

Displacement and causes of displacement in Kachin State

Documents

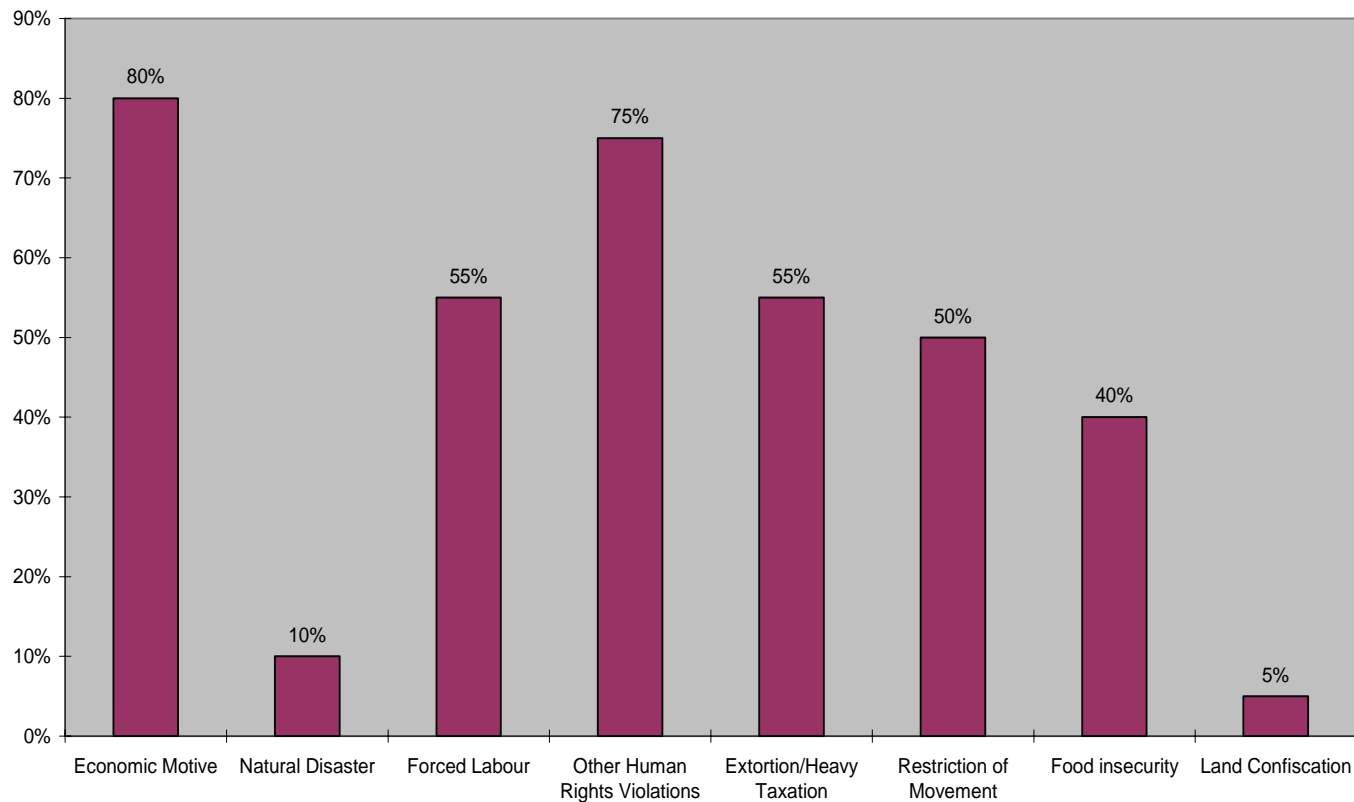
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Survey results (20 respondents)

5) Kachin State (percentage)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

Jade mining forces villages to relocate

-- *Network Media Group*, 7 May 2007 via *Burma News International*

Jade mining has compelled villagers to relocate in the Pha Kant region, Kachin State. Companies into jade mining are digging extremely deep with sophisticated equipment.

The mining companies are: Myanmar-Tagaung Company owned by United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Htoo Trading Company owned by U Tay Za. Wai Khar and Kaung San villages have been relocated, said a local from Pha Kant region.

"Wai Khar village has been relocated. The soil has piled up and is almost overrunning the area. The soil is being dug up in Hone Pan by the Myanmar-Tagaung Company. Villagers have moved to the old mine site because they are afraid that the village will be overrun with soil. Kaung San village has also relocated.

Kaung San is now located on a hilltop. There is a road to travel to Nat Maw jade mine, Karen Chaung jade mine and the Sai Taung jade mine from Kaung San village. It is the highest place in the vicinity. U Tay Za paid a small amount of money to local people and made them relocate forcibly. The Military Strategic Commander is overseeing the relocation."

The Myanmar-Tagaung Company is a subsidiary of Hone Pan Company. The company has been working on the mine site with tractors, bulldozers, heavy vehicles and heavy machinery. There are about 1,000 machines. Because of extremely deep digging the environment has been disturbed and the surface of the earth has been badly damaged, said a Sai Taung villager.

"It is estimated that it takes about four to six months to dig an area the size of 'Mandalay hill'. In the past, there was a small pagoda in Karen Chaung. Now the pagoda is located in a ravine and it looks very small," he added.

According to the Kachin News Agency, U Tay Za, who owns Htoo Trading Company and is close to Sr. General Than Shwe junta supremo, gave one million Kyat as compensation to each family which has been relocated.

Prior to 1988, mining for jade was a very small business where pickaxes, mattock among other tools were used. The Burmese military regime allowed joint venture companies as of 1990 but these companies folded up in May 1995. Now the government has granted permission to private companies to mine for jade.

Te Za started jade mining activities in Phakant

-- *Kachin News*, 1 May, 2007

A Rangoon-based Burmese tycoon, Te Za's Htoo Trading Company has started jade mining activities in the areas where they have confiscated with the helps of Burma's junta in Phakant in October, last year.

The company's mining activities have started over one month at Kawng San and Ting Kaw Mines in Phakant in Kachin State of northern Burma, said local jade businessmen's sources.

In order to begin jade mining activities at Kawng San and Ting Kaw, the company forced to displace over thirty houses in each mine with the helps of Phakant-based the junta's Strategic Command N0.3, according to residents of Phakant.

Each displaced house in Kawng San and Ting Kaw mines got up to one million Kyat as a compensation for their lost houses and land areas, said residents of Phakant.

Last year, Te Za's Htoo Trading Company directly bought the two jade mines from Burma junta's Ministry of Mines and he is known to be close to the Burma's supreme leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe.

Te Za currently controls teak logging business in Kachin State and now, he is also headed to control jade mines in Phakant, according to local jade businessmen.

Before 1994, Burma's junta and Kachin Independence Organization/Army (KIO/A) signed ceasefire agreement, Phakant jade mining areas were controlled by KIO/A.

