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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED KAREN PEOPLE (CIDKP)

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# Karen Unity Needed Like Never Before

Karen people from inside Burma, along the border and from overseas were elated by the resolutions passed and approved by the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Karen National Union. The Congress finished on 20<sup>th</sup> October with representatives vowing to uphold the Four Principles of Saw Ba U Gyi. Representatives from Karen organizations based in the US, Canada and Australia attended as did 131 delegates from KNU central headquarters and the various districts. Other morale boosting resolutions that were passed were: to work closely with other nationalities, to achieve their [Karen] political objectives of equality and self-determination for the Karen people and to work for a "genuine federal union".

The KNU damned the Burmese military regime for its crimes against the people when it brutally smashed monks and civilians of the streets. The KNU also called for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic leaders.

**"...Karen renegade factions are more interested in profiteering than helping Karen...."**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Congress resolutions cemented the KNU's position as serious political opposition to the regime. But as usual, except for a few "that's interesting" from embassy staff, the international community will largely ignore the Karen's political struggle.

It hasn't helped that in recent years, Karen renegade factions, more interested in profiteering than helping Karen, have weakened the KNU's political positions. These factions have only been to the benefit of the regime and a few greedy individuals.

If only, these self-serving bandits applied their power, battlefield manpower and energy to a disciplined response to the Burmese military, instead of directing it at unarmed Karen villagers, the result would be vastly different.

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

If you want to find out how you can help internally displaced Karen people: email [kidpc@cscoms.com](mailto:kidpc@cscoms.com), [blacktownhacket@hotmail.com](mailto:blacktownhacket@hotmail.com) or write to CIDKP, PO Box 22, Mae Sot, Tak 63110, Thailand.



## Villagers Face Manmade and Natural Disasters

*Saw Lah Soe, a CIDKP Mine Risk Educator, has just returned from Karen State and reports for Inside News on SPDC activities and natural disasters that are destroying the IDP's rice crops.*

Mostly, the internally displaced Karen people earn their livelihood by farming. Due to SPDC troop activities, the volatile weather situation, and animal and insect destruction of crops, many farms have been destroyed. This has resulted in increased difficulties for the displaced peoples.

Saw Chwel La, a villager from Htee Maw Kwe Khee in Kler Lwee Htoo district, said many paddy fields, including his, were

district were also damaged by the rats and insects. He said, "I crossed Mu Traw district on the way back from Kler Lwee Htoo and I saw many paddies on the Kwe Pley Mountain were destroyed. People who go and come across will see that. I was coming back through this area so I saw many paddy fields destroyed by rats and insects."

On the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Burma in the

Kae Pu village and he said: "After Cyclone Nargis, SPDC troops entered house by house, village by village in the Ler Doh township area asking for money. Gen. Khin Maung Oo and his soldiers entered many villages and asked for money to help cyclone victims. Every house had to give them 7000 kyats. There have been many villages that the SPDC troops asked for money like this."

Similarly, Saw Ber Htoo, a district coordinator of CIDKP from Kler Lwee Htoo district said: "In 2008 I have been to several villages in Mone Township such as Myaung Oo, Paw Pi Der, Kyauk Pya, Nga Lout Tet, Ter Paw and Myet Ye in Kler Lwee Htu district. SPDC troops LIB (599) have been

asking for money since June saying it is to help cyclone victims and they are still doing it in these areas."

As SPDC troops increase their activities inside many of the villages, villagers are faced with more difficulties such as travel restrictions, forced labor and extortion. There are three more SPDC outposts based in Kler Lwee Htoo this year. This also restricts the movement of the villagers, and makes it easier for



**A paddy farm destroyed by rats**

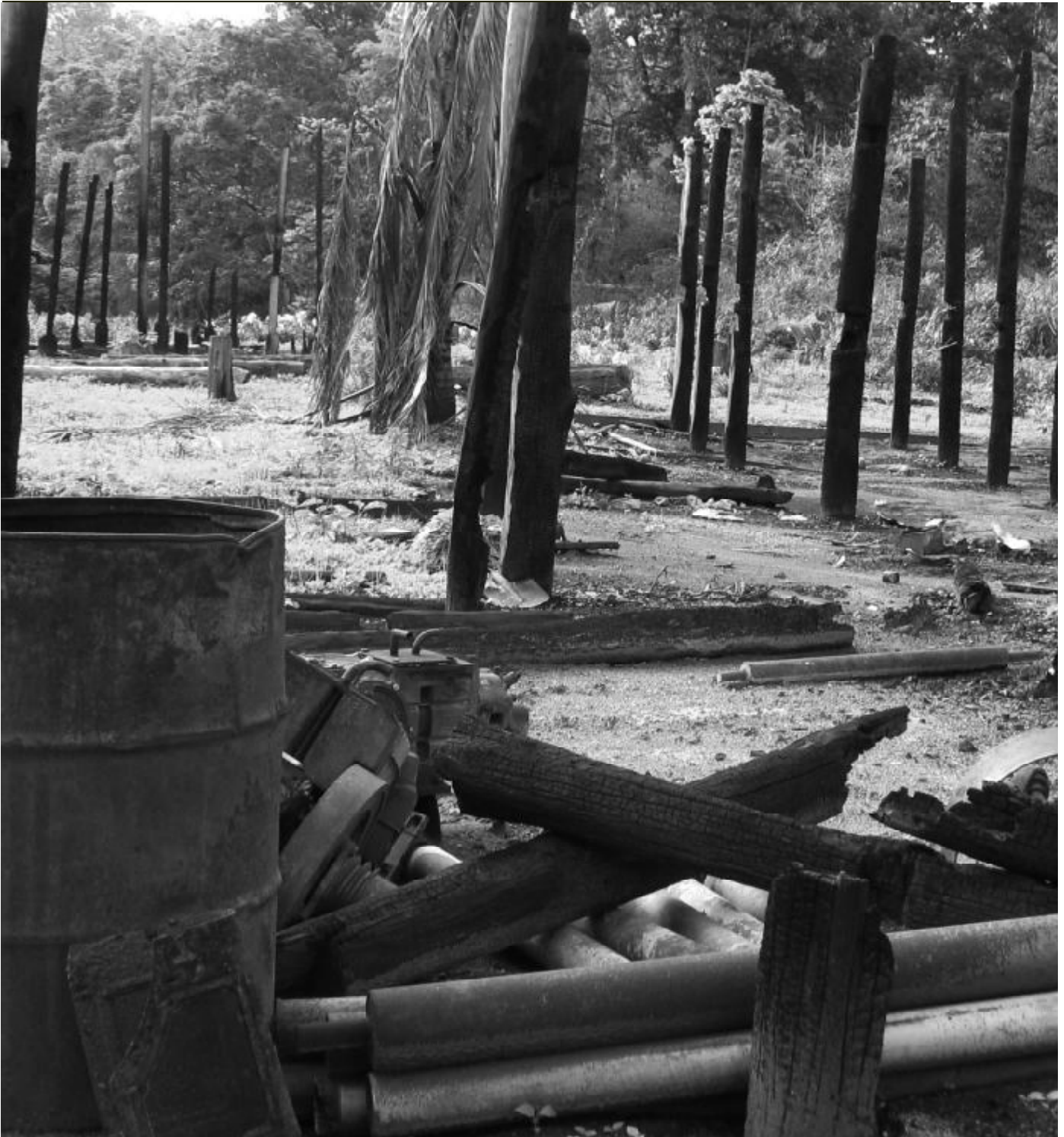
destroyed by rats. "This year my paddy was destroyed by the rats, and it was not only mine, many other paddies nearby were also destroyed."

