

SHRF MONTHLY REPORT - DECEMBER 2008

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COMMENTARY

60th Anniversary of the UDHR

Sixty years ago this month, with the intention to create a better world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a yardstick by which men and women can judge for themselves the extent to which their rights and freedom are respected by their respective governments.

However, for many peoples who have been under oppressive rules of their governments, such a better world is still a farfetched dream. The people of Shan State, or Burma as a whole, can easily be counted among those peoples, given the circumstances under which they have been forced to live for the most part of the last 6 decades.

Virtually all the basic human rights set forth in the UDHR have been denied them by the successive military governments which seized power from a democratically elected civilian government nearly 5 decades ago. For them, the world appears to have become increasingly worse over the decades, and seems to be heading towards the same direction with still no end in sight.

Nevertheless, as an organization dealing with issues of human rights in accordance with the principles articulated in the UDHR, SHRF commemorates its 60th Anniversary by pledging to continue to strive with all the people of the world for the realization of the highest aspiration of the common people.

COMMUNITY LEADER AND VILLAGER ARRESTED, TORTURED AND BEATEN TO DEATH, IN KAE-SEE

In July 2008, the headman of Murng Sawng village and a villager of Ho Hu village, in Nawng Tao village tract, **Kae-See** township, were arrested, tortured and beaten to death by a patrol of combined troops from SPDC IB287 and a Shan ceasefire group, known as "Murng Zern Group".

On the night of 23 July 2008, a patrol of about 13 SPDC troops from IB287 and about the same number of troops from the said ceasefire group, Murng Zern Group, came to Murng Sawng village in Nawng Tao village tract, Kae-See township.

The SPDC troops, led by a commander known as Bo Naing Htoo, arrested the headman of Murng Sawng village, Zaa Awng Nyunt (m), aged 49, and took him away with them, at around 10 p.m.. The troops headed towards Nawng Tao village, about 5 miles away, and about half way they tied the headman's hands behind his back with a rope and pushed him along.

The troops did not stop long at Nawng Tao village, but continued to Ho Hu village, about 2 miles from Nawng Tao, and arrested a villager named Ma-Ha (m), aged 45, who was staying in the village, and tied his hands behind his back.

Soon after that, at around midnight, the troops took the 2 villagers out of Ho

Hu village to a place where there was a big banyan tree locally known as “Mai Hung Suk Ho”, some distance north of Ho Hu village. The SPDC troops then tortured and beat the 2 villagers to death at that place.

Before they left, the troops wrote a letter and put it on one of the dead bodies of the villagers, which were lying as they had been beaten to death. The letter said that the 2 villagers had to face their fate because they were informers of the Shan rebels.

The next day, the relatives who had gone out to look for them found their bodies at the place where they had been left. As they read the letter, the villagers knew that the SPDC troops had not only killed the 2 villagers but also made a threat to terrorize the local people.

The villagers were actually terrorized because no one dared to complain about the incidents. They, however, still dared to bring some Buddhist monks to the place, conducted funeral rites for the dead and buried them near where they had been found.

A FOREST GATHERER GANG-RAPED IN KUN-HING

In June 2008, a woman who was returning from gathering bamboo shoots was seized, interrogated and gang-raped by the SPDC troops from LIB246 who were taking road security at the crossroad leading to Ka Li and Kaeng Lom village tracts in **Kun-Hing** township.

On 21 June 2008, 4 village women of Naa Lur village in Waeng Phui village tract, Kun-Hing township, were returning from collecting bamboo shoots in a forest when they ran into a group of 6 SPDC troops guarding the said crossroad.

As they saw the SPDC troops at close range, 3 of the women were startled and ran away in different directions. But one of them, Naang Sa (not her real name), aged 24, was confused or too frightened to run and was arrested by the troops.

The SPDC troops were from LIB246 and led by a 3-striped Sergeant, Thet Kyaw. They interrogated the woman, scolding and shouting at her, for about 30 minutes and finally gang-raped her until all of them were satisfied before releasing her.

Naang Sa was the only daughter of an invalid mother and an over 70-year-old elderly father who could not work anymore and she had to support both of them by working as a forest gatherer or as a day wage labourer.

A VILLAGER SEVERELY BEATEN, LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS, IN KAE-SEE

In May 2008, a villager of Nawng Tao village in Nawng Tao village tract, **Kae-See** township, was severely and repeatedly beaten during interrogation by a patrol of SPDC troops from IB286 until he lost consciousness.

