldiers with streaked uniforms than without. Only four or five wore plain green uniforms. Not all of them had their hats on. Two or three had hats like the Burmese military hat. Some had red scarves [around their heads]. Their guns were AR and AK, and one was also carrying a walkie-talkie. That one was not wearing a striped uniform [camouflaged]. They were not normal. We knew that because they were not walking straight. The Burmese were wearing the plain green uniforms. I think I saw maybe two or three who looked like Burmese.

Q: Did you see any badges on their uniforms?

A: No, I didn't look at the badges, I only counted the soldiers. Maybe they wore the Bandoola badge [the Burmese army badge], but I didn't look. We also dared not look at their faces, we only counted them. I stayed squatting so they could only see my head. Maybe if they had seen my foot they would have shot me [they would have guessed that he was a former Karen soldier because of his prosthesis]. I told them, "Don't shoot", and they didn't shoot me.

Q: Did the soldiers ask your religion?

A: No, but they asked that of others. My friends ran to the other side [of the camp] and the soldiers told them, "If you are Christian we will kill you all." But my friends are Buddhists, so the soldiers didn't do anything to them.

Q: At the end, did the soldiers leave quickly or slowly?

A: They left quickly. They ran back. They left from Section 7, but maybe they separated into two groups and some left through Sections 5 and 6. After they left me, I didn't go to the Thai village. I went immediately to look for my friends, because maybe someone was wounded in the refugee camp. I didn't see any soldiers there because of the smoke from the fire. I couldn't see, and after that the soldiers went back. Before they went back they fired their big gun from under the tree, but the shells did not land here. There was automatic fire,

and also G3, G4, and AR. We didn't see exactly but when I heard the noise I knew which kind of gun it was ["Saw Ghay Htoo" used to be a soldier]. I saw one G4 [G3 and G4 are standard Burmese Army assault weapons not commonly used by opposition forces]. After they fired G3 and G4, 21/2-inch shells came again. Then when they finished firing their guns, the fire started to go out.

Interview 14: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name: "Saw Po Gyi"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 38
 Ethnicity: Pwo Karen
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 4 children aged 10-16
 Address: Pa'an District; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
 Interviewed: March 16, 1998
 Source: KHRG

["Saw Po Gyi" has lived in Huay Kaloke camp since 1989. His house is in Section 11.]

Q: What happened to you that night?

A: That night at 12:30, shells of heavy weapons were fired. DKBA and Burmese soldiers came and shot at the camp. I started running after they fired heavy weapons. Bullets from both big and small guns were flying around. The shells of the heavy weapons were coming from near the Thai checkpoint. The bullets from small guns were coming from here, and also from other places. I hid. We couldn't stay in the stream because there was water in it, but we stayed beside it. They met us there when they went back. There were about 10 of us by the stream. There were three men and the others were women and children. They didn't do anything to the women, but they told us, "Don't run, we will shoot you and kill you all." They asked, "Have you seen any Kaw Thoo Lei [KNLA soldiers]?" One man said, "There is no Kaw Thoo Lei." They touched me with their guns. They were M1 [carbine] and M16. I dared not move. The soldier who touched me with his gun spoke Sgaw Karen. The soldier who spoke Pwo Karen told us, "Don't run, the shells of heavy weapons will hit you. You are not our enemy. Stay quiet, we will harm only our enemies." They grabbed two bags and some watches from the people. One was a student, she had two shirts, one skirt and 150 baht in her bag. Then they asked us, "Are you Buddhist or Christian?" We said, "We are Buddhists," and they said, "If you are Christian, we will kill all of you. Tomorrow you must go back to Myaing Gyi Ngu [DKBA headquarters in Pa'an District]. If you don't go back, in three days we will come back again." Then they went away and they started to fire their guns in the direction of the camp. They fired heavy weapons, and they fired 79s [M79 grenade launcher] twice. After they had fired and burned, the soldiers went away.

Q: How many soldiers did you see?

A: I saw 21 soldiers, but I didn't hear them speaking. They were the same that he saw [see

interview with “Saw Ghay Htoo”]. They wore streaked hats, but not all of them. Some hats were different, but the moon was shining so we dared not look in their faces. Some of the soldiers wore striped uniforms, and some of the soldiers looked like Burmese soldiers. There were more than 10 soldiers with streaked uniforms and four soldiers were wearing Burmese uniforms. These ones were carrying M16s but I didn’t see any sign on their uniforms. We dared not look to see if there were any badges on the DKBA uniforms because we don’t like them, they are our enemies. We don’t like the way they are working, they don’t work the right way. They were drunk. They looked like they had taken myin say [the drug commonly taken by DKBA, known as Ya Ba or Ya Ma in Thai, which makes one aggressive and stupid].

They left this way, the same way that they came. They crossed the fields. They threw away the old things [from what they had stolen] and they kept only the new ones. The people found those [old] things later. After they left we came back to our house and looked for all our things. My house did not burn, but we kept some of our things outside and they had burned in the fire. The soldiers put them into the fire and they burned.

Interview 15: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	Naw K’Paw Wah”
Sex:	Female
Age:	45
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 5 children aged 2-16
Address:	Hlaing Bwe township, Pa’an District; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 16, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[“Naw K’Paw Wah” has been in Section 4 of Huay Kaloke camp for four years. Her house was right at the edge of the open field in the middle of the camp, and she was wounded in the attack.]

Q: When did you start running?

A: When we heard ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! [she made the sound of automatic fire] we ran out of my house. I had no watch but I guess it was midnight. We carried our children and ran. Then we laid down beside our house. When we heard it the second time we ran beside the monastery and to the fields, not far from the banana garden. I stayed there for quite a long time, and after that I came back home again. When I came back I saw them [the soldiers] coming by. I was hidden behind the toilets when they came. They came along the main road [the camp’s main thoroughfare], then they went to the market. They marched quickly, chouay chouay chouay [she made the sound of rapid marching]. They were in a group, many soldiers, you couldn’t count. Maybe around 30 soldiers. They didn’t see me but I saw them clearly. They were very close. The distance between me and them was the length of a house. If I had looked carefully I could have seen the badges on their arms because of

the light of the fire, but I didn't look at them very carefully because of the fire. They carried guns. Some of them wore Burmese military uniforms and some of them wore streaked uniforms. Two of them wore white shirts. Some had caps and some had Burmese military hats. I heard them speak only in Karen, Sgaw Karen.

They were coming along and burning the houses along their way. The houses burned down quickly because the roofs were made of thatch. When I came back, Section 1 had already burned down completely, and Sections 3, 4, and 5 were burning. When the soldiers arrived, three of them entered my house. They didn't see me. If they had seen me I don't know what they would have said to me. I heard some people say that when the soldiers saw people they threatened to kill them. I hid myself. My children were already in the field, hiding behind the paddy-dikes.

My husband was together with me. He told me that our children are more precious than the possessions in our house, so he asked me to go to the children. So after the soldiers had passed by, I hurried and ran to the children, while he stayed here and watched. The soldiers passed through the field here [in the middle of the camp], but they couldn't see me because I was behind a paddy-dike. I didn't dare to go at first because there was a big fire. Afterwards, I escaped from the fire and ran to the monastery. A monk told me to run that way but I said, "I can't go that way, my children are over there [the other way]". When I kept on running on the high ground, they saw me and followed me, and the bullets landed nearer and nearer to me. Many bullets and shells flew over me. When I reached a tree I heard the sound of the guns so I laid down on my belly, near the banana trees and the teak tree at the edge of the camp. The bullets flew beside me, ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! I laid there quietly. When the bullets stopped flying, I tried to lift up my body. As soon as I lifted up my buttocks, something hit them and knocked me back down again. I looked up in the tree to see the fruit but I saw that there was no fruit, so then I knew it was a shell that had hit me! The shell didn't penetrate my buttock, it disappeared after it hit me. I don't know where it flew. At that time there was fire everywhere. So I prayed, "Lord, please take care of me," because I thought that I would die. It was really painful and aching. I couldn't stand up. Then I called my son, "Hay Glaw! Hay Glaw!" He answered me, "Wai." I thought to myself that I wouldn't be able to go to my children, but I tried to go to my children. I could partly stand up, then I pulled my leg [she demonstrated trying to walk doubled over, gasping and limping]. I was bleeding. My children were in front of me, a little far from me, about 10 meters away, but when I reached the place where they were they were sitting down, looking at me sadly. I told them that I'd been wounded by a shell. Then I saw a man and I called him. "Wai, Doh Pu Sha!" ["Hallo, friend!"] He didn't answer anything to me, so I laid down for a while. I saw a monk. I called the monk and asked him to send me my husband. He agreed but he disappeared for a long time and I didn't see my husband coming. Then I saw a woman and called her. I asked her for some tobacco because I wanted to smoke and she gave me some. When I was smoking, everyone who walked by came to see me.

Some people told the Thai soldiers about me and the Thai soldiers came to me. At that time my husband was arriving. The Thai soldiers asked my husband to carry me. He was going to take me to the monastery but I said that there's no hospital in the camp, so I'd rather go where the Thai soldiers asked me to go. Then they sent me to the water truck [the Thai fire truck]. I waited for a long time. There was no hospital car coming. The water

truck started to leave, then the hospital car arrived and my husband put me in the hospital car. Inside that car the wind was blowing. I looked for the window that was open but the windows were closed. I couldn't understand how the wind could blow through the glass of the car, but the wind blew a lot and made me very cold [she had never experienced air conditioning before]. My husband thought that I was unconscious and he called me, "Naw, Naw" and I answered him, "It is cold." When I reached the hospital the nurse put some medicine on my wound and put me in a bed. I covered myself with a sarong, I was shivering with cold. The nurses came and looked at me, then they put me in another bed with blankets. Then I was warmed up and I slept all night until the morning.

Q: What did the shell that hit you look like?

A: I don't know because I couldn't see because of the dark night. I just guess. A small shell I think. A kind of shell that has yellow colour on the top and black on the bottom. It was a little bit bigger than a banana. It hit my buttock right here [she was very lucky, because it appears that she was hit by an M79 grenade that didn't explode].

Interview 16: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Klaw Wah"
Sex:	Male
Age:	47
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 4 children aged 4-14
Address:	Pa'an Township; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 17, 1998
Source:	KHRG

Q: When did you start to run?

A: I don't know. I slept for a few hours and suddenly woke up when I heard weapons firing, and I ran away. I carried my youngest son. I didn't know what time it was. I wanted to save my things, but the Thai soldiers wanted us to sit down in the fields. They didn't allow us to go back. I decided to go back and went to ask whether we could go or not, but I didn't get to ask anything because one Thai soldier kicked me, while one of his friends sat and looked at me. Most of the people saw me when I was kicked. He kicked me two times, once in the chest and once in the waist. I didn't fall down but I nearly did. I couldn't breathe very well after I was kicked. When the Thai soldier kicked me the first time I passed urine, and then when I turned around he beat me with his gun. That happened at 3 a.m. He told me to go back and sit with my friends. Some of my friends were kicked as well. Then the Thai soldiers called each other and went back. The left side of my back swelled up. It was very painful on both sides when I coughed. I went to the clinic to get medicine. There are no visible wounds but I'm still on medicine and it is still painful inside my body. I feel better when I take medicine.

Q: Did the Thai soldiers beat anybody else ?

A: First they only beat me, and then they beat some other people. They beat Maung N—and A-'s mother. They also beat some women. In the morning people said that some had been kicked and slapped by the Thai soldiers.

Q: How long did you stay in the fields?

A: We stayed about 20 minutes and then the Aw Saw [Thai volunteer militia] came, so we asked them permission to go back to save our things and they let us go back. But most people stayed there and didn't ask permission.

Q: Do you want to stay here or go to Beh Klaw? Where do you want to go?

A: It depends on the [camp] leaders. I'll go and stay anywhere that it's possible to live, but I'm afraid to go to Beh Klaw.

Interview 17: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Eh Doh Htoo"
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 5 children aged 1-13
Address:	Nyaunglebin District; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 18, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Saw Eh Doh Htoo" has been in Huay Kaloke camp for 14 years. He stays in Section 1.*]

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: I can tell you. That night at 11:46 p.m., I saw one car and six motorcycles coming. The car was a small jeep. It was an old car. I didn't see the car's number because it was night time and they didn't have their lights on. I think I saw six soldiers in the car and two on each motorcycle, six motorcycles. All wore streaked [camouflaged] uniforms and they had weapons, but I didn't see what weapons. They came from Section 10, from the market. When they arrived they didn't turn their lights on. They made a lot of noise and when they came back they also made a big noise. When they arrived at Section 1 they stopped for about five minutes near the stream, then they went further than our house so I didn't see them. Then I saw them coming back. We didn't see them getting out in Section 1, but maybe they got out at another spot, we don't know. They still had their lights off. After they'd been gone for about 30 or 45 minutes, the shooting started.

Q: What do you think was the nationality of the men on the motorcycles?

A: I could not distinguish them. Usually every time the Thai soldiers come they turn their lights on, and the Thai soldiers here know me, if they see me they call me. This time, they saw me but they didn't call me.

Q: Did you see other soldiers after the beginning of the shootings?

A: I saw more than 60 soldiers in Section 1. They were together. They were Burmese soldiers, they wore streaked uniforms. Some wore hats like this [he indicated a beret], some wore baseball caps and some wore Burmese military hats. I didn't see any insignia on their uniforms because it was too dark and I dared not go near them. They spoke in Burmese and Karen languages. They called, "Set fire to the houses and shoot!" in Pwo Karen and they called "Run, run!" in Burmese. I was on the road and they shot at me when they met me. They also shot at the youth chairman named Hla Kyi. He was wounded but I wasn't, and I ran to my house. They were shooting with AK, AR, G3, M 79, and [carbine] rifles.

Q: What would you say if the Thais tell you to go to Burma or to Beh Klaw?

A: I dare not go back to Burma. I will say no, and I won't go to Beh Klaw. We need and want to stay in a new place where our lives will be safe and where we will also have good security.

Interview 18: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Pu K'Mwee Htoo"
Sex:	Male
Age:	58
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 7 children aged 6-40
Address:	Pa'an Township; now in Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 18, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Pu K'Mwee Htoo" lives in Section 4 of Huay Kaloke camp.*]

Q: That night what happened when you saw that car?

A: I was not sleeping, I didn't go to bed early, I didn't sleep and I was listening. So when the car came I was not sleeping. We were afraid and we were listening. When the car came it was just a little bit noisy and they had their lights turned off. The car was an old jeep without doors driven by soldiers. I saw four motorcycles behind the car. They came from this way [from the market and the main entrance] and many people saw that. They stopped the car and we thought that they were going to visit the other houses. Four soldiers got out of the car. I didn't hear them [talking] and I don't know what they were wearing, maybe black or camouflage, because it was a little bit far from the house. Then the car went back and there were no soldiers in the car. I think there was only the driver left when I saw the car. If there had been other soldiers in the car we would have seen them, because there were no doors. That car comes to the camp all the time. It is black. We thought that they were just coming through like they often do. But they didn't go further [than the school], they went back. I think that they came and drove people in. There were three on each motorcycle, and when they went back there were two on each motorcycle.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: I didn't do anything, I went to take a rest. About 20 minutes after the car had gone back, the explosions started. I heard the explosions and I ran to the toilets [the school toilets, which are made of concrete]. They saw me and they fired their guns near the toilets. They shot at me with small guns. Later we picked up the shell cases and they were AK47 bullets. I stayed in the toilets until the fire went out. I didn't see them because I dared not go out. I dared not lift my head up to look outside. They shot non-stop. The shell of a big weapon landed near me so I dared not lift up my head. But I heard them going and swearing in Burmese when they came and shot up the school library. I came out of the toilets when all the soldiers were gone.

Interview 19: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Hsah Hay Mu"
Sex:	Male
AGE:	33
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 2 children aged 2 and 4
Address:	Pa'an Township; now in Section 1 of Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 18, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Saw Hsah Hay Mu" is a medic in Huay Kaloke camp, where he has lived since 1984.*]

Q: Can you explain what happened that night?

A: That night we were on duty. During the night we spoke together about rabies and also about the patients. We discussed a patient who had cerebral malaria. Then we talked more about malaria, because some teachers were coming to teach us how to see virus in a microscope. We had to practice looking through the microscope to know how to identify the parasite. We went to sleep at 10 p.m. and we slept for one or two hours. Maybe at about midnight we heard a car coming into the camp. It stopped near the hospital and then went further than the hospital, to the corner of Section 1 near the fields. Somebody saw two motorcycles in front of the car and two behind, but I didn't see the car or the motorcycles, I just heard the noise. When the car would have been nearly back to the gate, it [the attack] happened.

It started with small guns, then just after that big shells landed near the hospital. After I heard the guns I began to run outside with my family. Before I got outside my wife opened the door, and she got injured in front of our house. She was hit by a bullet and she started bleeding. At the beginning she was bleeding a lot, but then the bleeding decreased bit by bit so I told her, "Let's get away, you can't stay here for long. We have to run away." After that DKBA and SLORC came almost to where we were. They spoke mostly Karen. Some spoke Burmese but the others said to them, "Don't speak Burmese, you have to speak Karen. What did the leader tell you before coming here? You have to speak Karen." So after that they spoke only in Karen.

Q: So you saw the soldiers?

A: Yes, I saw the soldiers in the fields. We were sitting together in the fields and they came around us. A lot of people were in the fields, maybe 100. The other villagers came from Section 2, Section 3, and also from Section 4. About fifteen or sixteen soldiers surrounded us. They looked at us carefully and then they said, "We will kill you all if you don't go back to Burma." After they had told us that, they went away. In front of us they continued to burn the houses. We went further into the fields. We couldn't stand near where they were burning the houses because it was too hot, very hot for our families. So we had to run away. We stayed in the fields the whole night until morning.

Q: Did you see what they were wearing?

A: Yes, I saw their uniforms very well. They were like Thai soldiers' uniforms [he showed a jacket with camouflage pattern as an example]. There were also some plain green uniforms. I saw badges on their uniforms, we call it the Bandoola badge [the standard red-and-white Burmese Army badge]. But I couldn't see their [battalion] numbers, because when they saw me they said to me, "I will kill you." They wore baseball-style caps and some wore Burmese military hats. Just some of them had caps. A lot had black hats this shape [like a Burmese army hat], and some had round black hats this shape [a beret]. Some had a yellow scarf around their necks. The others didn't have yellow scarves because they were not DKBA. I could recognize that. I'm sure that they were Burmese soldiers. The Burmese were wearing Burmese military hats.

Q: Is your wife better now?

A: My wife is cured but I could not find the bullet so it is still painful. I couldn't see the bullet. It is still inside, but I didn't send my wife to Mae Sot hospital. I can cure her, but maybe later it will be necessary to remove it. I can remove it if the wound disappears.

Q: What do you think they are going to do now with the camp?

A: If they move the camp it would be better for us, because if we stay here I think that the same thing will happen again. If we continue to stay here the camp will be burned again. But if we have to move to Beh Klaw, I won't go. In Beh Klaw the security is not good either.

Interview 20: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Naw Eh Moo"
Sex:	Female
Age:	24
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Teacher
Family:	Married, 3 children
Address:	Huay Kaloke refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 19, 1998

[The following notes on the situation in Huay Kaloke were written in English a week after the attack on the camp, by a human rights monitor who has lived there for over 10 years. The English has been slightly edited.]

The SPDC army acted very wildly toward the sleeping children in the refugee camp. On the night of March 10, 1998 at 11 p.m. the Thai soldiers allowed the SPDC army to enter our Huay Kaloke refugee camp to kill us and burn us together with our possessions. At midnight the SPDC started to shell us with heavy weapons, M79 grenades and 21/2 inch mortars. The first shell hurt a teacher and a boy. Then they fired grenades and mortars nonstop. So many children were hurt by the shells. They had bad injuries. A pregnant woman was shot and then burned to death in Section 2 behind camp leader Mary On's house. Her daughter was hurt as well, by a shell fragment in her hip. Her daughter is only nine years old.

There were four members of a family who were terribly burned, and the youngest daughter died three days later. They were in Section 4 [this family tried to avoid the shelling by hiding down a shallow cement well and pulling the lid overtop them, but they were all badly burned by the heat of the houses burning all around them]. Another sleeping family was also injured [by shell fragments], the mother was hit in her left breast. Her nine year old daughter was hit in the left side of her head. Her seven year old son was hit in his right shoulder and his left hand.

As for me, I have three children. My eldest son is six, my second son is five and my youngest son is two. At midnight when I heard the sound of the mortars and saw the light [of the fire], I carried my youngest boy and pulled along my eldest. My mother carried my second son. I had no idea where to run to, so I went under our house. My brother told us to run to the fields, but I didn't dare go because so many shells were falling in the field. Then I saw my friend, Teacher T—, and his parents pass by my house so I followed them. At that time my brother was in our house trying to gather our clothing, food and blankets. He was hurrying to follow us, but luckily while he was grabbing the bottle of my children's milk powder in his frightened hands, he dropped the bottle. Just as he bent to pick up the bottle a 21/2-inch shell exploded behind my house. That shell wounded six people behind my house. I was about five minutes away from my house by then. My brother wasn't too close to the shell, but he fell on his back. He felt numbness in his body, and he also felt hot all over. He thought he'd been hurt by a piece of the shell, but when he checked his body there were no injuries. When he heard the cries of the injured people he jumped down from the house and looked for them so he could carry them.

As for me and two of my children, we ran straight to the Thai village and stayed in the yard of the Thai monastery until dawn. When I arrived at the Thai village it was a quarter past midnight. I looked back at my refugee camp and saw many shells exploding over it. At 1 a.m. on March 11, my camp was burned down. So many houses were burned. At 1:15 a.m. I still hadn't seen my mother and my second son, so I was very sad. About 50 shells were exploding in our camp. My mother ran to the Karen monastery in our camp and then joined me in the Thai village by a different way. At 2 a.m. I met my mother, my second son and my brother.

Then I found out that there was one pregnant woman who was shot and wounded, she fell beside her house and was then burned to death with her house. Her name was Ma

Pein. A seven year old boy named Pa Lah Ghay was shot in his head and died in an NGO car on the way to the hospital. A 15 year old girl was burned and died later on March 14. There were also 36 people who were injured.

On March 11 between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. the Thai soldiers beat six people in the field near the camp. The Thai soldiers didn't say anything to them, just beat them and told them to sit in the field.

Now we have to be afraid of the SPDC army and the Thai army as well. The Thai soldiers are not kind to us, because the Thai Government wants to drive us back to forced labour, portering and hunger in Burma. I believe we need a safer place for refugees. We need a place between Mae Ramat and Tak, near Thai Karen villages [in the hills east of Huay Kaloke further inside Thailand; these hills are fairly sparsely populated by small Karen villages]. It is plenty of land filled with water and bamboo. Then we need UN troops to provide security for us because we cannot trust the Thais. I have many Thai soldier friends, and they've told me that they really won't protect us. They don't want to kill the SPDC soliders. They are not brave in battle, they are only cruel to the refugees. I have been in Thailand 14 years, and I know the Thai spirit very well. They only love money. If we can pay them money then they pretend to care for us, but when they finish spending the money they no longer pretend to care. Their faces and mouths show their hearts.

Interview 21: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Tha Muh"
Sex:	Male
Age:	20+
Ethnicity:	Pwo Karen
Family:	Single
Address:	Doooplaya District; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 23, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Saw Tha Muh" was wounded during the attack.*]

Q: Are there any pieces of the shell left in your thigh?

A: I don't know. I don't know if I was wounded by big weapons or by guns. I was the sentry at the gate, I was sleeping and I ran very quickly.

Q: Did you see the soldiers?

A: Yes, I saw all of them. About 20 or 30 came. I saw Burmese soldiers and DKBA, I saw all of them. I don't know what they were wearing, it looked like Burmese soldiers' uniforms. I dared not look anymore, I ran. They didn't come by car, they just came. In the evening we saw people with lights going along the other road [not the road near the gate]. That night we had to be careful because the situation was not good. And after one or two hours I told the other people in [refugee] security that I would sleep for a while and I slept on the ground.

Q: Did they fire big weapons?

A: I don't know if it was the Burmese or the Thais firing big weapons. A lot of Thai soldiers came and many people were mixed together. We saw the Burmese and the DKBA coming from behind the monastery, they called "Dteh! Dteh! Dteh!!" ["Go on! Go on! Go on!!" in Burmese]. After they went back, Thai soldiers came to the camp and put out the fire but they didn't fire any guns, they only came and looked around. Many houses burned in Section 6 and I can't tell how many people were injured there.

Q: Did you hear them [the attackers] say that they will come again?

A: No, I didn't hear them say that.

Q: Did you come here [to hospital] with any friends?

A: Yes, that boy there stays in the camp. He got injured like me. He didn't see the soldiers, he was sleeping with his wife in his house. There is also this woman who is laying down there, but I don't know her name. The other patients are in the [Thai] hospital.

Interview 22: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing, Religion

Name:	"Daw Sein"
Sex:	Female
Age:	25
Ethnicity	Pwo Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 1 child
Address:	Dooplaya District; now in Maw Ker refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 23, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[*"Daw Sein" was wounded in the attack and was interviewed in hospital.*]

Q: When and how were you wounded?