Saw Lah Soe said that, while he was staying in Kler Lwee Htoo district, in July, 2008, he saw many paddy fields destroyed by the rats and insects. Moreover, some paddies from Mu Traw

delta region and many civilians were faced with many difficulties. Many in the media stated that other countries wanted to help the cyclone's victims, but the Burmese government would not allow them. Saw Lah Soe talked to Saw Eh Kaw (*not real name*) from Noh Gaw village in the Kler Lwee Htoo district plain area, who had come up to the mountainous area at Ta

SPDC troops to find people to do forced labor.

Saw Ber Htoo also added that many villagers had to abandon their farm to avoid SPDC troops. "This year, many villagers have left their paddy fields because they are too close to the SPDC camps. The villagers can do nothing. They worry for their survival now, and in the coming year."



# INCREASE ATTACKS IN CENTI

Despite the increase in attacks in Karen State, Burma's regime once again received welcomes from Burma's pro-democracy movement and the international community for releasing 9002 prisoners in September, when in fact only seven of them were political prisoners. Many analysts and opposition groups say that the regime has done this to ease

the pressure on them for meaningful political reform.

The regime aims to be seen to be doing good on political reform in Rangoon, but on the other hand they increase their joint operations and attacks on ethnic control areas with its proxy Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a splinter group from the Karen





## AL KAREN STATE

National Union (KNU). Many critics say that it is a tactic by the regime to pull focus on to Rangoon, while increasing their offensive in ethnic areas.

■ Since early 2008, SPDC and DKBA troop operations have been increasing in eastern central Karen State where several villages have been burned down and hundreds of villagers

have fled their home because of the fighting, or in order to avoid human rights abuses committed by the DKBA and SPDC troops. Saw Yan Shin, a CIDKP Dooplaya district field staff member told *Inside News* that the DKBA burnt down 15 houses in Noh Pway Baw Hta village, Kawkriek Township in Karen State. “On 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, DKBA troops from Battalion #999 and #907, under Commanders Maung Chit Thoo and Na Kaung Mway, burnt down 15 houses in Noh Pway Baw Hta village a few days after the occurrence of skirmishes with the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army].” Saw Yan Shin also added that there are more cases of arbitrary arrest and torture by DKBA troops. “Whenever the fighting occurs during their operations, they arrest villagers from nearby villages or arrest the village chiefs and torture them. Saw Abaw 35, a village chief in K’ Law Gaw village in Kawkriek Township, was beaten until he had blood in his shit.”

Furthermore, the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) report on August 29, reported that DKBA troops burnt down houses in Ler Bpoo village, T’ Nay Hsah township, in Pa-an District which has 50 households, forcing villagers to evacuate to make way for their planned new military camp.

The report says; “On Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008, at about 3 o’clock in the afternoon, DKBA soldiers from Special Battalion #999 based at the town of Shwe Gko Gkoh in eastern Pa’an District (along Moei River) marched down directly to Ler Bpoo village and, upon arrival, burnt the village to the ground.”

It is alleged that the regime has signed an agreement with the DKBA to clear the KNLA control areas in eastern central Karen State. As the military government is going to hold a general election in 2010, they are trying to eliminate all armed opposition groups prior to this, in order to be seen as ready and moving forward with meaningful political reform.

Meanwhile, villagers in Karen State are being forced out of their home and their belongings are destroyed. They have to flee to the jungle or to the border to avoid the attacks and other human right abuses.



photo:KHRG

## *Villagers forced to–*

Naw Haw Dweh burst into tears as she told her story. Her house was burnt down in front of her eyes with all the belongings she had inside, and she hasn't seen her husband and three of her children for almost a month now.

On 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2008, DKBA Battalion #999 Column 1 led by Commander Mu Naw Dway forced K'Law Lu villagers out of their homes and burnt down eight houses in the village, including Naw Haw Dweh's house.

Naw Haw Dweh, 48, is from K' Law Lu village in Hlaingbwe Township in Pa-an District, Karen State. She has four children. She said that she was taken from her home and forced to leave. "The soldiers took me from my house, pointed at me with their guns and burned me with firewood. They told me not to say anything and just leave."

She said that she cried as she watched her house on fire. "My tears came down as I saw my house slowly burning down. They wouldn't let me take anything out of the house. All my clothes, pots, plates, spoons, a basket of rice and 17 baskets of paddy

were burnt down together with the house."

Naw Haw Dweh added that the soldiers also took all her livestock that she had. "They took my three hatching hens, five roosters and also shot six pigs and two male goats. I could do nothing. I was afraid of them as they were holding their guns."

K'Law Lu village was ordered by the DKBA Battalion #999 Commander Pha Nwee, to relocate to Hti Per Wah village which is 45 minutes walk away. The village chief begged local Commander Mu Naw Dway from Column 1 of Battalion #999, who directed the burning down of the village, not to move the village now as it was close to harvesting season when villagers need to attend their farms. He was ignored. Instead, the soldiers planted landmines around the village and at places near or in the farms.