Valley of Darkness - gold mining and militarization in Burma's Hugawng valley

-- Kachin Development Networking Group, 9 January 2007 (extracts)

After independence in 1948, the Burma Army sent only mobile patrols to Hugawng valley. In 1970, however, the first light infantry battalion (IB 86) was stationed in Danai. Two additional battalions (IB 238 and LIB 318) were established in Danai by 1992. Troop levels increased further after the ceasefire in 1994. This expansion of military control was mirrored throughout the state. Between 1992 and 2006, Burma Army battalions stationed in Kachin state increased from 26 to 41, and artillery units increased from 3 to 7. In addition, an extensive establishment of military outposts increased the SPDC's reach into hitherto "uncontrolled" areas...

The SPDC uses the town of Danai as the centre of its administrative and military activities for Hugawng valley. Even prior to the ceasefire, SPDC troops began confiscating lands in Danai, and this has increased over the years. KDNG was able to document the forcible confiscation of over one hundred acres of lands with houses and 150.5 acres of farm lands from 1991 to 2005 by SPDC battalion officers, including Regional Operations Command authorities, (see appendix for detailed list). These cases are not comprehensive and according to local residents, confiscation is ongoing.

Several military camps and offices were built on confiscated lands as well as a police quarters, a fire brigade, a forestry office, a saw mill, a sports ground, and army administration buildings ...

Battalion officers also profited from selling confiscated buildings and houses to non-local business interests. In other words, authorities forcibly seized properties from local residents without providing compensation, and then resold those properties for a profit. According to local residents, SPDC troops claimed that the orders for eviction came from central headquarters in Rangoon:

"IB 86, 238, and LIB 318 confiscated over 100 acres of housing lands from south of Danai bridge to north of lamung village in 2003-2004 from local Kachin, Shan, and Indian residents. Some of the land was divided into 60' x 80' plots and then sold to businessmen for 350,000 kyat each."

A Kachin elder explains how the Burma Army has taken over all aspects of governance in Danai as well as suppressed the use of the Kachin language:

"The SPDC army appoints army veterans for positions in the municipal and local community administration of Danai town...No local Kachin writings can be seen on street signs, sign boards at the bridges, or on public buildings anymore. There are only names and inscriptions by the army officers written in Burmese. " ...

The military expansion also stimulated further land confiscations by military-related businesses and families. One farmer explained:

"Many relatives of SPDC army officers and retired military men are occupying lands along the lower part of the Danai River. The local people are gradually losing their cultivated farmlands. " ...

In 2003-4 there were a new series of orders aimed to further clear out local residents along the Ledo Road in Danai. Residents that could not afford to make expensive upgrades to their houses were forced to move and their houses and lands were confiscated by the Land Survey Department:

"By SPDC order, the houses and land plots of poor residents living along the ledo Road who could not afford to build their houses with iron sheet roofing and wooden floors were confiscated by the land Survey Department. The displaced moved to hillside rice fields to try to make a living. " ...

Some of the land that was confiscated was valuable farmland:

"I have grown 106 banana plants, 80 orange trees, 300 lime trees, 300 tea plants, 338 Ding Nyin trees, and other fruit trees in my garden for my children and grandchildren. I intended these trees to produce fruit for a hundred years. This garden is on both sides of the Ledo Road and has now been confiscated as army property."

Local residents had no choice in the matter and received little or no compensation for their confiscated land. Some families were given lands in other places but those were often marshlands and useless for habitation or cultivation. Landless, people have had to leave for Myitkyina, upland fields, or gold mining areas further outside of town.

Local people suffer not only the loss of land and property but also the slaughter of their animals. A military farm set up on confiscated lands outside of Danai called "New Life Post" uses prison

labour from all over Kachin State. If local farmers' animals wander on to this military farm, the prisoners are allowed to kill and eat the animals.

The animal owners receive no compensation. "Our cattle and domestic animals have been stolen and slaughtered - we do not know how long it will go on like this," said a local resident.
(pp 9, 13, 14)

The SPDC has taken advantage of the 1994 ceasefire with the KIO to expand its military presence in Hugawng valley. The valley is now under the strict control of three battalions, one artillery unit and a Regional Control Headquarters. The SPDC has changed local place names in Danai from Kachin to Burmese, and has confiscated local residents' houses and farms to expand its own infrastructure and to pave the way for relatives and associates of SPDC authorities to settle in the region. Driven from the lands of their forefathers, local people have been forced to become day laborers in gold mines, while others have moved to distant towns for subsistence.

Local residents have had to bear various social ills from the gold mining ventures. People have lost their livelihoods, access to health care and education is minimal, and traditional cultures have weakened. Drug addiction, debt, and HIV/AIDS are sweeping through gold mining areas and these problems are further spread when migrants return home. Comprehensive damage has been wreaked on the natural environment; surrounding rivers and streams are polluted with discarded mercury and petrol. Future Hugawng valley residents will undoubtedly be subjected to greater health risks along with the loss of their natural resources.

The development projects currently implemented by the SPDC are not focused on benefiting the local Kachin people but on extending the SPDC's military force and providing for its interests.
(pp 57-58)

Land confiscation and forced relocation in Kachin State

-- *Briefing, Burma: Visit to Kachin State, 25 August-1 September 2006*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, September 2006 (p 8)

Land confiscation and forced relocation is widespread in Kachin State, but documentation of such incidents is scarce. Often land confiscation is directly related to religious persecution – a deliberate attempt to restrict religious activities, without explicitly stating this objective.

On 24 December 2005, for example, in the middle of Christmas Eve celebrations, civilian Government officials accompanied by SPDC soldiers delivered a relocation order to residents of one village, in a remote part of Putao district. The villagers, from 30 families, had originally moved to this village from three other villages because it is a more fertile area and therefore better for growing crops. The villagers were ordered to move to another location eight miles away in the mountains, and were ordered to destroy the church building they had constructed. According to one source, this was a “direct attack on Christians”.

On 13 April 2005, LIB 438 occupied arable land belonging to villagers and a 40-acre fruit farm (growing oranges and mangoes) belonging to the church pastor in village Y. The military occupied all farms in the village, and built an army camp nearby.

In August 2006, the SPDC's Northern Commander has been trying to relocate some people from KIO-controlled areas to a new township at the confluence of the Mai Hka and Nmai Hka rivers, tributaries of the Irrawaddy. He wanted to create a new district, but it is an area without a proper road and without adequate communications. Captain Tin Naing of LIB 29 allegedly tried to recruit villagers to sell heroin in the restaurants in the local area. Gambling, drug addiction and prostitution have developed in an area which previously did not experience these problems. The local anti-narcotic police have been corrupted, collecting bribes from local drug dealers.