A: I was not sleeping when I heard the heavy weapons, I was breastfeeding my child. I went down to the ground and my husband told me, "Don't run, they are firing big weapons and a lot of shells are landing". I dared not stay so I took my child and I ran outside the house. My sarong was falling down so I told my husband, "Carry the baby." He held it, I tied my sarong and then I told my husband, "Give me back the baby." My husband didn't give it to me because he didn't want me to run. A lot of bullets landed in front of me. I covered myself like this [with her hands] and when they started firing I was wounded in my hand. I was wounded by small guns, not by the big ones. If they'd only fired one bullet I wouldn't have been wounded, but many bullets were flying, it sounded like ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! They also fired a lot of big shells in Section 6.

Q: Did many people get injured?

A: In Section 6 I'm the only one who got seriously injured. My finger bone was broken to pieces so they had to cut off my finger. Another was a sentry, he was wounded in his back

and in his leg. Another one was wounded in the head. Both are from Section 6 but I don't know their names. In Section 6, five people were wounded. One woman had a shell land on her house and she was injured in the elbow and on her buttock. She didn't come to the hospital. The Gawlawas ['white foreigners', i.e. Medicine San Frontier doctors] came and took us to the hospital, me and one man. He is 22 years old but I don't know his name. He stayed in Section 6. The others didn't get serious injuries, just minor injuries, so they sent them to Maw Ker hospital. There is a clinic and a nurse there.

Q: Have you heard about the Muslims who got injured?

A: The Muslim woman here, her husband and her baby were both wounded. I don't know where she was wounded, but her baby's legs are broken [the mother's name is Nha Ma Chan, age 25; her baby boy was seven days old, named Tha Tha]. Now they are also staying in the hospital. I dare not look. One pregnant Muslim woman from Maw Ker was also wounded, but I don't know where. She doesn't live in Section 6 because in Section 6 there are no Muslims, so maybe she stays in Section 7 or 8.

Q: Did you see the soldiers?

A: Yes I saw them. They spoke Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen and Burmese. The Burmese [soldiers] were behind the Karen soldiers. The DKBA burned the houses and they called out, "Burn, burn!" They spoke in Pwo Karen. I could hear because I stayed inside the bunker when they started to burn the houses. I was already wounded. They shouted, "Burn, burn!" The Burmese were behind them they stayed behind the monastery, and the DKBA didn't burn the monastery. We had two monasteries; Than Manee monastery was Burmese and Wah Lay monastery is Pwo Karen. The Burmese monastery was completely burnt down, and so was the hall [beside it], but Wah Lay monastery was not burned. The Burmese fired their guns until the DKBA called to them in Burmese language, "Don't fire, don't fire!" And then the Burmese didn't fire. When they fired it was only villagers who got injured. They sat in front of our house and they fired, so how could we run?

Q: Do you know how many soldiers came?

A: Maybe 40 or 50 soldiers came. I had to carry my baby and my fingers were wounded, so I didn't have time to look. I don't know how they came; they didn't come by car. They fired big weapons, two or three shells, and then they fired their guns. They shot a lot of bullets, and then they burned the houses. In our section over 40 houses were burned. My house was burned. My house was near the monastery. In Section 6, 44 houses were burned. No houses burned in Section 4, but some did in Sections 7 and 8. I don't know exactly because when I got injured someone brought me to the hospital and the section leader didn't come to tell us.

Interview 23: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Saw Say Po"
Sex:	Male
Age:	30+
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen

Family: Married, children
 Address: Dooplaya District; now in Section 1 of Maw Ker refugee camp
 Date of interviewed: March 23, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[*“Saw Say Po”’s daughter was wounded in the attack.*]

Q: When was your daughter wounded?

A: My daughter was wounded last night, at about midnight or one o’clock. Her name is Moo Rah Paw. She is two years and two months old. She got injured in her lower jaw by a big shell.

Q: I thought that in Section 1 there were no casualties?

A: Yes, there were casualties in Section 1 and also in Section 3. In Section 1 my daughter and two others who got just a few fragments. The other two are in the beds over there. One is injured on her hip and the other in her leg. The one who got injured in the leg is Than Than Yi, she is 28 years old the pieces entered her thigh. The other is Say Lway Paw, she is 26. The baby there is only seven days old, he got injured and his father, his mother and his whole family got injured. Now there is no one to take care of him so I help him. His mother is in a very bad condition, the shell fragments penetrated her lungs, all over her back and in her buttocks.

Q: Did the houses burn in Section 1?

A: In Section 1 the houses didn’t burn. They [soldiers] entered Section 6, and only in Sections 6 and 7 the houses burned. I don’t know how many houses burned. When I left, the fire trucks were going into the camp. I saw many fire trucks from a distance.

Q: Do you think the attackers were Burmese, DKBA or Karen Peace Army?

A: I don’t know, but I heard that there was one who joined the Burmese Army, his name is Maung Chit Thu. Burmese. I don’t know if he is DKBA or KPA, we only heard that he joined the Burmese. [Maung Chit Thu is a DKBA commander from further north in Pa’an District, who was reportedly brought in for the attack by the SPDC because the local DKBA did not want to attack the camp.] I didn’t see the soldiers, but some people in Section 6 said they saw them. They said that they were young, just children.

Interview 24: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name: “Saw Bway”
 Sex: Male
 Age: 25
 Ethnicity: Sgaw Karen
 Family: Married, children
 Address: Dooplaya District; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp
 Date of interviewed: March 23, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[“Saw Bway”’s house was near the Burmese monastery and was burned in the attack.]

On the 23rd at midnight or one o’clock, SPDC and DKBA came to the camp, they fired big weapons and small guns and they burned houses. They burned Section 6 and part of Section 7. They burned more than 40 houses. Forty families were homeless. I saw some of them [the soldiers] wearing civilian clothes. When we ran we couldn’t carry our things because they fired their weapons. If they hadn’t fired we could have saved our things.

Q: Did they shoot at the monastery or did they set it on fire?

A: They shot, paung-paung-paung [imitating the noise of mortar shells]. I ran to the bunker and I called my family and my children to hide in the bunker.

Q: Do you think that the DKBA would shoot the monastery deliberately?

A: I can’t tell. If they were DKBA they should have had yellow scarves, but we didn’t see any scarves on their heads. We could see their faces because of the fire. Maybe they put their scarves in their bags, we don’t know. But the soldiers were shouting at each other, because I heard one saying in Karen, “Don’t shoot, don’t shoot, why are you firing your guns, it is very strange that you are firing your guns!” Only a few soldiers came. If many came they’d have no security and they’d suffer more casualties [because the Thai soldiers would know they were coming].

[Another refugee from Section 6, who was on duty as a sentry that night, added:] That night at ten, we saw some strangers and we didn’t know exactly who they were. Some people said that they were hunters. Later I saw four soldiers going to Section 7 and four to Section 3. I also saw some soldiers staying behind the monastery [they never entered further into the camp]. One sentry who was staying under a tree got wounded. After the attack we saw a 21/2-inch [mortar] shell and RPG shells left on the ground, but when the Thai soldiers came they took them away. I think that those soldiers didn’t dare to come and attack again because they were drunk and looked like they were afraid. They burned the [Burmese] monastery and a hall [just in front of the monastery]. They came one way and they went back the same way.

Interview 25: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing, Religion

Name:	“Saw Eh Kler”
Sex:	Male
Age:	23
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Student
Family:	Single, 3 brothers and sisters
Address:	Dooplaya District; now in Section 1 of Maw Ker refugee camp for 5 or 6 years
Date of interviewed:	March 23, 1998
Source:	KHRG

[“Saw Eh Kler” is the youngest of four siblings and just finished high school in the refugee camp. His father is dead and his mother lives elsewhere.]

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night and when it happened?

A: I am from Section 1, but that night I went to visit my friend in Section 3. He said, “Don’t go back, it is too dark, sleep here.” So I slept there. I was already asleep when I first heard the explosion. I looked at my watch and it was 1:15 a.m. When I heard the explosion I jumped down out of the house. I hid under the house, and then I walked to Section 1. They started to fire heavy weapons, after that they fired rifle grenades [special grenades that are mounted on the end of a rifle like an M1 carbine], small mortars and other bullets. Then the shooting stopped and I walked to Section 6. I reached Section 6 when the houses were burning. One man told me, “Nephew, they left already, they came just for a while.” I asked him, “Did you see many soldiers?” He answered, “I don’t know, the soldiers came in two groups. One group of soldiers came to see me and the other group went along the road.” The soldiers spoke Karen. They asked him, “Where are the Muslims’ houses?” and he said, “They are very far from here.” That group of soldiers was followed by the Burmese. The Burmese were behind them, while it was mostly the DKBA going in front.

The man said that when they entered they started firing the big weapons, one group called “Go on, go on, go on” in Karen, and the other group called “Go on, go on, go on” in Burmese. One group asked for a lighter from the others. The other group said, “Don’t burn, don’t burn”, but the first group said, “Burn, burn!” Then one soldier asked his friend for a lighter and his friend said, “I have no lighter.” So he asked one from another friend, and he set fire to the houses. That was about 15 minutes after they’d started shooting.

The first group was running in front and the second group was running and setting fire [to the houses] at the same time. Another group was staying behind the monastery they were Burmese. Each of the first two groups had four people. They burned the houses, they moved back and then they left the camp. That man told me, “I really saw it. They came and they burned my house. I put out the fire and they set it on fire again, and I put it out again. Then they searched me and they asked, ‘Uncle, do you have any money?’ I told them I have no money and they said, ‘If you don’t have money then run, run!’” They burned his house after he had run away. When I saw him he was sitting near the fire.

Later a lot of Thai military cars came. The Thai soldiers came and talked to a man from Section 7 who was near me, his name is M—. They asked him, “Which way did they come from?” M— answered, “They came from that way.” The [Karen] sentries had seen and heard them and they had shouted. The Thai soldiers didn’t say anything, and they were worried that the people would think that they did not provide any security. While that was happening, the Thai soldiers went in a line near the grave and shelled four times with big weapons. Then later the Thai soldiers who were in a line near the road shelled again. They fired across the river at Wah Lay. That was before sunrise. They fired again and again until five in the morning, and the people in the camp ran away because they were worried that the SPDC and the DKBA would shoot back.

Q: Did the Thai soldiers do sentry duty to protect people before that night?

A: No, they didn’t do anything. Sometimes they provide security but not regularly. That night we had only villagers as sentries and they were carrying nothing but slingshots, so

they dared not shoot. By looking at their behavior, I think the Thai, the Burmese and the DKBA have joined hands and are working together.

Q: Yesterday when the Thai authorities came and called a meeting, what did they say?

A: I think that they wanted to know the population of the camp, how many Christians, Muslims and Buddhists are in the population and how many people can speak Thai. And they asked about the helicopter crash. The Thai official asked, "Did you ever see that helicopter?" The villagers answered, "Yes, we saw it." And they asked, "Did you see the place where it crashed?" We answered, "We didn't see it." Then they showed money, 15,000 Baht, and they said, "If you find the pieces of the helicopter, we will give you this money." That was a Thai helicopter that crashed in the rainy season of 1997. We didn't see it crash, but we saw it flying that day. I didn't hear it crash but I heard the SPDC shooting at it. [A Thai army helicopter patrolling the border crashed in rainy season 1997, probably shot down by SLORC troops. SLORC refused the Thai request to send a team to search for the wreckage until several weeks later, and then would only allow them to search one specific location. No wreckage was found.]

Q: If someone tells you that you have to go back to Burma, what will you do?

A: Why would I go back? If we go to stay in Burma we must be slaves of the Burmese. I would rather go and be a KNLA soldier and shoot at them. That would be better for me.

Interview 26: Forced labor, Killing, Torture, Refugee, Relocation

Name:	"Pa Bway Htoo"
Sex:	Male
Age:	44
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Dta La Ku, Sect group
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with seven children
Address:	Doolaya district, Karen State
Date of interview:	March 23, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Pa Bway Htoo" is a Dta La Ku village elder who often has to negotiate with all sides in the conflict.]

I will explain to you the things that have happened in the past, about KNU and SLORC over time through the years. These things give problems to the villagers. The villagers have to suffer between KNU and SLORC, many kinds of difficult things. Sometimes SLORC or KNU groups do what their leaders order them to do, but sometimes they do not do as their leaders order, so the people who live near the border have had to suffer difficulties many times. As for me, I live along the border so I have to see and hear these problems. It makes me sad and I have pity on the people who have to suffer these problems. I want to tell about what happened first, when the SLORC came. At that time,

we were near the border and many people from many villages, such as Kwih Kler, Meh Naw Dah Hta, Lay Th'Ray, Tee Po Khaw, Maw, Tee Ler Baw, Kay Ghaw, Heh Kyaw Kwa and Meh Ger, ran away to escape from the dangerous bullets and shells exchanged between KNU and SLORC. The villagers were afraid and ran away because they could not stand it. Some people arrived in Noh Po [refugee camp] but the people who were very close to the border did not go, because they wanted to make peace, to live in their own villages to farm and to earn their living in their own land. When there will be peace in their country, at that time we will go to visit them.

I am the village headman from xxxx and I have a lot of pity for the people when I see that they have to suffer these problems. So I went to visit the second in command of LIB 44 [Light Infantry Division; actually just the second in command of the 44 Division troops in that area] named Aung Kyaw Nyunt; the name of their colonel is Than Lwin. They welcomed us nicely and told me, "Tell the people who fled to Thailand to come back and till their fields in their own villages." Then I went to Kwih Lat Der and held a meeting there with the headmen and the people, and told them what I had been told. The people who heard that were satisfied and happy, so they went back to their own villages. The people who'd fled on foot went back on foot, and the people who had fled on bullock carts went back with their bullock carts and their cattle. The people who had some possessions hired cars and went back with warm hearts and lived in their villages happily.

The time passed by and No. 44 went back, then No. 22 [Light Infantry Division] and LIB 356 came instead. Their leaders forced the people to work for them. The labor was not so hard, but the worst thing was that they arrested people and forced them to produce for weapons after they had tied them up. Then they interrogated the frightened people. Some people were not what the soldiers accused them of, but they were very afraid and the soldiers forced them to confess anyway, and then they had big problems until they couldn't stand it any more. The soldiers persecuted them in many ways, and they forced people to give their livestock, to sell them their cattle and buffaloes and to pay taxes to them. The people had to pay the taxes but they didn't really know to whom they should give them. If they gave them to one man, another man arrested them.

So, we were living near the border and we were sad to hear about these things. When the LIB 356 came, they persecuted the people and many people were hurt. The name of the LIB 356 commander was Ohn Lwin and the commanders who raped and persecuted many people were Htoo Kya and A'Saw Myo Htet. First Htoo Kya was living in Kwih Lat Der and Yaw K'Daw, then he went to live in Lay Th'Ray and persecuted a lot of people. Once he met a man who was a fool [mentally handicapped] and he asked the man, "Do you have a weapon? Have you seen the place where the KNU hides their weapons?" Then the fool answered, "Yes, I saw." Htoo Kya asked, "Where was it?", and the man answered, "Up on the rock" [it was a small limestone cliff]. After a while he saw a farmer coming back from his fields and he told commander Htoo Kya, "I can't climb up that rock, but that man can climb up the rock because he was the one who put the weapons up there, so he knows better than I do." Then Htoo Kya captured the farmer and forced him to seek the weapons up on the rock. But he couldn't find anything, so Htoo Kya kicked him off the rock and he fell. His name was Saw Chit Heh. They killed him; he was from Lay Th'Ray village.

Another man named Saw Ku climbed up a dogfruit tree to get some dogfruit.

Unfortunately he fell and broke his leg. He went to a traditional healer named Maung Yo Yeh. Maung Yo Yeh cured the broken leg with holy oil over which mantras had been recited. The Burmese heard about it, and they said “This nga pway [‘ringworm’, i.e. KNLA] soldier came back from the frontline battle and that traditional healer cured him.” I testified that what they said was not true, because there was no battle wound on Saw Ku’s leg. It really was broken by falling from the tree. Then they threatened the village headman that they would kill him because he had allowed a nga pway soldier to be cured. They said if the headman didn’t want to die he must give them 50,000 *kyat*. The headman was afraid of them but he couldn’t do anything. He asked them to go and see the place where Saw Ku had fallen down but they wouldn’t go. He asked them to go and look at Saw Ku’s leg but they wouldn’t go. They just asked for money. So the villagers helped him by collecting 50,000 *kyat*, and they gave that money to Htoo Kya. When the Burmese got 50,000 *kyat* they went away and stopped making problems for him.

So, the civil servants are working at politics. The Burmese say that they must rule over people in their country and that what they are doing is for the people in their country. The Thais also say the same, and if we look carefully we see that they rule over their people and persecute them terribly also. So we who live on the border are very sad to see the people on both sides suffering terrible things.

Afterwards IB 61 came, and they forced the people to work very hard but the people tried to do it anyway. They forced the people to carry cement from Ber Kler to Htee Hta Baw [over 20 km/12 miles as the crow flies, much farther on land], at night time in the rainy season when the river was flooded. So the people were in trouble. Some came back ill. Some coughed up blood, and some were vomiting blood. Some had wounds on their backs and others had wounds on their sides. We took pity on them when we saw them. Before they started carrying things some people said to the soldiers, “It’s too heavy, we can’t carry this. How can we carry this?” Then the soldiers kicked them and said, “Why do you ask before carrying?” Before they crossed the river some people asked, “If we cross the river will the cement get wet?” Then the soldiers slapped their faces and said, “Why do you ask before you cross the river?” Then when the people crossed the river and the cement got wet they kicked them and hit them again and said, “Don’t you know that the cement will be destroyed and we can’t use it if it gets wet?” They hurt many people that time. The commander who forced the people to carry cement is Kyay Lay Oo. He abused many people at that time.

So people saw that the Burmese all behave differently. Each one of them works differently and has different rules. If we look for the source we see that they all get their orders from the same leaders, but they come and order the people around differently. The people couldn’t stand it any more, so they fled for the second time. The people from Kwih Kler, Meh Tharaw Hta, Pu Chit Mu, Ter Wah Law, Lay Th’Ray, and Tee Po Khaw all fled because the Burmese persecuted those people, forced them to work as forced laborers and to be porters. We had pity on those people when we saw them in such a bad situation. After that there were more people from faraway places who fled here, because they were in a terrible situation too. We had not seen them before, because they lived far from us. We didn’t know what kind of problems they’d had to suffer. But we knew that they were in a very bad situation because they came from many villages, such as Yah Ther Hta, Noh Maw Po, Waw Lu, Klaw Day, Lay Po Hta, Na Htee Kloh, and from many other villages that we

didn't even know the names of! Also Meh Dter, Meh Ku, Htee Ka Bprah, Toh Doh Neh, many villages. Some fled up here to live with us, and some fled onwards to other places too. They fled into Thailand but they couldn't get into Noh Po refugee camp. They were coming from faraway places, and people let them stay along the pathways. It was very hard for them to get food. They were destitute. So we looked at them and had pity on them, and we were very disappointed with the people who ruled over the population. When they lived in Burma the Burmese persecuted them. When they went to stay in Thailand, the Thai didn't love them either. We saw the Thais push them up and down and hit them until they were wounded. They ran to Baw Ner Hta, some had no food to eat nor good water to drink, so they drank dirty water and got diarrhea, and then many people died of diarrhea on the mountainsides. This was a big problem that we couldn't solve. Then the Burmese and Thais wanted the people to go back to Burma. The people didn't dare to go back because they were too worried that the Burmese would harm them, but the Thais said they wouldn't allow them to live in Thailand anymore. It was a very big problem.

Just after Kyay Lay Oo forced people to carry cement, the monk of Myaing Gyi Ngu [U Thuzana, founder and leader of the DKBA] sent some DKBA people to us and they told us that if we were vegetarians and did everything the monk [Thuzana] ordered, the Burmese wouldn't come to our village to harm us again. They said, "If the villagers follow the plan of the Myaing Gyi Ngu monk, they will be free from forced labor and portering and the Burmese will not hit them or kill them anymore." The villagers felt very happy to hear that. Everyone decided to become DKBA and they started to eat as vegetarians, but after a few days the DKBA people disappeared. They went back secretly without saying goodbye to anybody. When they first came the villagers were very happy to hear what they said, but those people left the villagers hopeless when they went back secretly. [They were ordered back to Pa-an district by the SPDC, to be replaced by KPA.]

After that the KPA came and told the villagers, "If you put your name on the KPA list the Burmese won't force you to do forced labor and portering. Now we must live in peace. But if you don't put your name on the KPA list the Burmese will force you to do forced labor and portering". The Burmese force people to work harder than they are able, not as parents ask their children to work. If they made us to work as parents ask their children to work, we could try to bear it. We know that people who are in politics must force the public to work, but the Burmese force the people to work harder than the law, it's not just. So the villagers want to be free from this forced labor and portering, and they agreed to become KPA if they would be free from forced labor.

But when we held a meeting to talk about becoming KPA, the KPA came and ordered us to become soldiers. They said that KPA soldiers would not need to go to other places, that they could stay at home [based in their home villages]. Then some people from Kwih Kler and Meh Naw Dah Hta joined the KPA army. But the KPA never kept those people in their own homes, they sent them away to other villages. And now we've got a message that they tried to escape from the army! So then we couldn't decide anything about whether to become KPA or not, and we still don't know how to solve that problem for the people. We hope that the Burmese will love their children as our families love their villages and will try to solve these problems for the people, but when the people came up here the Burmese asked the Thais to drive them back, and when they went back the Burmese persecuted them. So we are worried. The people are good, but when people can't continue

and have to suffer, they can become bad.

Last month they gathered up the people and divided them into two groups. One group was to be a people's army [i.e. regular KPA] and the other group was to be village defenders who would be sentries in each village. They took their training in Kwih Kalay and the leader told them that they could stay in their own houses after the training, but after they finished they were not allowed to stay in their own homes. There were 50 of them in that training. The leader sent them from Kyaikdon to Kya In Seik Gyi, so then they knew that their leader did differently than what he said and many of them tried to escape. They ran away and hid themselves, they didn't want to go to other villages, they couldn't agree with their leader because he'd said they wouldn't have to leave their homes. We don't know how to help the people who are in this trouble now. Many people will flee here, many people have already fled from Thailand back to Burma because the Thais gave them no security and they were afraid, and I am afraid that they will have to face hunger. They won't have a chance to work their lands, and maybe some will become robbers. It is just like the period when the Japanese and the English were fighting each other. A lot of hunger and robbery occurred during that time. The best thing is that now the English are taking care of the refugee camps, but now the Thais won't allow the new people who flee to go to the refugee camps. When they go back to Burma the Burmese don't feed them either, so they are caught in the middle and hungry. I'm worried that they will kill each other in the fight for food, so I hope the rulers of the world will look and see this happening, meet with the SPDC and solve this problem.

If they don't do it, we who live on the border must be afraid. We are afraid both of the people who are being driven and of those who drive them, so I hope that the big men of the English and the Thais will meet with each other and think about how to take care of these people in a terrible situation. If the politicians are selfish then it will only become worse for these people.

Q: Are the KPA still saying that the Dta La Ku people must become soldiers?

A: Last month they were still saying that, but they haven't said anything this month. I will tell you: Many Dta La Ku fled to Thailand but they stayed together near here, not at the refugee camp. They fled because the Burmese forced them to do hard labor and portering. They fled from ID 44 and LIB 356, then they went back again but No. 61 came and forced them to carry heavy things so they fled again. Then the DKBA came and told them if they became DKBA they would be free from harm by the SLORC, so they waited for the DKBA's help. But the DKBA disappeared. Then the KPA appeared and ordered the Dta La Ku to become soldiers, but the people didn't want to carry weapons because they knew that even if they didn't use them to shoot at others, those others would shoot at them.

So when we had the New Year festival, many of us headmen held a meeting and we talked about how we must be faithful to our religion and follow the rules of our religion. That is easy to tell people, but not so easy to do because we are a minority who live among other peoples. We Dta La Ku must not drink or touch alcohol, we must not eat or touch pork, and we must not rear pigs. But if we live among the Burmese we cannot do as our rules say, and that makes us sad. If the Burmese order us to go and find alcohol and bring it to them we must do it because we are afraid of them. While we are portering for the Burmese we do not dare say anything against them when they put sausage or ham or the

head of a pig in our carrying basket. So how can we live as our religion dictates? Not only that, now they say we must carry guns. Even though we know that the words of our [Dta La Ku] leaders are right, we cannot observe them if we live among other people. So we headmen talked about that, and at last we decided that we would go to the Burmese leaders and ask them to give the Dta La Ku people a chance to live all together in Taung Ka Lay and Kwih Kler, in Burma but near the border, not on the Thai side. I think the Burmese will allow it. We will do nothing against them. If they come to our place or pass through it we hope that they will not persecute us, but if they do persecute us then we will run away again. Not only the people from Taung Ka Lay will flee, the people from other places will flee also. I think the Burmese will agree with us because the place we have chosen is near our religious centre and it will be easy for us to go to our festivals. If we live further away and we need to go to a festival we must pass many armies; if the Burmese SPDC allow us to go, maybe the DKBA will not allow us, if the DKBA allow us then maybe the KPA will not allow us, or if the KPA allow us then maybe the KNU will not allow us. Now many of our headmen have gone to the Burmese leaders to ask them. If the Burmese love us and do not want our religion to be destroyed, they ought to give us what we need.