Naw Haw Dweh said that her goat and dog stepped on those landmines just a few days before the incident. "My female goat with two baby goats stepped on landmines near the village and we dared not go look at it. My pregnant dog, who was almost



due to give birth, stepped on a landmine just at the bottom of my farm hut's ladder. She was cut into pieces as we looked from a distance."

After the village was burnt down, she fled to the jungle with her 13 year old youngest son and since then she hasn't seen her husband and three other children. She and her youngest son hid in the jungle for two days without eating anything.

She said that on the third day a group of local KNLA found her and gave her food. "When I saw them, I

ran because they are soldiers and I thought they were the same. They ran after me and told me not to run. I stopped but I was still afraid of them. In my mind I thought they were going to kill me. Later they explained to me that they were not yellow scarf [DKBA]. Then they fed me and comforted me."

Naw Haw Dweh and her son were brought to a relatively safer place close to the Thai border. But her husband and three children are still fleeing in the jungle. They had to abandon two paddy farms that they had worked on this year which are about to harvest.

Saw Kyaw Noh, her youngest son, said that he and his mother fled with only the clothes on them. "Right now, I have only the set of clothes on me. When I wash and dry it, I have to stay naked. For my mother, the [KNLA] soldiers gave her a longyi (man sarong) and she wears that."

From early July 2008, DKBA and SPDC troops have increased their activities in Myawaddy, Hlaingbwe and Kawkriek townships in eastern central Karen state and it has caused more displacement for villagers because of the destruction of food, burning of villages, torture, forced labor and

***"...My tears  
came down as I  
saw my house  
slowly burning  
down...."***

***-flee DKBA with nothing***



## Living on the Run in the Jungle

*Saw lah Soe is a field staff of CIDKP and a Mine Risk Educator. He recently came back from inside Karen State, and reported about the IDP situation in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) district.*

Burma's long civil war has worn out civilians in the conflict areas. Countless valuable lives and properties have been destroyed since the civil war started. Karen State is one of the most devastated areas. The military regime's offensives against the Karen resistance army in Karen State have led to the displacement of thousands of Karen civilians, including those who are forced from their home and have to hide in the jungle. Many of them have lived their entire life fleeing and hiding in the jungle.

Grandma Naw Thein Yin is 80 years old and is one of them. She said that she has never been in peace. "I have never seen, or had peace in my life, even when I was a child, and I am getting old now. When I was small I fled from Japanese army attacks and now I am still fleeing from SPDC army

attacks."

Grandma also said that Grandpa was killed by Burmese soldiers when her children were small. "My husband was killed by the Burmese Army when my children were babies. Now I am getting old, I have no more energy or good health to flee, but I still have to. Being a human in this life, I've never seen peace and have never lived in a stable home."

Grandma Naw Thein Yin is from Maw Soe Koh village in Ler Doh (Kyauk Kyi) township, Kler Lwee Htoo district on the border of Eastern Pegu Division and Karen State.

IDP's don't have the opportunity or time to build big or stable houses as they would like to. It's not easy with the instability around them. In a year some villagers have to flee twice or even more. Every time they move and hide, they have

to build new shelter. Saw Lah Soe says that since the regime has increased the fighting, it has created more difficulties for the villagers.

Saw Gay Htoo, 21, said that they had to abandon their farms because of the Burmese army attacks. "When the Burmese army attacked our villagers, we had to run and we couldn't attend our farms. So, all of my parent's farms were overgrown with grass and became forest. I also had to leave my entire new farm which I cultivated myself."

Saw Gay Htoo said that he wanted to go to school but there was no school. "When I was a child, I wanted to go to school but I couldn't because most of the time my parents hid in the jungle. I have never been to school. As I get older I see many children who can read and write, so I feel very sad because I can't read and write."

Saw Gay Htoo said that he has limited chances in his life and always has to worry about survival. "In my life I have only one chance to be a farmer. I have to run from Burmese army attacks. Every time the SPDC come to our village they damage our paddy so we don't have enough food and we have to eat boiled rice. Last year, in 2007, we ate boiled rice, and this year, we are sure we'll have to eat boiled rice again because we didn't get enough paddies."

He also added that as he grows old, all the worry is with him now. "When I was a child I saw the Burmese army burn out my house and my parents run to the jungle. At that time I didn't worry about anything, but now all of the worry is with me and it seems never ending."





## Endless Suffering:



In October 2008, the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) produced a report about Burma's internal displacement for the year, in collaboration with the ethnic Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who are working with internally displaced people (IDPs).

The report is based on a survey and group discussions conducted with internally displaced people in eastern Burma, in areas which border Thailand such as Shan State, Karenni State, Pegu Division, Karen State, Mon State and Tenasserim Division in 38 townships. According to the report, there are about 451,000 internally displaced persons in these 38 townships. In the four states and two divisions that the report covers, Karen State has the largest number of IDPs, approximately 104,900.

According to the survey, most IDPs are in villages that were forced to consolidate, or in relocation sites, in ceasefire areas. The second most populated areas are in villages forced to consolidate, or relocation sites,

under the control of the military government.

According to the reports findings, the IDPs are facing many problems, including crimes against humanity that the army has committed. These occur in many different ways and most are happening in ethnic areas.

The fundamental cause of these problems is the struggle for equal rights and self-determination between the Burmese military regime and ethnic nationalities. The unprincipled practices conducted by the regime's troops during the war against the armed opposition groups constitute crimes against humanity. These acts include attacking and targeting civilians, the destruction of civilian homes and property, the extra-judicial killing of civilians, forced labor, forced relocation of civilians, torture, the rape of women and other inhumane practices.

Crimes against humanity committed by the military government's troops are widespread and systematic in all ethnic areas. These acts do not

just pertain to the current situation, they have been perpetrated on the ethnic population for a long time. Furthermore, in order to secure their grip on power, the military regime has laid out their seven steps roadmap to discipline democracy, which they have already implemented up to the fourth step: ratification of the constitution. They plan to hold an election in 2010, win it and legalize their rule on the country. In order to implement this policy smoothly and without opposition, the regime has placed restrictions, through the enactment of oppressive laws, on political parties, democracy and human rights activists. Many activists have been jailed with long sentences. Similarly, ethnic ceasefire groups are also under pressure to surrender their weapons or to become puppet militia for the regime. At the same time, the regime has also launched offensives against the remaining armed opposition groups in order to eradicate them.