Impact of increased militarization and mining in Kachin State

-- *Human Rights Yearbook – Burma, 2005* - Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (extract, para 13. 7)

... Kachin State has seen an increase in control by the SPDC military, especially since the KIO signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994. As a consequence, the SPDC has sought to intensify its exploitation of Kachin State's vast mineral reserves including jade, gold, platinum and coal. Given the pattern of human rights abuses associated with the increased militarization of natural resource exploitation and 'development' projects, there is little doubt that villagers living around such resources face continuous harassment. At the close of 2004, EarthRights International reported on the displacement of local artisans by the increasingly industrialized mining program in Kachin State (source: *Mining, Gender and the Environment in Burma*, ERI, November 2004). The SPDC and private companies have previously worked together to forcibly evict villagers living in areas where the regime has granted mining concessions. This practice is consistent with the countrywide pattern of increased militarization of rural border areas, ostensibly for purposes of national 'development.'

Non-combatants in Kachin State were also displaced during 2005 as a consequence of clashes between conflicting factions of the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), a ceasefire group. On 21 September 2005, soldiers loyal to Zahkung Ting Ying, the recently deposed chairman of the NDA-K, captured the Kachin town of Hpimaw on the China-Burma border north of the NDA-K HQ in Pang Wah. Many Pang Wah residents fled the town anticipating fighting between the two sides. The villagers headed for the Kachin State capital of Myitkyina and to the nearby China border. (Source: "NDA-K Loyalists Take Hpimaw," *Irrawaddy*, 22 September 2005).

Kachin state: land confiscation leads to displacement

-- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (June 2005)

[...]

Rebuilding lives, families, and communities: the Kachins in upper Burma

Ratana Tosakul-Boonmathya, 28 August 2002,

"During the civil war, many rural inhabitants were forced to relocate. They were deprived of their home communities, farmlands and other property. The majority of them today are poor, illiterate, and plagued by fatigue and famine.

[...]

The cease-fire between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese military on February 24, 1994, has brought a moment of peace and political stability to Kachin State and its people, particularly to the majority in the rural countryside.

[...]

During the civil war, villagers had moved from one place to another for their survival. They have been displaced and lost their occupations, education, health and self-esteem. After the cease-fire in 1994, many returned to resettle in relocation areas near and around Myitkyina, the capital city of Kachin State, but have no security in life. In relocation areas, members are from diverse ethnic and religious groups and from different home communities. The majority are Christians and very few are Buddhists and animists. Generally, people form their own factions of kinsmen and close friends whom they have met regularly at local religious services. Different ethnic and religious factions tend not to unite or trust each other easily. Villagers are generally very poor and live from hand to mouth. They have uncertain employment. They have hardly enough food or money to live on.

[...]

To avoid confrontation with the military, many of them fled from the relocation settlements and hid themselves in the San primary forest. After the cease-fire agreement in 1994, villagers were not allowed to return to their home villages. They had to rebuild their lives, families, communities and cultures from scratch. In relocated communities, there were no roads, no schools and no public health stations.

Villagers in the vicinity have relied on the San forest for their livelihood. They have hunted wild animals and collected forest products, such as mushroom, bamboo, vegetables, medicinal herbs, rattan and fuel woods for home consumption and use and for market. They cut down trees and converted about two to three hundred acres of the forest area into farmland for shifting cultivation yearly. Since villagers have no knowledge of alternative occupations and in any case lack capital to invest in any other occupational alternatives or permanent paddy fields, they find it difficult to give up their traditional methods of shifting cultivation. As a result, the San virgin forest protection project became a local initiative for halting shifting cultivation, which was originally believed to be the prime factor contributed to deforestation in the San forest area.

[...]

To help escape this vicious cycle of poverty and pattern of exploitation [local development workers] have initiated diverse small-scale community development projects such as micro credit unions (MCUs), rice banks, and buffalo banks in their

respective areas.

[...]

The case of the micro-crediting system has initiated alternatives to borrowing from private moneylenders who charge exorbitant interest rates. The Kachin Rural Women Development Center has provided a new economic and cultural space for rural women from remote areas to rebuild their collective identities as being dignified women with capabilities to sustain their lives and families, communities, and culture. Lastly, the virgin forest protection project has demonstrated how villagers can sustain their economic livelihoods in a sustainable environment."

They Came and Destroyed Our Village Again

-- Human Rights Watch, 10 June 2005 (extracts)

"The main cause of post-ceasefire displacement in Kachin State is land rights. Although counter-insurgency motivated forced relocations have stopped, communities continue to still lose their land, due to:

- Post-ceasefire militarization, and farmland confiscated by the *Tatmadaw*. Before the ceasefire, there were four battalions in Bhamo District, southern Kachin State; by 2004, there were eleven, each of which had reportedly confiscated three hundred-four hundred acres of land.
- Up to four thousand people have been displaced by large-scale jade mining around Hpakhant in western Kachin State. Increased post-ceasefire logging and gold mining activities have also brought environmental damage to several areas, as well as charges of corruption against officials of different ceasefire groups.
- Large-scale agriculture projects have also often involved unlawful land confiscation, as has development-induced displacement, such as road, bridge, and airport construction in the state capital of Myitkyina, all of which have been carried out without regard for international standards on forced eviction.

All of these factors have been causes of continued forced displacement since the ceasefire—people are still being displaced, although the reasons have changed. In many cases, the abuses outlined above—particularly land loss, plus the prevalence of forced labor—have undermined villagers' livelihoods so severely that they have had little choice but to migrate either within Burma, or to a neighboring country. Indeed, food insecurity, loss of livelihood, and lack of access to basic services (such as education and health) are probably the most widespread and chronic causes of forced displacement in Burma."

A Conflict Of Interest: The uncertain future of Burma's forests

-- Global Witness, October 2003, (extract)

"The ceasefires have led to a vast improvement in the human security of the average person in Kachin State. This includes a very significant decrease in the loss of life and

significant decreases in the most serious human rights abuses such as forced portering, rape, and torture. In addition for the first time in three decades of war many families were able to plant crops again and come out of hiding in the jungle. There have also been small improvements in education and healthcare, freedom of movement and trade. A small number of Burmese and a handful of international NGOs have been allowed to operate in a limited way to implement health and development work. The KIO is said to have prioritised resettlement programmes for tens of thousands of displaced Kachin people but it is not certain how much resettlement has actually taken place.

However, forced labour as well as indiscriminate killing still takes place in Kachin State. There are also manifold problems with the way that the ceasefires have been implemented, that go a long way to undermining the immediate benefits derived from the cessation of fighting and may ultimately lead to the breakdown of the ceasefire agreements themselves. For instance, there are serious problems of natural resource depletion, health and land rights issues. Since the ceasefires the nature and scale of natural resource extraction has changed radically. Some of these changes may have been written into ceasefire agreements, whilst other changes have resulted from power struggles within and between ceasefire groups and the SPDC. There is also concern about the increasing number of SPDC troops based in Kachin State.

[...]

It has also been reported that the NDA(K) [*ceasefire group*] has a policy of moving villagers down from the mountains towards roads, so that they can be resettled in larger villages. Whether this is to facilitate logging, or if it is a crude method of social control is unclear. The NDA(K) has claimed that this is done to 'protect' the forest from shifting cultivation carried out by the villagers. A logger from Pian Ma told Global Witness investigators that the Chinese government is helping these displaced villagers with agriculture."