When we look at KNU soldiers, their commander orders them to go to the villages and to help the villagers, to take care of them because the SLORC harms them. But some KNU soldiers enter the villages and order the villagers to give money, 10,000 or 20,000 *Kyat*, and they say that if the villagers don't give the money then they will shoot at the Burmese around the village. So the people are afraid and try to give it to them, even if they don't have enough money for themselves. They must give to KNU, to SLORC, to KPA and to DKBA too. The people have hard lives because they have to give money to many groups even though they don't have enough food for themselves. That is the big problem for them. If you go and ask anybody about what they have to suffer, they will tell you the same. Now there are a lot of KNLA in Burma. Sometimes they disturb us when we go to our festivals, they say to us, "Do not go or I will shoot you." Sometimes the villagers want to sell their wooden houses to buy rice and move to Kwih Lat Der or Taung Ka Lay, and the KNLA ask those villagers for half the price of their house; for example if we sell our house and get 20,000 *kyat* we must give 10,000 *kyat* to the KNLA. They tell us, "If you don't want to give half the price of your house then you must not sell it." So now our Dta La Ku people need to live in Kwih Lat Der and Taung Ka Lay and just to make our land peaceful. We won't live in Thailand. Dta La Ku people who live on the Thai side have no chance to do farming, so if they stay for a long time they will have no food.

On March 20, 1998 a Thai official came and held a meeting near our monastery and told us that all the Dta La Ku people who have been staying around here must go back to Burma because he said everyone trusts the Dta La Ku, that the Dta La Ku can travel freely because the police never rob or interrogate them. But then he said that the people who burned down Huay Kaloke [refugee camp] were Dta La Ku, that the Dta La Ku who are staying in Thailand now are spies for the SPDC and burned down the [refugee] camps. I was so mad I wanted to hit him! I told him at once: "Every Dta La Ku who lives in Thailand and Burma puts their name on a list, and gives it to me once every year. Every Dta La Ku name is on my list. If you say that the Dta La Ku attacked the camp then capture those Dta La Ku and bring them to me. I will see whether they are real Dta La Ku or fake Dta La Ku!" Then he said nothing. But I know that if we do not live in the same place

together, other people will try to destroy our Dta La Ku culture. I know that the people who attacked Huay Kaloke were not from around here. Maybe they were DKBA. There are some DKBA who tie their hair in a knot and carry weapons. We don't like that. There are some people who tie their hair in a knot and wear clothes like ours who live in Thailand, in Maw Kwa and Paw T'Ga Hta. They drink alcohol a lot. We don't like that either, because it destroys the name of the Dta La Ku who live here. I always think about these things. We are good, but other people do not see us as good. They think that we are bad, so we don't know what to do. We do good things but get bad in return, and eventually we can't stand it anymore. I hope that the Thai, English and Burmese will think and have pity and do something for the Dta La Ku people to be able to live together in one place.

Q: Are there still some villagers in Kwih Lat Der village now?

A: Yes, some villagers still stay in Kwih Lat Der, Taung Ka Lay, Kay Ghaw, Tee Ler Baw and Naw Po Heh. These villages are close to each other. Now the KPA and the Burmese come there. There are no DKBA now, but there are SPDC in Kwih Lat Der. They come and go, they don't stay there all the time. Now they are No. 62 [Infantry Battalion]. Their battalion commander is Than Win, and their company commander is also named Than Win.

Interview 27: Refugee, Forced labor, Killing

Name:	"Saw Kaser Doh"
Sex:	Male
Age:	40+
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 5 children aged 5-23
Address:	Kawkareik township; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp for 5 years
Date of interviewed:	March 27, 1998
Source:	KHRG

Q: Why did you come to live in the camp?

A: I have been in Maw Ker for five years. I dared not stay in my village because the Burmese soldiers tortured us, so we came to stay in the camp.

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: I hadn't heard anything before, but that night I saw something strange. I saw someone holding a torch light [outside the camp], and he turned the light on. I told the security [Karen security], "I saw a light over there." The security told me, "Maybe it was a Thai hunter," so we just stayed there, waiting and listening. I was staying with the sentries. There were four or five sentries. It was 1 a.m. so we were sleepy. We slept less than one hour, then they shot at us and we ran. We had to run, because we had nothing [to shoot back with]. They came into the camp at 1:30 a.m. They came on foot, by the path beside the monastery. First four soldiers came and they spoke Karen, they said, "Taw, taw, taw!"

["Go on, go on, go on!" in Karen]. After that Burmese soldiers came also; they said, "Dteh! Dteh! Dteh!!" ["Go on! Go on! Go on!" in Burmese]. They shot at us with 79's [M79 grenade launchers] and 21/2-inch [mortars]. They shot with heavy weapons and they fired small guns. I didn't see any RPG's [rocket-propelled grenades]. If the soldiers had shot at us with an RPG, we would all be dead now. An M79 shell landed near us. It didn't hit me but my friend Kyaw Wah got injured.

I couldn't do anything. They shot at us, I ran back home and my friends ran to the monastery. I ran back home and I called out to everyone [to warn them], but I couldn't call all the people and I ran into a bunker. When I reached the bunker, the soldiers were also arriving and they were burning the houses. They shot their guns and burned the houses at the same time. They shot for nearly one hour. The first place they shot up was Section 6. Some soldiers could have been injured because they shot at each other by mistake. One group entered the camp and another group stayed behind them, so when the second group fired their guns the shells landed near their friends.

Q: Did you hear them saying anything?

A: They didn't say anything around me. They asked the people who live in Section 6 about the Muslims, they said: "Where are the Muslims' houses?" The one who asked the question spoke Karen. When they arrived in Section 4, their commander came to call them back and they went back. The commander talked to his soldiers in Karen.

In the dark, it looked like they were wearing streaked [camouflaged] uniforms. Their hats looked like Burmese army hats. I can't say what guns they were carrying. I think M16 and AK 47. They were not drunk. I didn't hear if they will come back again. We were too much afraid. I was afraid that they would shoot at me and the bullets would hit me.

Q: Did the Thai soldiers shoot at them?

A: No, they didn't fire their guns but one group of Thai soldiers stayed near the Ler Ghaw Kee road and they fired one or two times. When the Burmese soldiers fired into the camp, the Thais fired back only one or two times.

Q: Which sections were burned down?

A: Sections 6 and 7, they didn't burn the other sections. Fifty houses were burned down and one monastery. Its name was Than Manee monastery. They shot at it and they burned it. They also set fire to the other monastery [Wah Lay monastery] but the big monastery didn't burn, only the small one burned down. The fire also burned down the community hall. The fire truck came after the shooting. We also tried to put out the fire. They came to put out the fire with water just before sunrise.

Q: Since then have the Thai soldiers said anything?

A: No, they didn't say anything at first, but yesterday the Thai soldiers said, "Don't run away, we think that they will not come again." Now they come and guard the villagers all day. They said to us, "If you hear something, please tell us." But I don't understand Thai language, so I don't understand exactly what they said.

Interview 28: Refugee, Livelihood, Killing

1. Name:	“Saw Say Muh”	2. Name:	“Naw Paw Thu”
Sex:	Male	Sex:	Female
Age	30+	Age:	30+
Ethnicity:	Karen	Ethnicity:	Karen

Family: Married, 2 children aged 5 and 8
 Address: Hlaing Bwe township; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp only 1 month
 Date of interviewed: March 27, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[“Saw Say Muh” and “Naw Paw Thu” are married, and only recently arrived in Maw Ker.]

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?”

Saw Say Muh”: The soldiers entered the camp and burned down the houses. We heard them calling “Go on, go on!” I don’t know which way they came into the camp, because when I heard the shells I ran into the bunker. They fired a lot of heavy weapons. They fired both heavy weapons and small weapons. I saw a shell from an M79. We stayed in the bunker because they were shelling us with heavy weapons. At that time they hadn’t burned my house yet.

Boy: They fired M79, AK47, M16, and rifle grenades. They started to burn the houses at 1:15 a.m.

“Naw Paw Thu”: We heard the soldiers who came up in front shouting at the soldiers who were behind them firing their guns, “Nga lo ma tha! Why are you firing your guns while we are in front of you?” [‘Nga lo ma tha!’ is Burmese for ‘Motherfuckers!’] They talked like this. We stayed in the bunker and we listened. When we were hiding in the bunker, the soldiers called us so we got out from the bunker. A soldier asked me, “Where is your village?” I said, “Our village is Lay Po Paw Ler.”

“Saw Say Muh”: I saw two soldiers. They asked me, “Are you a villager?” I said, “Yes, I am a villager.” The soldiers told us to get out, so we got out of the bunker and they burned down our house. One soldier carried an AK47 and another soldier carried a Karen bag, an Esso oil bottle and a lighter. He poured the Esso oil on the house and set fire to it. Then they shot at the house and they said, “Go into the bunker.” They spoke Karen. One soldier wore a plain colour uniform and the other one wore a camouflage uniform, but I didn’t see their hats. After the soldiers had burned the other houses, they burned down the Than Manee monastery on their way back, then they went straight to the road and left the camp.

Q: Could you save your belongings?

“Saw Say Muh”: We kept our things in my auntie’s house, and all of them were burned.

“Naw Paw Thu”: Every night I went to sleep there, while my husband slept alone at home.

Q: What time did the Thai soldiers and the fire truck come?

“Saw Say Muh”: The Thai soldiers came just before sunrise, and they fired their heavy weapons just before sunrise. They couldn’t shoot at them [DKBA and SPDC] because they were already far away from the camp. They had already gone back and probably reached their camp by then. I am sure they could have reached their camp if they went straight, because the distance from here to Wah Lay is not far. When the fire truck came, the villagers had already put out the fire. It was already half past two in the morning. When the people put out the fire, our house had already burned down. There were two sections burned down, Sections 6 and 7. The other sections were not burned down. There were 45 houses in Section 6 and five houses in Section 7 that burned down. The total was 50 houses.

Interview 29: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	“Saw Eh K’Lu”
Sex:	Male
Age:	24
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 1 child aged 18 months
Address:	Pa-an District; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp for 3 years
Date of interviewed:	March 28, 1998
Source:	KHRG

Q: What did you see the night of the attack? A: I don’t know how many soldiers entered the camp, maybe more than 30 or 40 soldiers. We woke up when they started to fire big guns. I had no watch and I wouldn’t have thought to look at a watch anyway. Then the soldiers came to my house. I didn’t know that they were coming. When I heard the explosions, they reached the house and I ran down to the bunker. Then I looked at them. I saw just three or four soldiers. They were all wearing the same Burmese uniform, a black uniform. They also wore yellow scarves. I saw yellow on their shoulders but I dared not look closely. They were holding guns. I saw one RPG [rocket-propelled grenade launcher]. They spoke Sgaw Karen. They didn’t say anything to me, because I was in the bunker. I heard them asking where the Muslims’ houses were. I heard some soldiers speaking Burmese, they were staying near the monastery. I heard them but we didn’t see the soldiers who stayed behind the monastery. Then the soldiers said, “Burn this house.” My house was the first they burned down, it was house number xxx. Everything was burned except my child’s clothes. It took them about five minutes to burn the houses nearby. Then they moved near the monastery.

Another man: They entered separately, they entered in three groups. One group went straight to his house, the second group went to Section 7, and the third group stayed behind the monastery. After they burned the houses they all went near the monastery and then left

the camp. We heard that it was not the DKBA who live here [just across the border from Maw Ker], they were from further away and the name of their chief is Chit Thu [Maung Chit Thu, a DKBA commander in Pa'an district further north].

Q: Can you build a new house?

A: We have some plastic sheeting. What we will do depends on the authorities. If they give the order, we will build a new house.

Interview 30: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Naw Ghay Hser"
Sex:	Female
Age:	24
Ethnicity:	Sgaw Karen
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 2 children aged 1 and 3
Address:	Doooplaya District; now in Section 7 of Maw Ker refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 28, 1998
Source:	KHRG

Q: How long have you been living in Maw Ker?

A: We have been staying in Maw Ker for a long time. When the situation was good we went back and stayed beside the river [in Burma]. Then when the situation there got too bad we came back here, and we've been staying here for three years since then.

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: During the night we were sleeping, but we dared not sleep in our bunker so we ran to another bunker. They shot for a short time, not even an hour. We heard the soldiers calling, "Go on! Go on! Go on!" in Karen, and one asked his friend for a lighter. Another soldier said, "Don't burn, please don't burn," but they set fire to the houses. After they had finished setting fire to the houses, all the men [in the bunker] stood up and looked around. They saw the fire burning down the houses, so we got out and started to run. I was afraid and I took my children away. I looked at my watch and it was half past one. We ran directly to the main road of the camp. I don't know what happened after that because I had already run away, but others who stayed behind said they heard the soldiers asking, "Where are the Muslims' houses?" and they answered, "Sections 7 and 8." Some people saw the soldiers. They were Karen and they were wearing short pants. We didn't see the soldiers, we just heard them. When they entered, they met a man with his wife. That man and his wife were afraid of them so they said to the soldiers, "Don't kill us, don't kill us." The soldiers said: "We won't kill you. Many soldiers are coming. Go in the bunker." After that they burned down the houses. They didn't do anything to the people because they had no weapons in their hands. They only burned down the houses, they didn't hurt people because we are all Karen, we don't want to hurt each other. But the Burmese soldiers were staying behind, and they fired shells into the camp.

Q: Do you know how many families are now homeless?

A: Fifty houses burned down. About five houses burned down in Section 7, and many houses burned down in Section 6.

Interview 31: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name: "Pi Lah Say"
 Sex: Female
 Age: 55
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 6 children aged 13-30
 Address: Dooplaya District; now in Section 7 of Maw Ker refugee camp for 2 years
 Date of interviewed: March 28, 1998
 Source: KHRG

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: They fired their guns first, they didn't burn the camp first. They burned down the camp after they had stopped shooting for quite a long time. They fired big bombs and I also heard the sound of small guns. When they were shooting I tried to carry my children but I could only grab my child by the legs [because she was panicking]. Then we were hiding in the bunker. We saw two people coming and burning the houses. When the fire started to get bigger we ran away and I fell down on the way. I cut my legs so badly that I didn't dare to look at them.

Other people saw the soldiers but I was afraid. I didn't dare lift my head up to look, so I didn't see. The people from that house said they saw two soldiers. The Section 5 leader saw them too because the fire was burning brightly. That was when my house burned down. Two soldiers came and set fire to the houses. They were saying, "We will burn, we will burn." They spoke in Sgaw Karen. They didn't burn the monastery, but the Burmese soldiers' bomb fell on it.

Q: Do you think that the DKBA is good for Buddhists?

Another woman: I don't think that they are good for all Buddhists - it depends on the luck of the Buddhist who meets the DKBA. The DKBA came and shouted: "Where are the Muslims?" Maybe they hate the Muslims.

A: Yes they really did that, they asked everyone, "Where are the Muslims?"

Q: Do you think you'll rebuild your house here, or will you move?

A: If we can live here, we will live here; if we can't live here, we won't. I will follow the others. If they dare to live here then I will live here too, but if not then I also won't dare to stay.

Interview 32: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing, Religion

Name: "U Than Myint"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 47
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Buddhist
 Occupation: farmer
 Family: Married, 4 children aged 20-23
 Address: Hlaing Bwe township; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp
 Date of interviewed: March 28, 1998
 Source: KHRG

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: They entered, fired their guns and burned down the houses. When they came I don't know, we just heard the explosions at 1:15 a.m. on March 23. The shells landed nearby and we all woke up. At first I thought that the Thai soldiers had fired something. I kept listening. I was not running yet. I had to find my family.

The soldiers came straight to the monastery. They came straight and they shouted, "Go on, go on!" and they started fires. Women and children were hiding in the bunkers. I saw the fire and the soldiers calling, "Go on, go on, go on!" I heard one soldier who was holding a walkie-talkie. He said in the Karen language, "Don't fire the gun, don't fire the gun," but his friends fired. One soldier was shouting in Burmese, "Nga lo ma tha!! We are in front of you, why are you firing the gun at us?" ['Nga lo ma tha' is Burmese for 'Motherfucker'.] When the soldiers went to one place, the other soldiers shot at that place. If it was me I would be angry with the Burmese soldiers [who were firing from behind]. I would have turned my gun against them and shot at them. I heard one soldier speaking Pwo Karen. I thought he must be DKBA and I dared not go out.

First they fired big weapons and then they fired small guns. After they were shooting for about 10 minutes we couldn't see them anymore. They went to Section 7 and I didn't see which way they were going out of the camp. They burned down the monastery as they were on their way out. I don't know how they burned it, you'd have to ask the monks. They didn't burn the community hall [a community hall for religious use, associated with the monastery], but when they fired heavy weapons the shells hit it and burned it. They didn't burn all the houses, they only burned some houses and then the fire spread to all the houses. I saw four of them, and the others were over there. I saw them when the fire started. Some were DKBA and some were Burmese. The Burmese soldiers were shooting guns and the DKBA burned the houses. I could not stay for long, the fire was too hot.

Q: What language did they speak?

A: They spoke Karen language, not Burmese. The soldiers who spoke Burmese stayed behind the monastery. They were the ones who were shelling with heavy weapons. It was mostly Burmese soldiers shooting the heavy weapons, two mortars and M79 [grenades].

I saw four soldiers coming this way and the others were over there; they were not too young. The ones who came over here were carrying guns, and one soldier was carrying

a big bag. One soldier didn't have a gun and the other three soldiers were holding guns; AK 47, M 16. They were wearing military uniforms. I also saw one soldier with a yellow scarf but I didn't see their hats. Some soldiers were wearing a plain uniform and one soldier was wearing a camouflage uniform. The soldier who wore the camouflage uniform said, "Don't touch me, don't touch me!" I dared not touch him. He was holding a gun. He thought that I would hit him.

They shot at my house. They shot six times or seven times. I saw pieces of shells. When they shot at my house, I looked out the top of the bunker and I looked at them. They looked down into the bunker before they burned down my house, and they asked, "Are you a villager or what?" I said, "Yes I am a villager, we are not soldiers." They didn't ask me my religion, they asked me, "Where is your village?" I said "Paw Law Lay village, Hlaing Bwe township." After that we ran away because we were afraid. Then they burned my house down.

Q: Did they look drunk or as if they had used stimulants?

A: I don't know, I dared not look. They would shoot me if I looked directly at them. I can't tell you. When they burned the houses they were shivering. They were shaking, their legs were also shaking. Maybe they were afraid. When they heard the bombs they sat down on the ground. What were they afraid of? The KNU is not in the camp!

Q: Could you save any of your things?

A: I dared not carry anything, I dared not go into the house. My pots, plates and clothes, everything burned. Now I have only the clothes I am wearing.

Q: Did they ask for the Muslims?

A: The DKBA asked us: "Where is the Muslims' section?" They asked but they never arrived there. When the fire was blazing they left the camp, they didn't dare stay. They were worried that someone would shoot at them. After they had been gone for quite a while, the Thai soldiers started to fire their guns. They fired their guns in the morning, before sunrise. They fired four shells at the same time. One shell landed near where the Burmese soldiers stay, near Wah Lay monastery [Wah Lay on the Burma side of the border, not in the refugee camp], and another shell landed in the Thai village.

We got out of the bunker when the people put out the fire. It was about 2:30 a.m. Then the Thai soldiers came. The fire trucks came just before sunrise; when the Thai soldiers and the fire trucks came to the camp it was already 4:30 a.m. and the fire was already put out. Fifty houses were burned down in the camp: 5 houses in Section 7 and 45 houses in Section 6. Including the monastery and the hall it would be 52. Altogether there are over 300 houses in Section 6.

Q: Do you think that they will come again?

A: I can't tell, I didn't hear anything. But since that happened, we run away to sleep [outside the camp] every night.

Q: Do the Thai soldiers still come?

A: Yes, they come to arrange security for us. Now they stay behind the monastery. Yesterday

they came to hold a meeting. They didn't call all the villagers, they called only the men. They said, "Do you dare to shoot the Burmese?" The villagers answered, "Yes, we dare. If you call us [to fight], many people will go." They asked how many people had been soldiers and the ones who had been soldiers before stood up. Then they asked, "How many people can speak Thai?" The villagers who could speak Thai stood up. Then, "How many Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims are in the camp?" After that they told us, "Don't be afraid. You must live peacefully. You must join with the Thai. If we ask you for your support, you must give us your support." We promised to help them. They asked another question: "If you had guns, would you dare to shoot the enemy?" We said, "We dare to shoot." I didn't hear them say that they would give us guns, but they told us that we must obey the Thais because we are in Thailand. They said, "Don't be afraid, but you have to be careful, you have to dig a good bunker." I didn't hear that we have to move, but they were speaking in Thai so I couldn't understand everything.

Q: How long have you been in this camp?

A: Not even one year. It will be one year this Water Festival [mid-April 1998]. We couldn't stay in our village, because we were afraid of Burmese soldiers and sometimes of the DKBA too. I had to go portering and sometimes I had to go as a forced labor. I had to go portering for three days at a time, and if I couldn't go we had to pay 1,000 *Kyat*. We had a lot of difficulty finding 1,000 *Kyat*. And forced labour! I had to build a road all the time. We had to build the road very far from my village in Pa'an district, in Zar Tha Bhin. We started to build the road from Hlaing Bwe to Pa'an, and all the other roads too. We had to take food for ourselves. The DKBA forced us to work for the Burmese. The Burmese commanded the DKBA to do it, and then the DKBA forced us to work. When we stay in our village the Burmese and the DKBA force us to work. Now when we stay in the camp, they burn my house. Will our lives always be like this? I don't know.

Interview 33: Livelihood, Refugee, Killing

Name:	"Pu Lay Ko"
Sex:	Male
Age:	59
Ethnicity:	Karen
Family:	Married, 6 children aged 16-30
Address:	Hlaing Bwe township; now in Section 6 of Maw Ker refugee camp
Date of interviewed:	March 28, 1998
Source:	KHRG

Q: Can you tell me what happened that night?

A: The soldiers came to the camp at 1:15 a.m. I was staying in the house. At that time we were already asleep. I have six children, but that night only three of us were at home because my other children had gone to M— with my wife. I was sleeping in one room with my two daughters and a friend was sleeping in the other room with her daughter. There were a lot of explosions but at first we didn't wake up. We woke up when a shell landed in the toilets. When I heard that they were shooting I jumped down from the house. My

daughters are old enough to run by themselves, but I couldn't carry my belongings. Then we stayed in the bunker. After we had been in the bunker for a while, my daughter told me, "Our house is burning". I lifted up my head [above the tip of the bunker], looked outside and saw that they were burning my house. I wanted to go back home to get my belongings, but my daughters pulled me back because the house was already burning, so I went back into the bunker. I couldn't save anything. We just looked at the house burning.

I didn't see the soldiers who burned our house. I thought that they must have gone to burn other houses, so we stayed in the bunker. They went straight over that way, and then they went back at about 2:30 a.m.

His daughter: Pa, you stayed in the bunker and you didn't see, why are you talking as though you had seen everything?

"Pu Lay Ko": I'm just guessing. I dared not look. I didn't see when they were leaving. I don't know which way they went back. I stayed with my daughters. I can guess.

Q: Did you hear them talking?

A: No, I didn't hear. They didn't ask me anything because they couldn't see me. We didn't see anything. My daughter pulled me back when I stood up and looked outside. My daughter told me, "Leave it in the fire Pa, let the house burn in the fire." I couldn't do anything. Nobody dared to look, everybody stayed in the bunker. We didn't sleep, we just sat quietly and listened. We waited until all the houses had burned down and then we got out of the bunker, we looked around and we didn't see anything. I looked at the sky and I saw the stars. It was already almost morning. By that time the fire had already been put out. The section leader came to find out how many houses had burned down, he wrote it down in his notebook and went back.

His daughter: We got out when the people were warming themselves near the embers of the burned houses.

Q: How long have you been staying here in Maw Ker?

A: I've been around here for 14 years, since before the refugee camp. First we left our village and stayed in Thay Baw Boe [just across the border in Burma]. In those days there was no problem.

Interview 34: Arrest, Livelihood, Torture, Forced Labor, Relocation

Name:	"Naw Eh Ghaw"
Sex:	Female
Age:	53
Ethnicity:	Karen
religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Missionary
Marital Status:	Married with four children
Address:	Meh Tharaw Hta village, Dooplaya district, Karen State

Date of interview: April 1998
Source: KHRG

[*“Naw Eh Ghay” was interviewed in Noh Po refugee camp.*]

Q: Since you came here did you ever go back [to Doooplaya] to visit?