The regime has been desperately trying to get ready and legalize their power by every possible means: violence, lies, restrictions and threats that are unlawful. The plan that they are implementing now will not bring peace for the country, or a genuine democracy. It will never bring satisfaction to ethnic nationalities. Its intent is only to enslave the ethnic nationalities, and all people of Burma, and drive them into further suffering. There is only one way forward for us, to unite and oppose the military regime, in order to achieve our victory. Otherwise, this endless suffering and devastating disasters will continue for our children, grandchildren and the next generation to come.

# BURMA: Rule by Repression

**In the last 12 months, Burma's military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has been under intense international scrutiny. Phil Thornton reports.**

In September 2007, the world was shocked to witness the military batter and shoot protesting monks off the streets of Rangoon.

In March this year, Cyclone Nargis put Burma back in the news as it ripped a path of destruction through the Irrawaddy Delta, killing tens of thousands of people. Again, the international community was distressed by the regime's heartless attitude to the Burmese people. While villagers starved and waterways were clogged with decaying corpses, the generals

referendum vote to endorse its equally flawed constitution.

With international and independent election observers banned, the regime got what it wanted, boasting that out of 99 percent of eligible voters, 92.4 percent said 'yes'.

Endorsement of its constitution is crucial to the SPDC plans to hold a national election in 2010. The SPDC drafted constitution effectively enables the military to continue its dominance. Opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi is sidelined by a specially drafted



refused to let international donations of food, shelter and expert assistance into the disaster areas.

Instead, the regime ignored the international pleas and the plight of million of homeless Burmese people and without missing a beat pushed through its national

clause that excludes her; by barring anybody married to a foreigner, from running for office.

In 2004, in response to international condemnation and UN calls for democratic reform, the regime launched, its 'Seven Step Roadmap to Democracy'. The referendum is one of the key steps in a long-

term strategy to secure power for the SPDC.

Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma brought the real aim of the referendum into focus.

"As it currently stands, the constitutional referendum is just another step in the consolidation of military authority, not the beginnings of a democratic transition. The UN Human Rights Council and the international community must speak out before it is too late."

Khun Myint Tun, an exiled Burmese Member of Parliament, agrees with Mr. Pinheiro's blunt assessment.

Speaking to The Diplomat on the Thai Burma border he explains.

"The regime is only concerned with keeping power, politics should be about talking, compromise and negotiation, but for them [SPDC] winning is the first priority."

Khun Myint Tun attended the National Convention called to draft the constitution, but after three years of having his phone tapped, his mail opened, being followed and threatened with jail for breaches of national security he had had enough.

"I walked out, it was more like national detention than a national convention. Many delegates were informers they had no choice, they had their jobs and the welfare of their families to think about."

Even though he quit, Khun Myint Tun was soon to find out how far the military was prepared to go to maintain its climate of fear and oppression over its opponents.

"I was jailed for seven and half years for having in my possession a copy of a Gene Sharp booklet about non violent struggle."

For his 'crime' Khun Myint Tun was subjected to torture, beatings and humiliations in some of Burma's most brutal jails, including the notorious Insein. He was denied food and water, locked for months





in solitary confinement, kept in a dark room for 70 days and repeatedly tortured.

“For five nights and days I was made to sit hooded on a backless stool while military intelligence officers interrogated me. My hood was only removed at meal times and toilet breaks. I was not allowed to sleep.”

To punish, humiliate and de-humanise him further, Khun Myint Tun’s jailers deprived him of human contact.

“Even my guards, when I tried to speak to them would only respond to me by gesticulation. I was having difficulty talking; so everyday I would practice speaking to my mother, father, brothers and sisters. I would call out to them. I would be sad and happy, laugh and cry at my spoken words, it helped keep me sane.”

Though Khun Myint Tun spent most of his sentence in solitary confinement he was not alone. Burmese jails are filled with more than 2,100 political prisoners. In what is being seen as little more than publicity stunt, timed to coincide with pro-democracy activities to commemorate last years’ crackdown, the regime released 9,002 prisoners. Only seven of the released were political, the rest classified as petty criminals by prisoner support groups. One of the seven released is Burma’s longest serving ‘prisoner of conscience’, 79-year-old journalist Win Tin, freed on September 24, after serving 19-years of a 20-year sentence. His alleged crime; subversive acts, namely, writing ‘anti-government propaganda’. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists ranks Burma as one of the worst jailers of journalists.

Khun Myint Tun says the regime’s immediate priority is to transfer and cement its military might and supremacy in a civilian-based, political organization. He explains

the SPDC sponsors a number of civilian groups. The largest of these, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), has an estimated 24 million members.

“Many of their members are forced to join. Civil servants and teachers have to join, if they value their job and want promotions. The real function of the USDA is to be a ‘legitimate political front’ for the regime and to fool the world into thinking they are a genuine political party of the people.”

Human Rights Watch, in a 2008 report on Burma, pinpointed how the USDA operates.

**“For five nights and days I was made to sit hooded on a backless stool...”**

“At local levels, the USDA and its abusive militia, the Swan Arr Shin (Masters of Force), directly monitor the activity of all persons in their area, and deal violently with anyone believed to be a threat to the SPDC.”

Khun Myint Tun concurs with HRW’s account.

“Swan Arr Shin [following USDA orders] are militia thugs, sponsored by the regime; they intimidate, harass and beat political opponents as they did in the Depayin Massacre [2003] and last year’s [2007] monk and civilian protests in Rangoon. The TV footage showed truck loads of them arriving to beat and drag away bloodied protesters.”

Construction worker Aung Tin is an USDA hard man. He cracks his work-scarred knuckles and explains to The Diplomat how he and other USDA members keep his local Rangoon ward under control.

“I joined the USDA in 2000. They gave me the chance to do business in the ward, and they gave me respect. I got a badge, card and a book of rules I have never read. I get special privileges. I don’t have to work, or pay taxes. I only have to show my card...it’s easy to get train or bus tickets.”

Aung Tin was trained for six weeks at an unmarked army facility where he was shown how to collect information, set-up informer networks and how to use karate, bamboo sticks and catapults to break-up crowds.