Forced relocation for mining in Kachin State

-- *Human Rights Yearbook – Burma, 2004* Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

Kachin State is rich in jade, gold, platinum and coal and there is little doubt that the current exploitation of these lucrative natural resources has resulted in the internal displacement of villagers. The SPDC has held nominal control over most of Kachin State since signing a ceasefire with the KIO in 1994. This has allowed the SPDC to capitalize on Kachin State's natural resources. In 2002, the Ministry of Mines identified 23 blocks of land within Kachin State as likely to contain gold and began taking bids for their excavation (source: *Mining, Gender and the Environment in Burma*, EarthRights International, November 2004). In 2004, a further three blocks for gem mining were identified in Phakant, Lonkhin and Nantyahseik, and concession grants were opened for bidding (source: *Blurred Vision*, ALTSEAN, 1 January–31 March 2004). Several companies, including mining companies operated by the KIO and the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), have negotiated gold concessions with the SPDC and their

private sector partner, northern Star Trading Company. EarthRights International has drawn attention to how the practices employed in gold excavation in Kachin State mirror those of the logging and mining industries in other areas of central and eastern Burma. EarthRights International found that "the rapid shift to large-scale forms of intensive mining has displaced local communities that historically used artisanal forms of mining to supplement their incomes" (source: *Mining, Gender and the Environment in Burma*, EarthRights International, November 2004).

The SPDC and private companies forcibly evict villagers and confiscate farming land in order to clear mining areas for which they have been granted concessions. Forced relocation has been reported in both Naung Hkin and Mali Zupi. Images Asia and the Pan Kachin Development Society, two Thai based NGOs, released a joint report in November 2004 which included photographic evidence of villagers in Hpakant area, an area mined for both gold and jade, being forced by armed soldiers to move a house located in a mining site (source: *At What Price? Gold Mining in Kachin State, Burma*, Images Asia and the Pan Kachin Development Society, November 2004). Such evidence suggests that forced relocation, together with other human rights abuses typical of development projects, such as forced labor, are widespread throughout Kachin State.

At What Price?

-- Images Asia and Pan Kachin Development Society, 2004

The gold mining "boom economy" often profits people from outside of the region rather than locals. Many people lose their land due to gold mining, when the Burmese government or the companies to whom they have given concessions force villagers to give up their land. Forced relocations related to gold mining have happened in many places, such as Naung Hkin[23] and in Mali Zup[24]. Education, which in Burma is already of an extremely poor standard, especially in remote ethnic areas, is often neglected as many children are tempted to earn quick money in the gold mining industry instead of going to school (Chan, 2002). (p44)

[23] People had been forced to abandon their farms in 1999/2000

[24] In this area farmers had to abandon their farms in 2000 (p52)

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Prosecutions for those who criticise Burma junta's physic nut project

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma* 5 July 2006

Jul 05, 2006 (DVB) - The Burmese authorities at Bhamo, Kachin State in northern Burma issued an edict which states that those who criticise the government's physic nut plantation projects will be arrested and prosecuted under Act (118).

Local residents are being forced to contribute human and monetary resources for the projects by the order of the district authority chairman Major Hla Thaung. They have been forced to clear wild scrublands for the projects, situated 6 miles away from the town.

Each ward is being forced to grow an acre of the plants and those who could not take part in the project are fined 3000 Kyat. Each household has to pay 800 Kyat for the purchase of seedlings along with 300-500 extra charges.

Similarly, the local authority chairman of Mauklauk Village, Meikhtila Township in central Burma, Aye Saung has been imposing fines on those who do not grow the plants, and using the money for his own benefits, according to local residents.

Oil extracted from the nuts is reportedly used as the main ingredient of a type of bio-fuel in attempts to solve acute fuel shortages in Burma while the government is selling off the majority of the vast offshore natural gas reserves to foreign countries.

The people insisted that these government projects are economically unviable and that if the junta wants to help the people and itself, it should stop its authorities from meddling in their lives which the authorities neither understand nor try to understand.

Some people claim that the projects are part of the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) efforts to 'ward off evil' so that it could hold on power forever.

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Junta Blamed for Worsening Situation in Kachin State

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 7 January 2007

KNO President Bawmwang La Raw said that "... Burma's military presence in Kachin State has increased in recent months, and land and property have been confiscated by several Burmese battalions, adding that the Kachin also face dire poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS and rising drug use..."

Army Seizes Farmland and Homes for New Base

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 20 July, 2006

Dozens of privately-owned homes and large areas of agricultural land have been confiscated to make way for a new military camp near Myitkyina, capital of Kachin State, a local social worker told *The Irrawaddy* on Thursday.

The camp, near Pa-La-Na village, some 16 km (10 miles) north of Myitkyina, will accommodate the newly-formed Light Infantry Battalion-29, the social worker said. The order for the construction of the base came last year from the northern commander Maj-Gen Ohn Myint, and in past months work had begun on clearing the area.

Local residents report that about 50 estates and some 500 acres of agricultural land had been seized by the military. No compensation was being paid for the lost property. "They said the area is owned by their military camp," said the social worker.

Pa-La-Na village was founded as a relocation site in the 1980s during the Ne Win era. It has more than 500 households, most of them Kachin and also including war veterans who served New Win.

South of Myitkyina, meanwhile, a regime-backed company is reported to have seized villagers' land in order to grow nuts and rubber. Villagers living along the road from Myitkyina to Sumpra Bum have also been told to move out to make way for highway construction.

Burmese junta to build new artillery, infantry battalions in north

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 January 2002

A military study team from the SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] Defence Services toured places in Putao Township, Kachin State on 7 January and chose sites for establishment of new artillery and light infantry battalions. The team was led by Maj-Gen Thura Shwe Mann, joint chief of staff of army, navy, and air force; Maj-Gen Kyaw Win, chief of military training, Maj-Gen Ye Myint, chief of Bureau of Special Operations-1, and Brig-Gen Maung Maung Swe, the new northern military command commander. A site near Monlashidi Village in Putao Township was chosen for new artillery and infantry battalions while a site near Lon San Village in Putao Township was selected for a new light infantry battalion.

Implantation of settlers

There are anecdotal reports of the in-migration of ethnic Burman settlers from lower Burma. Military families have occupied much of the confiscated houses and land and, in a move which parallels events in Mon State, army veterans have been appointed to administrative positions in the municipal and local community. (In Mon State, these officials are helping to build up the local USDA. This might also be happening in Kachin State).

Forced labour

The Burmese Junta Employs Civilian-Porters at a Bridge Construction

-- *Kachin News*, 5 March 2007

The Burmese junta is using the civilian-porters from last month for carrying hardware materials to a new bridge construction in Kachin State, northern Burma, said local sources.

All the civilian-porters are from Machyang Baw Township beside Mali Hka River and now they have to carry cement for Ri Dam Bridge construction at Khawng Lang Hpu, over 60 miles away from southeast of Putao Township, according to a resident of Machyang Baw.