A: I went back the first time to Kwih Kler village, then I went back again during my children’s school vacation. The situation in Burma is too bad. The people live in fear. Every time the SLORC [SPDC] army comes the men have to run away and hide, because they try to capture the men whenever they come. Every day six people must go to stay with them so that they can use them whenever they need them. Wherever they want to go those six people must go with them and carry their things, which are very heavy, sometimes until they cannot carry any more. Sometimes they have to do other work, and sometimes it is dangerous. People who do not dare to go must give 1,500 *kyat* for three days [in lieu of three days of work]. If people don’t go then the Burmese will never set free the previous group. People must always stay with them and keep rotating.

Then they brought prisoners [convicts] up into the jungle on army trucks. Along the way they tied the prisoners’ necks and hands tightly to the sides of the trucks and made them stand up straight. When they arrived at the T’Ku Kee church they let them get down from the truck. Some prisoners couldn’t stand up any more and they fell down. The soldiers saw that and kicked them and hit them until they became unconscious. Then they picked them up and dragged them under a shady tree. I heard that they will use those prisoners to do road construction. The road will go from Kyaikdon to Kya In Seik Gyi. I know the prisoners are in Kyaikdon right now because I saw Auntie S— at the Bible School there and she told me, “Now Kyaikdon is full of Burmese military and prisoners. They’ve probably brought the prisoners to do road construction.” Right now the villagers aren’t doing road construction because they have to rotate doing forced labor in the army camp full time, and they must go and do whatever the soldiers order them to do at any time.

Q: Before you came back here did you hear about any villages being forced to move?

A: Now Kalay Kee and Kyaw Kay Ko have to relocate because the Burmese accused them of feeding the KNLA, so the Burmese won’t allow them to stay there any more. The people of Kyaw Kay Ko have to move to Kya In and the people from Kalay Kee have to move to T’Ku Kee. I heard that relocations will also occur in many other places. Even the villagers in Kya In [western Doooplaya] must move to the roadside. I also heard one village headwoman say, “If I’m going to build a house I will build it at the roadside, because we must move there anyway.” I heard her say that in H—’s shop in Seik Gyi.

Before the 11th [of March or April 1998] they arrested villagers from Kya In and put them in jail. They beat them badly. I didn’t see them when they were beaten but I saw their wives and children who had to give bribes to save them. Finally they set them free after many people had come and vouched for them, but they had to pay 10,000 *kyat* for each villager to be freed. Not only that, they had to buy clothes and food for the soldiers too. The arrested people were villagers of Kya In. I don’t know their names, but a younger brother of Pastor Tha Du was among them.

The villagers there are afraid of them and have to give money to them all the time.

They must give them whatever food they want whenever they ask for it. If the villagers don't give it to them then they just steal whatever they want. They always demand rice, vegetables, salt and fish paste. I saw that happening in T'Ku Kee. When I went back there I didn't have a chance to ask about too many things, and I often had to hide and couldn't dare go outside. But I heard about many things from the villagers there who have to live in fear.

Interview 35: Refugee, Relocation, Torture, Forced Labor

Name: "Saw Lay Doh"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 33
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Christian
 Occupation: Farmer/teacher
 Marital Status: Married with six children
 Address: Waw Lu village, Dooplaya district, Karen State
 Date of interview: April 1998
 Source: KHRG

["Saw Lay Doh" arrived in Thailand in late 1997 and was present when the Thai Army fired on refugees at Thay Pu Law Htwee. He and many of the others were finally allowed into Noh Po refugee camp, but at the time of the interview they were still living in long open shelters because Thai authorities had not allowed them to build proper huts.]

Q: Can you tell me about the situation of your village?

A: In February 1997, SLORC troops from No. 22 [Division], Battalion No. 206, camped in Waw Lu village and they called the villagers who had fled from the village during the fighting to come back to the village. They said to us that they had not come to kill or make problems for the people, that they had come to make peace. Then the villagers all came back. After that they held a meeting with the villagers in the monastery of Waw Lu, and they said "Come and give us your arms; we won't do anything to those who give us their arms." They pressed the villagers to hand over some weapons. So finally the villagers had to show them the guns of the village defence force [villagers armed by the KNLA to defend their village]. But after that they still accused and pressured the people to give them more arms. They said to some village headmen, "You have guns and walkie-talkies, so you must give us all of them." They frightened those village headmen until they had to give up whatever they were hiding. After that they asked the village headmen to build a new school. The villagers cut wood and bamboo and built the school and fenced it. After that they called for teachers and let them teach there for a month in April. There were four teachers, I was one of them.

Q: What about the villagers who had no guns to give them?

A: After they made their camp, they forced the villagers who had no guns to carry their things as porters. They had to carry bullets and rations when the soldiers went from place

to place to find their enemies. Each person must carry three big tins of rice. We saw some people who got wounds on their backs. Their backs were bruised. Sometimes they had to carry things for three days, sometimes four days. While they were carrying the heavy things the soldiers forced them to run. If they could not run the soldiers kicked their buttocks. If people couldn't understand their language [Burmese] when they gave orders the soldiers hit them too. The villagers who came back from portering explained that it was very hard for them to suffer like that. I know a person who had to carry things to Po Theh. The Burmese soldiers asked him a question but he could not understand Burmese, so they hurt him. They hit him with the butt of their gun.

My nephew once came back from portering for the Burmese soldiers, and at my house he told me how the soldiers had forced him to carry heavy things for four days. He showed me his wounded back which was really badly bruised. His name is Saw E—. He told me that he had to climb up the mountains while carrying heavy things, and that when they went to Meh K'Waw it made him cry because it was such hard work. There was another man from Po Yay village whose name was Saw Eh Wah, and he had to climb up the hills with heavy things for the Burmese soldiers to pass through the Maw Law Ee way. While he was going he became sweaty and exhausted from carrying the heavy things. At last his foot slipped and he fell down to the foot of the mountain. His load was still up on the path. He was going to die but nobody took care of him. Everyone passed him by. That's why we can say that their behaviour is terrible toward the villagers. Saw Eh Wah is about 40 years old. He is better now.

Ever since they started to settle down in Waw Lu they've forced the villagers to provide labor every day. There is no payment. They never give food, and they never give medicine. They force the villagers to dig bunkers and to work for them in Kyaikdon, but the villagers must take along their own rice. If they don't take their own rice then they have to go hungry. And they always ask the villagers, "Have any of you seen any of the arms that people are hiding?"

Q: Why did you have to flee the village?

A: As for my situation, while they were staying there they accused me of working for the outside people [the KNLA]. They said I was breaking their law so they would arrest me. I was a teacher. At that time the school had already closed. They arrested me and interrogated me about the places where the KNLA were hiding, and I answered that I had not seen them. Then they punched my jaw once on each side and asked me to wait there. Later they said to each other that they would keep me to pressure me some more and would tie me up. Then they tied me up with rope. They tied my hands tightly behind my back and made me lay on my belly, then they interrogated me again. This time only one person was interrogating me. He asked me, "Isn't it true that you have guns and a radio?" I said, "No, I've never had those kinds of things." Then he told me, "Your education supervisor Kaw Mu surrendered to us with weapons, and he told us that you have guns and a radio." I answered to him, "No, that is not right. If you don't believe me then you can ask everybody in the village. This is all I have to say. When you ask everyone you will hear the truth." Then they tied me up for ten days and beat me badly until I had to sleep with blood all over my body every night. They punched my nose twice, and blood was running down from my nose. They beat my body as well. They punched me in the chest, left, right, left... They punched me in my head

and on my temples. Both of my shins were beaten with a big stick. They tied me up tightly, made me lay down and then beat me badly on both shins until both of my shins were completely bruised. That was the most painful thing I ever had to bear. Finally they told me that if my friends and I could show them just five bullets then they would surely set us free at once. We said, "There is no way we could show you that," and then they left us.

Later they came back and told us that they would kill us because we had broken their law. They told us that if we could find just one gun for them then they would set us free at once. We answered again that we could not find them anything like that. Then they said they would put us in jail if we could not find one. We were quiet because there was nothing we could say. During those ten days they never let the village headman or elders come to vouch for us. Even our relatives could only give us rice through their soldiers. The soldiers brought the rice to us and then took the plates back to our children or wives. After ten days they allowed the headman to vouch for us. First they called T— [the other villager being held] and untied him. They called him out for a while, then they came again and untied me and asked me to get up into the house there. They asked me, "Are you okay?" I said, "Yes, I am okay." Then they wrote on a piece of paper that they were setting us free under the assurances of the village headman. They asked the village headman to put his signature on it and then they set us free. We arrived home at night and my body was filthy. Then I saw my mother who had come and been waiting for me for four days already, worrying about me until she could not even sleep or eat. She was very happy to see me.

I saw that since I had been taken there [since his arrest] they were forcing the villagers to work harder and harder all the time. I knew it wasn't possible for me to stay, so I had to prepare to come here secretly. When I came, the problem was that I couldn't bring any food or belongings like cooking pots because I had to carry my children who are too small to run.

Q: Did you have any trouble when you arrived in Thailand?

A: The trouble when I arrived in Thailand was that we camped in one area and suddenly the Thai army came and camped right near us. A Thai army officer came to me and asked me, "Don't you think you should dig bunkers here?" I answered him, "If we need to dig them we'll dig them tomorrow." He told me that the DKBA or KPA may attack so we should be cautious. Then they went back to their place. We talked about it with each other in our huts until late, and then we slept. When we were sleeping at about 5:40 a.m. they fired their big gun at us. An M79 shell [grenade] fell on a hut and two people about 60 years old were injured. All the innocent people were shocked, ran out of the area and hid in fear. A newborn baby died because he fell to the ground while his mother was running with him. Then we heard the noisy sound of bullets [small arms] being fired. When the daylight came we found out that it was the Thai soldiers who were shooting at us. We looked all around our shelters and cleaned things up. After a while they came to see the place too. They asked the villagers, "Who was shooting at you last night?" The villagers told them that it was them who were shooting at us. Then the Thai soldiers were quiet and didn't say anything. [This is the shooting that occurred at Thay Pu Law Htwee on November 15, 1997.]

Shortly after that they asked the villagers to fix up a bridge which leads to Kwih Hta, so the villagers built up a log bridge. When we had finished building the bridge we

went home and ate our meal. After that the [Thai army] senior commander arrived at our place and called me and the other headmen. He told us to prepare our things and be ready in one hour to move to another place, which we would reach by passing through Kwih Lat Taw. I told the people to get ready, but some people were not obeying me and they asked me “Why are you doing this?” Then the Thai soldiers were angry with the people who wouldn’t obey. They forced them, they tied some of them up and hit some of them. After that they called the villagers together and told us to be quiet. They told the villagers, “Now all of you see these three people we have tied up because they were not obeying us. This will happen to people who do not obey us.” Then they kicked some people. Finally they called the headmen to come out in front and then ordered them to go in front of the people to lead them. So the villagers followed us.

The Thais guided us by car but we had to walk. We were walking along like that until noon, and by then we could see that the children were walking with difficulty and they seemed very tired. Some were crying sadly. The women were weeping miserably. We kept on going, then we took a rest for a while and then we kept on going again. When we reached the foot of the mountain near the place where they were going to keep us, the sun was already going down. We settled down there and started cooking some food to eat. Some people had not brought any food but others had, so we shared with each other what we had. By the time we finished cooking the children were crying because they were so hungry. After we fed them they went to sleep under the trees for the night because it was already late.

Q: When you arrived in Noh Po did you have any more problems?

A: There was no problem except that we could not build houses [the Thai authorities would not allow it]. Those of us who had no houses had to live in a barracks. [A long bamboo shelter with no walls, covered in plastic sheeting; the Thai authorities forced them to live like this for four to six months.] I think that now we will get a chance to build houses because one or two days ago they allowed us to go and get bamboo for flooring from Thay Pu Law Su. I believe that we will be able to build houses soon.

Q: Is it different here from life in your village?

A: It is a little different. When we stay here we receive good care and good food, we don’t need to do forced labor and we can help each other in whatever way we can. When we were in our village the SLORC Army persecuted us and forced us to do labor without any payment, we even needed to bring our own food. We have already decided to go back when there is peace in Burma, but we will never go back before there is change there.

Interview 36: Livelihood, Relocation

Name:	“Saw Kler”
Sex:	Male
Age:	20
Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Animist
Occupation	Farmer

Address: Mawchee town, southern Karenni State
Date of Interview: April 27, 1998
Source: KHRG

Q: What is the situation in Mawchi?

A: Mawchi is so poor that people have nothing to eat. Some villagers there may have money, but even if you have money you can't buy anything and you can't buy as much as you want. You can't get as much rice as you want to keep in your home. For example, you can't store enough rice in your home for one month, just for three days. You must keep the rest in the church and go to get some of it every three days. This is your own rice. They don't allow the villagers to keep all their belongings in their own homes, because they accuse the villagers of supporting the Karenni army and giving food to the Karenni army. Even in Mawchi. Mawchi is very big you know; I'm from Mawchi. There are many churches in Mawchi, and there is also a mine. If you are in Loikaw, the capital, you can buy rice and you can eat it there, but you can't bring rice from Rangoon to Mawchi [the SPDC won't allow it], you can't bring rice from Loikaw to Mawchi or to or from the areas to the east.

Q: Are the relocation sites still there, or have they been closed and moved to other places?

A: No, nothing like that. Shadaw and Ywathit [relocation sites] are still running but Ywathit is very small compared to Shadaw. Mawchi also stays. Right now there is no road construction right in Mawchi [town] but the people who live in the relocation sites like Shadaw or Mawchi are forced to work for the military every day. The situation of the people in the relocation sites is going from bad to worse because they said they have no food in the camp. They receive very little food from the SPDC and it is not enough for everybody. Some are starving to death. Many people die of sickness, especially in the rainy season from malaria and diarrhea. They are also forced to work for the military doing things like carrying water, cutting bamboo, making fences and collecting firewood for the army. Especially in the second district, the army goes to fight almost every week so the people are forced to carry their supplies and ammunition, and many people die as porters at the frontline. Now a lot of people who stay in the relocation sites are forced to be militia too, but not only people in the relocation sites have to do that. People from other villages are forced to do that too.

The road from Mawchi to Toungoo is 96 miles long. There was an old road there but they haven't used this road for many years now. So far they have done 12 miles from Mawchi. Villagers were forced to work there from six in the morning to five in the evening with only one hour break. About three months ago 11 women and 90 men were doing forced labor carrying things on the road 12 miles from Mawchi. They spent the night there and were attacked by the KNPP, and then they stopped work on the road [temporarily].

We refugees from Mawchi [those staying in the relocation site], as there was a especially the women, were afraid whenever we went to find vegetables in the forest of being threaten and raped by Burmese soldiers. We were sad and pitied our friends who had to face that. The villagers at Mawchi had to carry things for them as porters, both men and women, old and young. They beat the porters and threatened them. I felt very sorry for all of my villagers when I saw their situation like that.

They didn't give us enough rice. There was not enough water for all of us at Mawchi. Especially in the hot season we had to go very far to fetch water. Some people got diarrhea due to the unclean water. We received no health care. The Burmese who brought us there ought to have given us health care, but they never did that. There was a pharmacy but the villagers could not buy the medicines because they were very expensive. Some seriously ill people died because the cars [public transport using small trucks] only ran sometimes. If we saw a car we tried to send the seriously ill people to the hospital in town.

If you look at the shelters [in the relocation site] you can see that they are very small and not properly built, because it was not easy for the people to go and cut trees and bamboo. The Burmese who brought us there ought to supply us with water, food and health care, but they never took care of us. I hope the behavior of the Burmese will change soon. I hope they will give the people a chance to live freely and in peace.

Interview 37: Relocation, Livelihood, Forced Labor, refugee

Name:	"Koo Nga reh"
Sex:	Male
Age:	40+
Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Animist
Occupation	Farmer
Date of Interview:	April 28, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Koo Nga Reh" is a KNPP official. The interview is included here because it presents a fairly broad picture of the current situation in Karenni.]

Q: Do you have any information about relocation sites?

A: I don't have much information from relocation sites such as Mawchi, Baw La Keh, Pah Saung, Ywathit, and Shadaw because now very few people there can contact us. All the relocation sites are controlled by the SPDC, so nobody can get into those places without their permission. The SPDC does not allow any NGO people [Non-governmental organizations, i.e. aid organizations] or even the church to provide any assistance to the people who are in the relocation sites. Since 1996, and especially since 1997, there have been very many people suffering from a shortage of food. They also suffer from malaria, diarrhea and other diseases. Since 1996, according to our annual report, about 300 people have died of various diseases in the relocation sites at Shadaw, Mawchi, and Ywathit.

At the moment there are five big relocation sites and five or six other relocation sites. In addition, since the beginning of this year they have been trying to relocate some villages down to the area they control around Loikaw. In many areas of the southern and eastern parts of the state there are no more people, because the SPDC has made a big offensive in that area so anyone they see in those areas is suspected and shot on sight with no questions asked.

Q: So are people also fleeing from fighting?

A: Yes, there is still fighting now, especially in those areas [the east and the south] because most of the people living in those areas are unwilling to move down to the relocation sites at Mawchi, Pah Saung and Baw La Keh. They don't go because they can stay hidden in the jungle along the Karen State - Karenni border, so they just move around there and avoid the SPDC troops. They're living in the jungle, they stay together with the Karenni Army there. But they've been doing that for almost two years now, so they have to face the problem of lack of food. I'm not sure about the next year; it depends on how long they can keep staying in that area by themselves without any support. They have no chance to cultivate crops, because SPDC troops are moving around in the area. All the villages are burned down now, including the churches, the schools, entire villages.

Q: Do they try to find the people who are hiding in the jungle?

A: Yes, they try, but they can't do it throughout the whole area, only in some parts of the area. Even so, some people who are hiding in the jungle will be found and killed by the SPDC troops. They call it a scorched earth operation. If they see anyone in the area, whether soldier or civilian, they shoot him dead with no questions asked. If they find people's rice, first they take whatever they can for themselves and then they burn whatever is left. Especially in the area between the Pon and Salween rivers. There are still around five hundred people hiding in that area, staying together with the Karenni troops there. They move around and try to find some food. All they can find is some of the food that families have left behind there, but there is no more food. They have no way to continue to survive there. Some try to flee to the [Thai] border but at the moment it is hard to travel because there are no boats to cross the rivers. Also, east of the Salween River all the way to the border there are so many SPDC troops, so the villagers are scared that they will be caught. Now then the SPDC army and the Thai businessmen are making logging deals, their troops travel to search for the logs in the forest, to know how many they have cut down already and how many are ready to sell.

They are trying to rebuild the old road from Mawchi to Toungoo, and onward into Burma. This old road was once used to transport the minerals from Mawchi, so they are trying to build it again now. They've ordered the people who are living in the relocation sites at Mawchi, Pah Saung, and Baw La Keh to go as volunteers to rebuild the road. There are also two other projects. One is building a new road from Baw La Keh to Daw Tama Gyi. That is a new road. Now all the people who live in that area have to be volunteers to build this new road. It is about 10 miles long. The other new project is near Loikaw; Ye Yaw village is 11/2 miles from the base of SPDC Battalion No. 269, so they are building a new road there. We just got this news a few days ago. Before there was only a path there so you had to walk, but now they are ordering all the local people around that area to build a main road for cars. There are many villagers in that area, so they will probably have about 1,000 people working on that road every day. It is just for the military to transport things; weapons, ammunition and rations. These kinds of roads just link villages to army bases, so the people have no use for them. No villagers use them.

Q: Have any of the villages in the northeast that weren't relocated previously now been moved?

A: In this area they started to relocate most people around the beginning of this year. They didn't do it in the past, only this year, because this year there has been a little more KNPP troop activity in this area. So they want to relocate the people down to the main road closer to their base, where they can supervise all the villagers more closely. Their base is at Nwa La Bo. They've deployed their troops to control the people, watch the people and see what they are doing. They have moved people to small relocation sites at Tee Say Ka, Nwa La Bo, Myeh Nee Kaw, Tee Plaw Ku and Pao Mai. There are three, four, or five villages together at these places. There are already villages there, but other villages have to move down [out of the hills] and stay there because these villages are close to the main road.

Q: How many relocation sites did you say there are in the whole state?

A: There are five big relocation sites and about six or seven small ones, but the small ones are difficult to count because they're always creating more of them to concentrate the villages more and more. But there are five big relocation sites: Mawchi, Pah Saung, Baw La Keh, Ywathit, and Shadaw. I think there are fewer people in Shadaw than there were at the beginning, because many people have tried to get permission to get out of the camp and have then managed to flee to the border. It is very hard to get information from inside the relocation sites. Most of the information we receive is from people who have escaped. Not many are escaping now. If people from outside try to go into the relocation camps they can if they are real villagers, but they must answer many questions: "Where are you from? Have you been here before? What are you doing, why have you come here? Do you know where the KNPP soldiers are, have you seen them?"

Q: Are the SPDC soldiers working alone or is the KNDA involved?

A: I think there is cooperation. The KNDA is together with them because their group was created by the SLORC. Many of them used to be KNPP soldiers, then they freely resigned from KNPP and returned to their homes, but the SLORC forced them to form a new group to attack the KNPP. That is the new strategy of the SLORC, just as they did in Karen areas [by creating the DKBA]. The KNDA is not so big, just 40 or 50 armed men. They also conscript villagers to be their troops. They always have to move together with SPDC troops because they have to be supervised by the SPDC, they cannot do anything without an order coming from the SPDC. Even if they want to do something themselves, they have to get permission from the SPDC commander before they can do it.

Q: What about the "people's army" [the SPDC militia force]?

A: This is different. All the villages have to form a militia and are forced to defend their village. Now the SPDC has a new strategy: whenever they want anything from the villagers they just force the militia to get it. If the SPDC commander comes to the village and gives orders to the headman then all the villagers know that the SPDC is demanding things; but this way, they form a militia and order it to do things for them so the villagers have to get it themselves, and then when the SPDC commander comes he says, "No, I'm not coming to your village to do that, that's your own people demanding it." This is their new strategy.

Q: Do they also use these militias to fight against the KNPP?

A: If necessary they may do that. They give them some kind of militia training. Then in

each village they only provide three to five guns, not so many, so the militia members have to take turns guarding their village. But if they think that the area is dangerous and that there are too many enemies around, they will provide more weapons and they will force the militia to be involved in fighting.

Q: Do the militia members get benefits like exemption from forced labor?

A: No, they have to do it, even they have to do forced labor. I think only the commander [the militia commander for the village] has to pay less or do less than the other villagers. Those village militias have to be formed with all the young men of the village; or else the young men have to join the KNDP. If you don't do either then you'll be sent away as a porter. So there are only three choices: would you like to join the militia forces, would you like to join the KNDP, or would you like to be a porter for the military? Which one would you like to choose?

Q: Is there still any area controlled by the KNPLF?

A: They just control a small area near Dee Maw So. Villagers living in this KNPLF area are safer than most others because now the KNPLF and the SPDC have a ceasefire agreement, so they don't do anything to those villagers. But others can't really flee to that area because most of the people there are Padaung [Kayan], and others can't really live among them because the language and the culture are very different. They also may not allow other people to come and live there among them.

Q: Is it still possible for new refugees to get into the refugee camps in Thailand?

A: At the end of last year the local authorities said that they would not allow any new arrivals, but just at the beginning of this year some new arrivals reached Camp 2. There were about 60 or 70 people. The Thais said nothing because those people couldn't stay any more in their home areas so they must allow them to come; if not, those people would starve to death. They came from the area between the Pon and Salween rivers. Some had been living in hiding and some had escaped from the Shadaw relocation site. The first group arrived in January and the second group arrived last month [in March]. They said that now it is quiet in Shadaw because fewer people are living there, but that they still have to work for the military every day and the military doesn't provide them with anything. The food situation there is very bad, the soldiers just provide a little rice for each family but never enough, so the families try to get some paid work outside the camp so they can buy some food to survive. But there's no business in those areas, it's only small villages, so they don't have a chance to make money and the local people can't help them. So it's very hard to get food.

Q: You said before that they [SPDC] are using convicts for forced labor; convicts from where?

A: Mostly from Loikaw prison because there are so many prisoners in Loikaw; some from central Burma, some from Shan State... They brought some prisoners from other prisons to Loikaw because they thought they might need to use them for military operations in the Karenni area. They use them for anything and everything. For everything they do they use the forced labor of everyone without payment, civilians as well as convicts. Even if they

have reserved a budget for a project they never use that budget for the project, they just use the local people. They never pay money for the work, you even have to bring your own food with you. They don't provide anything.

I don't know if things can change or not. Mainly the military are just trying to get more and more power and keep it longer, because they may be afraid that if they hand over power to the people then the people will send them to an international court. That would be dangerous for them, so that is why they are afraid to lose power, and that is why they keep trying to increase their power more and more.

Interview 38: Refugee, Forced Labor, Relocation

Name: "Loong Kham"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 43
 Ethnicity: Shan
 Religion: Buddhist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married with four children
 Address: Gong Long village, Ho Murng township, Shan State
 Date of Interview: April 29, 1998
 Source: KHRG

["Loong Kham" farms rice and sesame in his village near Khun Sa's former headquarters at Ho Murng. He recently arrived in Thailand.]