“We learn how to look like protestors and how to crush them. We make it look like its civilian against civilian.”

Aung Tin says he works closely with police, Military Intelligence and local government [know as Ya Ya Ka] on how to identify activists.

“We go around the ward together, meet in teahouses, organize people to attend [pro- government] rallies and take money from card players to let them play. We carry rubber sticks. If we suspect people of being against the government we get the police to take them to Ya Ya Ka office and we beat them. We let people in the ward know about it, it keeps them scared.”

Without missing a beat, Aung Tin says his gang is more lenient towards women suspected of being belonging to an opposition groups. “We call the Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation and they come and beat them. Many of the women are scared when we take them for questioning. Those not afraid are hand slapped and if still defiant a stick is used.”

The USDA through its vast civilian surveillance network blocks activists, political events and political opponents by using threats, beatings, intimidation and arrests. Aung Tin says National League of Democracy members are the easiest to target.

*continue to next page.....*

### "The Massive Increase in Burma's Political Prisoners"

A joint report produced by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) and the United States Campaign for Burma says the numbers of political prisoners in Burma increased by 78% compared to last year.

The report produced in September, 2008, says there were over 1,192 political prisoners in August, 2007, and that there are estimated to be over 2,123 political prisoners in September, 2008. According to the report, about 700 to 900 activists were arrested during, and in the aftermath of, peaceful protests led by the student groups in August, 2007, and the peaceful marches led by Buddhist Monks in September, 2007.

The Burmese government released 9,002 prisoners on September 23, 2008 but the group says it only included 10 political prisoners among those released. Additionally, Win Htein, a senior assistant to pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, initially released on September 23, was re-arrested the following day.

*continue from page 11...*

"We know who they are. We make them resign. We took one guy to jail. We beat and pushed him. We told him he would face many problems if he didn't resign. We accused him of being a thief; a drunk and he'd lose his job. We told him we'd give him many troubles." With thugs like Aung Tin prepared to spy and beat up on his neighbors, it's no wonder people in Burma are scared, paranoid and tell lies.

A Burmese journalist interviewed for this story said it's not only beatings that scare her.

"Someone disappears, we don't know if they been arrested or are in detention. If we are chatting in a teahouse and someone we don't know enters, we stop talking. If people are outside my house, I keep going. When I work, I worry that people I interview will inform on me. I'm scared about what they know and what they say about me. The trouble is I don't know who

can be trusted. This is my life. How can I write the truth?"

To get their stories in print, journalists' and publishers have to get approval from the Press Scrutiny Registration Division. The nine-stage process can take many weeks. All stories deemed inappropriate are censored. Stories criticizing the regime or the democracy road map are banned and risk a jail sentence. Journalists and publishers usually practice self-censorship rather than face jail like the 15 years Ne Win, a freelancer working for the BBC, was given in 2004. Ne Win was charged with illegally giving a foreign organization, the BBC, anti-government information.

With such heavy-handed measures, it comes as no surprise that Reporters Without Borders named Burma the second worst country out of 167 assessed for press freedoms.

The military regime's oppression has created a culture where lying

### WHO Myanmar Donor Update

The World Health Organization (WHO) report, "Myanmar Donor Update", released on the 21st of July, 2008, says that current health needs in the country, post-Cyclone Nargis, are shifting from emergency response to early recovery, but essential health needs are still going unmet.

The three page update says: "the most common conditions reported are diarrhea followed by fever, colds and respiratory problems". The report also states that, in a survey, it found, there is "a higher risk for enteric diseases with the reported declining sanitary conditions and access to clean water." According to the report, 74% of households are using hazardous sources (ponds, rivers, open dig



wells) to access water in the cyclone-hit area.

In addition, it states that as 40% of the ponds are polluted by salt water, the proportion of households using rainwater has increased from 17% to 30%. Almost 70% of people have no soap.

Before the cyclone, 80% of people indicated that they lived within an hour's walk or boat ride of a health

facility, but afterwards more than 50% had inadequate access to healthcare as 75% of health facilities were destroyed or severely damaged. In July, one in five people reported psychosocial problems, but of these, only 11% were receiving assistance

### Boy of 13 Forced to Join Army

On September 26, 2008, the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) reported that a 13 year old pupil at the No.1 State High School in Sittwe, Arakan state, was taken from his home on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September and forced to join the army.

Maung Tun Khaing Win, who lives with his mother Daw Khin Khin Win in Civil Servants Ward (1), was taken from his home by a soldier at knifepoint while his mother was out hawking food, according to a neighbor.

A neighbor said the boy had managed to write a note before he left which



and corruption are the norm. Neighbors spy on neighbor, workers inform on workers and plainclothes police trawl teashops to catch subversive whispers. Economically, the country is a basket case. The high cost of living and low wages means everyone is

**Elections,...,are the regime's final step in high jacking Burma's democratic process for its own profit.**

open to been bribed. And it gets worse.

Transparency International's, Global Corruption Report for 2008, lists Burma just better than Somalia, but equal to Iraq as the world's second-most corrupt country.

At every level of their existence

Burmese people have to bribe or pay the consequences. Students buy exam papers, government workers sell application forms for the renewal of national identity cards, bus drivers pay police and soldiers to pass through checkpoints, villagers wanting to avoid forced labor pay a 'fine' to the army, getting a travel permit, health care, having access to education and work promotions all require paying a bribe.

Meanwhile, in its attempt to keep the international community of its back and the UN Security Council on its leash, the regime continues its lie that it is sincere about moving the country towards democracy citing it's 'Road Map' as proof that there will be 'free' multi-party national elections in 2010.

Elections, that Khun Myint Tun says, are the regime's final step in high jacking Burma's democratic process for its own profit.

**\*This article first appeared in the The Diplomat Magazine.**

was read by neighbors and the boy's mother. "He wrote that someone had told him that if he didn't go with him, he would kill him", the neighbor said. Daw Khin Khin Win found her son and other child soldiers on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September at a military recruitment base in Utyinthaya ward near Letweh-Taloneto pagoda. But when she tried to take him home, an army officer told her that she would have to go through official procedures before he could leave.

Daw Khin Khin Win went to seek help from her son's teacher Daw Saw Khin and head teacher U Maung Soe Thein, but when they returned to the army base they could not find Maung Tun Khin Win.