By the order of Putao-based Military Command Commander Khai Soe, at least one person from each family of Machyang Baw, N"Pu Baw, N"Wai Baw, Htang Ga, Ah Lang Ga, Nam Hkam and Tarang Dam villages must participate in the activity, said local people.

Without any wages and rations from the authorities, the villagers have to delivery cement from Machyang Baw to Khawng Lang Hpu over 42 miles apart on foot and it takes 10 days to two weeks to make a round trip, said a resident from Machyang Baw.

Families who are absent in the activity must be fined 1,000 Kyat to the village authorities by the order of U Tin Latt, Chairman of Machyang Baw Township Administrative Office (Ma-Ya-Ka), according to residents of Machyang Baw.

The new bridge aims to connect the controlled area of pro-junta Rawang tribal armed group so-called "Rebellion Resistance Force" led by a businessman Ah Dang in Khawng Lang Hpu with Putao, local sources said.

The Rebellion Resistance Force is now implementing basic development programs in its controlled area and it was formed in early 2006, with the help of current Burmese military, Northern Commander Maj-Gen Ohn Myint, according to local sources.

The Burmese military always use local civilians in the construction of military bases as well as roads and bridges construction in Putao District of Kachin State in Northern Burma, said local sources.

Junta Orders Forced Labor in Kachin State

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 24 November, 2006

The Burmese military has ordered local residents in southern Kachin State to supply forced labor in what is so far a month-long effort to complete work on buildings and roads that are thought to support a new military base and ongoing logging projects in the area.

Residents say that the Hpakant-based tactical commander, Col Khin Maung Cho, ordered Hopin Township and its surrounding villages to supply workers for a new road leading east to Sinbo through the heavily forested Gau Gwi Pa region.

“Every morning three or four trucks, each carrying more than 50 people, carry forced laborers to the road construction site,” a liaison officer of the Hopin-based Kachin Independence Organization told *The Irrawaddy* on Friday. “Some who finished their quota are now returning and some are going.”

About 50 elephant owners are also being compelled to contribute their so called “voluntary labor,” in what has been called a “self reliance program,” without pay. Those unable or unwilling to work on the road can hire a replacement or face a fine of between 5,000 kyat (US \$4) and 20,000 kyat (\$16).

Every household has been assigned a stretch of road, with instructions to make it 20 feet long and 200 feet wide. “We have to clean the brush, cut down the trees and dig the soil,” one resident who just came back from the work site said.

The work began last year, and laborers have completed one-fifth of the estimated 40-mile-long road, which will pass through Sinbo and across the Irrawaddy River to Laiza. The Kachin Independence Organization, the largest Kachin ceasefire group, is said to be involved in the project, as well as well-known Kachin business leader Yup Zau Hkawng, owner of the Jade Land Co, Ltd.

A KIO officer denied any involvement in acquiring forced laborers for the project, saying that local Burmese military tactical commander Col Khin Maung Cho made the order and is responsible for the project.

“The KIO and the Jade Land Company are just nominal players, the officer told *The Irrawaddy* on Friday. “We haven’t started [working] yet. The current work is being carried out by the government.” He adding that he suspected Burma’s military junta

wants to expand its military presence in Kachin State and to open the way for logging in Gau Gwi Pa.

“They are very keen on this road project because they want to set up a new battalion near Bang San village, a former KIO military base. They also want logs from this area,” the officer said. “So they are in hurry to open up this road. Every household have to provide one person to work. If you have elephants, you have to send them to work.”

According to one resident of Hopin, local authorities are calling residents for meetings almost everyday, forcing those who have not contributed their quota of work to pay fines, and warning them they could be arrested if they failed to pay.

“We have no choice, they say it is order. So I already paid 10,000 kyat (\$8),” said the resident, who added that one of his neighbors, Ma Tin, complained about the forced labor and even quarreled with local authorities.

Forced labour in Kachin State

-- *Briefing – Burma: Visit to Kachin State, 25 August-1 September 2006*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, September 2006

Forced labour continues to be “widespread and regular” in Kachin State, according to several sources, particularly in areas close to SPDC military camps. Villagers in nearby areas are often required to give a “labour contribution”, particularly on Sundays, another deliberate attempt to disrupt Christian activities. Civilians are used to dig bunkers, build barracks and fences around army camps, and clean towns and villages. They face imprisonment and/or fines of up to 100 Chinese Yuan (£7) if they refuse to provide a “labour contribution”.

On 27 May, 2004 SPDC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 142 forced villagers from one village to contribute labour to build the army camp. Since 2004, troops from LIB 142 have looted five local villages and killed 33 cows. Local villagers were ordered to plant physic nut plantations without payment, and were refused permission to build a church

Forced Labor in Kachin State

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 20 April 2006

The Burmese Army has forced villagers in Sinbo, Kachin State, to renovate their military camp and to build a road leading to the state capital, Myitkyina.

According to a local businessman, residents from three villages near the town of Sinbo are being ordered by the government’s Light Infantry Battalion 141 to repair a road leading to the capital and to clean the army camp.

The Kachin businessman, who often travels to the Sinbo region, told The Irrawaddy on Thursday he saw about 80 people apparently being forced to work on the road. “They included children and elderly people, digging the soil with hoes,” he said. There were others digging up tree stumps and cleaning up undergrowth around the military camp.

The businessman said he learned the Burmese battalion ordered the villages of Yinna Pinlong, Min Thar and Man Khin to provide one person from each household to work without pay in a “voluntary program.”

“Villagers have to make shelters for themselves and work free for a week,” he added.

The battalion has been based in the area since 2004, and was reportedly ordered by northern commander Maj-Gen Ohn Myint to upgrade the road. The soldiers reportedly make their own laws and collect taxes from villagers and businesses.

Although the Burmese regime has promised that it is abolishing forced labor, the International Labour Organization reported on March 15 it is failing to take the necessary steps.

Intervention made by the ILO with the SPDC dated 22 December 2004

-- International Labour Organisation

According to the allegation, the army’s Infantry Battalion 46 was confiscating land from villagers in Putao township (Kachin State), and then forcing these villagers to continue cultivating the land on behalf of the battalion, for which they would receive only a limited proportion of the final crop. This allegation was made by 20 individuals concerned, on behalf of 102 affected persons.

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

The Junta’s Motorcycle Confiscation Campaign Starts with a Baptist Meeting

-- *Kachin News*, 6 April, 2007

The Burma’s military junta has started large-scale motorcycle confiscation campaign in the same day with a Kachin Baptist meeting began in Myitkyina, capital of Kachin State on Wednesday, northern Burma.

The authorities confiscated nearly 200 China made motorcycles on Wednesday on the Myitkyina-Sumpra Bum Road where the meeting venue is located and the motorcycles were delivered to the downtown, said eyewitnesses of Myitkyina.