Q: When did you arrive in Thailand?

A: I arrived on March 7. I came because of the oppression of the Burmese, like the others. I sent my wife and children first and then I fled. I had to do the same things as the others. There was more [forced] work in my place [than in "Sai Heng"'s village; see interview above]. You could see a lot of piles of stones along the road in Gong Long, a hundred and twenty piles of rocks along the road just for our village. There were more than 30 houses in the village, about 35 houses. We had iron rods to break the stones. One person from each house had to go. If we had no men, we had to replace them with women. Women and children had to go. They beat the people the same way they did in "Sai Heng"'s village because it was the same road, just a different section of it. The soldiers and their chiefs were watching us.

Q: When did you start to work on that road?

A: In the tenth month of 1997 [October/November by the Shan calendar]. In the tenth month it was still raining so we didn't have to work as much, we just had to work for about twenty days that month. It took us three months to finish that road [the section they had been assigned], until the twelfth month [December]. We had to finish it by then because they said that the road had to be finished completely by the end of the year. We had to work for them and follow the timetable that they gave us. If we didn't finish on time our village headman would be punished. We are all Shan and we didn't want to see anyone get hurt, so

we helped each other and in the end nobody had to be punished.

Q: Do you know where the road was going to?

A: The road that we built was going from our village to Ta Hung, to Sop Paeng, Tza Long and then on to Ho Murng. There was a lot of erosion because the streams were very strong. In Khun Sa's day they tried to repair that road, but now in the Burmese days there are no bulldozers or backhoes. Instead of that they use the villagers [Khun Sa used heavy equipment but the SPDC rarely does, preferring to use the cheaper option of forced labor]. They didn't build a dam on the river, so when the heavy rains come the water gets higher, the current is very strong and destroys the road along the river bank. We fixed that road for three months. This road is used by the forestry department [for logging], and the military use it to carry their supplies and their rations from Lang Kher.

Q: Did you have to do other work for the army?

A: Yes, we also did other things. When they wanted to build a school they tore down the houses of people who weren't around; some people had gone to Thailand or other places, and some had gone away to earn money. We had to tear the houses down for them and carry the building materials to their camp. If we hadn't done it we would have been beaten.

Q: Was anybody forced to move by the army in your area?

A: They didn't force us to move in that area because our village is close to the road, they come and stop there when they transport their rations. They were [Light Infantry] Battalion No. 525 from Pan Taw Wet. There were some people who fled the village but they didn't come here [to Thailand], they just went to Ho Murng. A big crowd of us came here - myself, L—, N—, K—, and also P—, S—, N—, P—, L—, another one we call Teacher, and T—; altogether 11 families, and also W—, all from the same village. Some others are in other places in Thailand. Some young people have fled to Thailand while their parents stayed behind.

Q: How did you come here?

A: We walked through the jungle for two days. We just hid from the soldiers and walked through the jungle, but if we had met the soldiers they wouldn't have allowed us to come. We couldn't carry any bags, not even any rice, otherwise we would have been accused of providing rice to the rebels. For the same reason we couldn't carry any dried noodles or cheroots. But we didn't even know where the rebels were. We've never seen any rebels, we've just heard about them.

We came as a group to Pang Yon [in Thailand], then we tried to bring some of our relatives who were left behind in Nam Kut and Kai Lon. Some people from Mai Kai tried to do the same, but the Burmese found out and blocked the way. In the end those people couldn't come, though their children are all here already. In Pang Yon we found day labor to survive. With what we earned for one day we could survive that one day, but we were short of food.

Q: Is it true that the Burmese army came to see you when you were in Pang Yon?

A: They did, even just two days ago on the 27 [of April] they came and fired their guns

over on the other side of Pang Yon, which is still Thai territory, and also at Long Juk which is close to the Thai border. They even came and camped in Mai Kai Long, which is Thai territory, and they kept in contact by radio [with their base]. So then the Thai Army also went and visited there. The Thais camped at Hong Yarm, and they also went to Mai Kai Long because it is very close by. Both the Burmese and the Thais go up there [Mai Kai Long] quite often.

Q: Do you think more people are going to try to come to Thailand?

A: If the villagers can find a way to come they will come. They can't stay there any more because of the oppression by the Burmese army. They are treating the villagers harder and harder all the time. In the beginning when the [SLORC/SPDC] soldiers first arrived they didn't dare force the villagers to do things because there were too many of us, but as the number of villagers gets fewer and fewer they treat them harder and harder, just like keeping hens in a cage, and people can't find a way out. [As the population gets lower the demands for forced labor, food and money remain at least the same, so each villager faces a heavier burden.] Under the present situation I don't want to go back because we won't be able to survive. Even now the situation there is very hard.

Interview: 39: Relocation, Forced Labor, Women, Child, Livelihood

Name:	"Sai Heng"
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Shan
Religion:	Buddhist
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with two children
Address:	Nong Yao village, Ho Murng township, Shan State
Date of Interview:	April 29, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Sai Heng" farmed rice and sesame in his village near Khun Sa's former headquarters at Ho Murng. He recently fled to Thailand.]

Q: Where are you from?

A: We are originally from Nong Yao village close to Ho Murng, then we moved to Pang Yon [a place in Thailand where many new Shan refugees took temporary refuge]. We arrived at Pang Yon the second week of the fourth month [in March by the Shan calendar] and we stayed there more than 20 days. Sorry I don't remember exactly, but we fled our village after the celebration of Union Day [February 12]. Nong Yao is two hours' walk from Ho Murng, north of Ho Murng. There is a road to get to the village but the road is quite old.

Q: Why did you flee from your village?

A: Because we were oppressed by the Burmese soldiers. We could not live there any

longer. That is why we moved. And I want to tell you how they oppressed us. Very often they forced us to carry stones to pave the road, so we didn't have time to earn our own living. We didn't have any chance to work on our farms because they were forcing us to carry rocks all the time. We couldn't stand it any more so we had to escape from that situation. When we refused to go [to forced labor] we were tied and beaten. Even our village headman was seized and beaten. That is why we could not stay at all, and finally the village became empty. Nobody dared to stay. Besides, all our chickens, cooking oil, rice, our pigs, our chilies, even our pots and dishes, whatever they [SPDC soldiers] saw they took away by force. They ate our food and our livestock, and even though we begged them not to do it, they just tied up the owners and then killed their cattle, pigs and chickens. Then they ate them while they drank alcohol. Even worse, even after we had nothing left to give them we were supposed to go and buy things from other villages to give to them. When we went to the other villages to buy the things that they asked for, sometimes the house owner was not there and the neighbors said, "Oh, the owner of this house is not here, he went to the jungle to become a revolutionary." Then when we went back and told the soldiers that the person wasn't there, they went and broke open the lock and took all the house owner's belongings.

Q: What kind of labor did you have to do?

A: Mainly carrying rocks to build the road. We could make only two trips in one whole day. They forced us to work on the road from Ho Murng to Nam Lin to Pang Kong [at the bank of the Salween River] to Tai Yoi Mu. This road goes towards to Lang Kher. The other roads [on which people have to work] go from Ho Murng to Mai Kai and from Ho Murng to Hok. Even when the villagers had to work on those roads they [the SPDC officers] would ask for a budget from their headquarters and they would keep that money only for themselves.

Q: In your village, how many people had to do this work each day?

A: More than 30, one person from each house had to go to work for them every day. If we only had two or three people in the house and we couldn't go to work for them, we had to give them money, a hundred *Kyat* a day. If we didn't have any money, we had to give them alcohol or chickens instead. If we had no chickens we had to give them beef, not the whole cow, but we had to kill a cow and give them some of the beef [this is a serious burden on a family because cattle are a major form of savings - once killed the meat must be used quickly or dried, as people have no access to refrigeration].

Q: Did the SLORC give you any food while you were working?

A: How could they feed us? They even stole the rice we brought with us! We had to bring our own lunch with us and then they took and ate our lunch. So we were hungry, we missed our lunch, and when that made us feel exhausted they beat us! Sometimes instead of stealing our rice they exchanged our good sticky-rice with their Burmese rice, saying that it was sticky rice but it was not. The soldiers wanted to have the villagers' sticky rice. Some stole the sticky rice from the villagers and then the people who had no rice became weak and they got beaten by the Burmese — and the Burmese said, "Oh, you are very lazy." If someone was working slowly he got beaten, because the soldiers were guarding us; but no

one died. Women and children were working there also. They preferred men but, if there were no men the women were obliged to go. If there were no adults, then children had to go. When the parents got sick the children had to go for them. They were teenagers, fourteen and older. The youngest children had to carry half of what the adults carried.

Q: Did the army come to your village very often?

A: They came and camped in the village for a few days, then they went and camped for a while in every village around there. In Nam Kuyt they caused problems. There were three women who were on their way to buy things to eat in Ho Mung, and they met some Burmese troops in Nong Laeng. The soldiers said "Come, we have rice", and they made the three women go into their camp, and then they raped those three women. After that they gave them one pyi of rice each [about 2 kg/4.4 lb] and they said "You don't have to pay for this rice." They were from Nam Kuyt, not our village. I don't know the names of the women, they were Pa'O and we live five miles away from them.

Q: What about the other villages around?

A: The other villages also had the same problems as we did. The first village is Lon Yao, the second is Ho Kit, the third is Nong Ai, the fourth Myo Yat, and the fifth Mayk Houg; all of these villages are totally empty now because they [the soldiers] did as I have explained. They started emptying two months ago. They treated us badly and we could not stand this kind of oppression. Whenever we couldn't give them what they asked for we were supposed to give them money.

When the soldiers realized that we had all moved to the Thai border they sent someone to tell us, "Come back, all of you come back, come and work in your opium fields again. When you grow it we will buy all that you produce, and we will pay you the same price that you could get from others." That is what they said. They were three battalions, LIB 525, LIB 332 and IB 99 from Mung Pan and Lang Kher. We answered, "No, we don't want to come back." We didn't even farm opium before. I farmed rice and sesame. We told them that we didn't want to farm opium and that we wouldn't go back.

Q: Isn't it forbidden to cultivate opium?

A: When the Burmese soldiers arrived in that area [in 1996, after Khun Sa's surrender] it was full of people, but later there were fewer and fewer people because of their oppression. They didn't like that [the army needs villagers for forced labor and as a source of loot and extortion money]. They tried to find out why the villagers left their villages. They were wondering, "Why did people leave after we arrived?" So finally they tried to make us go back home by telling us that if we did, we would be allowed to cultivate opium. They said, "If you farm opium you will earn good money, you will have money and gold, you will do good business. If you don't know where to sell it we will buy it, but we'll collect a tax."

Look, when Khun Sa was there it was said that Khun Sa was an opium warlord but we never saw this kind of thing happening around our village. But now, since Khun Sa surrendered, the price of Ya Ba has gone down to 10 baht per tablet ['crazy medicine', known in Burmese as 'myin say'; an amphetamine-type drug that makes you aggressive and stupid, common in Burma and Thailand], and the Burmese soldiers carry their opium and their Ya Ma along with them from place to place. They even come and sell it in

Thailand, in Mai Kai On and Mai Kai Long villages. Before I'd never even heard about these kinds of things, but now I've seen them myself.

Q: Do you know if there is a place where they produce Ya Ba in your area?

A: Only the Burmese [soldiers] produce Ya Ba and it is forbidden to go to the factories where they make it. It is forbidden and the places are guarded by soldiers. They make the Ya Ma outside the villages. In our area the man who transports the opium drives a 4-wheel drive truck [small pickup truck]. No matter what checkpoints he has to pass he is never checked, and he has all kinds of equipment for transforming opium [into heroin] in his 4-wheel drive truck. He is an operations commander ['byu ha mu'; strategic commander]. He buys the raw opium with gold, he buys one and a half viss [2.4 kg/5.2 lb; i.e. he buys about this much on each trip]. I don't know his name but he is from that same regional command, from Lang Kher. Now he's already moved, but the other units also do it the same way. Now only the Burmese do that business, the Shan and Pa-O don't do it. In Ho Murng there is a lot of Ya Ba, plenty! The sellers and the buyers are both Burmese. The Burmese soldiers just put on their mufti [civilian clothes] and then they sell the stuff from village to village as far as Mai Kai Long [in Thailand]. They go there not only to sell Ya Ma, they sell opium as well. They sold what they seized from the opium merchants after Khun Sa surrendered. After that they made their own fields at Gong Sarng and Gong Mai Houg and they forced the villagers there to work for them.

Q: Would you say that there are more opium fields now than before Khun Sa surrendered?

A: In Khun Sa days people were talking all the time about opium, but I had never seen it. I didn't even know what it looked like. But now, since the Burmese came to rule the area we've had the chance to see what opium, Ya Ba, and also heroin are. But we don't buy it, we don't use it. We just saw it when they came to deal in it. Before when Khun Sa was there, we just heard people mention opium and we saw opium in pictures, as though it were some kind of vegetable. [Khun Sa bought most of his opium from other areas before refining it into heroin; see the interview below with "Sai Long", who was arrested while transporting opium into Khun Sa's area.]

Q: Is the situation getting worse this year? Why did you decide to flee only now?

A: In Khun Sa's days, before he surrendered to the Burmese troops, we didn't have to be porters, we didn't have to pay money to the soldiers and we were not forced to work for them; but after the Burmese soldiers started ruling our area life only remained peaceful for about three months. After that, the situation started getting worse and worse until the land became empty [of people].

Q: Didn't you flee because of fighting between the SPDC and the SSA?

A: No. I think if the Burmese soldiers stay there I won't go back to my home, but when we achieve freedom I will go back. When we are living in Thailand we can't cut trees in the forest like at home [to build a house], and it is hard to survive. At home we can farm and cultivate, we can conduct small businesses there, but here we don't see anything we can do, so when the Burmese have gone we would love to go back. If it is not possible to go back we don't have any idea what we'll do.

Interview 40: Refugee, Relocation, Livelihood, Women, Child

Name: "Klaw Reh"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 50
 Ethnicity: Kayah
 Religion: Animist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Widower, nine children but six of them already dead
 Address: Daw Kraw Aw village, Shadaw township, Karenni State
 Date of Interview: April 29, 1998
 Source: KHRG

["Klaw Reh" was interviewed in a refugee camp in Thailand.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I don't know the date, but since then we've been given rice two times (i.e. he has been there one or two months). We came because the SLORC burned all our houses and our barns and they killed all our animals. We didn't have any house so we couldn't stay anywhere. We had no food and we didn't want to die. I am too old, I can't resist the SLORC.

Q: When and how was your village ordered to move?

A: June 1996 - they sent a letter. When we arrived there [at Shadaw relocation site] they just gave us very little food and the rice was not good. We had to work for them two or three times a week, for the whole day each time. We couldn't enjoy our food [i.e. they did not have enough and they were too tired and depressed to enjoy the bad food they had]. We saw a lot of people dying when we stayed in the relocation site. We couldn't bear it, that is why we escaped from there; but not all of us, only some. Some still stay in the relocation site.

Q: Was there a clinic in Shadaw?

A: Yes, but they didn't treat us very well. I saw a woman there who died when her baby was only six days old. They would inject one ampoule of medicine into two or three people. We didn't need to pay money for the injection, but if we paid money we could go to the medic's house and be properly treated.

Q: How long did you stay in Shadaw?

A: Two months. I stayed there but we didn't have enough food, and then the Burmese told us to go back to our village to bring back some food. When we went back to our old village we never tried to go back to the relocation place, we just tried to hide in the forest. The Burmese called the people who escaped to come back to the relocation site, but after we escaped we didn't want to go back. When we were hiding there, if the Burmese ever saw some smoke (from a cooking fire) they fired mortar shells at it. I was afraid because I saw many people killed by the Burmese, and we were afraid we would also be killed. We didn't have enough food to resist them.

I decided that if I died everything would be over and that would be better than going back, because life is very bad in the relocation site. We didn't have any chance to work for ourselves, we just worked for the Burmese. Then the Burmese sent a letter again to the people who had escaped, calling us back to the relocation site.

When we stayed [in hiding] in our village, SLORC soldiers came and when they found villagers they shot at them. We posted people as sentries, so when the SLORC were coming we always ran out of the village. We saw people shot at by the Burmese, but they didn't die because we knew they were coming. They look on the villagers as Karenni soldiers so they just kill them. They killed many people. We were really lucky to survive this long. I'm very, very lucky. If I was not lucky I would have been killed.

Q: How did you survive in the forest?

A: The village was already burned down [by the time they returned from Shadaw]; trees, bamboo and grass had already grown in the village. We had some food because we had hidden it in the forest or in caves, but it took one or two hours to go and find the food. They had burned all our houses and our barns, so if we hadn't hidden our food it would have been very difficult. Just then my wife died, leaving me with our small eight months old baby. I didn't have any milk to give to my baby. I just gave him water. If I had stayed there longer we would have died, so we fled from there.

Q: Did the people get sick while they were hiding?

A: How could they avoid falling sick? And we couldn't go anywhere to find medicine. But only my wife died. She died of diarrhea. Her name was Pru Meh. When we lived in Shadaw it was worse - at least one person in each family died of disease there.

Q: How many people were hiding with you?

A: People from Daw Ei Po, Daw Leh Da, and Daw Ei She, those three villages, but divided into groups of three families in three different places. There were about 15 or 16 people. There were also a single blind woman and a very old woman left behind there (when they fled to Thailand). There were also four families near D— village and two families near A—. In D— one family had seven people but one of them died. He didn't have any sickness, but when we arrived from Shadaw he just died.

Q: Did you see soldiers when you were hiding?

A: Yes, we saw them, but only from a distance. We came out from the places where we were hiding and watched them. We always watched when they were around because if we saw them coming our way then we'd have to run away from the place where we were hiding. When they found out where we were hiding we had to move, then when they found out our new place we had to move again. We had to move at least four or five times. But they didn't find us, because if they had found us they would have killed us. The Burmese patrolled around Daw Tama and Daw Bo Loh. They never made camps, they just came for a while and left. They came patrolling once a week, every week. I think they were Battalions 72 and 54, but I'm not sure. They were the soldiers who guard the Lawpita Dam [near Loikaw]. No. 72 is based in Lawpita and No. 54 in Loikaw.

Q: How long did it take you to come here [to the refugee camp]?

A: Six days, because we had to avoid the army, but if we could have come directly it would have been four days. It is very difficult to come here because Burmese soldiers block the border, but we had to try to pass. I came with a lot of people - one family from Daw Kraw Aw and two families from Daw Leh Da. If someone is lucky he can pass, if he is not he will die. I was afraid, very afraid that we would be killed. While I was coming here my mind was right outside of my body [an expression for extreme fear]. But we were lucky and we didn't die.

Q: Do you think one day you will be able to go back?

A: Yes, of course we would like to go back. Now we get rice from others, but we only receive it once a month so if they stop giving it what will we do? If we stayed on our own land we could plant and grow enough food for ourselves for the whole year.

Q: After you left Shadaw relocation site did you hear anything about the situation there?

A: At the beginning they were given rice there, but later they didn't get enough rice so they had to work. For one day's work they can get eight milk-tins of rice [about 2 kg/3 lb] and 14 *kyat*. If a family has more than five people this is not enough to eat for a day, so the people who still live in that place have to steal whatever they can find to eat, and this is a problem.

Interview 41: Relocation, Forced Labor, Women, Child, Killing

1. Name:	"Naw Wah"	2. Name:	"Baw Reh"
Sex:	Female	Sex:	Male
Age:	40	Age:	47
Ethnicity:	Kayah	Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Christian	Religion:	Animist
Occupation	Farmer	Occupation	Farmer

Marital Status: Married with seven children
 Address: Daw Kraw Aw village, Shadaw township, Karenni State
 Date of Interview: April 29, 1998
 Source: KHRG

[*"Baw Reh" was interviewed in a refugee camp in Thailand. He used to be headman of his village.*]

Q: Why did you come here?

A: The Burmese forced us to move to Shadaw at the same time as the others [in mid-1996]. The Burmese soldiers sent a letter saying that we had just seven days to move to the relocation place. First they sent the letter, then they sent a man to the village to order us to go to Shadaw within four or five days. He said, "You must go to the relocation site in time, you can't stay in your village after that date. If you stay after the date the soldiers will come to shoot you and kill you." We were very afraid so we went there, but some old people still

remained in the village.

Q: How many people from your village moved to Shadaw?

A: There were 105 households in my village. At first 60 households moved to Shadaw and some moved to Thailand. Some of our old people couldn't move, and some families were split because the people who could travel came here [to a refugee camp] and those who couldn't travel so well went to the relocation place.

Q: How long did you stay in Shadaw?

A: At first I stayed just over two weeks, I couldn't stay any longer because I couldn't get anything to live. I'd just brought two baskets of rice, and that was for my whole family. Then the man said, "You have to bring your belongings." So we went back again and again [to the village] to fetch our things. They allowed only seven days for that; they said that if we took more than seven days they would shoot us, but we couldn't bring everything in seven days. I called my family, and my whole family came and lived in Shadaw for more than a month. When we stayed in the relocation site many people got sick. I stayed with my family for about 20 days, and after that I escaped without permission and went back to our village to search for some food I could take to my family. I escaped alone; almost all the men left before their families. My family was still staying in Shadaw. I was in our village for four or five days, and if I'd stayed much longer than that they would have killed me. The Burmese soldiers said if you stayed away more than a week they would shoot you. Then they really did come and shoot at people in Daw Hi So and Doi Saw villages [while they were still getting things in the village]. Some people could escape but others couldn't, and we couldn't escape so we just hid around there. We ran from our village and hid in the forest. We ran and lived in our farmfield hut.

Then I went back to Shadaw and found that all my children and my wife were sick. Life was very hard there, especially for the small children, so we left. By then it was more and more dangerous to go back to our old village, so I took them all with me and we hid under the trees with five or six other families. We hid in the forest for four months.

Q: Did you have to work for the army in Shadaw?

A: I did not live in Shadaw for a long time so I wasn't forced to work, but the others were forced to work a lot. I just went back to my village so I didn't work for them. My family didn't have enough food because we had left most of it behind. I didn't find any food in Shadaw, I just tried to get some from where we had hidden it before. Even my house materials and belongings were left behind in the village. In my village I left a lot of livestock and other things as well. When I escaped it was without permission. The Burmese soldiers didn't stop us from going out because they could not feed the people any more, so we went in and out. I went to my village but there were no people there any more, and then I just lived in hiding outside the village. I don't have any education, so it was difficult for me to know what to do for our future.

Q: How did you come here?

A: We hid in the forest for a long time. The old men said that we would die of mosquito bites and disease. There were no medicines, and some died. Some could walk but some

could not, they just hid in the forest. It is difficult to live hidden in the forest. Then we left; the people who could walk went first and waited in front while the people who could not walk tried to follow. I tried to find some soldiers to guide us, and eventually along the way we found some Karenni soldiers in a field. When we met them we asked them to guide us along the way.

That was during the tenth month [October 1996], and the Burmese soldiers shot at us while we were escaping. That was when Si Reh and Ei Reh [both men] were shot dead. We were escaping together with them. I think four people died at that time, two villagers and two Karenni soldiers. They died because they went on ahead. Another villager was wounded and we carried him. Those who were killed were Si Reh, he was from Daw Kraw Aw, and Ei Reh from Daw Bo Loh. One of the soldiers killed was Mi Reh from Daw Kraw Aw. I don't know the name of the other one. He was from Brigade 2, Column 1. The man who was wounded was Pleh Law, from Daw So Kyar.

Interview: 42: Arrest, Forced Labor, Torture, Refugee

Name:	"Sai Long"
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Shan
Religion:	Buddhist
Occupation	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with three children
Address:	xxxx village, Loikaw township, Karenni State
Date of Interview:	May 1, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Sai Long" was arrested in 1994 for carrying opium and sentenced to 10 years. While serving his sentence in Loikaw jail, he was taken as a porter early this year for SPDC troops patrolling Karenni areas and eventually escaped.]

Q: When did you arrive here [a refugee camp]?

A: I arrived here on April 5. I came here because the SPDC forced me to be a porter. First I was a prisoner in Loikaw jail, then they took me out of jail and forced me to be a porter.

Q: Why were you in jail?

A: I went to prison because of drugs. I didn't want to carry opium and I never used it, but I had to think of how I could earn a living. I was given money to carry opium. A Chinese paid me 500 *kyat* for each piece, and I carried eight pieces. I have no idea where it came from. I carried it from Lwae Neh to Mae Aw, then from Mae Aw to Ho Murng. They didn't sell it in Karenni State, they were selling it to Khun Sa and they transported it there [Ho Murng was Khun Sa's headquarters]. I was arrested on April 9, 1994 by LIB 530 because I hadn't paid them any money. If you pay them money they don't arrest you. [The SLORC/SPDC charges a tax on those who independently produce or transport opium and heroin, and if you do not pay it you are arrested.] I think you have to pay at least a 100,000 *kyat*, but

the amount depends on how many pieces you have. The more you carry, the more you have to pay them. They arrested four people. I had a trial. I got a 10 years sentence and I stayed for four years of it. At first I had to stay in shackles for one and a half year. My serial number there was xxxx.