Daw Khin Khin Win has now gone to Myauk Oo, where Maung Tun Khaing Win's teacher had heard he had been taken, to find her son and bring him home.

Sittwe residents said that the practice of forcing underage children into the army has become increasingly common in the township. *DVB News*



## Karen Refugee Shot Collecting Vegetables Outside Camp

Saw Kho Noh, 33, from Mae Ra Ma Luang camp, was shot while collecting vegetables near the camp.

On 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2008, at 3pm, Saw Kho Noh went out near the camp to collect some vegetables for his family. He met a Thai-Karen villager, Saw Htoh Hai from He Doh village, however, the man, who he knows, had a rifle with him. Saw Kho Noh didn't notice anything strange.

A moment later, there was the sound of a gun shot and Saw Kho Noh

realized that he had been hit on the waist. He shouted: "friend why did you shoot me, please help me to get home". But the man ran away. Saw Kho Noh tried to move himself as much as possible. Luckily, after a while, he met with two fellow refugees from the same camp and they took him back to the camp hospital and he survived.

Saw Htoh Hai said that he mistakenly shot Saw Kho Noh, but critics say some villagers from Thai-Karen villages around the camp are not happy with fellow Karens in the refugee camp.

Saw Kho Noh said: "It's by the grace of God that I met two friends who took me back to the camp to get treated. That's why I'm still alive today to see my family."

## Cyclone Victims Being Forced to Work

Residents of cyclone-affected areas of Bogalay Township in the Irrawaddy delta have been forced to take part in reconstruction work or pay a fine. Locals have been ordered by the military's Division 66 to carry materials for building roads in Saa-O Kyaung, Set Su, Yay Kyaw Gyee, Shwe Pyi Aye, Mondaing Lay, Khyoon Thaya, and Kyeinchaung villages, a paddy field owner said. Those that cannot work have to pay between 3000 and 5000 kyat.

Since August, some paddy field owners have been paying the money demanded on behalf of their employees so they could be exempted from the work. The paddy field owner said army officials had told local workers to either abandon their day jobs to take part in construction work or pay the fine. "They are forcing almost the whole population of the villages to take part in road building, cleaning their buildings, and loading and unloading timber for the construction companies." He said that they have to work from 6.30am to 11am, and then they take rest and have lunch at their own home. Then they have to work again from 1pm to 4.30pm. He added, "They are saying that they are doing local development, but in fact they are just using forced labor." *Burma Net News*

# The Only Health Worker in Village

Naw Wah Wah, 28, is the only health worker at a clinic in Bu Tho (Papun) township, Karen State. She is responsible for the running of the clinic, including patient care. She says villagers are happy to have her. Her clinic covers four villages around the clinic and some other further villages in the area.

Naw Wah Wah has been working at the clinic for almost three years. She



says that compared to the past, the number of patients that come to the clinic has decreased a little. "If we compare it to the past, the number of daily patients that come to the clinic has decreased every month, but 20-30 people a day are still coming."

Naw Wah Wah says that she does house visits and talks to villagers. "I take time and visit the villagers. There are many poor living conditions that contribute to increases in disease such as not using mosquito nets at night, staying untidy, not getting enough vitamins etc. I talk to them about how to stay healthy and educate them about sanitation. It helps, I find that there is less sickness and they are becoming healthier"

"When I started working in this clinic, the villagers were happy that the clinic is close to them. There were many patients in the

village, about 40-50 patients came to this clinic everyday. Illnesses such as indigestion, dysentery, diarrhea, headaches, fevers, spleen enlargement, and scabies are what the villagers commonly face."

**"...I don't have enough materials and medicines for the patients who come here..."**

Naw Wah Wah said that there is a high rate of malaria in the area. "I noticed that there were over a hundred people who got malaria in a year. If some people get serious diseases that I can't treat, then I send them to other nearby hospitals that have more medicine."

She is courageous, most of the time she works alone. "I usually work alone because I don't have any colleagues to help me. So I can't do everything that needs to be done. I don't have enough materials and medicines for the patients who come here, especially for those who have serious diseases. We only have medicine for ordinary sicknesses." Naw Wah Wah also added that there are more patients during the change of season. "I have noticed that more villagers are sick between the end of the summer and the beginning of the rainy season. Usually it happens when the seasons change. In other times fewer villagers come to the clinic." Naw Wah Wah says: "The clinic gives hope and benefits many villagers in this area. It is very helpful because the villagers do not have to buy medicines".



# Clinic of Hope

Mae Tao clinic is a destination for many patients from Burma, and along the Thai-Burma border, who don't have enough money for their medical costs. Saw Peter, a medic who works at the clinic in the registration department, says the number of patients never decreases. "There are about 500 patients who come to the clinic every day; about 400 of them are follow-up patients and more than 100 of the patients are new. This is generally the everyday figure. During the rainy season, most patients suffer from malaria, diarrhea and in some cases there is dengue fever. There are also many patients who come to the clinic with other diseases during other seasons. The numbers never decrease."

Min Khin Hla, a patient who has to undergo an operation on her abdomen, says she came here because she couldn't afford to get treatment in Burma. "I don't have

enough money to get treatment so I came to Mae Tao clinic. My disease is quite serious and if I go to the hospital in Burma, it will cost a lot of money. I've seen many other people who have come here because they don't have enough money. This is my first time coming here and it's better than going to hospital there [Burma]. Many villagers from my village come to Mae Tao clinic."

Min Khin Hla has been checked out and she has a boil inside her abdomen. She said that if she went to hospital in Burma, it would have cost her a lot of money. She says she has made the right decision by coming to Mae Tao clinic and it cost her less than half than the cost of getting treatment in Burma. "It cost me only the price of transportation and food coming here. It was half the cost of going to hospital in Burma."

Saw Tay Tay, a medic working at the clinic in the surgical

department, described the type of patients admitted to their department and what they feel after treatment. "There are cases of injuries, burns, swelling, and other diseases that should be operated. We give them treatment and they say that the health workers here are good to them and they are happy."

Min Khin Hla is Pwo Karen from Pitakka Taung Zon village in Hlaingbwe township, Karen State. She said that there is no hospital and doctor in her village. "There are about 150 households in my village but there is no hospital or clinic. Many children get sick often. When a villager gets sick, we face many problems; if the disease is serious and we go to hospital, it costs a lot of money and we can't afford that. We work as daily labor. So, we just try to treat it with herbal medicine, in traditional ways."