After finishing the two day meeting, the Myitkyina Kachin Baptist Convention will be continuously celebrated until Sunday at Nawng Nang, Kachin Theological College (KTC), 10 miles away from north of Myitkyina, said a pastor of Myitkyina.

From Wednesday, daily motorcycle confiscations are not only taking place at regular corners but also high motorcycles traffic roads, junctions, corners and venues around Myitkyina, said local people.

The motorcycle confiscation also occur the car road between Wai Maw and Laiza which is the main road to import unlicensed motorcycles to Myitkyina, said local businessmen sources.

According to Myitkyina residents, the authorities are conducting direct confiscation system on unlicensed motorcycles and on the other hand, fine system on the motorcyclists who have not driver license or who are not handling driver licenses at that time.

A resident of Myitkyina told KNG today that the motorcyclists are significantly dropped and they can be seen rarely on the roads around Myitkyina.

Currently in the junta's motorcycle confiscation campaign involves road police, police, military police and firefighters including the junta's village and Township administrators (*Ka-Ya-Ka and Ma-Ya-Ka*), said a resident of Myitkyina.

Last year, the authorities had confiscated hundreds of unlicensed Chinese motorcycles in Myitkyina and it had transported to Naypyidaw, the junta's new capital of Burma, said residents.

In Myitkyina, the motorcycles are compulsory for local transportation of all residents and there are at least two or three motorcycles in every family, local people said.

The unlicensed China motorcycles are mainly imported from Laiza, a Kachin Independence Organization controlled area on Burma-China border in Kachin State.

The price for a brand new China made unlicensed motorcycle is between 400,000 Kyat (est. 400 USD) to 700,000 Kyat (est. 600 USD), according to local people.

Funds to be Collected [for] Summer-rice Project

-- *Kachin News*, 15 March, 2007

The owners of rubber plantations are forced to be collected funds for a summer-rice project in the outskirts of Myitkyina in Kachin State, Burma, said local villagers.

In Pa La Na village, seven miles away from north of Myitkyina Township, a written notification letter on summer-rice project has been released by the Village Administrative Office (VAO) on 19 February, 2007, according to a villager of Pa La Na.

The head of the village, U Win Naing has signed in the letter, mentioning the owners of rubber plantations have agreed to fund 2,000 Kyat per acre for the summer-rice plantation according to 3 February, 2007 meeting with the VAO, stated in the letter.

The letter also mentions that the VAO has to collect funds for the summer-rice project by the order of higher administrative offices of Burmese military government so-called State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Currently in Pa La Na village, the large-scale rubber plantations are owed by the pro-Burmese junta businessmen in Myitkyina and the local villagers are just owed very small-scale plantations, said residents of Pa La Na.

Burmese Military Detained over 300 Metric Tons of Teak Logs in Northern Burma

-- *Kachin News*, 17 February 2007

Over 300 metric tons of illegal teak logs worth around 300-thousand US Dollars are detained by Burmese junta, about two-week long operations in Northern Burma, said a local source close to the Burmese military.

The operations have been mainly taken place at Bhamo District in Kachin State and there are eleven infantry battalions including Meiktila based N0. (99) Light Infantry Division, according to a businessman from Burma-China border.

The detaining teak logs including more than 55 horses use as the illegal teak transportation in the logging fields have been delivered to Bhamo Township since last Saturday, a resident from Bhamo said.

All the teak logs and horses are captured in the areas of N'ba Pa, Hka Pra, Hkai Dan, Ura Bum, Mungding Pa, Man Win Gyi and Mile Thirty in Southeast of Bhamo near Burma-China border, said illegal teak loggers from the border.

According to illegal teak loggers from Burma-China border, they have already paid million of Kyat of bribes to concerning Burmese military high to low ranking officers in Kachin State, including Kachin State Commander Maj-Gen Ohn Myint in order to get illegal teak logging permission.

However, current illegal teak logs detaining operations have been done by the order of the Burmese junta's new administrative capital of Nay Pyi Taw, said sources close to Burmese militaries.

The illegal exports of timbers from Northern Burma through Burma-China border in Kachin State have been stopped by Chinese government since late 2005.

Extortion in Kachin State

-- *Briefing – Burma: Visit to Kachin State, 25 August-1 September 2006*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, September 2006. p8

...Bribery and extortion is widespread. On 29 July 2006, it was reported that SPDC soldiers at checkpoints near Gan Dau Yang were extorting money from villagers at gunpoint. The SPDC also demanded money from the churches in Japu, Dabak and Hkat Su villages, promising to provide land from the government for them to build church compounds. No permission from the government for the construction of church buildings has so far been given.

It was reported that local authorities often demand money from both sides involved in legal cases which have already been settled by customary law through negotiation. The SPDC demands payment in order to recognise the settlement

Burmese officials extort money from local residents in Myikyina

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 22 June 2006

The local authorities of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) at Myikyina, Kachin State in upper Burma, have been extorting money from local residents using all available means.

The worst is said to be the extortion of money from innocent people who queue for train tickets at night and the detention of those who could not pay, to at least 8 days to 3 months on suspicion of loitering, according to a local resident. Although the ticket sale starts at 6am, as it is very difficult to obtain the tickets legally from sales, people start to queue at 2.30-3.00am. Knowing the situation, officers from No.1, Police Station and railway staff are deliberately squeezing out money from people this way, a local resident told DVB.

"At our Myikyina, at night, the trains tend to arrive late. The police arrest late train passengers and those who queue for the tickets and indict them under Act 47, Act 35 and the like. As the arrests were made by the police and taken to court, they were released only when they pay money to the judge."

Other human rights violations

Four Burmese Military Rape Victims are put in Jail

-- *Kachin News*, 2 March 2007

Four Burmese military rape victims in Duk Dang village, about three miles away from south of Putao Township, are reportedly put in jail by the Burmese military, said local people.

The four victims are arrested for the reason of spreading out information into overseas Burmese media organizations such as BBC, RFA, etc, according to local sources.

Under this reason, the suspects from Duk Dang village- parents of victims, government state high school, village administrative office and village woman organization are being checked by No. 138 Infantry Battalion, according to a resident.

In order to stop spreading out Putao news into outside, the Burmese military also checks both local and foreign passengers at Putao Airport, who will depart to Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, said local residents.

The four local Rawang tribe teenagers, age 14 to 16 from Duk Dang Village- Rawang Nang, Chinlai Nin Ram, Nanghkyi Hkaw Dang and Pu Ram were gang-raped by three military officers and four soldiers at the military base in Munglang Shidi village on 3rd February, last month.

The rapist military officers are Maj. Zaw Min Thet, Capt. Win Myint Oo and Capt. Kyaw Ze Ya under No. 138 Infantry Battalion led by Lt-Col. Soe Win which is based in Munglang Shidi village, about 20 miles away from south of Putao.

The trial on military rape case was conducted by the village Administrative Committee and decided to compensate 500,000 Kyat to each victim, but only 300,000 Kyat was compensated to all the victims by the military, according to local sources.