Q: How was the life in jail?

A: They gave us one mess-tin-lid of rice to eat twice a day. We had enough water to drink but we could only take a bath once every five or six days. Some of the rooms we stayed in were big and some were small. Sixty or seventy people were staying in each small room. A room for sixty was the same size as this room [about 3x6 yards] so we had to sleep on our side [all pressed together side by side]. We went outside every day for one or two hours. We had to go to the fields to grow vegetables for the jailers. We didn't get to eat those vegetables though, and they beat some prisoners for trying to steal vegetables. U Mya Thein was in charge of the prison.

Q: What about diseases?

A: There were many kinds of disease. Some had fever, some had skin disease, some dysentery and some diarrhea. Some prisoners had money and when they were sick they bought themselves medicine and took it. If people had no money they stayed sick, they couldn't get medicine. I saw people die. I don't remember how many people died, but it was more than twenty during these four years. They died because they had fever, diarrhea and dysentery. I don't remember their names, most of them were old men. One of them was in for stealing a bicycle.

Q: When you stayed in prison were there any women prisoners?

A: Yes, there were 30 women. The men had enough problems [in jail], and the women had even more problems. There were also children in jail. Many, many children were in the women's jail. Some were born in jail and some were brought as prisoners. Two children were born in the jail, even though there is no hospital in Loikaw jail.

Q: How did you become a porter?

A: They forced me to become a porter. I had to be a porter for eight days. First we went to Shadaw by car. At first I had to carry big shells. The length was like this and the diameter was like that [he indicated 81mm shells, which weigh 3 to 4 kg / 7 to 10 pounds each]. I also had to carry rice and bullets. It was very heavy. The soldiers didn't even carry their own [personal] bags, we had to carry them. They carried only guns and equipment. There were thirty prisoners carrying things but no villagers. In my group there were no women but I saw older people, three or four people who were 40 or 45 years old. I also saw young people, fifteen or sixteen years old. The soldiers were from No. 250 [Battalion, based in Loikaw] and LIB 421 [based in Shan State]. There were over one hundred soldiers from each battalion. Our group had thirty porters for over one hundred soldiers, but I don't know how many porters the other group had. They didn't give us even one coin for that. We didn't even get enough food. We got just a few handfuls of rice, the same as in prison. We didn't have enough water, we had to find whatever water we could and we couldn't ever take a bath.

Q: Did the soldiers beat anybody?

A: Yes, but they didn't beat me, they beat Aik Htun. He was 25 years old and he was a prisoner. He was beaten by a three-star captain from battalion No. 250 because he couldn't climb the mountain. Actually he could climb the mountain, but the soldiers followed him and beat him from behind because he could not carry things quickly enough. They beat him on the back and on the head with a bamboo stick. He was wounded and bleeding a lot. I tried to help him for one day [before he ran away himself]. They forced him to carry things again but he could not carry anything any more, and when he couldn't carry the soldiers beat him again. When we fled he wasn't dead yet but maybe he died after that. They also beat another man, Saw Ee. They beat him on his back because he couldn't carry any more, because he didn't get enough food and he was sick.

Q: When you were carrying for the army did you see any villagers?

A: No, there were no villagers left and I didn't see any fighting.

Q: How did you escape?

A: We fled down the hillside when they [the soldiers] were a little bit far from me. Two of us fled together, but the others didn't come here with me. It took me over one month to come here. We stayed on the hillsides with the Karenni [soldiers]. They treated us with medicines because I got malaria the day that we fled, that night when we were sleeping [on the bare ground with no blanket].

Q: What do you hope for now?

A: I will work, any kind of work. But I want to go back and see my children. I have three children; the eldest was five in 1994, and the youngest wasn't even one year old at that time [he hasn't seen them since his arrest].

Interview 43: Relocation, Livelihood, Forced Labor, Refugee

Name:	"Nyi Reh"
Sex:	Male
Age:	26
Ethnicity:	Kayah
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with two children, aged 1 and 3
Address:	Daw Leh Da village, Loikaw township, Karenni State
Date of Interview:	May 6, 1998
Source:	KHRG

["Nyi Reh" lived in Nwa La Bo relocation site north of Loikaw for almost two years before fleeing to the Thai border, where he arrived at the beginning of April 1998.]

Q: Why did you come here?

A: The SLORC army ordered my village to relocate so I left my village two years ago. I

stayed for two years in Nwa La Bo consolidation village [relocation site], Loikaw township. Then I fled from there together with a friend.

Q: How many houses are there at Nwa La Bo?

A: There are about 130 houses in Nwa La Bo. Ten villages were relocated there; including Thirida, Daw Mu Leh, Daw Leh Da, Daw Sar Si, Daw Klay, Ku Lay and Daw Lar Leh villages. [Villages in this area were not forced to relocate in the initial relocations because they were spared by a SLORC agreement with the KNPLF ceasefire group; however, SLORC subsequently cancelled the agreement and relocated them anyway.] They didn't give enough food to the villagers. Before they gave one pyi [about 2 kg of rice] each and we could eat it for three days. Then they gave one pyi a week for one person. They gave a bit of salt but they didn't give oil, beans or soap. They gave only rice and salt. But they gave us a chance to find some more rice - they would let us farm outside the camp, but we had to pay for a ticket to get out. Each ticket cost 50 *kyat*. Then if they heard any strange news, for example, news that the rebels were close by, they wouldn't allow us out. So we couldn't go out to the fields and the paddy crop was destroyed. We could buy rice but it was very expensive: 100 *kyat* for one pyi. At first they had checkpoints but not any longer, and they never built a fence around the camp, so it was actually easy to go out and come in.

Q: Was there a hospital there?

A: They had a hospital but if you didn't give them money they wouldn't treat you. Some people died because they wouldn't treat them. In two years I saw three patients die, one old man and two children. They got sick and they died.

Q: Did you have a chance to worship in Nwa La Bo?

A: They built a Buddhist monastery but they didn't give permission to build a Christian church so we couldn't build one, and the Christians had no chance to worship [many Karenni are Roman Catholic]. The army also destroyed the Christian church in my village because of the [local SLORC] chairman Hla Win. Now he is not chairman any more, he joined the Military Intelligence. But they do have a school in Nwa La Bo.

Q: Did you have to do any work for the SPDC?

A: Sometimes they made us do forced labor in the Army plantation between Nwa La Bo village and Chet Kae village, over one hour's walk away. Infantry Battalion No. 54 came and took us on trucks. They forced us to carry things, dig the earth and do other things. They forced us to work like that three or four times a month. The soldiers said that they were planting vegetables for the refugees [the people in the relocation sites] but we never got any of them.

Q: Did they arrest [SLORC] soldiers who ran away?

A: Yes, they arrested their soldiers who escaped, but they didn't arrest those who left the KNPP as long as they joined the KNDA, the ones with the dragon badges. They forced them [the ex-KNPP soldiers] as well as villagers to become KNDA. If the villagers obeyed and became KNDA they didn't arrest them, but if they wouldn't become KNDA they arrested them and sent them to prison. [SLORC/SPDC demands some kind of quota of KNDA

recruits from among the villagers.] I joined the KNDA because they came and forced me to become KNDA. If my father had been staying with us I wouldn't have gone [one man from their house had to go, so his father would have gone]. But only my mother and my sister were staying in our house, so I had to go because I was afraid. When I stayed with the KNDA I didn't do anything for them. I just stayed in the Army camp beside Daw Leh Ku village, between Tee Ku Leh and Daw Leh Ku. They gave me an AK [AK47 assault rifle], and I had to carry that. Before I went there I'd heard that there were four hundred soldiers in the KNDA, but when I arrived there I saw only a hundred. The Burmese control them completely. Wherever they go the Burmese follow them.

Q: How did you flee from Nwa La Bo?

A: I fled Nwa La Bo at night, I don't know what time it was. I fled suddenly, and my wife and children didn't come with me. I fled with one friend. I fled to D—, then to K— and then across to this place. It took me less than one month to come here, sixteen or seventeen days. I saw them [SPDC soldiers], but I ran away when I saw them. They didn't catch us and they didn't shoot at me.

Q: What is the difference between Nwa La Bo camp and the refugee camp?

A: In Loikaw, at Nwa La Bo, they didn't give enough rice, but in the refugee camp we get rice, oil, salt, chilies, beans, blankets, mosquito nets, mats, and treatment for sick people. So now I will stay here and work. My wife and my two children will arrive soon. They will arrive here with other people from Nwa La Bo. I will build a house and stay with my family. I don't want to go back to Loikaw, I will stay here.

Interview 44: Religion, Relocation

Name:	Ashin Wanna Thiri
Age:	23 (2-year-monkhood)
Address:	Hway Yo Monastery, Pin Lon township, Shan State
Date of Interview:	May 22, 1998
Place of Interview:	Thai-Burma border
Source:	ABYMU

My name is Ashin Wanna Thiri and I have had two years in monkhood. I was from Hway Yo monastery, Pin Lon township Shan State. On March 2, 1998, my monastery was destroyed by the SPDC troop. On that day, troops from LIB 517 based in Mai Pun township, Shan State arrived to my village. They were led by Captain Aye Ko. First they told the villagers to move from the village and that the village would be destroyed. The villagers cried and pleaded not to be moved. The soldiers said it was an order given from their superior and they must obey the order assigned to them. The soldiers also told that the monastery must be destroyed too. There were about 20 monks residing at the monastery at that time. The soldiers were so rude and they did not listen to our request. They allegedly accused us of having contact with the ethnic armed group, working political activities and giving support to the armed groups. Actually, no one from the village had any contact with the armed group as their base was far from our village.

The village has had experience of human rights abuses by the SPDC troops for a long time. The soldiers from SPDC looted the belongings of the villagers, forced the villagers to do unpaid jobs and demanded money from the villagers whenever they came to the village. People never like them due to their abuses against the civilians, but no one dare speak out how they feel.

Let me return to the event of forcible removal of our village. When the villagers did not obey the order to destroy the village, the soldiers used very rude words and beat the villagers. About 30 villagers were beaten for not obeying the order. Then the soldiers began destroying the whole village. At last, the villagers had to collect their personal belongings from the houses while the soldiers were destroying. I can still remember the event now. It was like a hell and doomsday of the universe. People were running around and crying. Finally the whole village was destroyed and burnt down. The soldiers also looted whatever they wanted from the escaping villagers.

Our village was not the only village ordered to move. There were other villages faced the same situation. I know some name: Wan tai village and Kon Pat village. All had to run away. Our monk also had to move out from the villages.

We had no idea where to settle down after our whole village was destroyed. Some moved to the nearby town, some hid in the jungle and some fled to Thai-Burma border. I decided to go along with other people who were heading for the Thai border. It took for me six days on foot to get here. There were other five monks with me. Because it was during the rainy season, the route was very difficult to take. We had to cross many streams including the Salween River.

Interview 45: Child, Torture, Refugee

Name:	Withheld
Age:	15
Ethnicity:	Burman
Religion:	Buddhist
Education:	Second Standard
Address:	North Okkalapa, Rangoon
Date of joining the army:	1998
Rank:	Private
Date of desertion:	November 14, 1998 at Htaw Ma Pyo, near Ratchaburi Province, Thailand
Date of Interview:	November 27, 1998
Source:	HRDU

I was born in Payagong, Pegu. I attended the primary school there and when I passed second standard my family moved to Rangoon and then I quit school and never attended school again. I used to help my mother selling things in the shop.

One night in 1998 when I was in North Oakkalapa, I went to watch a festival (Pwe) and when it finished I prepared to go back home. I looked for my colleagues to come along with me. When I was looking for them, three men called me. One wore an army uniform and the others were in ordinary clothes. When I came up to them they took me to a teashop.

They tried to persuade me to join the army. I refused to join and they started asking me to show them my ID card, but I did not have it, so they threatened me that I would be sent to jail, because I did not have the card. They told me that if I joined the army I would not be sent to jail. I was afraid to go to jail and started to follow them. I learned later that night there were ten people stopped by the army and forced to join the army.

That night I was sent to Minggladon military camp, and I stayed there nearly a month. Then I was sent to No. 12 Divisional Training Central in Mergui for military training. I was under the training for four months. There were 120 men at that training camp. During training I saw many soldiers who were younger than I was. Some were just only 11 or 12 years old.

During the training in the morning we had to do some work in the camp like cutting grass, collecting wood, carrying water and do other jobs. In the evening we started our training. Old men and young men had to do the same. When the old men had to carry, for example a 12 kilogram pack we young boys also had to do the same. They said it was because we received the equal amount in salary.

After the training I was sent to LIB 433 camp. I stayed in the battalion for one month and we had to go to a border camp. We joined up with a column led by Captain Aung Min Oo and came to the border. We brought 60 porters with us. I have learned that four porters were shot dead because they could not carry their loads any longer. I carried one G-4 rifle and 200 cartridges, two sets of army uniforms and my other clothes along. My company was No.1 in LIB 433 headed by Captain Aung Kaing Lynn. We arrived at Htaw Ma Pyo on the border and stationed there.

Not long after arriving at that camp, I ran away. I ran away when I went out to shoot a bird with the sling shot near the camp. I looked down to the foot of the mountain inside Thailand and I saw people and a car in a far distance. I decided to run away and, if I got a chance to work in Thailand and got some money, I would find a way to go back to my homeland. I have not been happy since I was forced to join the army. I have always felt homesick.

When we were in Htaw Ma Pyo camp, our officers told us not to desert. They said that if we ran away to Thailand the Thai army would arrest us and give us to the Ngapway (the Karen revolution army), and the Ngapway would cut off our heads. Most of the soldiers are not happy in the army and want to run away but are afraid that they will be captured and killed. From the time our column was set up to the time I ran away, there were eight soldiers who ran away. Two were recaptured, sent back to the HQ and jailed.

After I ran away, I met Burmese villagers working in Thailand and they helped me by trying to look for work for me. Unfortunately Thai businessmen said that I was too young to work for them. Later I followed some villagers from the refugee camp and stayed there for a week. After that, a Thai officer in the camp picked me up and sent me to a Thai army camp. Later they sent me to the KNLA in the jungle. The KNLA did not kill me and now I am staying with them. My greatest suffering is missing my parents and wanting to go back to my home.

Interview 46: Relocation, Forced Labor, Killing, Refugee

Name

Lee Reh

Sex:	Male
Age:	54
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with six children
Address:	Thanaw Kalu village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	January 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Last three years ago, the SPDC sent a letter to our village ordering us all to move out. Our village had 30 households and a population over 100 people. We did not want to move but we were forced to move against our will. None of us wanted to move because we did not want to leave our farms, houses, animals and belongings behind. But we had no choice, we were told that we would be shot dead and the village would be burnt down if we failed to go. The troops would kill everyone found in the region after their deadline as they would consider them supporters or sympathizers of ethnic armed groups. Finally we decided to hide in the forest nearby. We chose to do that because we did not want to live in Shadaw camp which was like a prison to us people who live up in the hills and love freedom.

All the villagers hid in the forest nearby. It was not peaceful living like that. We always lived in fear of the troops. We hid in the deep forest or near our farms. We took the paddy with us for food and brought more from the fields when we were short of food. We always moved around in the region to avoid meeting the military. When we went back to our village after a week, we found out that the entire village was burnt down. We did not know who burnt it but we were sure it was the Burmese troops. We went back to our hiding place and kept on hiding.

When we heard that troops were approaching our hiding place we ran away. It happened several times while we were hiding. Fortunately, the military did not find our places but I met them once while we were harvesting our land. The soldiers arrived and started shooting at us. Nobody was hit but we all ran away. When we returned, the soldiers had burnt our entire paddy in the fields including our farm huts. Everything had gone.

I did not hear of any killing by the military while we were hiding and moving around in the region. People ran away and hid as soon as they heard the soldiers were coming to the region. Some were shot at but narrowly escaped.

Our health when hiding was so terrible. Many people got sick and died afterwards. Many children and old people died of diarrhea. In my group of 100 people hiding in one place, there were five old people and ten children who died of diarrhea in two years. We only had herbal medicines. My wife died in the first year after hiding in the jungle. She was sick with some unknown disease and one of my children died of diarrhea in July 1998.

If we could find a place to plant, we were able to work in the hills. But in such a dangerous situation, we could not work peacefully. We were always insecure and worried about the soldiers coming. We had to cultivate a small piece of land in one place here and there in order to avoid being found by the soldiers. It was hard to work in different places. The harvest was worse this year (1998). We could not grow enough for ourselves. We could hardly earn enough. We took a risk going to a Shan village and sold our cattle last year and

bought the paddy for next harvest. But there has been an intensive military activity in the region since the last rainy season. We did not dare go and buy the paddy for cultivation any more. Now troops are moving around in the region. We had been eating only boiled rice and salt for a long time.

I did not want live like that so I decided to find a better way to escape from all that. I would die if I continued to live like that. I took my children with me when I saw some people were heading for Thailand. They passed through our place and I asked them where they were going. Some other people from my group also moved to the Shan border to look for a job then. When we arrived at the Salween River bank, the number of people had grown to many more. They were people from different places in Karenni and Shan States. It took us a week to get here.

I hope the situation here will be better than back home. I had never heard of refugee camps in Thailand until I got here. As far as I can see, it is very good here. I don't dare go back to the place I lived. I don't want to be killed by the troops. I hope more of our people are coming soon.

Interview 47: Relocation, Livelihood,

Name	Nar Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	50
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with four children
Address:	Kaleh La village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	January , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Three years ago, the SPDC sent a letter to our village ordering us to move out. Our village had 15 households and the population was around 70 people. We did not want to move but we were forced to move against our will. None of us wanted to move because we did not want to leave our fields, houses, animals and belongings behind. We all knew that the life in the concentration camp would be worse than living in the village as there were many troops nearby in Shadaw camp. It would be unavoidable to work as forced laborers or porters while living in the camp. My relatives in Shadaw also informed us that the camps were already crowded and there was an insufficient supply of water. But we did not have a choice, we were told that we would be shot dead and the village would be burnt down if we failed to go. The troops would kill everyone found in the region after their deadline as they would consider them supporters or sympathizers of the armed ethnic groups.

Only two families moved to Shadaw while the rest either moved to Lu Moon Soe in Mauk Mae township, Shan State, or hid in the jungle nearby the village. At first we thought that living in the jungle would be better than moving to the relocation site. However, life when hiding in the jungle was not so easy. In the first year, we were able to go back to

our village secretly and bring out the food we had hidden before we moved into the jungle. We went back and brought out as much food as we could and ate it. We could not carry it all at one time. It was very frightening and dangerous to go back to the village because we might meet the military in the region. We had to inquire about the presence of troops before we went back to bring out our food. We would be shot without question if we were found by the military.

After staying in the jungle for about one year, it became impossible to go back and bring out food from the village as before. The military burnt down the entire village in 1997. There was no more food left there. Also we could not settle down and work in the hills in one place due to the constant fear of the military. So we decided to move to Lu Moon Soe village in Mauk Mae township, Shan State.

This village was not in the list of those being forcibly relocated by the military. It is situated on the border of Karenni and Shan State. But the villagers lived in a constant fear of military harassment. Whenever troops came to the village, the soldiers looted whatever they wanted. The soldiers also destroyed the houses, killed the animals and rounded up the villagers to be porters. The villagers had to run away when the military came into the village to escape being used as porters.

Living in the new village was not so good, too. We did not have a good harvest as the land was not good for cultivation. The whole village suffered from lack of food. People were starving. More people also arrived from other villages even though living there was not good. Most were Karenni villagers from Kyu Lae, Ka Lae La and Darida villages who had hid in the jungle like us before. They had hid in the jungle since their villages were ordered to move to Shadaw camp in 1996. Due to the increasing difficulties in the jungle, they moved to the villages on the border of Karenni and Shan states.

As I told you, we were living on this border, and in fear of harassment by the troops both from the Shan State and Karenni areas. Troops from Division 55 based in Se-son township, Shan State always came as well as some troops from Loikaw, Karenni and forced people to work as porters. When the troops entered the village or we heard they were coming, we all ran away. I was rounded up with two other villagers by the Burmese troops in 1998 March. They caught us while we are running away from them. They beat us on our backs with bamboo sticks and ordered us to carry the shells for them. They told us they would kill all three of us if we tried to escape. We did not dare run away after that threat. It was a mobile military column in the region. We were ordered to carry the shells and ammunition on our backs. I myself carried six 57" motor shells. It was very heavy for us. We went along with the troops to the Pun River. We carried these heavy loads for five days. My back was torn and bruised. There was no beating physically, but we were verbally abused all the way. The food given was not much, a very small amount of food was given twice a day. It was only rice and chilis. I did not dare ask for more food as the soldiers would torture us. After five days of working as porters, we were released.

Since 1998, there has been more intensive military activity in the area where my village is situated. That made us more miserable both by day and night. We could not stay without fear of being conscripted as porters. Also earning our living had become difficult for us. Therefore, I decided to come to the Thai border. Altogether seven households, about 25 persons, left the village the same day. Most were people who had moved to Lu Moon Soe from other villages. The other villagers would also like to leave the village but it was very difficult for them to abandon their fields and other property. We met more people

when we arrived at the Salween River. We did not expect to see so many people and I was shocked to see as many people as those. There were about 400 in all. We walked as quickly as we could, because we were afraid that the Burmese troops would follow us. We walked eight days to get to the border. Many people, mostly children and old people, got sick on the way. Most suffered from diarrhea and exhaustion. Fortunately, nobody died.

Interview 48: Relocation, Livelihood, Women

Name	Taw Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	52
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with six children
Address:	Par Law village, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	January, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Villages between Loikaw and the Pon river were relocated to my village in 1996. Since then, the living situation has become worse and military activities have doubled in the region. Before the moving order, villagers in my village had no problem for a living. They could manage to earn enough for their families. The villagers who were relocated from other villages were not provided with anything by the military. The military only gave a plot of land 50 ft x 50 ft. People had to collect bamboo and wood for building their own houses. When they did not have enough rice, they boiled the little they had and shared it among family members. Some could get help from relatives if they had any in the village. There was no clinic in the village, so many became sick. After the villagers from Daw Saw Kyu, Saw Se, Daw Ta Yoke and other villages moved to my village, we did not earn enough to live. Also we suffered from many abuses by the increasing presence of the military.

Villagers were ordered to build up fences both for the village and the military outpost. Thirty to forty soldiers were stationed at the outpost inside the village. They were from LIB 72. There were to be two fences for the village and we had to plant sharpened bamboo sticks around each fence, which was six feet high. Each fence was six feet high. One person from each household had to work on this task in rotation. The military's demand for labor became greater in 1998. We were ordered to work for the military outpost and guard the village at night for security. Each night two villagers were ordered to be on sentry duty. Five others were required to work at the outpost every day in the daytime. They were ordered to collect firewood, fetch water and clean the camp. The troops ordered the villagers to fetch water using their ox-carts at least five times in a day. It became more difficult in hot season when water was very scarce. If men were not available, women had to go and work. On average, my family had to supply labor work four times a month in 1998.

The troops ordered us to build three gates for the village. No one was allowed to go in or out between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The gates were closed during that time. Villagers were

only allowed to go out in the daytime. It made it difficult for the villagers to work on their lands, which mostly lay outside the village. If a person from another village came to our village he was required to leave our village before 6 p.m. If he wanted to stay overnight in the village, he was required to report to the village authorities. If he failed to report and was found out by the authorities, the authorities would fine him 500 *kyat* and his host 1,000 *kyat*.

The troops at the outpost were very bad. They stole chickens and pigs from the villagers. They did not care even if we built a fence around our house, they just entered and took anything they wanted. When we complained they said they would give us money later but never we got any. I did not hear of any killing or beating of the villagers by the troops.

I was rounded up and tortured by the SPDC troops in April 1998. I was accused of having relatives in the KNPP army. The soldiers said they received information about my relatives in the KNPP army, which was entirely false. I do not have any relatives in the KNPP army. The soldiers first came to my home and called out my name. When I came out the soldiers started beating me. They kicked me with their military boots all over my body. I knew they were from LIB72 and led by a captain whose name I did not know. While they were beating me, another five or six soldiers arrived at my home with my son-in-law from another ward. My son-in-law had his hands tied behind his back. When I saw him, his face was bloody and he had bruises on his eyes. Neither of us knew the reason why we were being treated like that. Later we both were taken outside the village. My hands were tied on the way. The soldiers kept beating my head and other parts of my body with a wooden stick all the way. I had a cut on my head and blood was running down.

