

National League for Democracy
No (97/B), West Shwegondine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon

STATEMENT 85 (7/99) (translation)

1. Our information is that forced labour is demanded from villagers living in the vicinity where the North-West military command (Na-Ma-Kha) has initiated a project for reclamation of 2000 acres of vacant and virgin lands. The area being reclaimed is in Sagaing Division, Yin-ma-bin township, south of the Mahu ridge near Alaungdaw Ka'thapa and is known as "Too-thone-sint camp". One Captain Aye Lwin (Light Infantry Battalion No: 16) is in charge and operates from a base near Ka-myu and Paung-wa.
2. Villagers from Yin-ma-bin and Pa-le townships are forced to work five times in gangs of 200 and at their own expense. Those who are unable to do so have to pay Kyats one thousand each.
3. They are instructed to run and hide in the jungles at the sound of helicopters and to come out of hiding to continue work after the helicopters disappear and if such instructions were not followed the threat is that they would be beaten, penalised, or made to do more work. Gang leaders instructed them to deny that they were on their way to or from "forced labour" if questioned by army officers.
4. Chickens, pigs and meat for consumption of the soldiers are forcibly taken from the villages of Ka-paing, Ka-myu and Paung-wa (operations base). Young village girls are insulted by insinuations and coarse language. When drunk, the soldiers behave outrageously beating and abusing the villagers.
5. Our information is that over three thousand people from the village tracts of Ka-paing, Thee-gone, Kyat, Thamin-lat, Nyaung-gaing, Ta-wa, Let-ka-bya, Mauk-loke, Sain-ya, Wa-yone, Sin-te, Inn, Yin-baung-taing and Sin-swe, in Yin-ma-bin township are forced to work without rest, without payment, without medical care, in hazardous conditions (often bitten by snakes). Some have fallen ill and died and the survivors are suffering tremendous hardship.
6. It will be seen from the above that though the military is initiating the land reclamation project, in its implementation, some unprincipled officers and soldiers are exploiting the poor villagers showing no fellow feeling and unashamedly bringing despair and hardship (physical and mental) to the people.
7. We condemn such actions and ask that steps be taken to immediately halt such activities.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
30 June 1999.