Shortly after compensation has delivered, the Duk Dang village Administrative Office, Woman Organization and the victims have been warned not to spread out news into outside by the military.

All the victims are eighth standard students and studying at Duk Dang State High School but they all are now dismissed by the school, according to local sources.

After the Burmese junta has extended one military battalion into four battalions in Putao from 1994, there is more forced labor, rape, religious discrimination, human rights violation problems committed by the Burmese military.

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Prosecutions for those who criticise Burma junta's physic nut project

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 5 July 2006

The Burmese authorities at Bhamo, Kachin State in northern Burma issued an edict which states that those who criticise the government's physic nut plantation projects will be arrested and prosecuted under Act (118).

Local residents are being forced to contribute human and monetary resources for the projects by the order of the district authority chairman Major Hla Thaung. They have been forced to clear wild scrublands for the projects, situated 6 miles away from the town.

Each ward is being forced to grow an acre of the plants and those who could not take part in the project are fined 3000 Kyat. Each household has to pay 800 Kyat for the purchase of seedlings along with 300-500 extra charges.

Similarly, the local authority chairman of Mauklauk Village, Meikhtila Township in central Burma, Aye Saung has been imposing fines on those who do not grow the plants, and using the money for his own benefits, according to local residents.

Oil extracted from the nuts is reportedly used as the main ingredient of a type of bio-fuel in attempts to solve acute fuel shortages in Burma while the government is selling off the majority of the vast offshore natural gas reserves to foreign countries.

The people insisted that these government projects are economically unviable and that if the junta wants to help the people and itself, it should stop its authorities from meddling in their lives which the authorities neither understand nor try to understand.

Some people claim that the projects are part of the ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) efforts to 'ward off evil' so that it could hold on power forever.

Nuts: Government agriculture projects ruin lives of Burmese farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 April 2006

Burma's military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) authorities again have been forcing farmers to grow unprofitable summer paddy and physic nut/castor oil seed plants, causing untold miseries and difficulties to them.

Burmese farmers who live on the western side of Pegu Division have been ordered to grow the paddy but the authorities are not selling them enough subsidised fertilisers at the

official rate, 4,000 Kyats per 110lb bag. The local officials have been siphoning off the fertilisers and selling them on to black market traders who sell them back to the farmers at the 'outside' rate, around 20,000 Kyats per bag.

At the same time, the authorities at Magwe Division, **Kachin State** and northern Shan State have been forcing local people to grow physic nuts and extorting money from them at every turn, residents complained.

“By the order of the ma-ya-ka (township authority), each household (in the towns) must grow 300 physic nut in their compounds. Moreover, the villages must have nurseries for the seedlings/saplings of physic nut, by the order of ma-ya-ka. There they have to erect two signboards. They collect (extort) 20000 Kyat from each village, by the order of the ma-ya-ka,” a local resident told DVB. Moreover, the people also have to take the responsibility of watering the plants in turn.

Oil extracted from the nuts are reportedly used as the main ingredient of a type of bio-fuel in attempts to solve acute fuel shortages in Burma while the SPDC is selling off the majority of the vast offshore natural gas reserves to foreign countries.

The people insisted that these government projects are economically unviable and that if the junta wants to help the people and itself, it should stop its authorities from meddling in the affairs which they neither understand nor try to understand.

Discrimination

The Burmese Military Orders to Demolish a Tribal Building in Putao

-- *Kachin News*, 12 March, 2007

The Burmese military has ordered a tribal Literature and Culture Building in Putao, Kachin State, Northernmost part of Burma to demolish within a month, said local people.

The military order has followed as soon as the news about military confiscation of “Naw Literature and Culture Building”, one of Lisu tribes at Zibidi village, has been spread out into oversea Burmese media in mid-February, said a resident.

The building has been confiscated by the order of local-based current Burmese Military Strategic Command Commander, Khai Soe with Major Saw Min Thet, Head of Infantry Battalion N0.(138) and Kyaw Shwe, Chairman of Putao District Peace and Development Council, since 2004, according to local people.

When the Burmese Infantry Battalion N0. (138) has based in Zibidi village, about five miles away from south of Putao Township, since 2004, the military has confiscated lots of land including houses, Christian churches and fruit plantations of local people, said residents of Zibidi.

However, the authorities has promised for providing 200 new zinc-roof-tiles for the damaged building as a part of compensation, the villagers have not received any roof tiles yet, according to villagers.

The villagers are also strongly alleged and condemned by the authorities for spreading out information to oversea Burmese media, according to a resident.

The “Naw Literature and Culture Body” was started to form by a tribe of Lisus when they constructed Zibidi village in 1979.

A Baptist Church's Building is banned by the Authorities in Kachin State

-- *Kachin News*, 23 February, 2007

The Burmese junta's Myitkyina Municipal Office has banned on a school building for Myitkyina Township, Kachin Baptist Church in Kachin State of Northern Burma.

The women vocational school building was constructed at Kachin Zu, south of Myitkyina and it has been banned in the same month when the construction was started in January, said a pastor from Myitkyina.

According to Church sources close to the Township Municipal Office, the construction has been stopped because there is no permission from Burmese junta's Religion and Home Ministries.

On Tuesday's meeting in last week, the Municipal Office trickery invited all the religion leaders of Christian, Buddhist and Muslim, forming the Charity Union in Myitkyina, but in reality, the attendants were lectured by the municipal officials to inform and get permission from the junta when making religious movements and constructing religious buildings, said an attendant from the meeting.

On February 16, the junta's Special Police also collected lists of all the religions' leaders and teachers such as Christian, Muslim and Buddha in Myitkyina Township, said a pastor from Myitkyina.

In Kachin State, the junta has more strictly banned on both Christian and Muslim religious movements and construction when the Northern commander Maj-Gen. Ohn Myint has arrived in Kachin State since 2005.

The Burmese junta always denies that there is no any religious oppression and discrimination in Burma.

Burmese Military Confiscated a COC Church in Kachin State

-- Kachin News, 19 February, 2007

A church of Christ of Church (COC) from Putao District of Kachin State in northern Burma has been confiscated by Burmese military for the past three years, said a local source.

According to the local people, the church and its surrounding 51.89 acres was confiscated on October 26, 2004, to house the Burmese military base of Light Infantry Battalion (138) led by Lt-Col. Soe Win.

The church, constructed in 1956 at a cost of 600,000 Kyat, is located at Zibidi Village, which is over 20 miles south of Putao Township and has over one hundred local Lisu Tribe devotees in the church.

The local people said that they had already received the legal land ownership grand NO.83 for the church from the Burmese military junta in 1983. The church officially demanded compensation for their confiscated church and area from the junta's Putao District authorities and was awarded 250,000 Kyat.

In 2003, a Burmese Light Infantry Battalion (137) based in Machyang Baw Township, a small city located 14 mile away from south-east of Putao Township, forcibly confiscated the two Prayer Mountains of local Assembly of God (AG) and Rawang Baptist Convention (RBC) churches, according to local people.