She said that it is very good to know that there is health care at Mae Tao clinic. "It is a lot better for us to know about Mae Tao clinic. If we can travel easily, many people will come here."





## Villagers Isolated from Medical Treatment

Saw Pah Dee, 45, is taking care of his son, Saw Eh Moo, a ten month old boy who suffers from diarrhea and fever. He says many villagers suffer from the disease in his village. "This year diseases, like diarrhea, defecating with blood, malaria, and vomiting have spread in our village and many people were sick with these diseases." Normally, more people suffer from these diseases during the beginning of the rainy season. However, people are still sick with these diseases. Saw Pah Dee said that when villagers get sick, those who have money can buy some medicine, but those who don't cannot. "In the past year measles spread in our village and most of the people in our village were sick with it. Some people have a little bit of money to buy medicine for themselves but some people had

no money and they cannot buy medicine."

A CIDKP field staff member told *Inside News* that villagers in Khaw Thoo Khi and Hti Pah Reh in Lu Pleh (Hlaingbwe) township in Pan district, have to walk for four hours through mountains in order to avoid SPDC outposts to reach a clinic. "When villagers get sick, it takes them four hours to get to the clinic based in Hti Per Wah village. They have to go with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the KNLA have to provide security for them because the SPDC outposts are on the way."

Saw Pah Dee is from Pah Klu village in Myawaddy township and he said that sometimes the Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) went to their village and gave treatment to villagers.

"When the situation is good and when there is less activity by SPDC troops, they [BPHWT] come to our village. When they reach our village, many villagers come to them to do their medical check up and ask for medicine. It's very helpful to the villagers."

He also added that while the health worker teams are there, villagers try to swap their roosters for medicine, in order to save it for later. "Some villages want to buy and save some medicines to use it when necessary,

but they don't have money. When the team came to the village, villagers ask them to exchange their roosters for medicine, but they can't. The team has to explain to them about their work and how they use the medicine."

Saw Pah Dee said that there is no medic or doctor in his village. There are some villagers that sell medicine, but they don't know much about it. "We had no doctor in our village, but there are three households selling medicine. They only have some medicine and they don't know much about how to take it and for what illnesses. They have limited knowledge and it's just for minor sickness. They don't do it as a profession, just to earn some income."

Poor living conditions in many rural areas, as well as lack of health care and health education, mean villagers are vulnerable to disease. Yet the Burmese military regime will not increase the health budget from the 3% of the national budget it currently spends on health care.



## Malaria: A Debilitating Disease if not treated on time

Three year old Aung Min Paing has been suffering from malaria for two months. He is also suffering from malnutrition, and lapses into unconsciousness, as he has been sick for quite a long time. His parents took him to hospital in Myawaddy but still, his sickness didn't get better. So, his parents brought him to the Mae Tao clinic. "First, we took him to hospital in Myawaddy and he was treated there for 21 days. The nurses there gave him lots of injections and pills which cost lots of money but his situation hasn't got any better" said Saw Tin Tun, the child's father.

Saw Tin Tun says he took his child to Myawaddy because the child's sickness was serious and to travel to Mae Tao clinic was difficult at that time. "We rarely go to hospital in Burma because it costs lots of money. We just treat our children with herbal medicine or in the traditional way if the sickness is not serious. It was not easy to come to Mae Tao clinic at the time he started getting sick. So, since his disease was serious, we took him to hospital in Myawaddy."

He suspected the hospital hadn't checked his child properly. "I noticed the nurses didn't check him well, so even though he was given injections and pills, he still didn't get better."

Later when traveling became a little bit easier, Saw Tin Tun and his wife brought their child to the Mae Tao clinic. They feel relief as they see their boy's condition improve and Saw Tin Tun says: "We have been here for 15 days,

his situation looks better now. He can drink milk so he has regained some weight and has more movement. We are happy seeing him getting better."

Saw Tin Tun has got six children and Aung Min Paing is the youngest. He and his family live in P' Loo village in Myawaddy

township, Karen State. He said that he wants all of his children to be educated but he can't afford to send them to school. "I want all my children to be educated people but as standards are getting higher, the school fees are also getting higher. Now I don't have money to send them to school any more and instead they help me working in the farm."

Saw Tin Tun is also worried for his children back home and his farm. He said that he hopes Aung Min Paing will recover completely soon and then they can go back to their village. "I have slash-burn cultivation and a corn farm. Now my older children are attending it. I hope my child will recover and we can go home soon."

"...I hope my child will recover and we can go home soon."



# Village Headman Tortured

"...`did you bring a stick with you?' And I asked him back, `what will you do with a stick?'..."

Saw Htet, 41, was beaten by a DKBA commander until he was unconscious, because he failed to participate in forced labor with his fellow villagers.

Saw Htet used to be a village chief in his village. He lives in Ta Kaw Pwa village, Kawkriek Township in Doo Pla Ya District. There are four in his family: him, his wife, a daughter and a son. He is Buddhist and Pwo Karen.

Saw Htet said that being a village chief is hard. "If the DKBA soldiers or SPDC soldiers summon us at day time we must go at day time and if they summon us at night time, then we also must go at night time. We cannot delay and go to them when we are free."

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) reports that: "The residents of Dooplaya District face regular demands for forced labor including cutting down and delivering bamboo poles, fabricating and delivering thatch shingles and cutting down and delivering wooden posts, amongst other tasks. These materials are typically used to build or rebuild army camps."

Saw Htet said that if the DKBA soldiers come to their village they have to take them in and villagers have to provide emergency tractor-trucks to transport their food. When the DKBA soldiers asked for people to work for

them, Saw Htet is responsible as he is a village chief. He said that he was summoned once because he didn't go with the villagers for forced labor. "One morning, I was ordered to transport food for DKBA soldiers. So, I asked one of my villagers with a tractor-truck to transport food for the DKBA soldiers. I went instead to Kawkriek town to buy some necessary household materials for my house. In the evening, the villager that went for forced labor came back home, he came to me and said that I was asked to go to Kho Ther Chee gate to fix my problem. He said, if you can't fix it you may not return home anymore."