On 22 May 2008, a patrol of about 50 SPDC troops from IB286, based at Murng Nawng in Kae-See township, came to Nawng Tao village in Nawng Tao village tract in the same township. As the troops entered the village, they saw a man who was going out of the village and waved at him to come to them.

The man was a villager of Nawng Tao, Lung Ta, aged 49, who was about to go to his farm outside the village. When he got to the SPDC troops, they asked him whether he knew where the Shan soldiers were staying in the area.

When Lung Ta said he did not know, the SPDC troops accused him of lying and trying to go out to the Shan soldiers to inform them about the arrival of government

troops, and one of the troops, a sergeant, dragged him by the collar and struck him on the back of the neck with a fist and kicked him in the waist, causing him to fall face down to the ground.

The SPDC troops continued to ask him about the Shan soldiers and repeatedly beat him with sticks all over his body as Lung Ta kept saying he did not know, until finally he lost consciousness. The troops then entered the village and told the villagers to go and see a Shan soldier they had just beaten up at the village entrance.

The villagers told the troops that Lung Ta was not a Shan soldier but an ordinary villager of Nawng Tao village and carried him back to his home. Lung Ta was traditionally treated by his relatives and fellow villagers and it took a couple of weeks for him to be able to climb up and down his stilted house. No one dared to complain about it to the authorities for fear of reprisal.

COMMUNITY LEADER SEVERELY BEATEN, LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS, IN NAM-ZARNG

In late April 2008, the headman of Paang Wurn village in Nam Soi village tract, **Nam-Zarng** township, was severely beaten up by the SPDC troops from LIB561 until he lost consciousness, at Paang Wurn village.

On 28 April 2008, a patrol of 27 SPDC troops from LIB561, led by commander Si Thu, came to Paang Wurn village in Nam Soi village tract, Nam-Zarng township, and stopped for a while in the village.

One of the SPDC troops, a Sergeant, went to the house of the village headman, Lung Ti, aged 46, and asked him about Shan soldiers' movements in the area, saying he heard that Shan soldiers used to come to the village quite often.

When the headman said he had not even once seen any Shan soldiers coming to his village for a long time, the Sergeant took him to their commander who was staying at a house 2-3 doors west of the headman's house.

The commander, Si Thu, then interrogated the headman in the compound of the house, asking the same questions as the Sergeant had done. The commander slapped the headman's face repeatedly every time he said he did not know about the Shan soldiers until his nose was bleeding.

The Sergeant then pulled out one of the split bamboo sticks from the fence of the house's compound and beat the headman several times, and they both beat and kicked him until eventually he lost consciousness.

The SPDC troops then left the village, leaving the unconscious body of the headman lying in the compound of the house where they interrogated him. It took some weeks for the headman to recover from the injuries sustained from the beating and no one dared to complain about the incident.

SITUATION OF ARBITRARY DISAPPEARANCE

Incidents of disappearance of villagers after being arrested by the Burmese junta's troops in Shan State are still more or less frequent occurrences.

Some of the victims disappeared after being in detention and interrogated for some time, and some disappeared after being seen taken away by the junta's troops, never to be seen or heard of again.

Some victims simply disappeared and it was concluded later that something had been done to them by the junta's troops based on circumstantial evidence.

The following are 3 such instances which took place during mid 2008:

VILLAGERS DISAPPEAR WHILE IN DETENTION, DURING WHICH THEY WERE INTERROGATED AND TORTURED, IN MURNG-PAN

In June 2008, 3 villagers of Long Kaeng village in **Murng-Pan** township disappeared while being detained by the SPDC troops at the base of LIB332, during which they were interrogated, beat, kicked and tortured by the troops.

On the night of 11 May 2008, one of 3 SPDC soldiers, who were taking security at a forced labour site where villagers were forced to cultivate rice for the military in Murng-Pan township, was shot and killed by unknown people while they were stealing vegetables in nearby farms.

On the next day, some SPDC troops came to Long Kaeng village and arrested some villagers for interrogation. They looked for a man named Aai Ni, but they could not find him and so they arrested his wife and son and took them to the base of LIB520.

Naang Poi (f), aged 39 and Aai Kham (m), aged 20, Aai Ni's wife and son, were kept at the military base for a couple of days and were released on 14 May 2008 after being interrogated. But, on 16 May 2008, the SPDC troops surrounded Long Kaeng village and again arrested several villagers.