When we arrived outside of the village, the soldiers forced both of us to kneel down while our hands were tied behind. The officer inserted the barrel of a pistol into my mouth and threatened to kill me right away. He told me “I will kill both of you and then your wives as well.” He asked if we had relatives in the KNPP army and where they were now. He slashed to my face many times. Then he ordered the soldiers to untie our hands, and told us to dig a pit. He said it was for both of us to be buried alive. We were scared to face that fate. Our bodies were shaking with fear. My son-in-law was crying while he was digging the pit. He pleaded with the officer not to kill us as we did not have any relatives in the KNPP. The officer paid no attention to his plea. The soldiers hit him on the nape of his neck and shouted at him to stop speaking. After we finished the officer forced us to jump into the pit and lay down. We thought we would die soon. The pit was wide enough for one person to lay down, so my son-in-law was under my body. All I could do was close my eyes and pray. However, the officer changed his mind and ordered us to come out from the pit. I did not know why he changed his mind, but I think the gods loved us and saved us.

We were taken back to the village after the soldier had tied our hands behind our backs again. They took us to the primary school. While our hands were still tied behind us, the soldiers poured buckets of water over our heads. One bucket after another came down until we fell down on the ground. One soldier hit my head and others hit my face and nose with their bare hands. Then the officer ordered the soldiers to detain us in a house near the school. My hearing has not been normal since that beating. We were detained at the house one night and released the next day. The troops killed three pigs while they were staying in the village. I was in bed for one month to recover from these tortures. I am still frightened of being treated like that again.

It was the last time I have been tortured physically, but much harassment tortured me mentally. The soldiers came to my house and checked on me. If they did not find me at home, they questioned all my family about where I was. They left a message for me to report to them as soon as I got back home. I felt I was constantly watched and harassed. I did not feel happy and comfortable living like that.

Seventeen of us came to Thailand together from the village. We did not dare tell many people we were leaving because we were afraid the news would leak out. We met other people on the way and joined them. It took ten days to get here.

I do not dare go back to my village. The military will find out that our family is missing from the village. They will definitely kill all of us if we go back to the village. I feel safer here, and better.

Interview: 49: Relocation, Women, Child, Arrest, Killing, Torture, Forced Labor

Name	Withheld
Sex:	Male
Age:	Not-stated
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	married with children
Address:	Withheld
Date of interview:	January, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Our village had to move to Chee Paw Klo village in the middle of 1996. All the villages in our village tract were ordered to move there. Living conditions in the new place was not good and we did not want to move there. However, we had to do as we were ordered. The SPDC troops would have killed us if they found us in our village after their deadline. For the first month after we arrived at the new site, we were given five tins of rice each to last for a week but that was not enough.

As soon as we arrived at the new site, we were ordered to provide forced labor by the SPDC troops. They ordered us to build fences six feet high around their military barracks. Also they ordered a fence to be built in a two-mile-radius around the relocation site. The soldiers were from LIB 428. Around 30 soldiers were stationed at Chee Paw Klo village.

There are 16 wards in the relocation site. The population was around 3,000 people. They were from Chee Paw Klo village tract, Daw Ku village tract and Gaylier village tract. Each household had to provide one person each for one day a week to do forced labor.

In February 1998, five persons from each ward in the relocation site were summoned to work on the motor road renovation between Demozaw and Daw Tamagi. In rotation, one person from each household had to go for one week to work on the road. The road was 29 miles long. The military provided trucks to transport the people from the relocation site to

the road site. The trucks arrived early in the morning and took 80 persons to the work site. People had to bring their own food and tools for working. I have personally worked on that renovation. I worked ten times in 1998 on this project as I was the only able-bodied man in my family. We were ordered to level the ground for laying the road, to collect stones and sand and to dig trenches around the motor road. The troops demanded five persons from each ward regardless of sex. I saw young girls and old people working there with other workers. The road construction is still going on. If we had money to find a substitute for the work quota, we could avoid going and working there. It would cost 100 *kyat* a day to hire a substitute that was quite impossible for us to find. The working conditions on the work site were so bad. We were not allowed to rest during the entire day except at lunchtime. Soldiers from LIB 428 and 530 were guarding us while the people were working at the work site. If they found someone taking a rest, they shouted very rude words like "You fucking Kayah are lazy and do not want to work hard." They also said "This road is for you and you have to work hard." I did not understand why they said this road was for us as we never use this inland road for ourselves. Only the military use the road for their military supplies.

In March we were told to move back to Daw Law Khu village track near the military headquarters of Loikaw. We were happy to return to our own area and thought we could escape from forced labor demanded by the military. However, we were driven into a worse situation involving forced labor and economic hardship. There were both SPDC and Naga (a Karenni splinter group) guarding the region. We had to work and pay taxes to both, sometimes for the joint columns of both as well. There was a checkpoint near our village and run by the Naga. The Naga troops levied ten *kyat* for each tin of corn, paddy or peanuts traded into the village. As the harvest was not good because of constant demands of forced labor and drought, and most of our villagers relied on trade goods. Increasing taxation has caused the people to suffer more starvation. The troops did not allow us to buy more than one basket of rice from outside the village. If you traded more the one basket of rice, you are allowed to take only one basket and the rest would be taken away by the soldiers. They would later give you a ration of rice that was one basket per week.

Villagers were summoned to work at the Naga base near the village. That was once or twice a week. The village headman had to collect the people to do the work. They were ordered to repair the fence, collect wood and water, work in the vegetable fields and do other odd jobs in the camp. My wife had to go and work there when I was working on other forced labor tasks in other places.

LIB 427 forcibly confiscated over 20,000 acres of land at Kan Khunit Sint, in Ngwe Taung in 1997. In April 1998, two persons were assigned to work on six plots of land to plough summer paddy. Not only did people have to plough the land, but also they had to dig channels for the water supply from Chee Paw Klo to Ngwe Taung that was two miles far. I was among the laborers forced to work on this summer paddy project. I worked eight days at a time and had to work there three times. Some people had oxen so it was not difficult for them to plough by cart. But for me it was very hard to work.

In May, one person from each household had to work one week at Nam Khom Lake that was 15 miles away from my village. Around 400 villagers from Ngwe Taung, Daw Talaw Du and Chee Paw Klo all had to go and prepare for paddy cultivation near the lake. This was ordered by the SPDC troops from Ngwe Taung.

In June 1998, our ward was given 30 acres of land in the Daw Law Khaw area by

the military and required to cultivate green beans. Only the land and bean seeds were provided and we had to spend all our time working at this. The troops from LIB 427 told us that all the benefit would be for the military and we had to pay back the cost of the seed after the harvest. It was not a good harvest and we were all forced to pay compensation for the seeds given to us for cultivation. Each household was charged 400 *kyat* for compensation to the LIB 427 after the harvest. Around 30 cattle were shot because they trespassed onto the planted fields. No compensation was paid to the villagers for killing their cattle.

In addition to the increasing demand of forced labor, there was a threat to our livelihood. On November 2, 1998, about 20 soldiers from Naga and 80 soldiers from LIB 102 arrived at our village. It was a joint military column of the Naga and the SPDC. It was in the morning. The soldiers rounded up all the villagers and gathered them in front of the primary school. The soldiers singled out three villagers, including me. The other two were Htoo Reh, 40 years old and Ngo Rei, 38 years old. The troops accused us of being in communication with the KNPP. The military officer named Captain Ngwe Thein kicked our heads with his military boots. Other soldiers grabbed our hair and smashed into our faces with their bare hands. The officer asked, "Would you like to be killed or will you tell us about the troops?" We did not have any communication with the KNPP and we said that we were just civilians. They kept treating us like that for two hours while the other villagers were forced to stay in front of the school. Our hands were tied on our backs and we were left under the sun for the whole day. No food or water was provided. At night, a military truck arrived at our village and the soldiers took the three of us to IB54 in Loikaw. The soldiers also took other male villagers from my village and from Daw Ta Kale, Daw Tanaw and Daw Pu to Loikaw. I did not know how many of them at that time. We all were detained in the LIB54 base.

On the next day, MI.27 came and took me to their headquarters. They accused me of providing food to KNPP soldiers. Thirteen people in one group were interrogated without rest. They smashed my face and beat my body with wooden sticks. They grabbed my hair and hit my face with their sandals. It went on the whole day. When I could not stand up or sit, they carried my body and threw me into a water tank in the room. They put my face down in the water and held it there several times. I could not remember how many times they did that. I got dizzy and almost lost consciousness. After that, they forced me to do sit-ups and stand-ups 400 times. When I could not do as they ordered, they beat my back with wooden sticks. They also inserted wires into my ears on both sides and gave me electric shocks so I lost consciousness. When I came to, I was naked and they were still with me. They gave me electric shocks again. They also burnt my genitals. They also covered my face with a plastic bag and made me almost suffocate. They forced me to kneel on the pebbles and when I could not sit any more because it was so painful, they beat me all over my body, again and again. No water or food was given for one day and one night. I was taken back to IB54 after that.

When I got back there, the soldiers gave me rice but I could not eat and I could not even move properly. I slept on the floor almost all the time. Villagers from my village and from other villages were in the same barracks as me. The MI singled out some people every day and when they came back they had been badly tortured. I spent 15 days in the IB54 base. Every day the MI took some people and tortured. All of us were interrogated and tortured. After 15 days, we were taken to MI.27 office. We all had our photographs taken

and records kept. Twelve people were sent to Loikaw Prison for allegedly having connections with armed groups. They were charged under criminal act 17(a), I think. They were U Htoo Rei (50 years old), U Do Rei (35 years old), U Baw Rei (40 years old), U Pho Rei (45 years old), U Po Rei (40 years old), Maung Klaw Rei (30 years old), Maung Shar Rei (20 years old), U Khu Rei, U Pha Rei (35 year old), U Nga Rei, Ngo Rei (54 years old) and one whose name I do not remember. The MI warned me that it would be my responsibility if something happened in the region. I was required to sign an agreement saying that I would behave myself after my release. Altogether 132 villagers were released on December 4.

When we got back, we found out that most of our belongings were destroyed or taken. I did not want to stay in the village and was afraid that I would be arrested again. I decided to leave the village. Fourteen villagers from Daw Pu, Daw Pe and my village came here together. It took twenty days to get here. When we arrived to the Pon River, the water was so strong we did not dare cross it. We did not eat food for two days during the journey. My niece could not walk well after one week as she was so tired. I arrived at the camp on January 31, 1999.

I am still not feeling well. I stayed at my friends' house in the camp. I can't walk as much as before and easily get tired. My hearing is not good, too. I get chest pains when I sleep. I think it is because of the treatment I received during the interrogation.

Interview 50: Relocation, Forced Labor, Women, Torture

Name	Mei Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with two children
Address:	Daw Soe Sa village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on January 31, 1998 together with over 400 refugees from all over the Karenni region.

My village was ordered to move to Shadaw in 1996. When we moved, there were over 1,000 people living in the very small area outside Shadaw. Nothing was provided by the military. We had to build our own houses ourselves. In the beginning we ate the food we carried from our village, but when all that food was gone, we had to collect vegetables from nearby.

From 1996 to just before I left to come here at the end of 1998, people in the relocation camp were required to work for forced labor projects. Since January 1998, we have been ordered to work on the renovation of Loikaw-Pon River-Shadaw motor road. One person from each household was collected and forced to work. The men had to crush rocks and the women had to carry the rocks to the road renovation site. We had to go for

four days at a time and work there once a fortnight. Nobody dared refuse to go, because the military said we would be harshly punished if we failed to work as necessary.

There was also forced labor at the LIB 428 base for us in 1998. One person from each household had to go and work at the military camp for a day. That happened twice a month. If there was no male who could go and work as required, children over 12 years old had to go in substitution. Even a widow had to go if her household was assigned. She had to leave her young children left behind. People had to do all the odd jobs at the military base, such as repairing fences, digging trenches and collecting water and firewood. I personally have worked there. Though I was not beaten up by the soldiers, I have seen many beatings of the villagers by the soldiers. Say Rei, a 28-year-old Karenni villager, was beaten by the soldiers when he could not work well. It was in March 1998. He was kicked with military boots on his back and he fell down on the ground. The soldiers kicked him again on his legs when he lay on the ground. He could not stand up again right away because of the pain in his legs. Those who were sick and weak also had to do this manual work. Beating was very common.

In 1999 January just before I came here, we were forced to work on the construction of new military base of LIB 311 in Shadaw. We had to bring our own food and tools to work there for three days. On the day we had to go, the village headman could not collect the number of people as it was required. The soldiers came and found out that we still needed more people. The soldiers forced the village headman to sit under the scorching sun for two hours. They ordered him to collect the number of people they later required. They also told us that we would all face the same fate as our village headman if we failed to provide labor in the future. When we went there to work, we were ordered to dig trenches, build fences and sharpen the bamboo to plant them around the fence.

I was used as a porter in December 1997. It was for a column from LIB 511. Three wards in the relocation camps had to provide three people to porter for them. I was on of the three people. We had to carry things that were very heavy. It took three days for us to walk between Shadaw and Tatamaw. I was beaten while I was working as a porter. The soldiers asked the short way to Tatamaw. I actually did not know one, so I said I did not know. The soldiers shouted "You Kayah did not know anything and you're idiots" and beat me with rifle butts on my head. An officer also came and hit into my face again and again. Only one meal was provided a day and only when there was food left after the soldiers had their dinner.

I was detained a while in July 1998. I came back from another house in my village for a traditional ceremony that could only be held at night. I met soldiers from LIB 428 on my way back who were patrolling the camp. The soldiers accused me, saying I was coming from a meeting with the KNPP, and beat me all over my body. They took me to the detention cells in the camp and put me in the stocks. The next day, other village headmen came and guaranteed my innocence and the soldiers released me.

I did not want to stay under these circumstances and decided to leave for Thailand. When we first left we were about 50 people, but we met more from Daw Le Khu, Daw Naw Bu and Daw Ei Thaw on the way. It took ten days to get here. Mostly children could not walk and were sick. One woman from Ta Say Bu village gave birth on the way. She was a 38-year-old Karenni woman. Other women helped her. No medicine was available. She received medical assistance only after she got here. Some are still under medication from

their illnesses. Currently I am staying with my family at the nursery school provided by the camp authorities. I will build my own house soon, I hope.

Interview 51: Relocation, Arrest, Torture

Name	Saw Lee Mon
Sex:	Male
Age:	28
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Baptist
Marital status	Single
Address:	Daw Ta Hill village, Disakha village track, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I left my village on January 3, 1999 and arrived here in January 16. Our village has never been ordered to relocate. However, we had been ordered to do many types of forced labor and act as unpaid porters. This has increased recently and that's why I decided to come here.

I was taken as a porter in October 1998 by the SPDC Column 7 from Phe Khone township. The troops came to my village and stationed an outpost there. The troops later called the village headman and demanded six villagers to act as guides for the mobile column in the region. If he failed to provide all the people, he would have to go himself as well. He was not able to collect the six people as required, so he was put in the stocks. His name is El Le Khee, 40 years old Baptist Karenni. He was detained for 24 hours and troops demanded 1,500 *kyat* and 15 *viss* of meat as ransom. The village was not able to give the money required. The next day, the troops entered the village and arrested people at random. I was rounded up while I was hiding in my house. Altogether six people were rounded but five managed to escape on the first day. I worked with the administration section of the column so I could not escape. There were eight people from Kuu Na village, seven from Wah Khike village and four from Paya Phyu village. Some were rounded up from their fields and conscripted as porters too. The fields were then burnt. All of us had to carry shells, ammunition, food, rice and office materials. I later carried four motor shells. It took me two days to carry things and go along with the troops. The soldiers beat all of us frequently. I was also beaten when I was exhausted. First the soldiers kicked me on my back with their military boots and hit me with bamboo sticks. Four soldiers kicked near the waist when I fell down on the ground. Blood later came out from my body. I was so thirsty and could not walk any more. But I had to carry on my portering. They kept beating me until I stood up and carried the things. Two other porters were also beaten. We were given two meals a day. One was given at 4 a.m. and second was at 1 p.m.

Forced labor in the military outpost was very common. There was a military training school at the outpost in my village. It has resulted the people to work more forced labor. My

last forced labor at the outpost of Column.7 was on December 15, 1998. We were ordered to make fences, water the vegetable plantations, carry stones and collect wood for the soldiers. We had to carry stones three times from a place that was five miles far from the outpost. If you had a cart you could use it. Otherwise, manual work was required. Villagers were ordered to do this kind of work twice a week. The stones were used for building a road in the military compound. It was a big compound because it was a training site for soldiers from See Sai and Phe Khone. There were always between 100 to 200 soldiers there at any one time. People had to carry water for the soldiers when they had to work in the outpost. The soldiers killed the oxen and cattle if they trespassed into the compound. They did not pay any compensation, instead they asked for 5,000 *kyat* from the owner for compensation.

I decided to come here because I did not want live like that. Three friends fled together when we were forcibly ordered to cut wood for the army in mid-December. Twenty villagers with their own ox-carts were ordered to go to a place near Daw Bi Bat village along with 30 soldiers. We had to cut wood and carry it back on a cart to their military outpost. The wood would be sold by the soldiers for their own benefit. While we were on the way back to our village, we decided to flee to the border.

It took us fifteen days to get here. We did not bring anything with us as we had not planned to run away. We begged for food from other villagers we found on the way. They helped to show us the way to get here. I am still not feeling well. I had diarrhea during the journey and am still taking medication at the clinic here.

Interview 52: Forced Labor, Relocation, Women

Name	Bu Mei
Sex:	Female
Age:	20
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Baptist
Marital status	Single
Address:	Dari Dah village, Shadaw township, Karenni State, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on January 11, 1999. My village was moved to Nwa La Boe village in 1996 as ordered by the SPDC. They threatened that they would consider anyone found after the deadline as an enemy and would kill them. Some families moved to Shadaw. Nwa La Boe is smaller than Shadaw and about 50 households from the village moved there.

During the first month after we arrived Nwa La Boe, the military gave us four tins of rice for one week, but only once. They did not give anything after that. We were provided with a small piece of land. There were about 1,000 people that moved from other villages such as Daw Sa See, Daw Le Da, Daw Hee Suu, Daw Khu Le, Daw La Le, Daw Klaw All, Daw Klo Ko, Daw Ka Raw Le, Dari Dah, Daw Muu See, Daw Mu Le and Daw Tanaw. The military did not allow the new people to return to their homes or work outside the new relocation site.

Not only were we put in this designated area, but we were also ordered to do a lot of unpaid work after moving there. In 1998, we had to perform many different kinds of forced labors during the year. Since mid-1998 villagers were ordered to work on the motor road renovation and extension project in Taunggyi and Loikaw. People were ordered to plant trees along the road, to dig the ground for road foundations, to carry stones for road construction and to level the road. One person from each household was collected and ordered to work full time at the work site. There were about 100 laborers from the relocation site at each time. People got up early and went to the work site that was one and half hours walk from the relocation site. Work started at 9 a.m. and finished at 4 p.m. We had to carry our own food and we got no pay. If someone failed to go, he had to pay 100-150 *kyat* per day as a fine. If you did not have money to pay the fine, you had to go even if you were sick. I saw some children aged 12 years old working there as their parents were ill or out on other forced labor projects. It was exhausting to carry stones to the work site. Soldiers from LIB 250 guarded us while we worked. I was personally beaten with sticks when I took a rest in the afternoon. I could no longer work as I was so exhausted and had to rest. The soldiers found out and beat me with sticks. It was very violent and painful. The soldiers watched people carrying stones. They forced everyone to carry heavy loads. If they could not carry theirs, the soldiers beat their backs with sticks mercilessly.

In September 1998, three women went out from the camp to gather vegetables for their families. They thought there would be no danger for them as they were married with children. They were Daw Sar See, 45 years old, Thee Mei and one whose name I do not know. All three were from my village and all Karenni. Thee Mei had her two-year-old child with her. They met the soldiers from LIB250. All three women were raped by five soldiers in the forest. After raping them, the soldiers threatened the women saying they were not to report this case to anybody or else they would kill the women. Thee Mei was my cousin and she told her parents and they told me.

I didn't want to be ordered to carry on working without pay any more. We did not have time to work for ourselves and our families. We were always busy carrying out forced labor as ordered by the military. So I decided to come here. Fifteen people left together on January 10, 1999. My mother is still in the village because she is too old to walk. I did not want to leave my mother but she said, "You are young and you go first. Otherwise you will die of starvation." I just brought rice for the journey. My brother-in-law had been to the border for cattle trading. We spent six nights travelling. When we got to the Salween River, the number of people trying to leave had reached more than 300. Many people got malaria, diarrhea and were exhausted. Some old people had to be carried by their relatives. There was no medicine for them. We did not have enough rice for six days and did not eat for one day. Some people are still under medication.

I am staying at my relative's house in Camp 2. I worry about my mother who was left behind. I feel safer here than back in my village. I don't know what to do next and I don't know where to go.

Interview53: Relocation, Livelihood, Forced Labor, Torture

Name	Nar Tha
Sex:	Male

Age:	over 50
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Security guard at the hospital
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Married with six children
Address:	Dari Dah village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Only one week was given for my village to relocate either to Shadaw or Pa Long or Nwa La Boe in 1996. The letter making the order was sent to the village headman saying that we had to move out of the village without fail. Anyone would be shot dead without questions after the deadline, the letter said.

Only two or three households, including my family, moved to Shadaw, while others moved to Nwa La Boe and Daw Ta Maw village. Our church leader moved to Daw Ta Maw with his followers. In the Shadaw site, there were three main quarters, the south, the north and the middle. My village Dri Dah was the biggest in the northern quarter. We had a hospital, a primary school and a church.

When we got to Shadaw, a small piece of land was given to each family. It was very crowded with villagers from different villages. First we had to clear the bushes and trees on the land we were given. The land was 20 ft x 30 ft wide and had no trees for shade. Many got sick and had diarrhea, some even died from disease. In the first year, about 100 died at the new place. I worked at the clinic so I saw the lists of dead persons there. Many other people died but was not reported to the clinic. The actual number of deaths would be much higher than the lists in the clinic. I estimate 200-300 people died in one year out of 4,000 people in the site. A lack of sufficient medicine was the other reason for the deaths. No medicine was available in the clinic. Only people who had money could get good treatment from another clinic. The number of such people was very small as most were too poor to meet their daily needs.

People on the site were not allowed to go out or go back to their villages. Since they were hungry, some villagers tried to return and bring back the food they had left behind. Some got rounded up and imprisoned later. Some were shot and some disappeared. I heard some were killed but I did not see any bodies. First the camp was guarded by IB 54 and then by LIB 261 and 250 in rotation. There was an SPDC outpost at Mya Zaydi hill and it was always patrolled.

I worked as a guide or porter with a mobile military column in the region for more than 20 times in 1998. I mostly worked as a guide for them as I was older and the troops knew me well. The other villagers were conscripted as porters and worked as porters. Soldiers always threatened the porters to work well or get a beating. People were afraid to be beaten so they obeyed the orders as far as they could. The things they had to carry were very heavy. The duration for working as porters was not the same. Sometimes it took five days or ten days, but sometimes it took 15 days. I saw many were beaten for being unable to carry their loads. There was not enough food and only a handful of rice was provided for each meal.

The last time the military column demanded me to work as a guide was last October, 1998. The troops were from LIB 108 under the command of Division 55 based in Yut Sauk, Shan State. The officer sent a letter to my village headman with my name in it. The letter also demanded the number of porters they required. I had worked as a guide for many times in 1998 and I did not want to carry on working like that. Even though the troops and columns changed, they kept ordering me to work as a guide for their columns. I did not know why it happened only to me. This time, I did not work for them because my family was starving, they did not have enough rice to eat. My wife boiled the rice and fed the children with bamboo roots. I decided to hide. One soldier came and searched for me at my house. He did not find me and reported back to his superiors, Major Soe Htun and Major Moe Kyaw from LIB 108. Later Major Soe Htun came himself and asked my family about me. When my family said they did not know where I was, he left one bullet at my house. We did not know what was the meaning of leaving a bullet. It might have any meaning but it would not be a polite message. When I came back my family cried in fear. We decided to run away from the site. That was October 15, 1998. The whole family left for Loikaw and stayed there one week looking for a way to escape. After being unable to find the way, we decided to leave for the border via Shadaw. It was November 28. We met other people on the way and heard that some people had left earlier. We walked fast to catch up with the people who had left earlier. When we got to the Salween River, we saw many people from different areas such as Demawsoe and Daw Tama Gyi waiting for cross the river.

We brought rice with us but nothing else. Fortunately there was enough rice for five days' traveling. It would not be enough if we took more than five days. My wife could not walk fast as she had a pain in her knees. I saw one young woman give birth to a baby during the journey in the jungle. She was only 18-19 years old. She suffered from excessive bleeding after delivery. No medicine was available to cure her. She was left in the village on the way because she could not continue the journey. I hope she will be well soon. Some children were crying during the night-time as they were sick. We all were afraid the SPDC troops would hear and find us.

It took five days for us to get here. We arrived here on December 2, 1998. I feel safe here as I don't have to worry about my life. But I still want to go back to my village when the situation is peaceful.

Interview 54: Forced Labor, Relocation, Child, Livelihood

Name	A Lay Shwe
Sex:	Male
Age:	45
Ethnicity:	Geebar, Karenni
Occupation:	Government servant at communication office
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Married with six children
Address:	Shadaw town, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on January 30, 1999 from Shadaw. Even though I was a government servant, I could not escape from being conscripted as a porter. I did not want to suffer these abuses under the military so I decided to leave my town.