The Burmese junta continues to deny the accusations made by the United States or other international actors that religious discrimination is occurring within Burma.

Violations of Religious Freedom – Discrimination and Restriction

-- *Briefing – Burma: Visit to Kachin State, 25 August-1 September 2006*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, September 2006 (pp 5-7)

According to one Kachin pastor, “there is no religious freedom” in Kachin State. On the face of it this appears an exaggeration, as churches are able to continue to worship openly and are not generally subjected to violent persecution. However, all the sources interviewed by CSW confirmed that the SPDC is pursuing a subtle strategy of ‘Burmanisation’ and ‘Buddhist-isation’, involving restrictions on church activities and construction, discrimination against Kachin Christians, and attempted forced conversion of some Kachin Christian children. “They [the SPDC] hate Kachins and Chins because

we are Christians,” one Kachin pastor told CSW. Another Kachin told CSW: “The regime wants Burman Buddhism to dominate. They want all people to be Buddhist. So they discriminate against the rights of other religions.” But, he added, “the religious persecution is not very harsh or aggressive. In Chin State it is more aggressive.” Another source, however, said that the situation was very serious but “people are too afraid to speak out. People are asleep.”

Several sources confirmed to CSW that Christians are denied promotion in Government service. There are no Christians in senior Government or military positions. According to one source, “if a Christian is very smart, they might reach the rank of Major – but no higher”. CSW interviewed a defector from the SPDC, a former Major, who confirmed this and said that the highest rank that can be attained by Christians now is Captain, and that no Christians are accepted into officer training school now. In addition, SPDC soldiers are encouraged to marry Kachin Christian women to convert them to Buddhism and “dilute” their ethnicity and religion and “assimilate” them, the defector confirmed. However, a Burman Buddhist soldier who marries a Kachin Christian woman who does not convert to Buddhism cannot be promoted. The former SPDC Major said: “Burma Army officers are really scared of Christians. They think that when the British colonized Burma, before they left they deliberately converted the ethnic nationalities to Christianity in order to maintain Western influence. The growth of Christianity in Burma, in their eyes, means the growth of Western influence. So they do not trust Christians.”

In another insidious effort to undermine Kachin Christians, the SPDC regularly holds staff meetings and training days for Government employees on Sundays. This includes teachers and doctors. For Christians, Sunday is a day of rest and worship, and so they are faced with a choice: to attend Government staff meetings and training, and miss Sunday church services, or refuse to attend the Government meetings, but risk the termination of their employment. Those who do not attend these Sunday meetings are sacked, and replaced by Buddhists.

During the visit CSW was told of reports from several villages of the destruction of Christian monuments and symbols, including crosses, and of the restrictions on the construction of new churches in Myitkyina and Bhamo, the two major centres of Kachin State. Further details of these incidents are expected to be received by CSW soon.

In October 2005, the SPDC’s Northern Commander, Brigadier-General Ohn Myint, reportedly said in a speech to subordinates that he did not want to see any crosses or other Christian symbols on roadsides in Kachin State.

Approval for church meetings and events has to be obtained from the SPDC, and such permission is frequently denied or delayed. In 2003, the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) asked the SPDC for permission to hold its Convention, which normally takes place every three years, in Muse. Permission was delayed for several months, until finally the KBC obtained approval to hold the Convention in a different location, Kutkai. Such delays indicate a deliberate attempt to disrupt and hinder church activities, while not completely preventing them.

CSW received reports on the establishment of ‘Na ta la’ schools to which Kachin children are recruited by the authorities with the promise of a good education and exemption from tuition fees. Parents without means to pay for education for their children are naturally very attracted by the offer of free schooling. However, once in the school Kachin Christian children are forced to participate in Buddhist worship, punished if they refuse and forbidden to attend church. One such school exists in Bhamo. Approximately 30 children aged between 13-16 attend this ‘Na ta la’ school. According to two Christian workers, those children who refuse to participate in the morning and evening Buddhist worship are severely beaten. Kachin girls are forced to dress as Buddhist nuns. This is a clear violation of freedom of religion, and appears to be a deliberate attempt to separate Kachin Christian children from their ethnicity, cultural heritage and religion and subtly ‘Burmanise’ them and convert them to Buddhism.

Between June and August 2006, SPDC Captain Kyaw Win forbade one church from building a function hall, to be used for wedding receptions, Christmas celebrations and other events, until they had a government permit for construction. Captain Kyaw Win ordered the villagers to establish “physic nut” plantations on all the available church land, and warned that if they refused, the SPDC would occupy all the available land including the church compound. Physic nuts are believed to produce oil which can be used as a diesel substitute. It is reported to be one of Senior General Than Shwe’s favourite projects.

In April 2006, leaders of a church in Bhamo received a letter from the municipal government ordering them to stop the construction of a new church immediately. Verbal permission had been granted for the construction of this church by former Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt when requested by the Kachin peace negotiator Rev. Saboi Jum but it appears that permission was rescinded after Khin Nyunt’s fall from office. The municipal government told the church that an order had been issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs prohibiting the construction of new churches or mosques. In contrast, the nearby Buddhist monastery built a three-storey building after the construction of the church had begun, and the monastery faced no restrictions. Similarly, a large Buddhist monastery was built in the summer of 2005 near one SPDC military post in another village. The SPDC forced local Christian villagers at gunpoint to contribute wooden planks for the construction of the monastery.

In 2002, a prayer mountain belonging to the church at Daw Hpum Yang, close to Laiza on the Myitkyina-Bhamo road, was seized by the SPDC and occupied. The cross and prayer room on the mountain-top were destroyed. It is reported that Russian-made rockets have been installed on the prayer mountain, targeting the KIO headquarters in Laiza. It is also reported that construction of the rocket installation base was first carried out by Chinese technicians, who were subsequently replaced by Russians. In the first week of October 2002, one Kachin village and two nearby Shan villages were ordered to build a landing strip for aircraft on the prayer mountain. Two sources independently confirmed that Senior General Than Shwe visited Daw Hpum Yang in December 2005, and Prime Minister General Soe Win and other SPDC ministers have visited at various

times since 2002. While this case does not necessarily show religious persecution, as the SPDC probably chose the prayer mountain primarily for its strategic location, it demonstrates a profound lack of respect for religious freedom and ethnic cultural heritage on the part of the SPDC.

The proposed “Principles of Religious Organisations” to be included in the draft Constitution prepared by the National Convention (see next section: “Political Developments”) accord Buddhism a unique, primary status. According to the “Principles of Religious Organisations”, the “existence” of other religions – Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animist – is recognised. Religious organisations are prohibited from involvement in economic, political and social work, and enjoy the right to worship and practice their religious subject to “law and order, public health and the Constitution”. The State reserves the right to take action against any religion that “misuses” their position to “monopolise” the political system and “create hatred between religious organisations and divide them”, if such behaviour is deemed a “threat”. Such loosely worded provisions create opportunities for continued and indeed increased restrictions on religious freedom.