They arrested Aai Ni (m), aged 45, Zaam Sa (the headman), aged 55, Zaai Kham (m), aged 20, Zaai Kya (m), aged 43 and Zin-Na (m), aged 58, and took them to the base of LIB520 and interrogated, beat and tortured them.

On 19 May 2008, the SPDC troops came to Long Kaeng village again and arrested 2 more villagers, Zaai Maad (m), aged 40 and Kun-Na (m), aged 50. The troops then continued to Kung Keng village and arrested the headman and 2 villagers, and took them all back to the base of LIB520.

All the villagers, including those arrested previously, were detained and interrogated and tortured at LIB520's base until 22 May 2008 when they were all moved to the base of LIB332, where they continued to be interrogated and tortured.

On 7 June 2008, 3 of the villagers, including Aai Ni and Aai Kham and another villager whose name was unknown, were taken away from where they were detained and have never been seen or heard of again since then.

On the next day, all the remaining villagers were taken to Murng-Pan town by the SPDC troops and handed over to the police to be put in jail. Although all the other villagers were in police custody when this report was received at the end of July 2008, the 3 villagers that had been taken away while in detention at the military base were no where to be found or heard of.

VILLAGERS DISAPPEAR AFTER BEING TAKEN AWAY, IN NAM-ZARNG

In May 2008, 2 villagers, Lung Ti, aged 45 and his son, Zaai Gam, aged 11, disappeared after being taken away on a military truck by a group of SPDC troops from LIB516, on the outskirts of Nam-Zarng town, **Nam-Zarng** township.

The villagers were from Wan Nawng village in Wan Nawng Kung Mong village tract, Nam-Zarng township. They had gone to the town on a business trip on 3 May 2008. When they left the town on their return trip, they met a military truck on the east of the town where there was a pineapple garden.

At that time, 3 farmers were working in the pineapple garden and they saw the said military truck, with about 10 SPDC troops on it, stop near the 2 villagers who

were walking on the side of the road. The villagers were then ordered on to the truck, which was driven away in the direction of Haai Phak village.

The 2 villagers have since then disappeared. Their relatives could not find them although they have gone to many places in search of them, including police stations, prisons and all the military bases around Nam-Zarng town.

According to their relatives, Lung Ti had taken his son with him and gone to receive money, about 900,000 kyat, in Nam-Zarng town, sent to him by his son and daughter-in-law who were working in Thailand.

After learning about the incident from the farmers who had witnessed them being taken away on a military truck, the villagers concluded that at the time of the incident Lung Ti must have been carrying the said money, which was most likely the cause of their disappearance.

COMMUNITY LEADER DISAPPEARS IN MURNG-NAI

In June 2008, a community leader from Loi Wawt village in Naa Khaan village tract, **Murng-Nai** township, who was temporarily staying in Murng-Nai town, disappeared after being seen driving a motorcycle to and fro along the main road in the centre of the town.

On 10 June 2008, Lung Aw-Ta, the village tract headman of Naa Khaan village tract, who was visiting and staying at his relative's house in Murng-Nai town, had not returned to the house after driving a motorcycle out into the town.

When on the next day his relatives inquired about him in the town, many townspeople who knew Lung Aw-Ta said they saw him riding a red Honda-Dream motorcycle up and down the central main road the day before. But now Lung Aw-Ta together with the motorcycle had disappeared.

A few days later, 2 villagers from Kung Long village in Loi Khio village tract, which was on the west of and not very far from the town, saw a motorcycle lying in a ravine beside the Murng-Nai - Mawk-Mai road. They knew that it was the motorcycle that Lung Aw-Ta drove on the day of his disappearance, but he was nowhere to be seen around the place.

The 2 villagers brought the motorcycle back to the house of Lung Aw-Ta's relative in the town and they together went to look at the place where the motorcycle was found. They looked for Lung Aw-Ta around the place and found a lot of footprints left by boots usually worn by Burmese troops, but could not find him anywhere.

However, as they searched for Lung Aw-Ta, they met several villagers who said that on the day of the incident they saw a six-wheel army truck of LIB518 parked on the side of the road near the ravine where the motorcycle was found with no one on the truck and the troops seemed to have gone down the ravine.