Just before I left my town on January 18, I was ordered to perform forced labor. Conscription for portering is still taking place in my town.

The last time I was taken as porter was two years ago. The soldiers entered our houses and rounded up all the men they found. I showed my government servant identity card, but no luck. They told me to talk to the officer later and took me to the base. They did not let me see the officer then and forced me to work as a porter.

Since 1988 and until now, people in the town have been ordered to go and contribute free labor for the military. One or two times a week, people from different wards in the town were ordered to cut wood and timber for military bases in the town. Each household had to provide one person for this work. The place people had to go and cut the trees was about one mile far from the town. We had to cut and carry bamboo or timber back to the military base in the town. On January 16, 1998, each ward was ordered to cut four pieces of timber 10 inches wide and 21 feet long within one week. I was among the people assigned to do this. The soldiers said the timber would be used for building a bridge for the newly transferred LIB 531. This unit moved to Shadaw around December 22-24, 1998. Troops were moved in and out frequently. The last unit before LIB 531 was LIB 247. I did not know where the bridge would be built. If a ward had a small number of houses, it was more difficult for them to do the work. We also had to carry ropes or bamboos. At least fourteen people were required to carry this timber and it was very hard work. After working two days, I could no longer carry on such hard work. So I returned home, gathered up my family, then ran away. Altogether thirteen people, including my family and other friends, came together.

Forced labor for military bases is not new for local people. Whatever the number of the unit, local people were ordered to do unpaid work for them. Once or twice a week, we had to go and work at their bases. On January 8, 1999, each household was asked to provide three lengths of timber that was six inches thick and six feet long for LIB 531. We were ordered to send them within a day, so I went to the forest early in the morning and brought them before the late evening. These timbers were later used for building fences and overheads. The soldiers always yelled at us and shouted rude words. Sometimes they said, "You Kayah are so bad and dumb. Because of that we have come here to teach you a lesson."

Other kinds of forced labor were also practiced. In November 1998, people from Shadaw relocation site were ordered to provide forced labor on the motor road between the Pon River and Shadaw. There was a road but it was destroyed during the rainy season. People were ordered to renovate the road. Each house had to provide one person for that. The soldiers marked the place for each ward to work on the renovation site. People had to clean the roadside that was three miles long and ten feet wide on each side. Our village had 21 households so 21 persons went and worked there. If there was no man available to come, women or children over 12 years old must come instead. People had to finish their quota of work or continue working until the work was completed. If some households failed to send their quota of persons they would be fined 50-100 *kyat* a day or put in detention. No one wanted to be fined and arrested so they came and worked even if they were sick. I saw some

people's health get worse after they had been forced to work and were sent to hospital when they got back to their homes.

I spent two nights sleeping outside of my village after I ran away from the military. I went back and took my family. My family sold the house and bought rice for the journey. We did not eat rice or food for two days. We begged for food from other villagers. I met other people at the Salween River but no SPDC troops. Many children got diarrhea and were exhausted. Some people needed to be carried by others. It took us 12 days to get here.

My infant son got diarrhea after we got here. He was sent to hospital for treatment. I don't know what to feel right now. I don't have a house for my family. I am still afraid of the SPDC and fear that they might follow us and attack us. I dare not go back now, but I will go back when I can go without fear of the SPDC.

Interview 55: Forced Labor, Relocation, Child

Name	Saw Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	70
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Widower with two children
Address:	Daw Su Sell village, Daw Klo Lei Du track, Shadaw, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Our village was close to Shadaw and SPDC troops frequently came before it was relocated there in 1996. Whenever the troops came, the soldiers killed the cattles, took our paddy and sometimes burnt the rice barns and farm huts. I moved to Shadaw as ordered and temporarily came back to the village after three months, to find the entire village burnt down. I did not see anyone dead in the village.

I came here in the middle of January 1999 from Shadaw camp because there was no way for us to survive any more. There was no food left to eat and we were like animals in the cage. We were not allowed to go out of the camp and earn our own living.

I personally have been made to work on forced labor several times. After the rainy season one person from each household was ordered to work without pay on the motor road construction between the Pon River and Shadaw. There were around 30-50 persons on one any one day. We had to go and work there three times a month for three months. We prepared our own food and used own tools when we went there in the morning. We walked on foot to the work site in the morning and walked back in the evening. Work started at 9 a.m. and finished at 4 p.m.

Last December 1998, one person from each household was collected and ordered to cut timber for the military. I do not know the unit number of the military but they were from a Shadaw-based battalion. Each household was ordered to collect six logs within a day. Each log must be six inches wide and six feet long. Even a widow was not spared from

providing forced labor. She was ordered to cut and carry four logs instead of six logs like other households. The place where the logs were available was a long way from Shadaw so we all had to walk far and cut the logs and then carry them back to town. The soldiers threatened us that if we were could not finish within a day four extra logs would be added into our quota. So we all tried to finish our quota within a day. I was beaten while I was taking a rest. It was very exhausting work under the hot sun so I took a rest. The soldiers came behind me and beat me with canes. I was so sweaty that I was really in pain. The soldiers asked for money from the households unable to provide their quota or if someone was very sick. They asked for 150 *kyat* for one person failing to provide labor.

I came with my family from the relocation site as I did not want to work any more on forced and unpaid labor. We were subject to forced labor for different kinds of work and for different military battalions. We did not have time to earn money for ourselves. We were like robots working as ordered by the controller. I would rather die if I had to stay in that situation any more.

It took me two weeks to get here. I met other people during the journey. I did not expect to see people fleeing like me so I was shocked. We did not see any SPDC troops when traveling as we avoided the regular paths. We came through the jungle, so it was very exhausting. My youngest son was sick and he is still in hospital. The medic said he has a high fever now. I don't know what I should do next. I will build a new house and stay here until the situation improves. It would be good if there are no SPDC troop in my region.

Interview 56: Relocation, Refugee, Arrest, Torture

Name	Nga Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	36
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Divorced
Address:	Daw Pu village, Daw Pu track, Demawsoe township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on January 30, 1999. It took me twenty days to get here. I came with friends from my village. I was arrested and tortured by the SPDC in November 1998 and I did not dare stay in my village.

I was arrested twice in 1998 and accused of being a KNPP supporter. The first time was in April 1998 by the Naga (KNPP splinter group). I was on my way back from Ngwe Taung to my village. I went to see my son who lived with my divorced wife. While I was sitting on the bus, Captain Thein Aung, Captain Kyaw Htay, Private Ba Liok and Private Chaw Lwin from Naga rounded me up and took me to Demawsoe police station in a horse-cart. It took half an hour to get to the police station. The police informed the MI and took me to a separate building in the compound. Four or five MIs interrogated me about my

contacts and my activities with the KNPP. I was not a KNPP supporter so I did not know how to answer their questions. At first they did not use force or torture me, but later they became violent. They tied my hands behind my back and made me stand up. They hit my shin-bones and thighs with sticks, hard. Then they made me lie down and rolled wooden rollers on my shins. The interrogation went on the whole night without rest. No food or water was given to me. They tied four car tires together and put me inside the tires while my hands were still tied behind, and then rolled the tires on the ground. They covered my face with a plastic bag and poured water until I was suffocated. They forced me to lie down on the wooden bed with nails on it. The nails were so sharp that blood came out from my back. This went on for three days. I was given a little water during those three days, but no food. They detained me for 18 days. After those days, the police took my photo and made me sign a statement. They also took down all my records and background history and finally I was released.

The second time was on November 11, 1998. All the villagers from my village, Daw Phu, were rounded up by the troops from LIB 530. There were about 30 soldiers that time. All the villagers were put in the primary school in the village. The soldiers selected 27 male villagers and set them apart. Women, children and elders were kept in the primary school for one week. All 27 men were put onto the truck at night and taken to Daw Law Ku village. Many more villagers were collected on the way and then taken to LIB 54 in Loikaw. We were detained in barracks as soon as we got there. Nothing was provided for us and the soldiers patrolled outside. We did not dare speak to each other. A meal was given only at 2 p.m. the next day, but it was not enough. At night, three young boys, aged 14-15, were taken out to MI 27 office. When they were brought back, they had bruises and swellings all over their bodies. They later told us that they were accused of supporting the KNPP. Later another two were taken. They were Suu Rei, 19 years old, and Say Rei, 20 years old. This interrogation was applied to all persons under detention. Not a single one escaped. The MI later took eight persons in one group and interrogated them. During the daytime, people in the barracks were tied up with ropes. At night the MI took the people and interrogated them throughout the night. They sent the people back to the barracks the next morning. Some people were transferred to the police lock-up or the MI office after the interrogation. Some were repeatedly tortured and asked questions. Some were tortured three times. I was interrogated only once. The MI, three persons in a group, asked about my connections with the KNPP and tried to force me to confess. Actually, I did not have any information and I said I was an ordinary civilian. They beat me with canes, sticks, wooden rods and kicked me with their boots. Some punched me with their bare fists on my face. Blood came out from my mouth and nose. This beating went on for the whole night. They did not get satisfactory answers from me because I did not know anything about their questions. After that I was taken back to the barracks.

We spent one month and four days in the barracks. Two meals per day, each with small amounts of rice, were given per day. Water was given as well. Every day, once in the morning and once in the evening, we were taken out to go to the toilet and the soldiers let us go in to the bushes. We were allowed to take a bath only after twenty days. Some became ill. Many could not move well due to the torture they received during the interrogation. Say Rei lost three teeth during the interrogation and everybody had cuts in their mouths.

Later, the MI took photos and recorded all the details about everybody. All 149

people were released except 12. The twelve were sent to Loikaw Prison accused of having contacts with the KNPP group.

When I arrived back in our village, I found out most of the cattle had been stolen by the troops. I did not want to live in fear of more arrests and torture, so I decided to leave my village with five friends. It took me twenty days to get here. The food we brought was not enough. Therefore we begged for food from other villagers. I have never been here before, but those people we found on the journey knew the way. I followed them.

I still have pains in my knees and waist. I think it is because of the torture I received during my arrest. Here it will be better because I can receive medical treatment at the clinic. I don't want to go back now. If I go back, I will be arrested and tortured again for sure.

Interview 57: Relocation, Forced Labor, Refugee

Name	Ooh Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	47
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Married with five children
Address:	Daw Ei Thaw village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on February 1, 1999. I left Shadaw camp because there was no way for us to survive any more. It was very hard to survive due to the strict control exercised by the military in the area.

My village was ordered to relocate to Shadaw in 1996 and later was burnt down. There were ten houses in my village and we all moved to Shadaw. We had to leave all our belongings and land behind when we moved to Shadaw. There were a lot of people who were ordered to move to Shadaw like us. The health situation was so bad. People, mostly children, were sick and died of diarrhea. When you went to the clinic they gave you one tablet or gave you an injection. The medical staff shared one needle with many people.

Living in the relocation site was like being in a labor camp. We were taken as forced laborers any time the military wanted us for many different jobs. Nobody was allowed to go out and work to earn money except on the site or in Shadaw town. People had to be ready for any forced labor demands by the military. I worked as a forced laborer many times since we moved to Shadaw. I will tell you only the recent works I was forced to do.

In June 1998, a group of SPDC soldiers from unknown battalions entered the Shadaw site. We did not know who they were and what they would do next, so we hid. One soldier found me while I was hiding. He pointed his gun at my head. I was so scared so I pushed his gun and ran away. The soldier did not chase after me but after other villagers. I was very lucky because he did not shoot me and he did not chase me.

In November 1998, I had to work on a motor road construction site between Shadaw

and Pon River. We were ordered to provide one person from each household with our own food and work on road construction. No pay was given for this task. Our ward had to go once every week like other wards in the site. If one family was not able to provide its quota, they had to pay a fine. The fine was 150 *kyat* a day. People were so poor and could not pay fines so they sent elders or young children to do the work as demanded. When I went there, I saw many elder people and children who were only 12 years old working on the construction site. Soldiers were guarding the site and monitoring the people's work. They always used bad words with the villagers. Sometimes, I saw them beat the villagers. Usually the soldiers used canes and bamboo sticks to beat people, but they also beat us with their bare fists. They always used bad words as though they did not know how to use polite words while dealing with human beings.

In December another villager and I were ordered to take a letter to Daw Maw Ma village that was three hours walk from Shadaw. There was a military outpost there. When we got there, we were not allowed to return. The soldiers at the outpost ordered us to cut 15 bamboo each for them and to fetch water five times. We had just walked three hours and the soldiers forced us to continue working for them. No pay, of course. It was inhumane. We were released the next day.

Now people in my village have moved out to different places. Some have moved to the Thai border and some have moved to other areas close to Shan State. One or two houses remained in Shadaw after we left.

My whole family came here together with four other households. The total number of persons was 20. It took ten days to get here. Luckily, no one got sick on the way. Now I am staying at my friend's house in Camp 2. I will build my own soon. I want to go back to my village, but not now. I will go back when the military does not mistreat the people.

Interview 58: Relocation, Forced Labor

Name	Soe Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	35
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital status	Married with three children
Address:	Taw Paw To village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on February 6, 1999 from Shadaw camp. It took me ten days to get here. My whole family and other three friends, altogether eight people left the relocation site. We were starving at the site because we were not allowed to grow food which is the only work we know to make our living. There was no food left for next year and we would definitely die of hunger if we stayed.

The troops from IB 54 sent a letter to our village headman and ordered us to move

the village to Shadaw. It was in the middle of 1996. They threatened that they would burn our fields and the village and kill the people there if we failed to move. When we arrived at Shadaw, we used leaves for roofing and slept on the ground. Many got sick and there was no medical care for us. There was a clinic in the site but it had no medicine. We were not allowed to grow food and the soldiers said they would shoot if someone was found outside of the camp.

The site is a place where soldiers can come and conscript forced laborers or porters any time they wish. For regular portering, the soldiers told the village headmen to provide the number of porters they wanted. The village headman had to arrange to collect people from his village. In January 1998, ten persons from each ward (Shadaw has three wards; north, south and middle ward) were ordered to work as regular porters. The village headman came to my house and told me to go to be porter. He did not know how long it would take, neither did I. I took some food with me and went with the troops who came and picked up the porters the next day. The work started at 8 a.m. that day. I had to carry eight motor shells and other ammunition. We walked to the Pon River and it took two days without taking any rest. Many of my friends were beaten by the soldiers as they were slow to walk. The soldiers beat us with bamboo at the waist. We were released when we got to the Pon River. It was the last time for me to be a porter in 1998, but many people had to work like that several times.

In October, 1998, we were again forced to work at the Shadaw-Pon River motor road. Each household had to send one person for this forced labor. It was twice a month for our village because there was a rotating system. Ten persons in one group were assigned to dig three pits of stone which was 10 x 10 ft wide and 5 ft high, and to carry the stones to the work site. We had to work the whole day, but if we could not finish our quota of pits, we had to come back the next day and work until the assignment was finished. Some families sent children around 12 years old because they did not have other adults or all were sick. This forced labor is still going on. When we worked there, there were about 12 soldiers guarding us. I did not know which battalion they were from. They did not treat us well and did not like it if we took a rest. They forced us back to work. If there were women or children in the groups, it took a longer time to finish the assigned work. So we had to come back and work again. If the ward failed to send its quota of people, the soldiers said we would be harshly punished. I don't understand what "harshly" meant, but we were afraid to receive harsh punishment. It could be anything; killing, torture, arrest.

I did not want to work on forced labor or as a porter. I did not have time to work for my family and was always occupied with unpaid labor. I left with some friends. I only brought rice and a blanket. On the last two days, I did not have any rice left. We only met people from Shadaw and one other place on the way. More than 400 people in our group after three days. Many had malaria and were in pain. Most children got diarrhea and could only walk very slowly. We did not find any village on the western bank of the Salween River. We just saw the burnt villages and fields.

I would die of hunger and excessive work during forced labor if I continued to stay at the relocation site. I think it is better here than in Shadaw. I don't know what to do yet. More people will soon come from Shadaw.

Interview 59: Relocation, Forced Labor

Name	Soe Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	40
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Widower with five children
Address:	Daw Ei Thaw village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February , 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I was from the same village as Soe Reh. We have the same name. So I don't what to repeat the same story but I will add some of my experiences.

When I was in the Shadaw relocation site in October 1998, I was assigned by my village headman to go and work as a porter. Each village was ordered to provide two porters for the troops from Division.55. Altogether ten villagers were supplied to those troops, including me. We were ordered to carry things from Shadaw to Daw Mu Ma village, north of Shadaw, where a military outpost was stationed. It took the whole day for us to carry things like mortar shells and food supplies. We spent one night there and the troops would not let us go back. The next day, we were ordered to carry things to Ko Lel village in the south. I myself carried shells and ammunition while others carried food, rice, cooking oil and condensed milk for the troops. It took two days and nights to get there. After that, we were allowed to go back. We spent one week in all acting as porters. During that time, I was not beaten but one porter was beaten with a flat knife. He said he could no longer carry on walking as he was very tired. He pleaded to let him take a rest. The soldiers did not let him rest and beat him. He was forced to go on walking. I could rest only when the soldiers wanted to rest. Only two meals per day were given, and they were insufficient. Not only was there very little rice, there was no curry except raw tamarinds. My friend once asked for more rice but he was scolded. The soldiers said, " We don't have rice for porters. Eat what you have and don't ask for more. If you ask for more rice, I will give you only my fists." When I got back home, both my shoulders were swelling with pain.

I worked as a forced laborer on the Pon River- Shadaw motor road several times in 1998. At least once a month. At first the work site was only two furlongs away from the site but it got further and further away as the site moved along the road. We had to dig up stones and build the road. Each time, one person from each house was summoned.

Forced labor for military bases was also very common and frequent. Every month, I had to go and work at least two or three times. The order was from IB 54 stationed at Pagoda Hill. The soldiers usually sent an order to the village headman and he then had to arrange to send people. They had to go in the morning and come back in the evening. If there were no men in the family, the women had to go and work as well. They did not give us food, we had to bring our own food. The soldiers scolded us when they found we were taking a rest.

Life at the Shadaw site was all unpaid and forced labor. We could not work in the fields because the troops did not allow us to go more than five miles beyond. I stayed there more than two years and did not want to stay there any more. I would die if we stayed longer there. So I decided to leave. I left with two daughters and one son. I left two sons at the mission boarding school. It was a mission run by Rev. Raymond Doh, a Padaung priest from Loikaw. There are 60 children, mostly orphans, boarding in the school. I had been to the border when I took the cattle to sell in Thailand. We left our site at night because we were afraid the military would find us. Also we did not use the regular route. We met other people when we arrived at the Salween River. Many become sick while traveling.

I don't know what I am going to do next. I am now staying at my friend's house in the camp and receiving food.

Interview 60: Relocation, Forced Labor

Name	Toe Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	26
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation"	Farmer
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Marital status	Married with three children
Address:	Daw Le Ku village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2 Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on February 6, 1999. Before I was forced to move to the Shadaw site, our village had 20 households. The military always came to my village and took whatever they wanted. They also conscripted men for porters. I have myself worked as a porter for them when I was in the village. There were some KNPP troops passing through the village. They asked for some food but never looted the villagers' property.

The whole village was moved to Shadaw. I was in the middle ward. There was a hospital, a monastery, a church and a boarding school in the camp.

I have not worked as a porter after I moved to Shadaw, but many times I have been taken for forced labor for the military. If you don't want to go for that, you have to pay money to the military. It costs 70-100 *kyat* per day for failing to perform labor at the military bases. I was not well when I was in Shadaw site, so I tried to pay as much money as I could instead of working for forced labor. I had worked three times in 1988 because I did not have money to pay the fine. Sometimes, my wife had to go for unpaid labor at the military bases. In November 1998, I went two times for forced labor on the bases. I did not receive any money for that and ate my own food. Each household was ordered to send one person for labor on the military bases in Shadaw without fail. If you did not go, the soldiers would come and ask for money first, and then they would take you by force if you could not afford to pay fine.

My whole family came together here. It took us ten days to get here. My wife had

a new baby two months ago. So she was very weak and tired from the journey. We had to take care and wait for her while traveling. Some people joined us on the way. We crossed the Salween River by raft. We found no military during our journey.

We were provided food and medical care when we arrived at the camp. I heard some of my relatives are in the refugee camps here but I cannot find them yet, but I have found some people from the Shadaw relocation site who left before us. Many people are leaving Shadaw and now only half of population remains there.

Interview 61: Relocation, Forced Labor

Name	Nay Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	35
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with two children
Address:	Daw Say village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

My village was eight miles far from Shadaw town before it was ordered to relocate. Once in the relocation site in Shadaw, people were used as forced laborers and did not have enough food to live. I heard people were leaving for the border so I left as well. I came with my wife and two children. It took several days to get here. My youngest son is only 11 months old. My wife, myself and my friends carried him in turns. He got ill with diarrhea on the way and we did not have any medicine for him. I ran as quickly as I could to get medication at the camp. I was very depressed and disappointed because my son was sick during the journey. I wondered when all these miseries would end for us. I felt better after getting here. My son is still receiving medication. My wife is also not feeling well. She also goes to the clinic.

The last time I was taken to be a porter was in early December. People had to go to be a porter or pay a fine if they did not go. The SPDC troops sent a messenger and asked for porters. The number of porters needed was not always the same. Sometimes they asked for ten and sometimes they asked for 15 persons at one time. The village headman was responsible for arranging and collecting the required number of porters. If he was not able to collect the number, the military said they would come and take the people away. We all understood that it would be worse if they came. So we always tried to provide the number required. Nobody dare not go. In December I was among the ten villagers who were forced to carry food for the military. We were ordered to carry food from Shadaw to the Pon River and then come back to Shadaw. I did not know the number of the battalion but the troops were from Shadaw. There were 40 soldiers in the columns led by captain. There was no mistreatment but the work was very tiresome. We left early in the morning and walked the whole day and night. We were very lucky because we worked for only two days. Others

spent one week or more at their tasks..

I have also performed forced labor throughout 1998. I worked on the motor road construction project between the Pagoda Hill, where the military are stationed, and Loikaw. Each household from the relocation site was ordered to provide one person each for this motor road construction. The troops threatened that those who failed to come for work would be imprisoned. So we worked without fail. We were ordered to repair the road, clear the grass and lay down the stones. All three wards from Shadaw site had to send the people so there were many people working there. Each ward was assigned to work at the designated site. Each work site was about two miles wide. The military were guarding people while they were working. The soldiers said we could not go back home unless we finished our assignment. We had to work very hard to finish.

I feel better since I got here. My kids can receive medical care here and I do not have to worry about forced labor and portering. But I want to go back if there is no military near my village.

Interview 62: Relocation, Forced Labor, Livelihood, Refugee

Name	Say Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	25
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Animist
Marital status	Married with two children
Address:	O Klela village, Shadaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	February, 1999
Place of interview:	Karenni camp 2, Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I arrived here on January 16, 1999. I spent six days getting here. In 1996, our village was ordered to relocate to Shadaw. We did not want to move because it was far away and difficult to earn a living there. All eighteen households in the village first moved to the place near the Dee Le stream. We brought rice from our barns in the village and hid it in the jungle. We could survive with that rice for a year. But when all the rice we hid was finished, it was very difficult for us to find food. We ate bamboo roots instead of rice for a long time. Some people moved to the Karenni-Shan area. Only five households were left at the site near the Dee Le Stream. We built small huts in the jungle and lived there. When we heard the news of a military presence, we went hiding in the deep jungle out of fear. I could not live in peace and was always afraid. The SPDC troops would kill us if they found we had not moved to Shadaw as they ordered and were hiding in the jungle. When they found our huts while we were hiding, they destroyed them and took everything in the huts. That happened three or four times in 1997.

We cultivated rice on the land for our survival. We did not dare plant a big area in one place because we were afraid the military would find the farm and destroy them all. So we had small plots in different places. In October, 1998, about one hundred soldiers from

an unknown unit came to the area where we were hiding. We ran away and hid in the deep gullies for the whole day and night. I heard them coming and destroying our huts. We did not dare go and look at what they were doing. As there were some children with us, we were so scared the troops would find us. So we stayed in the gullies until they went back. When we returned to our huts, we found they all were burnt down, as well as our rice.

The nearest village to the Dee Le Stream was one day's walk from the site where we were hiding. It was in the Kadu Gyi village tract in southern Shan State. We sometimes went to that village and bought some food. For the last three years, we only survived with hill paddy and bamboo roots.

Many people became sick while hiding in the jungle. Five people out of 23 people from the five households died in the last two years. Most died of malaria and diarrhea. My son died of diarrhea last year when he was only three years old. We could do nothing because we did not have any medicine. We just watched and cried while he was dying. One boy named Mee Reh, 12 years old, died of weakness. We had to keep as fit as we could because we did not have medicine to treat illness.

There was no security while hiding in the jungle. As the area we were hiding in was between the Shan and Karenni area, there were many military activities in both areas. We always lived in fear.

We met some people while we were hunting. We asked them where they were going. They told us they were leaving for the border. We also wanted to go, so we joined them. None of us wanted to live in fear and suffer starvation.