Saw Htet had no idea what was happening and worried that the commander would punish him or do bad things to him. "I was worried and asked a villager to go with me, we left for Kho Ther Chee at once, this was on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. I reached there while the gate commander Saw Myaweddy was having a shower. When he saw me he just asked me, 'did you bring a stick with you?' And I asked him back, 'what will you do with a stick?' He answered, 'for nothing else, just to beat you.' Then we stayed quiet and waited with him at the place where he lives."

Saw Htet's fears had become

reality, he was accused of drinking and was beaten. "Soon after, he came to us and said: 'you came to me when you were drunk'. Then he just got his gun and hit me with the butt at my forehead. Then I fell down backward and was unconscious."

Luckily, some people around him helped him. "One of my friends who came with me and one of his soldiers helped me stand. My forehead was cut and bleeding and villagers there worried that I may die. But they were not allowed to get the doctor to help me. The commander said that we should kill this man, because he contacted and worked with Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU]. After I regained consciousness, I was taken to a village nurse. She cleaned my wound and gave me some medicine to take when I returned home to my own village."

Being village chief is a very dangerous job in Karen state. They have to deal with several groups who are enemies with each other. To cope with this problem, some villages rotate the leader's term every six months; no one dares to hold this position for a long period. When there is more activity by troops, village chiefs are more likely to face problems of supplying labor, collecting money, traveling with the troops or being tortured.



## SUMMARY OF HUMAN RIGHT ABUSES

### **Destruction and forced displacament**

■ On 2-10-2008, the DKBA Troop 907, led by Blah Nah, burnt down four houses in Blah Toh village in Kawkriek township, the owners of the house are Ah Kyaw, Maw Nae Kyaw, Peh Ney Say, Shwe Mang Kyaw and Tee Taw Thoo. Thirty households in Blah Toh village were also affected by landmines that were planted around the area.

■ On 7-10-2008, a DKBA troop led by Ta Oh Moo, burnt down four houses and a primary school in Ta Kaw Ka Kloe village, Kawkriek township, Dooplaya District in Karen State. On the same day, this troop burnt down seven houses in Ka Law Kler village in Kawkriek township. The villagers from Ka Law Gaw, Paw Buh La Hta, Kau Po Kee and Htee Nya Pai Hta in Kawkriek townhsip tried to escape to a Thai village, but the DKBA troops told them that they would find those who escaped to the Thai side, that wherever they reach they will attack them. The headman of the Thai village was afraid of attack, so, the villagers were forced back to the other side. Villagers from Blah Toh who were forced to stay with the DKBA troops were not allowed to escape and made to stay in a cave without food. Children were ill and the DKBA did not allow a CIDKP health worker team to treat them.

■ On 8-10-2008, DKBA troops burnt down thirty-two corn barns in Blah Toh and Maw Po Kloe areas in Kawkriek township.

### **Extortion**

■ On 22.7.08, MOC 10 Commander from Kler Lar (Bawgaligy) demanded 800,000 Kyats from twelve villages in the Kler Lar area in Tantabin Township, eastern Pegu division.

■ On 29.9.08, Second Company Commander Than Sein Aung from LIB 3 demanded 20,000 Kyats from Ta Rot Mae village in Bilin township. On the same day Pah Ker Ler from the DKBA demanded 350,000 Kyats from Kyet Chay Kat village, Bilin Township. On 16.10.08, Kyaw Min from DKBA Troop 333 extorted two tins of rice and eight vises of pork from Htot Klaw Hki.

■ On 3-10-2008, a DKBA troop entered Mae Klong Kee village in Amphur Umphang on the Thai side of the border, they entered Kam Nam's house with two 79-MM, took the belongings in the house, and went back to the other side of the border.

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### **Demands for new recruits**

■ On 27.7.08, IB 60 from the Burmese Army demanded one person each from Par Ta Lar, Noh Gaw and Wet La Daw villages for new soldiers, if they failed to send villagers they had to pay 100,000 Kyats per person.

### **Force labor**

■ Beginning the third week of June, 2008, combined troops of IB 24 and the DKBA, led by Tha Myint, were patrolling in Thaton township. They traveled from village to village, asking for porters from a village and, upon arriving at another village, released the porters from the former, they would then ask the village for a new porter. They were carrying out this patrolling until the third week of July, 2008.

■ On 15.7.08, at 02:00 am troops from DKBA 333 led by Thaw Ma Na pretended to be KNU troops, and came to Pyi Thein, village head of Wei Pyan village, and said that they were with military officer Saw Nay Say from the KNLA. They then demanded 500,000 Kyats from him, the village head appealed and refused to pay, but he was shouted at and threatened by the troops, and so he paid 300,000 Kyats.

■ On 11.10.08, Captain Tin Myint from LIB 3 demanded fifteen villagers and three ox carts each from Mi Chaung Ai, Htee Nya Pau, Ma Yan Gone and Ka Law Ker villages in order to build a bridge.

■ On 3.7.08, No.1 Column from IB 24 left from Plaw Po and came to Yaung Oo Pu and demanded fifteen porters from the village.

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## Proud to serve

Naw Chwel Htoo, 29, works for Mother and Child Health in Kaw Mu Der mobile clinic in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District, Karen State. She says the infant mortality rate used to be very high in her area because of a lack of health education and access to care.

“In the past many children and including some mothers died when giving birth. People just accepted it, they believed it was their fate.”

Kaw Mu Der Clinic is located in an area populated with internally displaced people. The Clinic is a source of hope to many villages and people in the area.

In the past villages and people had to deal with disease and infections such as, diarrhea, malaria, worm and skin problems.

Now villagers when sick can access the Clinic area says Naw Chwel Htoo.

“Some mothers give birth in their own house and our medics join with traditional birth attendants to care for them in their homes, but some

come to the clinic for information.”

Naw Chwel Htoo says there have been around 80 births since 2007 and it keeps the Clinic busy.

“We also give health training to people, it reduces sickness levels in the community.”

Naw Chwel Htoo says it is important to educate the women about birth.

“If they are about to give birth and are not unsure how difficult it will for them to get to the Clinic if we know we can also come their home.”

Naw Chwel Htoo explains that their Clinic does the best it can to help the villagers.

“I am very proud of being a health worker because I can help our people to a higher health care standard. To stay healthy is very important and to have health workers is also important. Working as a health worker is a way we can help to save people’s lives.”