A GIRL DETAINED ALONE AT A BORDER CHECKPOINT, IN MURNG-TON

In June 2008, a 16-year-old Pa-O girl, who was among 37 persons detained at a border checkpoint manned by SPDC troops from IB65 in **Murng-Ton** township, continued to be detained even after the rest had been released.

On 25 June 2008, a Thai police truck brought 37 Burmese nationals, who had been arrested in Thailand and were being deported for illegal entry, to the Border Point No.1 (BP-1) and handed them over to the SPDC troops from IB65 manning the checkpoint there on the Burma side of the border.

The deportees were men and women of all ages, although there were apparently more men than women. Most of them were from several townships in central Shan State, e.g., Nam-Zarng, Murng-Nai and Loi-Lem, etc., who had gone to Thailand for various reasons, but mainly to work as a means of survival.

Since it was evening, the deportees were taken to a nearby military outpost camp by the SPDC troops and told to stay there for the night. The next morning, the deportees were lined up in front of the camp and released, except one of them.

The SPDC troops told the deportees that they all were free either to go home or back to Thailand where they had been deported, except for a Pa-O girl, Ma Ma Lay (not her real name), aged 16. The troops said that they would send Ma Ma Lay back to her parents because they knew them and knew where their house was in Nam-Zarng township.

Ma Ma Lay had gone to work in Thailand with some of her close relatives who had also been deported with her, and she had been kept separately from the others during the night at the camp. Her relatives were worried and pleaded with the SPDC troops to let Ma Ma Lay go with them, but to no avail.

The SPDC troops ordered the 36 other deportees to leave Ma Ma Lay alone with them and go away to wherever they wanted, saying that they would send her to her parents. Although her relatives did not want to leave Ma Ma Lay, a young girl of 16, alone among the SPDC troops, they could not defy their order and had to leave.

FORCED RELOCATION OF 3 WHOLE VILLAGES IN NAM-ZARNG

In April 2008, 3 villages, comprising over 100 households, in Nawng Hee village tract in **Nam-Zarng** township, were forced to relocate to Nam Wo village in Nam Wo Kun Saai village tract in the same township, by the SPDC troops of LIB515 based in Lai-Kha.

On 18 April 2008, a patrol of about 50 SPDC troops from LIB515, based in Lai-Kha township, came to Nawng Hee village tract in Nam-Zarng township and issued an order requiring 3 villages in the village tract to move to another village tract within the month of April.

The 3 villages, Paang Khaam = 38 households, Nam Paa Lam = 42 households and Si Kawng = 36 households, were situated about 18 miles northeast of Nam-Zarng town on the Nam-Zarng - Kun-Hing main road, in Nawng Hee village tract in Nam-Zarng township.

The SPDC authorities accused the 3 villages of being places where passing Shan soldiers often got their food and information about the movements of the government troops, and forced all the villagers to move to Nam Wo village in Nam Wo Kun Saai village tract where they could be protected by a Pa-O ceasefire group.

MEMBERS OF PEOPLE'S MILITIA PERSECUTED, MONEY EXTORTED, IN KAENG-TUNG

In May 2008, 2 members of village militia of La Murng village in Kaad Tao village tract, **Kaeng-Tung** township, were accused of keeping more arms than permitted and interrogated for 7 days, and money was extorted from them, by the SPDC township authorities.

The 2 villagers of La Murng village were Zaai Seng (m) and Zaai Sai (m), who had been conscripted to serve in a people's militia force by the SPDC authorities

since 2007. Zaai Seng was given a rifle and 2 rounds of ammunition, and Zaai Sai was not given any gun but only 2 hand grenades, by the authorities.

On 10 May 2008, there was an inspection conducted by the SPDC troops of the arms of the people's militia in Kaad Tao area and the 2 villagers were found to have more weapons than they had been given by the authorities. Zaai Seng had 3 rounds of ammunition for his rifle instead of 2, and Zaai Sai had 3 hand grenades instead of 2, so that they each had one extra weapon than permitted.

The SPDC troops withdrew all the weapons from the 2 villagers and took them to a military camp for interrogation. They were required to report to the military camp and be interrogated every day for 7 straight days.

However, the weapons were returned to them after 30,000 kyat of money was extorted from each of them by the SPDC troops, and they were required to serve in the people's militia again. It was learned that they were interrogated because the SPDC troops suspected they got the extra weapons from the Shan soldiers, which was not true.